

**MODERN RHETORICAL PRESIDENCY AND THE RESHAPING OF DEMOCRACY IN NAMIBIA: 29<sup>TH</sup> INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY SPEECH OF PRESIDENT HAGE GEINGOB**

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**Abstract**

*As a constitutional democracy, Namibia is governed by the fundamental rules that constitute the country and its institutions. Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia stipulates that as the Head of State, the “President shall uphold, protect and defend the Constitution as the Supreme Law, and shall perform with dignity and leadership all acts necessary, expedient, reasonably and incidental to the discharge of the executive functions of the Government.” Rhetorically, the situation brings about the existence of discourse. This view affirms that rhetoric is constructed in response to and within the context of a particular “rhetorical situation”. In the case of this paper, the exigent circumstance is one of President Geingob’s ceremonial speeches as required of him by the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia. It is the current researcher’s observation that it is through speeches that presidents lead their countries. President Geingob’s modern presidency, executed the laws through speeches, communicated directly to the Namibian people about what his Government has done, what it is attempting to do, and what they plan to do. Therefore, by using Aristotelian (2007) “three regimes” of rhetoric as well as the three rhetorical proofs ethos, pathos and logos, the paper analyses how Geingob’s rhetoric reshapes the democracy of post-apartheid Namibian government. President Hage Geingob, the third democratically elected Namibian President, delivered statements during his term of office. The statement he made on the 29<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary is the focal point of this paper. Geingob’s rhetoric touches a wide spectrum of topics ranging from tackling corruption, promotion of economic development and reconciliation, strengthening democracy, the maintenance of peace and stability, the protection of the territorial integrity of Namibia, to the promotion of international peace and security. Therefore, the rhetorical analysis of Hage Geingob’s speech in this paper shows how modern presidential rhetoric is an important tool for his leadership as it is characterised by proper use of discourse in his speech. Thus, his verbal eloquent identifies his charisma.*

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## **Introduction**

On the 21st March 2019, President Hage Geingob, a third democratically elected Namibian president delivered a speech as the country celebrated its 29th independence anniversary. Delivering a ceremonial speech like this, is one of Geingob's constitutional mandate to lead the people who have elected him into power therefore, rhetorically speaking a president leads by speech, moreover presidency is a rhetorical institution, through speeches a president seeks to persuade the nation as a whole or certain sections of a society in particular. The 29th independence anniversary is a rhetorical situation which calls rhetorical acts of President Geingob to declare the independence anniversary. Therefore, it is important to note that "the rhetorical situation exists when a certain circumstance is understood within the context in which the speaker or writer creates discourse".

It is a tradition in a democratic regime for the leader to rely on spoken words to persuade his audience of the benefits that arise from their leadership. Burns 1978, p. 18 explains that "leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilise, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers". President Geingob used the most important type of behaviour by which leaders mobilise their followers through his linguistic performance, as it is primarily through language that leaders legitimise their leadership in a democratic regime therefore, it is arguable to state that Geingob's rhetoric shapes his governance.

## **Rhetoric, Political Persuasion and Language**

From the outset of the paper it is important to emphasise the relationship between rhetoric, politics and persuasion. While persuasion is the fundamental for public policy debates, equally, the same act (policy debate) engages, through language both the supporters and opponents of a proposed policy, in which the two sides employ any means available to persuade the audience to support and identify with the opinion of their interest.

<sup>1</sup> Bitzer, L. F. (1992). The Rhetorical Situation. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, (1), 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row.

Political rhetoric is defined for this paper as the art of employing different literary and linguistic techniques to either persuade or dissuade the audience into believing what the communicator believes. Rhetoric and persuasion are collocation sets. One hardly mentions rhetoric without including persuasion. The rhetorical discipline is an art and power to discover the best among all available means of persuasion to convince an audience (Aristotle, 2007). Dylgjeri's (2014) writes that Aristotle's three appeal of rhetoric, logos, ethos and pathos are the key principles of Rhetorical Theory, and are still considered as one of the prominent approaches to political discourse analyses. Furthermore, Aristotle's Proofs can be used in different ways to persuade audience.

Ching Ko (2015) found that as far as emotions (pathos) are concerned, there are positive as well as negative elements of pathos that are used to persuade an audience. Positive persuasion includes using emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, sympathy, while positive emotions include happiness, hope and satisfaction, amongst others. Wodak (1989) asserts that in political discourse, the repetition of the possessive pronouns "we", "us" and "our" is a "persuasive linguistic device which helps invite identification and solidarity with the 'we group', which, nevertheless, simultaneously implies distancing from and marginalization of others. At the lexis level, on the other hand, choices seem to be "less overt operations, in the sense that they rarely go fully unnoticed by the listener or reader since they lie above the threshold of consciousness". Wodak (1989) further stresses the importance of lexical choices to reveal ideology; lexical choices carry the speaker's negative or positive evaluation of the people, events, or actions.

Therefore, politics can be viewed as "a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it".

### **Heterogeneous Audiences and the Modern Rhetorical Presidency**

In delivering the 29th independence anniversary speech, President Geingob was not talking to himself, the speech was being presented to the audiences who had gathered to celebrate the 29th Independence Anniversary.

<sup>3</sup> Wodak, R. (1989). *Language Power and Ideology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

The president is now appearing to speak directly to the people, which is one of the features of modern presidential rhetoric. The presence of an audience expressed epideictic discourse which Kuypers (2010, p. 42) refers to as an instance in which “spectators come to experience a celebration or commemoration of some person or event- that is a ceremony in the present.” In the opening line of his speech President Geingob paid respect to the audience who were gathered at the stadium by saluting to a number of individuals according to the protocol of hierarchy. He stated:

- Director of Ceremonies – Honourable Martin Andjaba, Minister in the Presidency;
- Our Guest of Honour – Your Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya;
- Comrade Nangolo Mbumba, Vice President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Mbumba;
- The Right Honourable Saara Kuugongelwa- Amadhila, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia and Mr. Amadhila;
- Comrade Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma, Founding President and Founding Father of the Namibian Nation;
- Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, Former President of the Republic of Namibia and Madam Pohamba;

Perelman (1969) defines audience for the purpose of rhetoric as “the ensemble of speech targeted vast, heterogeneous audiences” as there are both immediate and universal audiences consisting of the high dignitaries that were gathered at the Windhoek independence stadium, and thousands of people in different towns of Namibia who could see and hear President Geingob’s speech through the medium of television and radios.

<sup>4</sup> Chingko, H. (2015). Political persuasion: Adopting Aristotelian Rhetoric in Public Policy Debate Strategies. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 5 (10), 114- 123.

<sup>5</sup> Kuypers, J. A. (2010). *Framing Analysis from a Rhetorical Perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.

Again, a large number of other people possibly outside Namibia would read Geingob's speech from the newspapers and online the next day.

It is worth noting that rhetorical analysis does not only involve identifying and labelling linguistic features but the examination of the entire context of communication. "An important part of context is the audience because the rhetoric is never about discourse in the abstract but is always concerned with directing one's words with specific intentions towards a specific audience". A feature of what can be argued as democratic rhetoric is witnessed here in the first line of Geingob speech after the salutation, as he mentioned the phrase "Fellow Namibians" to indicate that he shared certain values with the portion of the audience among the heterogenic audience he was addressing, which can be categorized as Namibian people, in this case the shared values are in terms of their state of citizenship. After grabbing the attention of the audience, President Geingob declares that: "It is my honour to address you on this momentous day and in so doing, join you in celebrating our 29th Independence Anniversary."

On that note, Geingob shared with the audience his sentiment of being "honoured to address" the Namibians on the celebration of their 29th independence anniversary. As he occupied the highest office in Namibia, as the president, the post had high power packaged with it, hence while exercising the powers duly entrusted in him and through this speech, he exhibited the praxis of presidential rhetoric. Geingob was honoured as the president and for that he enacted his social responsibility and had to stand in for the nation on special occasions, such as the celebration of the country's independence to deliver a speech. With that, Geingob "linked his character and the passions of his audience by means of syllogisms he employed". Geingob thus, set the purpose of the speech at high level as he secured the audiences' attention right from the beginning of the speech.

<sup>7</sup> Perelman, C., & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969). *The New Rhetoric: A treatise on Argumentation*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

<sup>8</sup> Silva Rhetoricae, (2016). *The Rhetoric of the Forest*. Utah: Brigham Young University. Retrieved November 18, 2017 from <http://humanities.Rhetoric.byu.edu>.

<sup>9</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.

Moreover, this first line of Geingob's speech provides a window into the rest of the speech, that it is a speech of "the celebration of Namibia's 29th Independence Anniversary". This opening line is of paramount importance to the audience as it is capable of creating either a lasting impression about the speaker, as persuasion is accomplished by character whenever the speech is held in such a way as to render the speaker worthy of credence. If the speaker appears to be credible, the audience will form the second-order judgement that propositions put forward by the credible speaker are true or acceptable. Therefore, Aristotle calls character "the most authoritative" proof as the audience would trust a speaker's character than mere message in the speech. Among other types of political system such as autocratic, oligarchic, the last quarter of the twentieth century clearly witnessed important gains in the spread of democracy. In 1975, a year after the emergence of the third wave of democratization, the average rating for the roughly 150 countries that comprised the international system was 9.1. Twenty-five years later, after an additional forty-one countries had achieved independence, an improvement score of 7.0 represented a 23 percent gain in global democratic practices. Namibia attained independence on 21st of March 1990. This was done following the first democratic elections which took place in November 1989. Dr. Sam Shafiishuna Nujoma was the first President of Namibia, Nujoma held the office for fifteen years, from 1990- 2004. It is through Nujoma that the foundation of a democratic society in Namibia was laid. Nujoma's successor was President Hifikepunye Pohamba, who ruled Namibia for ten years between 2005 and 2015. Followed by the current President Hage Geingob whose tenure of office began on 21 March 2005. However, this paper focuses on Geingob's rhetorical presidency.

In addition to the enormous influence on the development of the art of rhetoric made by Aristotle who is regarded as the father of rhetoric, other important aspects of rhetoric were also given to the number of scholars. Malmkjaer (2002) writes that rhetoric originates from the theory of how best a speaker or writer can, by application of linguistic devices, achieve persuasion.

<sup>10</sup> Nichols, Mary P. (1987). Aristotle's Defense of Rhetoric. *Journal of Politics*, 49(3), 657–677.

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, (2007). *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by George Kennedy. New York: Oxford.

<sup>12</sup> Schraeder, P.J., ( 2002). *Exporting Democracy: Rhetoric Vs. Reality*. Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Moreover, Burke (1954) concurs with Aristotle in his definition of rhetoric, as the faculty of discovering the persuasive means of using language to produce an effect on the audience. From the argumentation, above, one could conclude that rhetoric is primarily concerned with persuasion, the ability of a speaker/writer to influence and persuade an audience.

The very initial lines which constitute the salutations of Dr. Hage Geingob's speech (President of the Republic of Namibia, on the occasion of the 29th Independence Day Celebration) are neither linguistically void nor a mere gesture to exhibit respect and conventionality in any formal speech. The salutations in sync with the rank and file (ethos) of former presidents of Namibia starting with the founding President Sam Nujoma whom he described as a father figure and a founding father of the nation, and then Hifikepunye Pohamba, is a conspicuous reflection of how Namibia has transformed itself as a modern constitutional democracy where leadership change and renewal shapes its post-independence politics. The deliberate acknowledgements of the two leaders by President Geingob as "former presidents of Namibia" is a reflection and reminder of how Namibian political leadership, particularly the SWAPO party has continuously regenerated itself into a modern party that values democratic principles and moves abreast with time through peaceful leadership transitions.

Furthermore, the salutations are inescapably reflective of the strong ties that Namibia has built with other African states as acknowledged by the presence of among others, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya. President Geingob made such reference to the presence of African leaders as a reflection of regional approval and acceptance of Namibia into the family of nations as well as the cooperative power and unity of purpose that Namibia has as signified by the political diversity that constituted the guests who were in attendance, particularly from the diplomatic corps, opposition political parties as well as the members of the third estate. This approach by President Geingob to insinuate his message to resonate and relate with the audiences in their multivariate differences is not only conspicuous in the salutation remarks of his speech, the exposition of the speech is richly saturate with passionately and well-crafted references of Namibia as "a Child of Pan African and International Solidarity." Such personification of Namibia as "a child" is solely

intended to unify and send home the idea of togetherness, mutual cooperation and integration at local, national, regional and international level.

### **Political Reminiscence and the Rhetoric of National Historicity**

In paragraph three of the speech, President Hage Geingob instills a reflective and reminiscent memory into his audience, in an obvious attempt to localise the audience to the occasion and purpose of the celebrations. For the essence of this call for national reminiscence Geingob asserts that:

There is an old African proverb that goes, “However far a stream flows, it never forgets its origin.” In essence, this proverb encapsulates the reason why we revere this historically special day in our nations’ calendar. Although the stream of independence has flowed for 29 years, we shall never forget its origin, we shall never forget our struggle and we shall never forget the sons and daughters that made our freedom a reality (Paragraph 3).

The rhetoric of Namibia’s national history here lays the foundation for the president to walk the audience down the historical lane through which he articulated the painful path that Namibia has walked from apartheid and colonialism right into the threshold of independence. This was especially designed to inculcate into the audience an emotional attachment with the past in order for them to appreciate the legacy of independence which came through ultimate sacrifices and blood of innocent and resilient Namibian veterans. Furthermore, Geingob recalled the event of Namibia’s Independence from apartheid and colonialism in 1989. The speech was informative in relaying and reminding the Namibian citizens who, perhaps, have forgotten the efforts of the founding fathers in the bid of ensuring Namibia’s political independence. In addition, the rhetoric of national history by Geingob was strategically placed to educate the younger generation of the commitment by Namibia’s foremost nationalist in the struggle for independence from colonial rule. The president extolled the virtues and unrelenting courage and determination “by selfless women and men, whose blood nourishes the roots of our tree of independence, yielding the fruits of self-determination, sovereignty, freedom, liberty and justice.”

<sup>13</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek

<sup>14</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek



Moreover, Geingob reminded Namibians the need to celebrate nationhood and that they must not only cling into the past, but they should rather take stock of the past, which will then help inform the future and look forward to opportunities that past experiences offer, and challenges that lie ahead for Namibia. This was alluded to in paragraph 8 as follows:

Fellow Namibians, Dear Friends, Anniversaries do not only offer us an opportunity to reflect on where we have come from. They also offer us an opportunity to take stock and reflect on where we are today and where we are heading in the years to come (Paragraph, 10).

Complementary to the above assertion, President Geingob's rhetoric on the 29th independence anniversary relies on collective memory and past achievements to appeal to the audience that his SWAPO party must be respected as the ideal political party to rule Namibia. The phrase "the past 29 years" is repeated multiple times in Geingob's speech to emphasise the enduring legacy of sacrifice and commitment by his SWAPO party towards the greater good of the Namibian people. The context in which this phrase is mentioned in the text refers to the historical epoch that the President would like his audiences to remember. Collective memory refers to past events that are likely to trigger or remind the audience of specific incidents in the past. Collective memory is thus a commonplace rhetoric that politicians use to stimulate the audience's consciousness to their message.

The rhetoric of collective memory has also been overly used by President Geingob to fraternise the Namibian historical and political narrative with the rest of African states in a bid to foster the feeling of regional and continental friendship, Pan-Africanism and African political consciousness. He states that:

At this event, I narrated the fact that Namibia's freedom was attained due to the Pan African bond we share with our brothers and sisters in Africa. When Namibians were victims of Apartheid aggression, the people of Africa stretched out the hand of solidarity. (Paragraph 6, line 4-9).

<sup>15</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek

<sup>16</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek

<sup>17</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek

...Namibia is a Child of Pan African and International Solidarity, midwifed by the United Nations.

The above lines in Geingob speech tells a story of a leader whose quest for enhanced unity transcends beyond national boundaries. These specific allusions to historical events of mutual collaboration against a common cause is no doubt a direct attempt to encourage and streamline a continued and mutual engagements, cooperation and collective responsibility amongst the African states both at regional and international level. In a way, Geingob is reiterating the importance and power of unity, and to drive home this objective, he gives moving examples of how Namibia is a beneficiary of such enormous investment in regional peace, security and development. A personified representation of Namibia as “a child of Pan African and International solidarity” is not only literarily rich but also filled with meaning that gives the audience a protracted moment of serious and reflective thought on the processes of attaining self-rule, the pain, trials and sacrifice that (just like giving birth and raising a child) those responsible for such bold executions and undertaking had to go through.

### **Rhetorical Devices as persuasive Strategies**

Repetition as a persuasive linguistic device is employed as rhetorical strategy for producing emphasis, clarity, amplification and emotional effect. The phrase “the past 29 years” appears in the speech 10 times. In all the contexts, “the past 29 years” emphasise the success of the Namibian government achieved in the past 29 years of ruling. The repetition of the phrase “the past 29 years” is deliberately used to produce a rhetorical effect. The readers would be persuaded to vote for SWAPO because of the constant reminder of the peace and tranquility, development and all the achievements that are constantly mentioned in the speech. “The past 29 years” does not only remind the readers of how good the past 29 years were but also serves as a reminder of how different circumstances were before independence. In a way Geingob used this phrase as campaign rhetoric for his presidency and for SWAPO party.

Elements of gratification are also observed in the speech when President Geingob asserted, “It is my honour to address you on this momentous day and in so doing, join you in celebrating our 29th Independence Anniversary.” Therefore the idea of the importance of the country’s

independence is highly commented on, flagging the importance of the independence celebration. On this note, President Geingob further asserted:

Although the stream of independence has flowed for 29 years, we shall never forget its origin. (paragraph 3, line 5-7)

...we shall never forget its origin, we shall never forget our struggle and we shall never forget the sons and daughters that made our freedom a reality (paragraph 3, line 6-8).

When we gathered in Windhoek, 29 years ago to witness the lowering of the Apartheid flag for the last time (paragraph 12).

As a nation, we have made significant strides over the past 29 years (paragraph 13).

...Namibia has undergone a tremendous transformation over the past 29 years (paragraph 20).

29 years ago, we witnessed the end of the nightmare of Apartheid (paragraph 45).

Happy 29th birthday Namibia! (paragraph 48).

President Geingob appeals to the readers' emotions with the repetitive emphasis

of "the past 29 years" by triggering the peace, stability and freedom enjoyed in the past 29 years but the number of years also takes the readers back to how the country was before independence, which convinces them to vote for the SWAPO party next time. When certain words or phrases are repeated various times, especially in Presidential rhetorical discourse, the readers and listeners get used to them and start to identify with them regardless of what they believed in the beginning.

18 Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.

19 Geingob, H. (2019). 29th Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.

In paragraph 42, President Geingob employed two synonyms, ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ where he says, “As we revel in the celebration of our freedom and independence ....” “Synonyms are words that are similar or have a related meaning to another word.” Geingob employed the synonyms to demonstrate prominence, the significance of these two words as well as the context in which they were used: “As we revel in the celebration of our freedom and independence, the fact that some of our citizens are bearing the heaviest brunt of the economic slowdown is not lost on government.” The words ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ denote to same or similar thing. In a way, these two similar words were deliberately employed to overstate the meaning carried by these words. One can argue that Geingob employed these words for the sole purpose of avoiding the repetition of the same word. By so doing, Geingob demonstrated verbal skills through using certain such words which would essentially make a difference by turning the audience to believe in a certain way, thereby appealing to the audience’s emotions.

### **Comparative language**

In order to amplify his point, President Geingob used politics of scales to juxtapose the new and the old, and Namibia and other countries. This strategy by Geingob would create a conducive premise for his audience to make detailed comparisons of different historical epochs as well as experiences with other countries. These comparisons are not necessary void but, are especially designed to tease the conscience of audiences to notice and appreciate the efforts of their political leadership in the face of simmering challenges. There are three distinct juxtapositions and comparative appeals in Geingob’s speech in his assertions below:

When we gathered in Windhoek, 29 years ago to witness the lowering of the Apartheid flag for the last time and the raising of our national flag for the first time, it marked the transition from old to new (paragraph 12).

<sup>20</sup> Silva Rhetoricae, (2016). *The Rhetoric of the Forest*. Utah: Brigham Young, University. Retrieved 18 November, 2017.

The struggle for political independence was won, but the struggle for economic independence had begun (paragraph 13, line 6).

Very few countries have been able to achieve poverty reduction rates like Namibia has achieved since Independence... (paragraph 22, line).

Arguably, it is a penchant of African political leaders to create allusions in their speeches which would help them to sway the focus of their audiences from things that matter. Aristotle called that politics of diversion. However, in the examples above, Geingob was not specifically diverting the attention of his audiences, he created political juxtapositions of the apartheid flag and the national flag to resurrect a national consciousness of the historical past whilst at the same time stimulating national pride of what the Namibian people have achieved. The episodes of the apartheid past, as herein reflected in Geingob's stern reference to the downing of the apartheid flag, are sufficient to invoke nostalgic memories of the painful experiences of the past. The two flags are herein juxtaposed to represent two different historical epochs in the political history of Namibia, with one representing past oppressions and travails whilst the other is an emblem of peace, national pride, hope and independence. Such comparative appeals are very powerful in trigger emotions of patriotism and empathy in the audience.

President Geingob, knowing very well of the common national anticipation and simmering hope for better economic fortunes, appeal to his audience emotions by juxtaposing political independence and economic independence. He advertently acknowledged that "the struggle for political independence was won, but the struggle for economic independence had begun" in order to neutralise and caution his government and his predecessors from the potential criticism that it has failed on the economic front. He therefore, inoculated his government and fellow comrades from the possibility of this outburst by heaping self-eulogies on the number of successes on the political front, and then finally acknowledged that the economic challenges that were facing Namibia were in fact a struggle that had just began.

<sup>21</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle. (1991). *Rhetoric: A theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by George Kennedy. New York: Oxford.

Insinuatingly, Geingob was in fact making an appeal that the struggle for economic independence, just like the struggle for political independence, demands a collective effort of all Namibians and obviously, a cooperation by other African states and the world at large.

Moreover, President Geingob, perhaps sensing the deficiencies of his convictions in convincing his audiences of the tremendous work that his government has done in emancipating Namibia from the manacles of poverty, he resorted to comparing Namibia to other African states in the fight against poverty. He categorically stated that, “Very few countries have been able to achieve poverty reduction rates like Namibia has achieved since Independence...” The statement is a conspicuous attempt to justify and vindicate his government of any possible counter accusations of incompetence and inaction in fighting poverty. He emphasised his assertion by a logical appeal to statistical data when he asserts that “In absolute terms, more than four hundred thousand Namibians were lifted out of poverty during the period from 1994-2010”.

This appeal is necessary at this juncture to diminish a dangerous assumption by Geingob’s audiences of his untamed ignorance to facts.

### **Public Deliberation of the Construction Namibia**

President Geingob made concerted efforts to pinpoint a set of achievements which the Namibian government had made possible during its tenure in office since independence. Among these attempts are his passionate reference to independence, democracy, justice and socio-economic development and nation building which the Namibian state had enjoyed over years. This, amongst others, is one instance of how Geingob employed social rhetoric, a “rhetoric of national pride, democracy and nation building” in order to persuade his audience. It is imperative to note that to Geingob, this is an important development which Namibian people must admire and respect as well as celebrate. The extract below from Geingob’s speech helps illuminate this observation.

<sup>23</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek, (paragraph 11, line 6)

<sup>24</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek. (paragraph 21, line 1)

This is a day we celebrate the rewards of the struggle, waged by selfless women and men, whose blood nourishes the roots of our tree of independence, yielding the fruits of self-determination, sovereignty, freedom, liberty and justice (paragraph 2, line 1-2).

By crediting self-determination, sovereignty, freedom and justice which the country had enjoyed for some time, President Geingob gave prominence and importance to political development as something which the Namibian people must consider important and cherish widely. Accordingly, President Geingob politely inferred that political independence and freedom constitute the cornerstone of socio-economic development. In this way, Geingob appealed to his audience to appreciate the prevailing peace, stability, freedom and justice as foundation which can assist in unlocking synergies and potential for both political and economic development of the nation. Accordingly, Geingob highlighted quite a number of what the Namibian government achieved for the sole purpose of supporting his insinuations as well as to persuade his audience. President Geingob uses the 29th anniversary independence speech to articulate government policies and to demonstrate that his government was fully aware of the problems disturbing the nation and to let their audience know that as the government they are putting in proper measures to mitigate such predicaments. The following assertion illuminates the above position:

Let me assure you that you are not alone, we understand your dilemma, we empathies with your predicament and we are working around the clock to ensure that we restore economic growth and job creation (paragraph 35).

Moreover, Zarefsky (2002, p. 20) asserts that “a presidency has always been a place for rhetorical leadership.” As a modern president, Geingob’s presidency was based on words; therefore, Geingob was obligated to support and defend national interests and sovereignty against special or personal interests. Geingob therefore, used the 29th independence anniversary event to exercise this power vested in him by the majority of the audience by reporting on the positive achievements that the Namibian government had made since independence. The following excerpts validate this stance:

<sup>25</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek, Para, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Salazar, Ph-J. (2002). *An African Athens: Rhetoric and the Shaping of Democracy in South Africa*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>27</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.

We have established the firm foundations of democracy, unity, peace and stability, and used them to develop a robust governance architecture, characterized by well-functioning processes, systems and institutions (paragraph 15).

Our track record in governance has been recognised both regionally and internationally... (paragraph 16, line 1).

We have made tremendous progress over the years with regards to fighting poverty (paragraph 20, line 4).

...government has invested heavily in infrastructure development and maintenance (paragraph 29, line 3).

The above excerpts show President Geingob's appeal to the ethos of his presidency in terms of socio-economic development and democracy, and was influenced by the desire and necessity to address socio-economic inequalities pertaining innumerable grievances as far as government policy and programs are concerned. These are praising values which give the speech more features of epideictic rhetoric as Aristotle (2007, p. 244) asserts that "in epideictic one should interweave the speech with praise." This reinforces Geingob's positive character and built his credibility as a president, as it conveyed respect and trustworthiness thereby appealing to the ethos of his presidency. It is imperative to note that his audience was swayed to believe that President Geingob had the ability and responsibility to take Namibia forward.

### **Collaborative Language**

President Geingob profusely used the pronouns 'we' and 'our' to refer to the Namibian governance and in some cases Namibia as a country. The pronouns 'we' and 'our' are further used in his speech to create a feeling of togetherness and unity with the audience.

<sup>28</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek, Para, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Zarefsky, D. (2002). *The Presidency Has Always Been A Place for Rhetorical Leadership*. In L. G. Dorsey (Ed.), *The Presidency and Rhetorical Leadership* (pp. 20-41). College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press.

<sup>30</sup> Geingob, H. (2019). 29<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary Address by his Excellency President Geingob Hage: Windhoek.



There is a persistent use of the pronoun “us” as an indication of inclusiveness. In other words, the speaker does not want the audience to feel that they are being excluded from this important achievement. President Geingob’s speech cleverly creates a sense of belonging to the activities of the country, by all Namibians. This point puts him in good standing since everyone is involved in the task of rebuilding the nation. In addition, the opening statement can be interpreted as showing that President Geingob is not selfish, arrogant or boastful. The fact that President Geingob says he is “honored” also creates the impression that he is no more important than other Namibians. This is a very effective rhetorical technique used to appeal to the audiences’ support and to make the speaker more acceptable to them.

Additionally, there are references to the pronouns “our” and “we” in President Geingob’s speech, for instance, as used in the phrases and statements “.....we celebrate the rewards of the struggle...”, “we the people have remained faithful...”, “we shall never forget our struggle...”, “we have a very special friend in our midst ...”, “When we gathered in Windhoek ...” and “We remain steadfast and resolute in the pursuit of our ultimate objectives....” indicate a very strong sense of unity and shared responsibility which Geingob and his fellow Namibians intend to display for the betterment of their country. The use of collaborative language keeps reminding the audience that the Namibian government is ruling because it agrees with the nation’s needs. Therefore, Geingob used togetherness and unity to trigger the voters’ emotions of peace because when the audience feels they are included in how their country is run, they will be persuaded to repeatedly vote for that particular party.

## Conclusion

This paper is a concerted analysis of President Hage Geingob's 29th Independence Anniversary speech. Geingob employed rhetorical and metaphorical devices to spruce up his speech and capture the logico-emotional temperament and sensibilities of his audience. These devices have great effect in persuading the mind of the audience, covering and softening truths and befogging the thoughts. This paper concludes that Geingob's speech involves the speaker's praising or blaming in regard to existing qualities, but also reminding the audience of the past and projecting the course of the future therefore it is, with no reasonable doubt qualifies as an epideictic rhetoric. Also, among others, Geingob's generous use of pronouns and lexical dexterity and choice of words were especially and carefully adopted as linguistic tools to persuade the audiences' perceptions and interpretations of, first the speech itself and the message conveyed. Finally, the paper concludes that spoken language is one of the primary mode of communication in the gentle arts of persuasion and impression management skills.

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