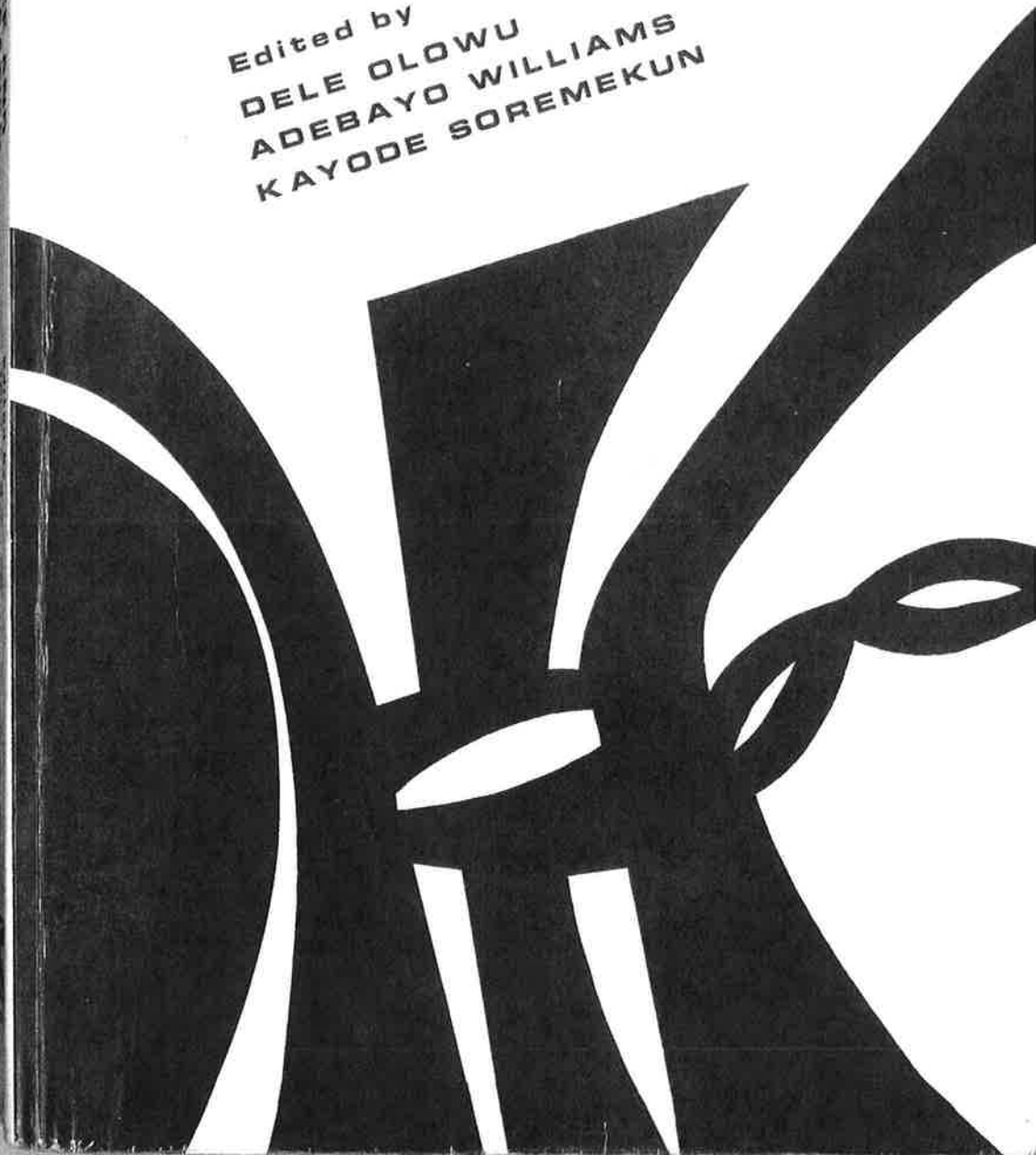


**GOVERNANCE AND
DEMOCRATISATION
IN WEST AFRICA**

Edited by
**DELE OLOWU
ADEBAYO WILLIAMS
KAYODE SOREMEKUN**



Governance and Democratisation in West Africa

Edited by
Dele Olowu, Adebayo Williams and
Kayode Soremekun

Mica
Olowu

COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
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Contents

Dedication	v
Notes on Contributors	ix
Chapter 1	
Introduction	1
Chapter 2	
Rethinking the Study of African Politics	11
Goran Hyden	
Chapter 3	
Local Governance and Social Capital in Africa: The Nigerian Case	29
Akin Mabogunje	
Chapter 4	
The Challenge of Governing Africa's Large Cities	41
Dele Olowu	
Chapter 5	
Literature in the Time of Tyranny: African Writers and the	61
Crisis of Governance and Democratisation	
Adebayo Williams	
Chapter 6	
The International Dimensions of the Democratic	83
Ferment in Nigeria	
Kayode Soremekun	
Chapter 7	
Universities and the Governance Crisis in Nigeria	101
John Erero	
Chapter 8	
Ethnic Minorities and the Crisis of Democratic	117
Governance in Nigeria	
Rotimi Suberu	
Chapter 9	
Local Government and the Babangida Transition Programme	141
Francis Chigbo Enemuo	

Chapter 10	
Local Government Finance and Accountability: A Case Study of Selected Local Governments in Nigeria Silvanus Ikhide	165
Chapter 11	
Military Language and Democratisation in Nigeria Oluwaseyi Ojo	193
Chapter 12	
Law and Justice on Gwoza Hills: An Assessment of the Viability of Informal Justice for Good Governance and Democracy in Nigeria Abdul-Mumin Sa'ad	217
Chapter 13	
The Media and Democratisation in Nigeria (1984-1996) Tale Omole and Ayo Olukotun	239
Chapter 14	
On Democratic Renewal in Francophone West Africa Emeka Nwokedi	265
Chapter 15	
Paradise Lost and Regained? The Travails of Democracy in Sierra Leone Amadu Sesay	287
Chapter 16	
The Transition from Military Rule to Constitutional Government and the Consolidation of Democratic Governance in Ghana Joseph R.A. Ayee	319
Chapter 17	
The Military and Democracy in The Gambia Ebenezer Obadare	341
References	359

Chapter 11

Military Language and Democratisation in Nigeria

Oluwaseyi Ojo

Introduction

As often as Nigeria has made attempts at initiating democratic governance, there have been miscarriages and abortion of these efforts. One constant reaction to these abortions is a spate of apologies and prescriptions from scholars of politics in particular and social scientists in general. Reasons varying from the flaws in the structuring of government (Dalpino 1991; Olowu 1992) through the structuring of society to resource management within the society (Inanga 1991; Diamond 1991a, 1991b) have been proffered. On the basis of these analyses, prescriptions have been offered as to how to correct these shortcomings.

However, in spite of these pontifications, democratic governance has eluded Nigerian society. In fact, successive attempts have failed, each more woefully than its predecessor. This continuous spate of failures compels one to think that perhaps the recurrent failure is linked to factors other than those identified by scholars of social sciences, and probably not as visible as policies, structures, constitutions and resource management.

If one follows this line of reasoning, it becomes easy to identify the one feature that continues to recur in the failure of democratic governance programmes. This is military dictatorship. The constancy of military dictatorship in Nigeria is equalled only by the regularity of the failure of the various democratisation programmes. It is therefore necessary that a closer look be taken at the military institution and its relationship with the democratic process in Nigeria.

Because in Nigeria the incumbent rulers have always been the military, we are compelled to believe that the failure of each experiment has

something to do with the military, not their institutions, or their policies but something more fundamental.

One suspect area, to my mind, is the influence of military language or register on the interpretation of the ideals of democracy towards which they intend to steer society. In interpreting the values of the ideal which is stored in language, it is our belief that the military rulers' interpretation, as the guardians of the transition programmes, is often influenced and modified by their own register. Thus, the value they set as the target or goal is often different from the value originally encoded in the ideal. If the target value itself is different from the ideal, it follows logically that the reality becomes much more different from the ideal. The result is that what is installed and entrenched in the guise of democracy is never really democracy: hence its constant failure each time it is put to test. Thus, even though the political system installed by the military continues to use the same labels as those of democratic ideals, the norms and values attached to these labels have been altered semantically and imposed on the citizenry over years of military dictatorship so that a new semantic norm of political ideals, and, by implication has a new set of correlating political behaviour, has emerged.

In our view, the use of language by the military, which includes both instructive and interpretative levels, has become a vehicle for altering and modifying semantically the basic concepts and ideals of democracy, either consciously or unconsciously. Nevertheless, the result is the same. Through its manipulation of language, the military ends up creating a new politico-semantic norm for the democratic ideal such that the outcome of democratic transitions ends up not being democracy.

Based on the foregoing logic, this work proposes to account for the failures of our democratic experiments with the manipulation of language and subsequent reconceptualisation of democratic language by the military dictatorship preceding each experiment. What is installed usually will therefore only be democracy as conceptualised by the military and handed down to civil society, but definitely not in consonance with the universal conceptualisation of democratic ideals.

Second, is the quality of meaningfulness. A language must be meaningful in order to carry out its role as a vehicle of communication (Christopherson 1972; Yule 1985). In order for a language to be able to store societal values, the various items of the language must have meaning. It is on the basis of the meaningfulness of language that it is able to func-

tion as a store of value. Also, language is dynamic (Yule 1985), that is, susceptible to changes. By implication, meanings, societal values and norms are compelled to change as language itself changes. Finally, language is conventional (Christopherson 1972; Yule 1985). The meaning ascribed to items of a language and the attendant values stored within a language in a society are arrived at through convention — a tacit unwritten agreement among the users of the language. To arrive at the values, a meaning must first be conventionally agreed upon. It is only after this that a value is attached to the language item.

The values stored in a language become the corner-stone of societal norms. A change in language use and meaning can trigger a change in societal behaviour; thus creating a new norm and consequently establishing a new set of societal values to be stored in the language. Although the reverse can also easily occur, concern in the present work is with the former.

This chapter intends to examine one such situation in which change in language use and meaning has orchestrated a change in societal norms and consequently a modification of the values stored in the language. The contention is that the use of language by the Nigerian military administration by virtue of changes enforced on it semantically, under the influence of military register, has created a new set of political norms within the society. In effect, the political values stored in the language have become modified and, necessarily, people's reaction to and appreciation of these terms have also become changed. The present work intends, therefore, to show how the persistence of military governments has, through the influence of language-use, modified the political norms of the society negatively, in terms of democratic ideals and also to highlight the implication of the new political-semantic norm for the avowed desired goal of democratic governance.

Military Dictatorship in Nigeria: Antecedents and Peculiarities

What evolved into the Nigerian Army was essentially a gathering of the less prestigious, less reputable and the less privileged enlisted from the more backward parts of the country (Miner 1971). Their role was essentially not to defend the inhabitants against foreign attack but to assist foreigners in conquering the country. As Miner (1971) puts it, they were certainly not a national army and played no part in the struggle for independence.

By implication therefore the antecedent of today's military ruling class was essentially an army of occupation made up of the less enlightened and less prestigious members of society, particularly the backward parts of the society. Little wonder that the military ruling class continues to radiate a bankruptcy of ideas and an insatiable lust for power, force and various shades of corruption.

Starting from Nzeogwu's intervention in 1966 to the coup that installed the current ruling junta, and in spite of several reasons proffered for these interventions, the one constant feature is the entrenchment of non-democratic governance and an uncanny display of idealistic bankruptcy.

Apart from the features highlighted above which should be expected considering their antecedents, one other peculiarity of military dictatorship in Nigeria which is less noticeable is the use of language and its impact. Although it is obvious that military dictatorships use peculiar language in administration, what is not so obvious is the effect of such language use. This chapter illustrates this peculiar language use and also shows its impact on other spheres of societal life. Before doing this however, we will effect an explicit focus on democracy, a theme that runs through the entire book.

The Concept of Democracy

In spite of conceptual conflicts, there appears to be a theoretical consensus among scholars on the tenets of democracy: viz, meaningful competition among individuals and organised groups for resources and positions in society, abhorrence of the use of force, a high level of political participation; civil and political liberties, and a host of others (Dahl 1971; Sartori 1987; Diamond 1988).

But these tenets cannot really offer us a definition of democracy mainly because their interpretation is subject to individual subjectivity and preferences and also because what they offer are essentially ideals which are not achievable. How then do we define democracy? We suggest a blend of the two approaches towards its definition available in the literature. While the first approach is positively definitive by delineating clearly what democracy is or should be (Diamond 1988) the second approach employs what is called 'definition a-contrario' as espoused in the work of Sartori (1987). This approach highlights what democracy is not.

A blend of the two approaches is desirable because, while the former provides ideals towards which proponents of democracy must aspire, the latter provides ideals from which willing democrats must steer away. Democracy and indeed all other political systems should be seen on a cline with the ideal at the top of the cline and the identified greatest variation from the ideal at the bottom of the cline. We can therefore adopt a working definition of democracy as a political system that is guided by a set of ideals towards achieving the conditions of its own ideal.

Democratic Governance, Democratic Ideals and Language Use

The keynote of this chapter is that language use has a contribution to make towards the attainment of a democratic political system. Our concern here is to map out the boundaries of this relationship. One of the cardinal characteristics of language is that it is a store of value. Ideals of any political system are therefore values that are stored in language. The interpretation of these values thus becomes crucial to the establishment of any political system. Just as ideals are expected to reflect on reality, whatever interpretation is given to the ideal values will also reflect on the kind of reality established. Essentially therefore, whatever meanings we attach to the wording of the ideal will necessarily dictate the nature of the institutions represented by the concepts such wordings signify.

Sartori (1987) apparently concurs with this viewpoint when he says: 'The quite essential point is that the difficult and precarious linkage between the outer world (reality) and the world inside our heads (ideals) stands and falls on one element. Its words and wordings'. He goes further to warn that '...if there is a sure way of distorting and indeed destroying, the process that somehow brings the outer world to our minds (and vice-versa) this sure way is to destabilise the vocabulary, to play or cheat with words'.

In view of the argument running through this work, we can easily see the linkage between democratic ideals on the one hand, and the role of the military in Nigeria as mediants and the reality they have entrenched each time on the other hand. Clearly, there is some kind of flaw in their interpretation of the ideal values of democracy which guarantees failure each time they attempt to put it in place. It is therefore to this level of language use that we must turn to seek for explanation (Constant 1985).

Stages in the Development of Military Induced Politico-Semantic Norm

The phenomenon under investigation in this study did not develop overnight. Rather it was developed over three stages of language use which we have termed as Military Politicalse, Diplomatese and Military Legalse. Ironically, each of the stages reflects a point of contact between military and some registers of civil society.

What we intend to do in this section is to examine the linguistic features of each of these stages. Because military register stands out as the starting point, we shall also examine its linguistic peculiarities in Nigeria.

Linguistic Features of Military Register

Militarese here refers to the register of the military as a professional group in contra-distinction to the language use of other professional groups. In linguistic studies, register is usually analysed on four basic levels: syntax, lexis, semantics and discourse. We shall attempt to analyse Nigerian *Militarese* along these levels.

Syntax

This is the level at which the peculiarity of Nigerian *militarese* is most distinctly reflected. It reflects a preponderance of the imperative command sentence type which is demonstrated by the following features:

- Use of compulsive modals and adverbials e.g:
 1. Platoon 4 must be across the river by D. moment;
 2. All orders must be obeyed;
 3. All drills must stop immediately;
 4. Parade starts with immediate effect.
- Absence of Features such as Politeness and Request
Militarese usually lacks the standard features of politeness like do, please, request etc. We therefore have sentences like:
 5. All soldiers are to converge by noon.
 6. You are to come with me.

Other structural features of *militarese* include what Eschnolz et al (1982) refer to as use of 'verbal false limbs'. As such, tools and equipment are rendered 'inoperative' instead of damaged, events and actions 'militate

against' instead of stopping. Short, staccato syntactic formations are also common in militarese as illustrated by the following:

7. Parade drills, 4.00 p.m.;
8. Platoon 6, guard duty;
9. 27th August, Wasa.

At the level of morphology, that is, word structuring and formation, the following peculiarities are noticed in militarese:

Acronyms: e.g. R.V. for Rendezvous, WEF for with immediate effect.

Shortening: e.g. Sit. rep for situation report, Reccee for reconnaissance.

Lexico-Semantic Features

These are features that reflect peculiarities at the levels of words and meaning. The two have been linked here because of the dependent relationship between them. This is a regular trend in linguistic studies.

(a) Jargon

Militarese is replete with jargons although several of them become functional only after a subjection to the semantic processes of transfer and relexicalisation e.g:

- Jargons subjected to semantic transfer
 - i. Cow: A colleague that can be controlled or ordered about.
 - ii. Clown: Somebody junior to ego.
 - iii. Job: Act of sexual intercourse.
 - iv. Crab: Incompetent and slow subordinate.
 - v. Shit: An inferior colleague.
- Jargon subjected to re-lexicalisation e.g:
 - i. Rating: Non-officers in the Navy.
 - ii. Bagger: Used generally to refer to juniors and colleagues alike to indicate either superiority of opinion or rank respectively.
 - iii. Jaji Rifle: Cheap-to-woo girls with whom officers relate while on course in military school in Jaji.

(b) Inter-lingual borrowing and re-lexicalisation e.g:

1. Wasa: Borrowed from Hausa in which it means play. In militarese, it refers to the official social gathering observed annually.
2. Shai: Also borrowed from Hausa where it means tea. In militarese it refers to the concept of Godfatherism or protection

(c) Lexical creation e.g:

1. Kabiko: Ladies
2. Titikaka: party
3. Paruf: Physical punishment
4. Semankwe: Ladies, usually of easy virtue.

• Discoursal features

At this level, the processes of conceptual transfer and reformation are employed from one field to the other. In militarese, the transferred concepts are usually military in source e.g:

1. Salvo: Sexual intercourse;
2. Jammed-round: A clash of two girl friends;
3. Welfare: Gifts and gratifications.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the language of the military in Nigeria as used within their various units has features that clearly differentiates it from other registers.

Military Politicalese

This is the starting point in the process leading to the formation of a new politico-semantic norm. A lot of the features of militarese are transferred to political administration. This is not unrelated to the military's belief in the use of order and force. At this stage, military regimes merely transfer the structure of their parade language to political administration. Unfortunately, civil society is compelled to accept this because of the threat of force. The linguistic features of language use at this stage are given below:

• Imperative structures e.g:

1. As from now, General Yakubu Gowon ceases to be...
2. The Nigerian Armed forces have decided to...
3. A dusk to dawn curfew is hereby imposed.

In addition, features of politeness are usually lacking and also a significant use of adverbials of order is noticed e.g. *With immediate effect, henceforth, immediately*. Also noticeable is the use of words which in addition to reflecting order also run counter to constitutionalism e.g: abrogate(d), suspend, terminate, dissolve etc.

The point to note about this stage is that the psyche of the citizenry has been conditioned to the order-obey stimulus-response mode so that succeeding manipulation is scarcely opposed.

Diplomatese

At this stage, political devices are employed to consolidate and sell acceptance for what has been ordered earlier. Linguistic features of language use of this stage are:

- Syntax

- (a) Elimination of simple verbs e.g:

- Render inoperative: stop;
- Militate against: debar;
- Give rise to: develop;
- Take effect: start;
- Serve the purpose of: used.

This is a device of propaganda which carries an element of the dramatic and ensures the build-up of climax in oratorical delivery.

- (b) Replacement of simple conjunctions and prepositions by phrases e.g: In view of; in the interest of; greatly to be desired; on the hypothesis that.

- (c) Use of resounding and common phrase adverbials e.g: Greatly to be desired; cannot be left out of account; a development to be expected in the near future; deserving serious consideration, etc...

- Lexico-semantic features

- (a) Pretentious diction: This is used to dress up simple statements and to give an air of impartiality to biased judgements e.g: objective, effective, basic, promote, utilise, eliminate, exhibit.
- (b) Misplaced technical jargon e.g: maximise output, terminal objectives, programmed scenario.
- (c) Neologisms e.g: optimised, federalised, randomised.

- Discoursal features

(a) Euphemisms/Palliative phrases — This is a device also used for the purpose of evasion. For example, while addressing the nation on the cancellation of the political parties formed by the people, Babangida said: '...granted, the guidelines required hard work and seriousness before they could be satisfied...'. Events have shown that to be a palliative form for saying *unattainable*.

Other examples from his various addresses include: '... I made it very clear the kind of political system we intended to bequeath in our people...'. This of course means *impose*.

Also while addressing newly graduating officers in Kuru in 1990, their criminal connivance as elites became a 'cultural dilemma' and the lapses and errors of his own government are not to be condemned but 'critiqued'.

In the same vein, massive armed repression of peaceful demonstrations and protests were carried out to enable him achieve a desired terminal objective. Several instances of this feature abound in the various addresses of the two military leaders that prosecuted transition to civil rule programmes in Nigeria.

(b) Use of stock phrases: Every group of privileged appointees with unchecked power becomes a 'task force', every issue involving rising public interest is 'referred through proper channels' and will always 'await report and recommendations of a panel'. We are always confronted with the need to 'conform with acceptable norms', we require parameters to evaluate 'policies', variables, inputs and outputs are always needed to meet 'challenges'.

(c) Propaganda: Perhaps the most important discoursal feature of diplomatese is propaganda. Literally, this means using language to brainwash the citizens. There are two types. The first type which carries a negative connotation is called name-calling and is usually reserved for opponents of the government. The second type is what Cross (1982) labels *Argumentatum-Ad-Populism*. This has positive connotations and is reserved for supporters of the government. These features also demonstrate the mastery of military rulers in the art of evasion and deception. More significantly, because of the conditioning imposed during the first stage ('Military Politicalse') by the virtue of the underlying threat of force, the populace, willingly sometimes and out of compulsion at other times, buys the deception so propagated. This deception is then

legalised through the use of decrees.

Military Legalese

This is the final stage in the creation of the new politico-semantic norm. Based on the conditioning of the first stage and the deceptive propaganda of the second stage, the third stage ensures adherence by the promulgation of decrees and edicts to legally enforce the deception of stages one and two. The hallmark of this stage is the proliferation of decrees to back up whatever propaganda has been dished out.

Thus, while the language features of stage two ('Diplomatese') still persist, there are always anecdotes in the form of decrees which thus add a tinge of legalese to the language. It must be noted that these legal additions are usually outside the existing constitutional injunction. Indeed, they usually countermand the dictates of the constitution.

Relative to the present work, our submission is that key concepts of democracy, having been processed through these three stages end up meaning something else and eliciting different responses as conditioned by the dictates of the ruling military junta. At the end therefore, what is presented can never be democracy but something else. This is the position to be tested and validated in the next section of this work.

Data Findings and Discussion

The data findings analysed here were collected from questionnaires administered to 2,500 respondents in five different states: Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ogun and Kwara States. Although these states might reflect some kind of ethnic sectionalism, efforts were made to counter-balance this by administering questionnaires to several people who were from other parts of the country although resident in the mentioned states. The choice of these states was influenced basically by their proximity to the base of the researcher. The respondents belong to three broad groups viz: politicians, non-politicians and military men. This was done to give more spread to the responses to be collected. Also, it allowed the coverage of the three segments of society which are involved in the making of, and affected by, the political decisions within society.

As earlier explained the goal was to find out how far away or how close the various concepts are to the ideal in the people's perception and

subsequently to argue that the people's perception of these concepts colour their reaction to them.

The method employed in the comparison of the people's closeness to the ideal involves the use of a linguistic method of analysing meaning-componential analysis. What it does essentially is to break down the meaning of an item into components such that it becomes possible to see the meaning of an item as a combination of many components. The great advantage of this system is that it makes provision for semantic comparison on a near-quantitative scale. In the present work, what was done was to allocate marks for each component. Those components from the subjects' responses that tally with those of the democratic ideal were awarded positive marks while those components that differed or contradicted those of the ideal were awarded marks negatively. At the end, the score for each lexical item by each respondent was calculated and based on that of the ideal which is scored 100 per cent. The total calculated score for each item therefore forms the percentage score for such an item relative to the ideal.

Table 1: Average Score for Individual Concepts (Politicians, 1979-1983)

Concept	Percentage Score
Presidency	40
Judiciary	28
Party	60
Election	70
Voting	38
Justice	40
Mandate	40
Constitution	50
Legislature	74
Appropriation	40
Freedom	45
Government	40
Law	18.23
Democracy	50

Note: This table was arrived at by totalling the percentage scores of all respondents for each concept and then dividing by the total number of respondents.

The items selected for evaluation through the questionnaire reflect the key concepts of a democratic system of governance and whatever interpretation is given to these concepts has a lot of influence on the type of democratic governance installed in the society. Given below are the responses reflecting significant differences based on all the variables in tabulated form.

From the presentation above, we notice that the score for the individual concepts among respondents who are politicians range from 18 per cent for Law to 74 per cent for Legislature. The implication of this is that the perception of even members of the same group is not uniform for all the concepts of democracy. It is therefore possible to find a particular concept and the corresponding political institution it represents functioning very closely to the ideal while others might be very far away from the ideal.

Table 2: Average Score for Individual Concepts (Politicians, 1989-1993)

Concept	Percentage Score
Presidency	40
Judiciary	25
Party	10
Election	40
Voting	34
Justice	20
Mandate	0
Constitution	35
Legislature	80
Appropriation	30
Freedom	35
Government	30
Law	13
Democracy	15

Note: The method of deriving this table is the same as Table 1 above.

As shown in table 2, the score differential ranging between 0 per cent for Mandate to 80 per cent for Legislature again buttresses the possibility for sectional implementation.

However, it is of more significance to compare the average scores for each item between the two periods. We notice that the scores for the 1983 period were higher overall than these for the 1993 period, although there are some instances in which the scores tally and once when the 1983 score was higher than the 1993 score. One might then submit that the political programme of the 1979-83 era was much closer to the 1989-93 era. While this perception might be informed by the reality on the ground, it is also possible that the outright failure of the 1993 experience might be a factor.

Table 3: Average Score for Individual Concepts, (Non-politicians, 1979-1983)

Concept	Percentage Score
Presidency	35
Judiciary	22
Party	40
Election	51
Voting	30
Justice	40
Mandate	20
Constitution	30
Legislature	67
Appropriation	15
Freedom	30
Government	15
Law	10
Democracy	15

As reflected in table 3, there is again a score differential ranging from 10 per cent for Law to 67 per cent for Legislature. It would seem that the legislature in the perception of politicians and non-politicians alike seems to be quite close to the ideal.

It is quite significant however to note the difference in the rating of these concepts between politicians and non-politicians. The average scores given to each of the concepts in almost all cases by non-politicians were lower than these by the politicians for the same period, i.e., 1983. The only exception is the concept of justice where the scores tally. The reason for this might be that the non-politicians are more objective in their as-

assessment as they had little part to play in government, unlike politicians who themselves were part of government.

Table 4: Average Score for Individual Concepts (Non-politicians, 1988-1993)

Concept	Percentage Score
Presidency	30
Judiciary	20
Party	9
Election	12
Voting	28
Justice	10
Mandate	0
Constitution	17
Legislature	61
Appropriation	15
Freedom	25
Government	15
Law	12
Democracy	10

There is again a significant difference in the average score for individual items between the two subject group types. The reason might also be the same as the reason suggested for the occurrence of the same phenomena in Table 3.

As it happened with all the other groups, there is a score differential amongst the individual concepts. In this case, the score has a range between 10 per cent and 80 per cent. The significance of this appears to be the same as observed earlier on in section Table 1.

We again notice the differential in the score of individual concepts which is most likely to be explained by the same reason given in Table 5.

Table 5: Average Score for Individual Concepts (Military Respondents, 1983)

Concept	Percentage Score
Presidency	50
Judiciary	25
Party	50
Election	80
Voting	34
Justice	40
Mandate	23
Constitution	22
Legislature	60
Appropriation	20
Freedom	45
Government	20
Law	18
Democracy	10

However, we also noticed that the average scores for individual concepts among military respondents do not reflect the same pattern between the two time periods as was reflected among other groups. With the other two groups, the scores for the 1983 period were usually higher than those for the 1993 period. Among military respondents, the relationship is not one-sided. Although there are instances in which the 1983 score is higher than the 1993 score, there are several other instances in which the reverse is the case. This is probably because there was a wider spread of military involvement in the 1988-93 transition programme.

Table 6: Average Score for Individual Concepts, Military Respondents (1988-93)

Concept	Percentage Score
Presidency	50
Judiciary	30
Party	30
Election	50
Voting	40
Justice	30
Mandate	0.2

Constitution	50
Legislature	60
Appropriation	30
Freedom	60
Government	30
Law	20
Democracy	50

Table 7: Comparative Overall Average for Individual Concepts (1978-83/1988-93 - %)

Concept	1978-1983	1988-1993
Presidency	41.6	40
Judiciary	25	25
Party	50	16.5
Election	67	34
Voting	34	34
Justice	40	20
Mandate	31	0
Constitution	34	34
Legislature	67	67
Appropriation	25	25
Freedom	46	46
Government	25	25
Law	17.24	15
Democracy	25	25

From the table, it is clear that people's perception of these concepts for the 1978-83 period is closer to the ideal than that for the 1988-93 period. This might imply that what was installed in 1979 was closer to the ideal than that which was intended for 1993. This perhaps is one of the reasons why the 1993 experiment ended up as a total disaster.

Table 8: Comparative Overall Average for Subject Group Types (1979-1983, 1988-1993)

Group type	Period	
	1979-83	1988-93
Military	35.40%	37.89%
Politicians	46.08%	29.07%
Non-Politicians	30.00%	18.85%

As indicated in the table above, the highest average score of 46.08 per cent was recorded by respondents who were politicians for the period 1979-83. This is probably because as a group, they were privileged to function in that political dispensation for some time. Conversely, the lowest average score of 18.85 per cent was recorded for the group of respondents who were non-politicians. This might be a reflection of their non-involvement in the whole exercise.

Comparatively, respondents rating of the concepts for the 1978-83 period are higher than for the 1988-93 period except in the case of respondents who are military officers.

Table 9: Comparative Overall Average Scores (1979-1983, 1988-1993)

Period	% Score
1979-1983	37.14
1988-1993	28.65

The overall average score for 1979-83 is significantly higher than that of the period 1988-93. This might be a reflection of the intention of the incumbent pre-political dispensation that midwived each of them. In reality, the 1979-83 experiment was conclusive although it lasted for only a short while whereas the 1988-1993 experiment was aborted before its conclusion.

One thing however stands out clearly from the findings above: Generally, the key concepts of democracy as installed in Nigeria during the last two transitions to democratic programmes fall far short of the democratic ideal. By implication therefore, what was installed in the name of democracy is derived from a norm that is by far short of the ideal. What was installed rates on the average at its highest point 37.14 per cent when juxtaposed with the ideal. At its lowest point, it rates only 28.65 per cent

of the ideal. As we argued earlier on, although the ideal by its very nature might not be achievable, it is supposed to serve as a guideline, a kind of beacon for reality, such that the closer to the ideal one gets, the better.

The findings above have therefore shown that our conceptualisation of key concepts of democracy under the guidance of military leadership is so far from the norm of the ideal as to qualify as a different and separate norm on its own. It is therefore not surprising that each time this non-democratic norm is employed in the installation of a so-called democratic system of governance, it simply collapses.

Our argument in this chapter is that the creation of this norm is a by-product of military dictatorships which as self-imposed custodians and interpreters of the values set in the norm of democratic ideal have brought in their own language use (*militarese*) to condition their interpretation of the ideal. What we then have is a mixture of two political systems that are by their very nature mutually exclusive of each other: a military dictatorship and democratic governance.

Considering that the military have usurped the role of custodian and interpreter of the value of ideal democracy for 25 out of a total of 35 years (1996-2021) of our independence, there should be little wonder at the all-pervading stature of this warped democratic norm induced by their rulership. What then is the implication of this finding for the democratic process in Nigeria and what conclusions can we draw from our findings? We shall examine these in the final sub-section of this chapter.

Towards a Language of Democratic Governance

The preceding sections contain an analysis of the structure of the language of a non-democratic system of government. A point that needs to be stressed is that each register aids the entrenchment of a particular kind of system or profession. *Militarese* for instance assists in entrenching the autocratic nature of the military and is, in fact, a tool for doing this.

On the basis of the above view, it is logical to argue that a register of democratic governance will enhance the entrenchment of a democratic system of governance. We therefore propose that there is a need to consciously develop and inculcate a language that reflects democratic ideals in the psyche of the citizenry as a shield against the currently all-pervading *militarese*.

Going by the general definition of register as language according to use (Brook 1979), we propose a working definition of democratese as the ideal linguistic extractions, a particular variety of language, the use of which every genuine democrat must aspire to. It is like a set of ideals which assist the entrenchment of a democratic system of existence from the level of language. The implication is that the closer one gets to this variety in our language use, the closer we are to being genuine democrats.

Although several works exist in the literature on registers (e.g. Brook 1979; Charrow and Charrow 1982; Ojo 1992) nobody that this writer knows of has ventured into the classification of democratese. What we intend to do here therefore amounts to a tentative exploration of the field. This is accounted for by the prescriptive nature of our proposal instead of the usual descriptive nature of register studies. At the end, we hope to prescribe linguistic features that will correlate with the components of democratic ideal. In essence, therefore, this prescription will naturally be theoretical and abstract. At the end of the day however, it would serve its purpose of functioning as a guideline for the attainment of democracy at the level of language. Given below therefore are the set of linguistic features expected to be found in democratese.

Syntax and Morphology

'Extensive competition' which signifies some kind of equality is one of the key features of democracy. A system that recognises this feature should therefore avoid using language that is replete with imperative sentences. Rather, it should have an abundance of declarative sentence types. In addition, the sentences should be compound or complex in nature to allow for reference to the constitutional source; for example, by taking cognisance of diversity, multi-culturalism and individuality.

The language of the system should also not seek to coerce. It should therefore have indices of politeness and persuasion in recognition of the equality between addresser and addressee. It should therefore avoid short staccato sentences which smack of militarese, e.g. 'Everybody here at 4.00 p.m.' could be framed as 'we are all expected here by 4.00 p.m.'

Democratese should also have limited emphatic use of the personalised pronoun *I*. This goes against the quality of equal participation in democracy. A leader in a democratic system of governance should always refer to his source of authority when he uses such a pronoun, e.g. 'By the powers conferred on me, I have...', 'As the president of Nigeria, I have...'.

Equality and liberty suggest joint or at least representative participation in decision making. Thus, orders as reflected by the excessive use of compulsive modals and adverbials should be an anathema to democratese.

Equality as one of the cardinal tenets of democracy should also be reflected at the level of morphology in democratese. This is to ensure that words that are formed do not leave room for differing interpretations which will of course deter equality. There should thus be limited use of acronyms, clipping and shortening.

Lexico-Semantic Features

The use of jargon increases the possibility of subjective interpretation. Jargon is by nature usually subjected to semantic transfer and relexicalisation for meaning. The ensuing subjectivity in interpretation will normally erode the basis for equality. It should therefore be sparingly used in the register of a democratic system.

The notions of equality and liberty naturally subsume politeness in inter-personal relations. Democratese should therefore choose lexical items that reflect politeness. Words like 'banned' and 'proscribed' could be replaced with 'illegal' to reflect this. Conversely, lexical items which contradict the notion of civil and political liberties should be excluded from democratese.

Finally, democratese, in consonance with the notions of explicitness and universality in interpretation should be wary of lexico-semantic manoeuvres like inter-lingual borrowing, lexical creation, and general flippancy in language use.

Discourse

Democratese should display a discourse that is simple, straight-forward and explicit. This conforms with the goal of total comprehension by the populace and suggests the avoidance of the use of jargons and palliatives as these eliminate explicitness and erode the basis of equality in the sharing of responsibility.

Finally, democratese discourse should avoid language devices such as propaganda which suggests a mischievous way of eroding the basis for equality. Resorting to name-calling while dealing with people of contrary opinions goes counter to the component of freedom of opinion in a democratic system.

Having attempted to highlight the guidelines for democratese above, we must hasten to add that the features are by no means exhaustive. It is but a mere incursion into a virgin land. The important thing is to note that democratese can and does exist and has a role to play in the entrenchment of democracy. This work should therefore be seen as a preliminary step towards its identification and description.

Implications and Conclusion

First, it is clear that if what is installed and operated as a democratic system of governance is not such, it will naturally fail, and as is the case in Nigeria, this failure ushers in as an aftermath another era of military dictatorship.

This position was aptly captured by Adebayo Williams in his acceptance speech for the DAME Award for Informed Commentary 1994 when he said

It would be clear that our democrats do not actually believe in democracy, that what they confuse with democracy is some form of civil rule under the armed tutelage of their military mentors, and that what has been going on all along in the name of democratisation is a costly farce in which factions of the political class take their turn to collaborate with military rulers. For our military, rulers, nothing could have been more god-sent, since it guarantees that the nation would be under one form of armed rule or the other for a very long time (*Tempo*, January 1995).

In essence therefore, the installation of a misconceived form of democracy will ironically guarantee the perpetration of military dictatorship.

The installation of a proper democratic system requires a proper political class whose perceptions are not conditioned by the military, not a rabble that is a surrogate of each preceding military dictatorship. It also requires a conscious development of democratese to suppress the currently all-pervading and pervading military register. Both the citizenry and the political class alike should make a conscious effort to embrace democratese as part of their diction.

In sum, a proper democratic experiment must be initiated, planned and executed by a non-military class and can subsequently develop into something better. Perhaps this is a sense in which the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election was both criminal and tragic. It would have been

an opportunity to start the process of a non-militarily midwifed-democracy.

The pattern which is etched in bold relief with our experiments in democratic governance is that politicians who succeed military dictatorships are military-made because many have participated in military dictatorships and are in fact made in the image of the military. They can therefore never really be democrats. Their perception of democratic ideals continues to be coloured and dictated by *militarese* rather than *democratese*. This explains why several post-military era administrators use language as if they were military commanders. It also explains why several times their behaviour has been quite undemocratic in spite of their avowed commitment to democracy. It is essentially a question of conditioned perception.

In essence therefore, politicians who succeed military juntas operate a warped form of democracy, a farce which in no time collapses and provides the military with the opportunity to return to power.

Finally, we conclude on the rather gloomy note that as long as our democratic ideals and values are interpreted by the military, as long as our democratic experiments are planned and executed by the military, proper democracy will continue to elude us and, by implication, therefore, we shall continue to labour under the yoke of intermittent military dictatorship.

Note

- * Name calling: Anti-government personalities are regarded as reactionaries. Those who protest policies by demonstrations are insurgents and are tools of Neo-colonialists.
Argumentatum-Ad-Populism: At auspicious moments, labour became the backbone of the country, students became leaders of tomorrow, Kuru graduates became elite of the nation, imposed local government leaders became custodians of grass-root governance and in a fit of generalisation, Nigeria at auspicious moments becomes our dearly beloved county. Muritala becomes one of the greatest sons of Africa and officers who died in a plane crash due to the negligence of government agents became heroes of our country who died on active service.