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Remorseless apology: Analysing a political letter

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ABSTRACT

Why should one say sorry if one does not feel any guilt? The phrase ‘remorseless apology’ comprises terms that seem semantically conflicting in as far as ‘apology’ is regarded as a moral activity. I use the phrase with the contention that sometimes ‘apology’ could be a pretentious activity. Where pretence reigns, sincerity of action is put to question. In most instances, apology as an act uses language as a tool. Through a critical study of the hidden meanings and implications in the language of the political reiteration by the President of Uganda¹ to the Chief Justice over the High Court² siege, I highlight that some ‘political’ apologies are remorseless. In the context of this study, the President uses a ‘political’ apology to minimise the position of the Judiciary and to assert power/precedence over the Judiciary. The objective of this article is to raise awareness to the language used in political or non-political apologies, in order to ascertain whether the apology is genuine or deceptive.

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1. Introduction

In this article, “Remorseless apology: Analysing a political letter”, I analyse the concept of apology and how it is variously used. My analysis is a contribution to studying the act of apology in a political discourse. I do the analysis based on a letter written by the Ugandan President to the country’s Chief Justice as the leader of the Judiciary, in response to the tense situation caused by the event of the High Court siege. In the sections down the line, I explain the details of this event and then discuss the content of the letter. I analyse the content of the letter as a linguist, drawing on approaches of pragmatics. My findings could as well be of interest to any critical member of the public.

1.1. The Ugandan structure of governance

In Uganda, as in many other countries, there are three major arms of government – the Executive, Judiciary and the Legislature (Parliament).

- The Executive is the arm of government mandated by the constitution to carry out the administrative functions of the state. The Executive is headed by the Prime Minister and comprises Cabinet Ministers. They are members of the ruling party and most of them are also members of parliament.

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¹ Uganda is located in the eastern part of Africa, bordering with Kenya to the east, Tanzania to the south, Rwanda to the south-west, The Democratic Republic of Congo to the west, and Sudan to the north.

² High Court of Uganda is the third court in the judicial hierarchy and has unlimited original jurisdiction, i.e. it can try any type of case. The High Court is headed by the Principal Judge.

- Parliament is the arm of government that is charged with the duty of making laws for the good governance of society. It consists of members most of whom are elected through the ballot box except a few special interest groups like the army, women, youth and the disabled whose representatives are elected by Electoral Colleges.
- The Judiciary is the third arm of government, and its role is to interpret the law and its application by rules or discretion to the facts of each particular case. It is formed by the various courts of judicature, which include the magisterial courts, High Court, Court of Appeal (Constitutional Court)³ and the Supreme Court. The Judiciary is headed by the Chief Justice (Mahoro, 2006; UGANDA, 1995).

The three arms are equal in power and make up one government. Together they assist the President in managing the State.

The President, as Head of State, is above all the three arms of government and holds supreme power over them. For example, the President appoints the cabinet; the judges too are appointed by the President on recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission and approval of Parliament (Mahoro, 2006).

In Uganda, the President is the head of the ruling party, National Resistance Movement (NRM). Since 1986 when the party assumed power until the referendum on a political system suggested multi-party politics in 2005, the system of governance used by the NRM party was movement type in which all citizens of Uganda were regarded as members of one party, and no other party existed. The party came into power through a guerrilla war fought by the National Resistance Army (NRA). In the 1995 Constitution of Uganda (UGANDA, 1995), the NRA became a national defence force and was named Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF). As Head of State, the President is the Commander-In-Chief of the UPDF. And as Commander-In-Chief, he takes full charge over the actions of the UPDF.

1.2. The event – Court siege

Word about the Peoples Redemption Army (PRA) began about early 2005. The PRA was perceived as a rebel group fighting the government. The objectives of the PRA could not easily be ascertained because there is always limited or no access to rebel groups especially in their inception. However, the name itself may imply redeeming the populace from a danger perceived by them (PRA). Eventually this rebel group was linked to a leader of a schismatic group (opposing and calling to return to the original objectives of NRM). This means that the leader of the schismatic group was formerly a member of the ruling party (NRM) which initially assumed power through guerrilla war in 1986 as NRA. He is one of a number commonly referred to as the '27 men' who masterminded the NRA guerrilla war. When the 2005 referendum on political system opted for multi-party politics, the schismatic group also articulated itself as a political party known as Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).

By some secretive means, some members of the populace were suspected to belong to the PRA, and were arrested. Towards the nomination of candidates for presidency (late 2005), the opposition leader was arrested and charged with colluding with 22 suspected members of the PRA to overthrow the government. After more than a month in prison, and after failure to produce enough evidence for conviction (which would hinder him from being nominated), he was nominated to contest for presidency. Since he needed to join the race of soliciting votes, he was granted bail. His co-accused stayed in prison.

Since these suspects were ordinary citizens, the High Court took charge of the case with reason that the suspects went against civil law. However, the Court Martial⁴ too had interest in the case with reason that the suspects were in possession of illegal arms at the time of their arrest, and thus were to be tried according to martial law. The struggle between the two courts necessitated the intervention of the Constitutional Court which decided in favour of the High Court to try the suspects. The Court Martial did not concede loss of charge and persistently continued trying the suspects. For sometime, the PRA suspects were tried simultaneously in both courts. Since the suspects were viewed by the High Court as qualifying for Court bail, it was granted to them. But before the bailed individuals left the High Court premises, they were immediately re-arrested by a security organ.

The security organ's action of re-arresting the bailed persons in the High Court premises was popularly regarded as a Court siege. The Judiciary put down tools and all courts of justice in the country closed. The role played by the media in this situation has to be underlined. In Uganda, the media, mainly newspapers and radios, play a great role in transmitting information widely as well as influencing people's political and social thoughts. Most of the media, be they or not founded and funded by particular political parties, are politically biased in their transmission. The media, mainly in favour of the opposition, endeavoured to convince the public that the Court siege was an action of attack on the Judiciary by a security organ and ruling party (original owner of the organ) and it warranted an apology. Amidst the tense situation, the President wrote a letter to the Chief Justice, the head of the Judiciary who is the main addressee (section 1.3). Copying the letter to other persons is a question of political protocol beyond my interest. In Uganda it is common that the President's response to any situation that has caused public attention is distributed by the President's secretariat to the major national media for

³ Constitutional Court or Court of Appeal was established by the 1995 Constitution. It is an intermediary between the Supreme Court and the High Court and has appellate jurisdiction over the High Court. It is not a Court of first instance and has no original jurisdiction, except when it sits as a Constitutional Court to hear constitutional cases. The Court of Appeal consists of the Deputy Chief Justice and such number of Justices of Appeal not being less than seven as Parliament may by law prescribe.

⁴ Court Martial is equal to High Court in judicial powers. The administration of justice in Court Martial is similar to that of High Court. However, it does not base on civil law but martial law. Court Martial does not try citizens but soldiers and members of other security organs.

broadcast. On this occasion, the same was done. The letter was broadcast and published verbatim in English, the official language of the country. So, the letter is directly quoted as I accessed it in one newspaper which I randomly selected.

1.3. The letter

**His Lordship
The Chief Justice of Uganda
Chief Justices Chambers
KAMPALA**

I refer to your letter dated 2 March 2007, forwarding to me a copy of the resolution of the Courts of Judicature of the same date concerning the events of the release and re-arrest of Peoples Redemption Army (PRA) suspects on 1 March 2007, at the High Court. On 5th March 2007, I issued a statement regarding the incident.

On 6th March 2007, the Minister of Internal Affairs presented to Parliament a joint statement of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Attorney General regarding the matter.

In response to the concerns expressed in the resolution by the Judiciary, I wish to reiterate as follows:

1. Government is concerned and regrets the unfortunate events, which took place on 1st March 2007, concerning the release of PRA suspects. The original mistake, however, was for the Court to release the people on bail who were facing very grave criminal charges. Happily, the Constitutional Court has rectified this mistake.
2. Government assures the Judiciary and the general public that it undertakes to do all in its power to ensure that no repetition of such incidents will take place.
3. Government reaffirms its adherence to the safety and independence of the Judiciary as an institution and of individual judicial officers, and to uphold the rule of law.
4. All organs and agencies of the State will always accord to the courts such assistance as may be required to ensure the effectiveness of the Courts as provided by Article 128(3) of the Constitution.
5. The Judiciary objected to the manner in which the arrest of the PRA suspects was effected. It is possible the government lawyers and security officers overreacted in this process. Government will investigate the matter and determine if there were breaches of the law or procedure in the process of re-arresting these suspects and if indeed there were breaches, it will take corrective measures.
6. Legal and transparent modus operandi for re-arresting suspects released by the courts will be formulated and agreed on by the agencies involved in the administration of justice.

**Yoweri K Museveni,
PRESIDENT**

**CC. The Vice President
The Speaker of Parliament
The Prime Minister
The Minister of Internal Affairs.**

Source: Daily Monitor News (March 11, 2007).⁵

2. Interpretation

Most of the newspapers and radios, the main influences on the popular view, interpreted the President's letter as apologetic to the Chief Justice for the commotion created by a security organ at the High Court. Since the public had been prepared by the same media to expect for an apology for the Court siege, this was popularly bought as a proper apology. I do not assume that the Judiciary's resumption of work was based on this letter or that they regarded it as apologetic at all. Therefore, I prefer reading the letter as a linguist, using methods and concepts from pragmatics, despite the fact that my findings could be of interest to any critical member of the public. My analysis is based on a theoretical framework introduced in the next section.

2.1. The concepts

2.1.1. Remorse

Remorse or guilt is a product of internal deliberations over a morally bad action in preference to a morally good action. An action is judged morally good or bad according to the context, the circumstances and the person, i.e. the doer and the one to

⁵ The letter was accessed on <http://www.monitor.co.ug/> and read on 11/3/07.

whom the action is done. Therefore, an action may be judged as morally good by the doer, but morally bad by the person to whom it is done. If the internal deliberation opts for a morally good action, then there is no need for guilt because the action does not affect others, and thus no apology warranted for a good action. A morally bad action may generate a feeling of guilt to the chooser and doer because of its actual or potential effects on others, and may further warrant an apology.

2.1.2. Apology

Apology is common in human verbal utterances. Taft (2000) rightly asserts that we live in an age of ‘apology-mania’ in which humans are strongly inclined to verbalising apologies than reflecting on the underlying sincerity in them. The exaggerated use of apology raises questions on the genuineness in seeking and obtaining forgiveness, and of reconciliation. ‘Is every apology based on guilt?’ is the main issue for concern in this article. I maintain that any apology that is not prompted by a feeling of remorse lacks sincerity. Although I do not use moral landmarks (e.g. good and bad, right and wrong) to explore this issue, my argument may not be completely free from moral tones embedded in nominalizations like offender, offended, apologise, apologised, etc.

Researchers (e.g. Hickson, 1986; Taft, 2000; Weyeneth, 2001) have defined apology as a written or spoken expression of sorrow, regret, repentance for an offence, wrong or injury done. Apology is a common social means of reconciling the offender with the offended. Throughout history, apologies have been traced in various sectors like cultural, social, legal, political, religious and intellectual. Apology is regarded as a moral act because it acknowledges ‘the existence of right and wrong and confirms that a norm of right behaviour has been broken’ (Taft, 2000:1142). However, I maintain that not all people would use apology from a moral stance. Various apologies given in some situations indicate a functionalistic role whereby apology is simply used as a strategy to politically appease. In the functionalistic understanding, it would be hard to envisage a genuine moral acknowledgement of apology. I would regard an apology given under coercion, social pressure, economic threat, positional threat, etc. to be functionalistic.

A genuine apology should comprise two main elements as suggested by Taft (2000) and Weyeneth (2001). First, it should contain an expression of sorrow for the offence committed; second, it should identify and acknowledge the specific offence committed.

3. Analysis

3.1. Chronological introduction

The President introduces the letter in a way which displays his detailed awareness of how the events have been unfolding. I would perceive this introduction in terms of what Mey (2003:793) refers to as the author’s effort to make an ambience of ‘discourse that the reader is willing to accept on the writer’s “authority”’. In the first three sentences, the President’s awareness is displayed through quoting significant dates of various actions relevant to his letter. As a President, indicating dates would restore confidence to the public and Judiciary that, despite his other concerns in the country, he is fully equipped with knowledge of events taking place in the country. It is necessary to consider, however, that the President is addressing judges as professionals to whom chronological ordering of events in judicial matters is important. He seems to be conscious of this, and through indicating specific dates, he may intend to show that although he is not a professional in judicial matters, he has some competence in legal procedures. In light of competence, indicating dates at this earliest stage of the letter would easily manipulate some members of the public to regard the message of regret as thought through from the legal perspective.

3.2. Stance commitment and apology

Noteworthy, the president in the context of this analysis is regarded in Goffman’s term as ‘a principal’; as ‘someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken’ (2001:103). In the first reiteration, the President writes that ‘Government is concerned and regrets the unfortunate events, which took place on 1st March 2007, concerning the release of PRA suspects’ (reiteration statement 1). The word ‘regret’ not only reflects the tone of the letter, but also a desire for absolution. Although ‘regret’ can be used to apologise for an offence committed, I agree with Weyeneth (2001:17) that regret can hardly ever be ‘viewed as equivalent to an apology’. In my perception, ‘apology’ reflects guilt whereas ‘regret’ may simply reflect concern or being sympathetic. In this understanding, therefore, reiterating ‘regret’ by the President may merely be an expression of compassion. This prompts the following conclusions.

From the hierarchical perspective, as the head of government, the President’s action of writing to the Judiciary, an arm of government, would be justified as a sympathetic expression. Using ‘government’ may indicate the whole body as sympathising with fellow members (Judiciary) for the tragedy of the siege. Although ‘government’ may also be interpreted as excluding the Judiciary, in this context I regard it as inclusively used by the President who heads the three arms of government, to console the offended arm as member of one body. Understood from Goffman’s (2007; Capone, 2007) footing perspective, ‘government’ hereby used by the President, could as well be the pronoun ‘we’, meant to mediate wider institutional sympathy to the Judiciary.

In the letter, changing from ‘we’ to ‘I’, could be regarded as assuming a different position as Commander-In-Chief of the UPDF. As commander, the President is held accountable for the misconduct of the security organ. His responsibility in responding to the incident, as Commander-In-Chief, is expressed three times by using ‘I’ in the introductory part of the letter.

In this case, 'regret' may not be merely sympathetically but apologetically used in the letter; that he writes to apologise to the Judiciary for the misconduct of the security organ. From this view point, although as President he uses 'government', the letter would as well be regarded as written by the Commander-In-Chief of the offending organ to the Judiciary as the offended arm of government.

The tension between the two positions he occupies is apparent throughout the letter; it is a tension between apologising as Commander-In-Chief and as President. While apologising as the former would indicate sensible leadership, the latter would point to political incompetence. In the letter, shifting from the position of Commander-In-Chief to President reflects fostering precedence (as President) as one of the intentions of the letter, which is a different intention from that of apology, claimed by the media as perceived by the public and Judiciary. This raises a question on intentionality as discussed by [Duranti \(2000\)](#). Is the letter about apology or fostering precedence? The letter's underlying intentions are reserved to its author, and attempted by analysts to discover. Analytically, this rhymes with [Goffman's \(2001:96\)](#) argument that, 'a change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others. . . as expressed in the way we manage the production . . . of an utterance.'

Nevertheless, the expression of 'regret' fits the purpose of apology only if it includes the second element which is, identifying and acknowledging the specific offence committed ([Taft, 2000](#), [Weyeneth, 2001](#)). To exemplify my argument, the phrase, 'I am sorry for your loss,' would reflect irresponsibility and merely sound sympathetic if used by an offender, whereas 'I am sorry for the loss I caused you' would sound more responsible. Accountability for the offence should be reflected in an apology. Let's speculate that missing the second element was intentional, why would the President avoid it? [Lazare \(1995, cited in Taft, 2000\)](#) argues that to apologise is to accept that one made a mistake, and this is an acknowledgement of failure to uphold the values of competence and honesty. No one would wish to expose oneself for having failed in these two values, worse still a Head of State! People, especially leaders would want to appear competent and honest even in the hardest of situations. In instances where competence and honesty appear to be in jeopardy, the assumption is always to restore a public image at all cost even if it requires a remorseless apology. This alters apology from being a moral action to a political action.

To explain apology as a political action, an understanding of politics as it is used in this article is apt. Politics is commonly understood and defined according to one's situation and purposes. This means that politics does not have a standard definition because situations and purposes may vary according to persons and groups. In this article, [Chilton's \(2004:3; Chilton and Schaffner, 2002\)](#) definition of politics as 'a struggle for power between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it', is most pertinent for the discussion. The whole political process is a contest and tension between power asserters and power resisters. Researchers (e.g. [Fraser, 2001](#); [Weber 1968b, cited in Maier, 2001](#)) define 'power' as the capacity to achieve a goal or to make things done, regardless of resistance which could come from nature, persons or groups. This reflects power as a possessed and repressive action. [Arendt \(1970, cited in Reynolds, 1990\)](#), however, sees power as the ability to act with the approval of the group, i.e. power as a shared and productive action. [Arendt's](#) view falls in line with the Foucauldian regard of power as not a monopolised or possessed entity, but an exercised action ([Foucault, 1980](#)). The option one takes to understand power, as well dictates ones understanding of politics because power lies beneath any political action. Politics lies at the centre and base of society and thus permeates every social action. This means that the action of the human being who shapes society which in turn nurtures him/her, not only becomes a social action but a political action too. Researchers (e.g. [Ball, 1988](#); [Brekke, 1989](#); [Holly, 1989](#)) agree that politics borrows and draws on sub-languages used in different social strata e.g. religious, legal, moral, medical, economic in order to forge out political meanings and purposes. Primarily political language is defined as 'who speaks to whom, as what, on what occasions, and in what goals' ([Van Dijk, 2000:225](#); [Chilton, 2004](#)). It is concerned with presenting and selling ones positive image to others. [Goffman \(2007\)](#) and [Capone \(2007\)](#) refer to this type of self-presentation in various situations as footing. Footing is apparent in political discourses e.g. apologies and speeches. The success of this merchandise depends on linguistic skills employed, which, as [Sornig \(1989\)](#) outlines, may include persuasion, seduction, conviction, pledge, pretence, and so on. According to the above definition of politics, an apology could be a functionalistic strategy of restoring a tarnished image and reselling it to others. Thus it is borrowed from the moral realm and becomes a political instrument or action. Apology may become a tool of asserting and maintaining power by the offender, and in this context, fostering precedence.

The President says further that:

The original mistake, however, was for the Court to release the people on bail who were facing very grave criminal charges. Happily, the Constitutional Court has rectified this mistake. (Reiteration statement 1)

Based on the analysis of these words which follow the President's regret, I note that missing the part of articulating the offence and harm caused may not only be intentional, but also explicitly blaming the Judiciary as the root cause of the Court siege.

Moreover, in the first sentence of the letter, the President indicates that he received a forwarded copy of the Judiciary's resolution concerning the event of 'the release and re-arrest' of PRA. This means that the event comprises two inseparable components; release and re-arrest, which reflect the Court's action and security organ's action respectively. However, in the reiteration statement 1, the second component – 're-arrest' – does not appear in 'concerning the release of PRA suspects'. This is also an issue surrounding intentionality in the president's response to the event. At this early stage of the reiteration, eliminating the action of a security organ may be indicative of his stance. The stance is not about Judiciary versus security organ, but about rightness versus wrongness of the action of the security organ in the situation. Perhaps he agrees with the

action of 're-arresting' the suspects and how it was done. This possibility is seemingly supported later by the President's choice of words towards the conclusion of the letter. He says that, 'It is possible the government's lawyers and security officers overreacted in this process' (reiteration statement 5). The choice of the modal expression, 'It is possible' is a non-commitment which could allow rightness of the opposite, i.e. 'it is impossible'. This allowance is confirmed in 'overreacted'. Overreacting would mean going beyond the expected limits for reaction. To judge the level of reaction would point to an existing standard for reaction. His reiteration seems to mean that reaction in such situation is a normal security action providing it is done within the existing set limits. However, to promise that 'legal and transparent modus operandi for re-arresting suspects released by the courts will be formulated and agreed on by the agencies involved in the administration of justice' (reiteration statement 6), the President refutes his presumption in statement 5. His promise indicates non-existence of a standard for reaction. Although this appears as a contradiction, it proves his stance regarding the rightness and wrongness of the action of the security organ. Since there is no mode of conduct in existence, the security organ does not merit any blame because its action was improvised. This would as well imply no basis for incriminating the action because anything would be allowed or not allowed at the time of the siege. The action of the security organ (Court siege and re-arresting PRA suspects) did not go against any law because no guidance existed. This indicates that the choice of the word 'regret' in reiteration statement 1 might have been lightly used not necessarily to convey apology because the words that follow do not purport any remorse. The discourse reflects a higher authority instructing lower ranks of authority on proper legal procedures.

The President's positional commitment to the event is further reflected in the prejudicial words 'original mistake' in the reiteration statement 1, 'original mistake, however, was for the Court to release the people on bail who were facing very grave criminal charges'. This is stated as early as the second sentence which comes after the sentence that carries an apologetic word. It indicates a detachment from the 'regret' stated and perhaps points to non-commitment to the presumed apology in the 'regret'. It kind of acquits the security organ from the alleged offence, and turns the blame on the Court. This puts into question the President's basis to claim the authority of judging the Court action. Could it be professional or political authority? It sounds more of a political authority when he says that, 'happily, the Constitutional Court has rectified this mistake'. This sigh of relief not only applauds the intervention of the Constitutional Court, but exonerates the security organ as justifiable in putting right where High Court goes wrong.

According to the 1995 Constitution, the justices of Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, and High Court are appointed by the President (UGANDA, 1995). The Court of Appeal or Constitutional Court did not exist until the 1995 Constitution. 'It is an intermediary between the Supreme Court and the High Court and has appellate jurisdiction over the High Court. It is not a Court of first instance and has no original jurisdiction, except when it sits as a Constitutional Court to hear constitutional cases' (Mahoro, 2006). This would mean that the Constitutional Court could be dispensed with and its work transferred to the Supreme Court since the bench of the Constitutional Court are also members of the Supreme Court bench (Mahoro, 2006). The accumulation of judicial levels, therefore, may be economically and politically beneficial to judges who are members on both benches and to appellants respectively. Being appointed to sit on the bench of Constitutional Court could be regarded by some as an incentive from the President. This could influence the Constitutional Court's decisions over the actions of the President. In this situation where levels of precedence are boldly marked, the President's manipulation of law and judicial decisions is likely to reign.

3.3. Temporal commitment and apology

A promise is an assurance that one will or will not undertake certain behaviour or action. Making promises is common in discourses of different genres, e.g. Jesus' promise for eternal salvation in the Bible, 'G8' promise for debt cancellation in politico-economic summit, promise for peace in political campaigns and so on. There are necessary elements that mark the seriousness of a promise one of which is a definite mark or time-scale, e.g. promise for eternal salvation is reached after death. Promises can remain empty especially when they lack a definite time-scale for fulfilling them. Promises with no definite temporal commitment may reflect the nature of value and inevitability attached to the event that requires action.

In political discourses, promises can act as strategies to restore a shattered image, to seduce a less rationalistic mind, or to persuade a more rationalistic mind (Sornig, 1989; Wodak, 2000). However, in a genuine apology a promise would not be necessary since feeling sorrowful and acknowledging responsibility for the offence committed would imply readiness for accountability for any social and/or legal repercussions. If apology expresses sorrow for the offence committed, and identifies and acknowledges the specific offence committed, I agree with Tavuchis (1991, cited in Taft, 2000:1140) that words like; sorry and regret would imply 'a willingness to change, a promise of forbearance, and an implicit agreement to accept all the consequences'. Therefore, reparations should only flow from the social or legal process in proportion to the offence. Reparations should lead to completion of the reconciliation process. In this natural flow of reconciliation process, I do not envisage any necessity of the offender making promises to the offended. Although promises made by the offender may indicate seriousness in avoiding the re-occurrence of the offence on the one hand, they may on the other hand reflect power inequalities, and justification of preferential positions.

The President uses the name of 'government' to assure 'the Judiciary and the general public ... to do all in its power to ensure that no repetition of such incidents will take place' (reiteration statement 2). Since the statement does not enumerate any means to achieve this assurance, I assume that the next statements outline these means. However, before enumerating these means, he makes reparations in reiteration statement 3:

Government reaffirms its adherence to the safety and independence of the Judiciary as an institution and of individual judicial officers, and to uphold the rule of law.

And in reiteration statement 4:

All organs and agencies of the State will always accord to the courts such assistance as may be required to ensure the effectiveness of the Courts as provided by Article 128(3) of the Constitution.

Both statements indicate an existing order which was violated in the event of the High Court siege. The reaffirmation in statement 3 indicates an already existing responsibility that should be fulfilled by government. Government fulfils the responsibility of assigning the police and prison forces with the duty of collaborating with the Judiciary in enforcing law and order, as well as providing safety to the Judiciary. The reaffirmation embedded in 'will always accord' in reiteration statement 4 can only be understood in relation to the reference made to Article 128(3) of the Constitution. This brings to our knowledge the fact of an ordinance already in place as regards the non-interference but instead cooperation between the Judiciary and State security organs and agencies.

The President uses the name of 'government' to make reparations for the offence of the security organ. The reparations do not naturally flow from the social or legal reconciliation process, but rightly assumed to have been violated in the action of the security organ. It is political cunningness to articulate these reparations in a letter which, to me, reflects no remorse. Reparations or re-affirmations articulated here are meant to reconcile the Judiciary with the security organ and to restore mutual cooperation between them. However, although the re-affirmations are rightly addressed to the event of the Court siege, genuineness in articulating them may be questioned in light of the President's non-commitment to the apology which I discussed above.

Reiteration statements 5 and 6 are promises added to reparations made by the President to the Judiciary. Although these are deemed valuable by the President, they all lack a definite time-scale, and thus are not binding to the President. This further indicates emptiness in these promises, and thus depriving the event of its proper value and necessity.

The statements which point to the future; 'will investigate . . . will take corrective measures' (reiteration statement 5) and 'will be formulated . . . agreed on . . .' (reiteration statement 6), lack a definite time when they would be executed. It is easy to get concerned with who will be entrusted with the investigation mentioned in statement 5, who will be investigated on, and in case there were breaches of the law, the corrective measures to be taken, whether the officers and lawyers would be brought to book, and what this would mean for the PRA suspects. Similarly, we may ask who will be entrusted with the role of formulating a legal and transparent mode of re-arresting released suspects, the nature of the formulation, and how it will benefit the PRA suspects. However, these can be meaningless mental occupations unless we consider the question of the time-scale for fulfilling both actions.

Since the promises are not committed to a definite time, they seem as good as lullaby to the Judiciary and the general public. Is this a persuasive approach to calm down the situation? Is it a political means of buying back the Judiciary's and public's confidence in the President? Failure to define time for action may mean that reconciliation is not of much value and necessity to warrant urgent attention. Probably no action will ever be taken. Moreover, it indicates the President taking decisions on what event requires which attention.

4. Concluding reflections

'Is every apology based on guilt?' This has been the central focus in this discussion. By analysing the President's letter to the Chief Justice of Uganda, I have explored and discussed that apology is not necessarily based on guilt. In political discourse, apology is not necessarily a moral action but a tool used to politically appease and to settle some situations that may threaten power.

Although this letter may be perceived differently by various analysts, I have chosen to approach it as a linguist, drawing on the methods and concepts of pragmatics. In the analysis, I have focused on three elements; chronology, stance and temporality. Chronological arrangement of dates at the beginning of the President's letter may provide an impression to the reader that he is fully aware of the events that lead to the Court siege. I have discussed stance in terms of the President's commitment in approving or disapproving of the action of a security organ. Analysing various texts in relation to the macro- and microcontexts enabled me to explore the President's type of commitment. He seems to approve of the security organ's action; and this renders his regret merely sympathetic to the Judiciary and remorseless. I have discussed temporality in terms of the President's commitment to the re-affirmations and promises articulated. Expressing sorrow for an offence committed carries with it the readiness to undertake any ramifications that may automatically result from the injury done. I have therefore, argued that promises are not necessary in an apology because they act as persuaders, or as seductive means to the offended. When used where they are not called for, they may reflect higher-lower relationship. However, where they occur they act as filler for the social and/or legal consequences, reflecting genuine consideration of repentance by the offender. Serious promises are marked by a definite time-scale or terms. As the President takes the initiative to offer promises, in a situation short of social or legal reconciliation process, promises should at least be based on a time-scale to show serious commitment to reconciling the security organ with the Judiciary. This would also reflect the value and necessity of maintaining harmonious collaborative terms with the Judiciary. However, since there is no time-scale indicated to fulfil the promises outlined in the letter, their nature raises

issues surrounding the President's commitment to the apology, the genuineness of the apology, and how he regards the Judiciary.

Therefore, this article raises awareness not only to the language used in political apologies but in any other apologies. As naturally political beings, language is one of the commonly used human tools in social interactions. Human beings become even more political in apologising to the offended so as to obtain forgiveness. Therefore, we ought to be keen on the apologetic language used in different situations that warrant reconciliation; we ought to scrutinise the concepts used in order to explore the hidden meanings in an apology. This may help in ascertaining the genuineness or deceptiveness of an apology.

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