

President Hage Geingob's rhetoric on "Harambee Prosperity Plan" and the shaping of Namibia's future

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Introduction

This paper attempts to examine President Hage Geingob's rhetoric on the adoption of "Harambee Prosperity Plan" (HPP). The paper will analyse how the President's discourse shape Namibia's future. This analysis is largely drawn from the document *"Namibian Government's Action Plan towards Prosperity for All"*. The content of HPP can also be found in paragraph 32-61 of President Hage Geingob's second State of the Nation Address. It is important to note that discourse does not need to be major or universal in scope to produce effects.¹ As part of the role of rhetorical critic of public discourse, the analysis and assessment concentrate on Geingob's HPP in his position as the president of the Republic of Namibia.²

1. Hage Geingob's Presidency and Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP)

The free and fair elections held in Namibia since the first UN supervised elections in 1989 culminated in the peaceful transfer of power done in a credible and transparent manner from one president to another and so far, this was done three times, with three presidents democratically elected. Thus, President Geingob's transition to power was through a relatively peaceful process. This is how rhetorical genres may be passed on in Namibian context.

Hage Geingob is the current and the third president of Namibia. His term of office began on the 21 March 2015. Geingob was also the first

¹Cathcart, R. S. (1981). *Post-communication: rhetorical analysis and evaluation*. Bobbs-Merrill Educational Pub.

²Cathcart, R. S. (1981). *Post-communication: rhetorical analysis and evaluation*. Bobbs-Merrill Educational Pub.

Prime Minister of Namibia from 21 March 1990 to 28 August 2002.³ During and after the liberation struggle, Sam Nujoma identified Geingob's leadership capacity and entrusted him with some important leadership roles including the top ministerial position as the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia. This enabled Geingob to be part and parcel of the first government machineries to build democracy and continue shaping democracy in Namibia.

Upon his commencement of his presidency, the Namibia third democratically elected president, Hage Geingob presented a body framework that aims at guiding his leadership towards prosperity. This development map is called Harambee Prosperity Plans (HPP). It is through his rhetoric of this policy as articulated in his second State of the Nation Address that Geingob shaped the future of Namibia.

The plan was presented a year after the beginning of Geingob's presidency. He was still in a position of envisioning the country's future, and to try to set the tone for his remaining four years of his first term. He rehearsed traditional values of the Namibian presidency. By rehearsed shared values that are drawn from the past, Geingob's word shows how he joined the present moment with the past by building on the foundation established by the founding president, father of the Namibian nation, who is also the founder of democratic society, Dr. Sam Nujoma. Geingob clearly pinpoints the most important areas in his targeted action plan to work on the development of the country in order to plan its future. This is equally more or less the same as Nujoma's vision 2030. Nujoma persuaded the future by implementing "Vision 2030", a national vision with a perception of the future. The Harambee Prosperity Plan complements the country's long term development goal as they are reflected in Nujoma's Vision 2030. In addition, some elements of flexibility in the Namibian planning system, where progress was observed to be slow were part of Harambee. Geingob stresses that "the HPP does not replace any national development roadmap but aims to complement the long-term national goal for prosperity". He adds that the plan seeks to ensure effective implementation of already budgeted for programmes and to accelerate the reform processes with a new approach.

2. Definition of "Harambee Prosperity Plan"

The word "Harambee" is a Kiswahili word which means "Pull together in the same direction". Its aim is to call for unity and encourage

³ Geingob, H. G.(2004). State formation in Namibia :Promoting Democracy and Good Governance, University of Leeds.

all Namibians to work hard in order to reach their common purpose.

President Geingob's rhetoric in this plan is symbolic. The non-English word "Harambee" in the phrase plays a major role. Although it is not in Namibian languages, it emphasises the meaning and the promising of the plan to the future of Namibia. One might be tempted to think that the word "Prosperity" would have been used alone, but then by only using this word "prosperous" Geingob thinks that it might be too vague and do not clearly stipulates the meaning of the plan, therefore, Geingob deliberately names this plan "HARAMBEE PROSPERITY PLAN" [HPP] to reflect on the English meaning of the word Harambee "Pull together in the same direction" which emphasises his principle decision and stand that "No Namibian should feel left out".

3. Geingob's rhetoric as deliberative

Of the other two kinds of rhetoric described by Aristotle(1991) such as, forensic rhetoric- an orientation towards the past which is either accusing or in defence; and epideictic rhetoric- an orientation to the present time which can be acclaiming or condemning.⁴ Geingob's rhetoric of HPP falls under deliberative rhetoric as his discourse advises about the future. Deliberative rhetoric is future oriented and it either encourages or is dissuasive. Geingob continually refers to the future and so uses deliberative rhetoric. This approach is appropriate for Geingob's discourse in the HPP as the beginning of his presidency with the implementation of the HPP will likely to bring changes. In his foreword of HPP document, President Geingob indicated how Namibians have overcome tremendous historical obstacles in the past and affirmed his confidence that through the HPP, the challenges of the present will be raised and those that will be encountered in the future. The plan ushers Namibia into the era of prosperity for all.⁵

A small minority populace of the Namibian people enjoyed an affluent standard of living and quality of life, while the vast majority lived under conditions which were barely above the subsistence level. The constitution of the Republic of Namibia Chapter 11, Article 95 states that the state required to actively promote and maintain the welfare of people and in particular a life of human dignity and prosperity for all Namibians.⁶ This is another way the Namibian government committed

⁴ Aristotle. (1991). *Rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse*. Translated by George Kennedy. New York: Oxford.

⁵Geingob, G. H (2016). *State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President Hage Geingob* [For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

⁶Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (2nd ed) (2010). Windhoek: Ministry Information

itself to national reconciliation and its duty to unite the country and not allow divisions of any kind to threaten democracy and the rights of its citizens, especially vulnerable minority groups. This is supported by the rhetoric of Hage Geingob when he underlines the impact of poverty and how his leadership is willing to reduce this big challenge. He said:⁷

I am acutely aware of the burning desire of the Namibian people to inhabit a Namibian House where there is no poverty. Namibians want a house where everyone feels a sense of belonging, where everyone is presented with a fair opportunity to prosper in an inclusive manner and by so doing, ensure that no one feels left out.

4. HPP an element of social transformation

After more than two decades when Namibia attained its independence, the country is still in transition to a bold social transformation. New institutions are being created, fundamental new laws are being passed, new policies are being designed as well as being implemented, and new spending priorities are being identified. Some of these changes are necessary in all areas of government activities and transition therefore forms a common theme throughout the plan such as HPP.

The main thrust of Geingob's rhetoric in HPP highlights human development. It is meant to provide a short term framework within which his first term of office would seek to complete ongoing projects which were initiated by his predecessors. In a democratic political system and indeed as part of modern presidency, it is vital through presidential rhetoric that government shows the people how it intends to improve their situation and for the people who elect them into power to be aware of the resource being spent.

However, it is also important to note that in a democratic political system, where most of the productive assets are not owned by government, there are also very clear limits to what government can achieve. In his rhetoric, Hage Geingob made this clear when he stipulated that:⁸

The HPP is not presented as the panacea that will resolve the

Communication and Technology.

⁷Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President Hage Geingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

⁸Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President Hage Geingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

myriad causes of poverty and deliver absolute prosperity within a four-year period. This plan aims to identify goals that can be pursued with vigour in the short-term implementation period (2016/17 - 2019/20) and lay a solid base to attain prosperity in subsequent planning phases.

5. Five pillars of Harambee Prosperity Plan

President Geingob's foreword in the document "*Namibian Government's Action Plan towards Prosperity for All*" employs rhetorical element of his own ethos by referring to what is entitled of him to do in his endeavour and the priority areas, which need future prosperity. "On 21 March 2015, I was inaugurated as the third democratically elected president of our republic and assumed the mantle to deliver prosperity for all our people". He further used ethos of the two former Namibian presidents, on the important role they played on paving and sustaining of democracy in the country as follows:⁹

Former president, Comrade Hifikepunye Pohamba, cemented our democracy and stabilised the country by building on the firm foundation established by our founding father, Comrade Sam Nujoma. Spurred on by these giants of our revolution, and building on their legacy, I have declared all-out war against poverty and embarked upon the path towards prosperity.

In Geingob's Harambee Prosperity Plan, poverty eradication is one of the key factors of the HPP five pillars. These five pillars are stated in the Harambee Prosperity Plan document as follows: Effective Governance, Economic Advancement, Social Progression, Infrastructure Development and International Relations and Cooperation.

Each of these pillars brings the promise of the plan that of "deliver prosperity for all people" closer as they improve the quality of his governance. The five pillars also unravel Geingob's rhetoric of inclusiveness, his spirit of seeing transparent Namibia. "A Namibia where no one dies because of lack of food, and a Namibia where all have decent shelter and access to basic amenities".

⁹Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President Hage Geingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

6. The Plan

The three crucial issues that Geingob rhetoric highlights under the pillar “Effective Governance” are as follows: “Accountability”, “Performance management” and “Enhanced service delivery”.

6.1 Effective governance

The implementation of these issues follows with the directive which President Geingob gave for all ministries to sign a performance contracts. He tackled issues of social evil such as corruption by making it compulsory for all ministers to declare their assets. He urged all public servants to exercise self-discipline and individual accountability at their work places.

In order for his persuasion to be successful, Geingob’s rhetoric appealed to the audiences’ emotions, he expressed his concerns and the government’s commitment to improve the well-being of the nation, when he stressed the issue of eradication of poverty. With this, Geingob declared war on corruption. He asserts that sustainable must address the issue of poverty and aim to satisfy the essential needs and aspiration of all people without compromising the resources and option for future generations.¹⁰

Geingob relates democracy with restoring dignity to all Namibians. In order to restore dignity within the country, the notion of poverty needs to be addressed. With this, the president used appeal of reasoning in the deductive form. A probable argument¹¹, as Geingob’s main argument stress that all of the social problems in the country cannot be addressed outside the context of job creation and eradicating poverty.

Moreover, Geingob associates corruption with poverty. In order to reach the people, President Geingob deals with corruption, an issue that can easily strike the mind of people. An orator has to arouse emotions exactly because emotions have the power to modify our judgments and the success of the persuasive efforts depends on the emotional dispositions of the audience, for we do not judge in the same way when we grieve and rejoice or when we are friendly and hostile.¹²

¹⁰Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President HageGeingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

¹¹ Kennedy, G.A. (1991). “On Rhetoric a Theory of Civil Discourse/ Aristotle: Newly Translated with Introduction, Notes and Appendixes” New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

¹² Aristotle. (1991). Rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse. Translated by George Kennedy. New York: Oxford

Furthermore, Geingob's rhetoric indicated how the "Effective Governance" can be achieved as the plan recognises that corruption has many facets. With this the following areas are covered:

- Increasing the level of political accountability;
- Preventing corruption in government offices, ministries, agencies and state-owned enterprises;
- Strengthening efforts to deter corruption;
- Conducting extensive anti-corruption education;
- Preventing corruption in the private sector; and
- Engaging civil society and the media in combating corruption.

Although Geingob made acknowledgement of the good progress made on the areas of democratic governance, he sees some "critical social imbalance" in the country. Which include income disparity, poverty and unemployment. It is against this background that the government has declared a full-scale war against poverty, committing itself to address and reduce the challenge of unequal income distribution. By addressing these needs, among other basic amenities, it is another way that the President appeals to the emotions of his citizen.

6.2 Economic advancement

Geingob shapes the future of Namibia by focusing on the advancement of the economy, as his second pillar of his Harambee Prosperity Plan. Equally with other pillars, "Economic Advancement" focuses on the importance of the economy in the fight against poverty. Geingob stresses that wealth creation is the most effective way to address poverty. This can be done by growing economy in a sustainable and inclusive manner. This include creation of decent employment opportunities. In order to achieve these, there are four critical areas that will be addressed. They are as follows:¹³

- Macro-Economic Stability;
- Economic Transformation;
- Youth Enterprise Development; and
- Economic Competitiveness.

Geingob's discourse on these four sub-pillars of "Economic Advancement" highlights the reduction of the debt to GDP ratio to less

¹³Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President HageGeingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

than 30 percent by the end of Harambee period. A range of expenditure, revenue and structural measures will be introduced.

Moreover, Geingob, rhetoric emphasises some measures that can be taken to strengthen the fiscal position which include the adoption of "Public-Private Partnership legislation" by December 2016. This is to enable the private sector to play a key role in the construction of government infrastructure. Geingob used metaphoric language when he referred to large worthy in the country's public sector which is yet undiscovered. His presidency therefore, promised to "investigate on how to better leverage the assets of SOEs to reduce the burden on the National budget."

Geingob clarifies government position on the economic empowerment. He began with the draft of the "Namibian Equitable Economic Empowerment Bill" that was released as well as the land reform.

Geingob appealed to the emotions of his audience when he expressed his disappointment on the development of this bill."

He however used the rhetoric of inclusiveness when reminding a number of communities to join hand in hand in the provision of the basic service to their employees.

I would like to reiterate my call of last year to the farming, fishing and business community to join hands in the provision of decent housing for workers, particularly seasonal workers at the coastal town of Walvis Bay and in Southern Namibia.

As is of concern in other pillars, Geingob mentioned two of the crucial issues "quality education and health care" on poverty reduction that can also be used to empower Namibians.

"Youth Enterprise Development" is an appeal of happiness to those with the passion of entrepreneurship. It targets Namibian youth especially those that live in rural areas. In his rhetoric, Geingob made it clear that this sub-pillar addresses issues such as "access to finance and information."

The fourth sub-pillar "Economic Competitiveness" target is for Namibia to become the most competitive economy in Africa by the year 2020. This can be achieved by addressing a number of constraints in the business environment.

6.3 Social progression

The third pillar of Harambee's plan emphasised one of the important responsibility that the government has that of taking care of the "most needy citizens and to create an environment where those with ability can prosper". Geingob clarifies this by referring to the Marxian dictum that, says "Each according to their means, each according to their abilities." As characterises by the four critical issues that will be outlined below, the development is people-centre and inclusive. The four critical issues are as follows:¹⁴

- Hunger and Poverty;
- Land Servicing, Housing and Sanitation;
- Infant and Maternal Mortality; and
- Vocational Education Training.

With Geingob's declaration of war against poverty, his rhetoric in this pillar made it clear as he stated "no Namibian should die of hunger during and after the Harambee period." Furthermore, Geingob reiterated that in the true spirit of Harambee, those targets that were set in this pillar will be achieved, with the full support and collaboration of the private sector, the Government Institutions Pension Fund and Development Finance Institutions that have pledged to support government's housing efforts.

Housing and land have been issues of concern in Namibia, Geingob used the appeal to emotions when expressing his concern about the "housing and land availability shortages" in the country. Moreover, he used reasoning appeal by referring to the recent incident in Walvis Bay of the land grabs. He urges that:¹⁵

Government will never condone illegal land grabs but in the same vein, we will no longer tolerate the slow implementation of agreed upon strategies to resolve these issues. It is the concern we observe the opportunistic attempts to hijack the genuine and valid land concerns of Namibians in order to incite violence and disorder.

This situation leads Geingob to ask a rhetorical question "What purpose does violence and vandalism serve?"

In his HPP, Geingob made some promises to shape the future of the country by reducing some social evil. On the "Infant and Maternal Mortality" his governance promised to implement the following action in

¹⁴Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President HageGeingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

¹⁵Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President HageGeingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

order to reduce this notion.¹⁶

- Provision of essential drugs;
- Deployment of community health workers, including midwives;
- Introduction of a dedicated maternal/neonatal ambulance system;
- Increased training in obstetrics and gynaecology; and
- The construction of maternal shelters for remote expectant mothers.

Strong Vocational Education is also emphasised in the “Social Progression pillar”. This can be achieved by expanding VET opportunities and by increasing the intake number per annum. Furthermore, Geingob spoke rhetoric of promising which shape the future of the country, “we will also introduce, to the extent possible, apprenticeship, mentoring, coaching and equipment aid, including financial assistance to enable VET graduates to start own businesses”.

6.4 Infrastructure development

The fourth pillar “Infrastructure development” focuses on the modern and reliable infrastructure, as this important for the sustained growth of the economy in the country. Geingob mentioned a number of important areas that need to be addressed urgently. Geingob asserts that:

These include: shortage of locally generated electricity; an aging rail network, especially the stretch between Walvis Bay and Tsumeb and an underdeveloped water infrastructure in the North and Central areas of the country. These infrastructural challenges will, therefore be tackled head-on, during the Harambee period.

These are basic needs of human beings, therefore by using the rhetoric of urgency to address these needs implies bright future for Namibian people. It also shows that Geingob is concern with the future of the citizen. That is another way the president appeals to the emotions of the people

Moreover, in his rhetoric, several times Geingob establishes commonplaces with his audience by using the term “we”, mostly when referring to his government, but in paragraph 61 line 8 and 12 he used the

¹⁶Geingob, G. H (2016). State of the Nation Address by his Excellency President HageGeingob[For his second term of office] Parliament: Windhoek.

pronoun "I". This shows how his rhetoric of power that can shape and map the future of Namibia.

6.5 International relations and cooperation.

In the fifth and final pillar of the Harambee Plan, the "International relations and cooperation" Geingob used his own ethos as he spoke about his standing position on the implementation of this plan as well as wrapped up the plan of action for Harambee. Ethos is the most important constituent of any speech, even before any words are uttered. Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character, is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken to make people think about his credibility. Geingob's ethos was one of his greatest assets as he is the current president of the country. Audience can easily be persuaded by his rhetoric that shapes the country's future. He stated that:

As you are aware, I have declared the year 2016, as the year of implementation. To ensure a high level of implementation, key deliverables of this Plan will be incorporated into the Performance Agreements of each of the Ministers responsible for implementation. Execution will be tracked on a quarterly reporting basis and assessed annually.

Conclusion

By virtue of its concern for the people of Namibia, Hage Geingob's rhetoric in the document of Harambee Prosperity Plan is determined to meet the challenges faced by Namibian people. He asserts that the discipline imposed by a planned approach to many challenges offers the most realistic likelihood of success.

Several times President Geingob's discourse in HPP appealed to the audiences' emotions, he expressed his concerns and the government's commitment to improve the well-being of the nation, in his declaration of war against poverty.

Geingob's rhetorical performance in the HPP improved the quality of his governance and his rhetoric helps his readers to understand the future of Namibia. Furthermore, this paper concludes the important role presidential rhetoric plays in nation-building and in shaping the future of their countries. So Geingob's rhetoric on Harambee Prosperity Plan helps to understand the future of Namibia.