

The Truths and Lies in Nigerian Politics: De-Structuring the Post-Truth Challenge of the Buhari Presidency

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Abstract

This essay interrogates one of the major wrongs of Nigerian Politics namely, the lies of the Nigerian leadership and its submissive acceptance by the Nigerian public under the administration of Muhammadu Buhari. Today, we consciously live in a post-truth Political space that harbours corruption of intellectual integrity which has damaged the fabric of Nigerian democracy. Today truth seems longer important and relevant in national policy and politics. The resultant effect has been corruption of leadership recruitment processes, with its attendant economic and social problems of unemployment, youth restiveness, hunger in the land and criminality etc. This paper explores this dark side of the age of Information and communication Technology (ICT), a side that is exploited by the media mavens, political hawks and ideological propagandists who promotes lies, illusion, confusion, and other forms of demented or manipulated imagination. The paper submits that the Buhari Presidency was characterized by abundant lying as one of the defining aspects of dark times in Nigerian democracy in which policies, politics and governance were framed largely by lies in the promotion of sophistry and illusion has ruined the economy and damaged its polity.

Keyword: Muhammadu Buhari, Post-truth, Fake News, Information Technology, Nigerian Politics.

Introduction

Hannah Arendt was reported to have said, “If it is the function of the public realm to throw light on the affairs of men by providing a space of appearances in which they can show in deed and word, for better or worse, who they are and what they can do, then darkness has come when this light is extinguished ... by speech that does not disclose what is but sweeps it under the carpet, by exhortations, ... that ... degrade all truth in meaningless triviality”² In today's world, the scale and speed of the highly

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partisan news and falsehoods that circulate in the human environment is deafening. In politics and governance for instance, the populists have exploited the ICT effectively and without restraints, to access power and authority. Today, we are in the era of post-truth, an era in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. This paper explores the dark side of the age of ICT, a side that has been exploited by the media mavens, political hacks, and ideological propagandists who promote lies, illusion, confusion, and manipulated imagination. The paper concludes that, corruption of intellectual integrity and damage to democracy which characterizes the Buhari presidency must be battled to protect information integrity and the Nigerian state.

Information and Communication Technology

In the present world order, there is literally nothing that has and will ever been accomplished by humans without communication. Understood as an intercourse between two or more people, communication begins when one person interfaces with another. Thus, communication originates as a mental image within a person who desires to convey those images to another.³ It presupposes and precludes the transfer of information from one person to another. It is the giving; receiving or exchange of ideas, information, signals, or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups, regardless of distance, to persuade, to seek information, to express emotions.

One of the immediate tasks of philosophy is to wrestle with the question of how communication, thought and language enables us to get a proper grip on the world. In recent years, philosophers and some communicators have become increasingly aware of the possibility that there may be no single answer to this question. This awareness has undoubtedly been promoted by the increasingly one-dimensional character of the Western communication practice with its high degree of

3. R. Adler, and N. Towne, *Looking out/Looking in* (2nd Ed.) (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), 2

misinformation, disinformation and the accompanying tendency for peculiar ways of using communication to predominate in peculiar social-cultural and politico-ideological contexts. One result of such awareness has been the call for a new international information order.

The new information order so desired cannot emerge by mere wishful thinking. It has to be consciously sought, purposefully designed and brought to be via theoretical formulations, philosophical postulations and peculiar, deliberate enlightened communication practice. The focus of this essay is to raise some of the vital relevant questions concerning this central issue as it relates to our life and the practice of communication in Nigeria. An appropriate question here is, what is communication? For what purpose is it intent to serve? When and how do we inform, misinform and disinform or even propagate lies and deceit?

It is from this perspective that an enlightened, critical philosophy, liberated communication practice which is in consonance with the self – reliance orientation is a necessary corollary of that process in a rapidly changing environment or one in which development has assumed a chaotic character and progress therefore is retarded. In a society where” anything goes” but “nothing really works” an enlightened effective communication rooted in self-reliance helps to order the perception and orientation of the people along an optimal trajectory and thus helps to avoid dilly-dally in a situation where a quick perception and appropriate rapid change in orientation or reorientation is needed.

The “Truth” Conundrum

Humanity is today living in a new and frightening era of post-truth, a world in which lies and fiction are hosted as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. By way of definition, post-truth a condition where “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief⁴. In academic

4. Sean Coughlan, “What does post-truth mean for a philosopher?” BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/education-38557838>

and scientific world whose whole purpose is to establish objective facts, the post-truth world is not only an undisguised horror, it is the "corruption of intellectual integrity" and damage to "the whole fabric of democracy"⁵. It synonym, *fake news*, is any news or story put forward in the public domain that is inaccurate, dishonest, misleading, intentionally untrue, and even intended to damage the paradigm of factual information. It is a form of yellow journalism (news stories with catchy headlines but with little or no factual basis) that consists of deliberate misinformation, hoaxes or fraudulent stories, spread in traditional media or online social media intended to distort or "mislead the public for personal or corporate gains. It also goes by the name propaganda. In the recent past, this evil political tool swept Donald Trump and Brexit supporters to victory. In today's polarized political and media climate, Donald Trump has cannily sought to discredit any negative reporting by deeming it *fake news*. In Nigerian politics, fake news is believed to have aided Buhari's ascendancy to the presidency of Africa's biggest democracy in the 2015 to 2023.

A retrospective look at history reveals that the phenomenon of *Fake news*/propaganda, has always been part of the human communication landscape. The sophists, equipped with some basic knowledge, wielded the elements of Aristotelian logic but without principles and care for the truth earned their peddling a world of seeming and clever deception to win a case and turn round and argue the same case to win for the loser. They make truth a matter of clever dressing. They dressed up untruth in the very shiny robes of truth and sell it to the highest bidder. Fake news has seen the denial of entire nations and the creation of fake countries. Many people might be upset if and when we equate religion with fake news, but that's the truth. Fake (heretical) doctrines dominated the early Christian communities. Nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher defined it as "that which preserved the *appearance* of Christianity, and yet contradicted its

5. Coughlan "What does post-truth mean for a philosopher?"

essence"⁶ Thus, heresy is understood today to mean the denial of revealed truth as taught by the Church. The book of Second Peter Chapter two, verse One (2 Peter 2:1) exemplify this when it states, "even as there shall be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them and bring on themselves swift destruction"

Thus, fiction is amongst the most effective tools in humanity's toolkit⁷ Used as a propaganda, inclusive of hate speeches, fake news has in the past, isolated individuals or groups of people, destabilized governments, and fomented anarchy. Take the death of a nine-year-old English boy called Hugh whose body was found in a well in the town of Lincoln on 29 August 1255. The rumour that he was ritually murdered by local Jews quickly spread. Arising from this was the trial and execution of nineteen Jews. Eventually, the entire Jewish population of England was expelled in 1290. The story has it further that, the boy, was buried in Lincoln Cathedral and was venerated as a saint, drawing many miracles and pilgrims at his tomb even centuries after the expulsion of all Jews from England⁸. We are told that only in 1955- ten years after the Holocaust, did Lincoln Cathedral repudiate the blood libel, placing a plaque near Hugh's tomb which reads:

Trumped – up stories of 'ritual murders' of Christian boys by Jewish communities were common throughout Europe during the Middle Ages and even much later. These fictions cost many innocent Jews their lives. Lincoln had its own legend and the alleged victim was buried in the Cathedral in the year 1255. Such stories do not redound

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6. Alister E. MacGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 153
 7. For many a humanity, Adam and Eve does not exist though, religious institutions are acknowledged as useful and important human organizations that have inspired people to build hospitals, schools and bridges, to bring joy to billions, to be compassionate, courageous and creative.
 8. Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Pantheon, 2012); Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them* (New York: Penguin Press, 2013)

to the credit of Christendom⁹

This is a clear case of fake news that lasted for 700 years before it came to be shut down by strong and rationally convincing evidence. This is most likely what may have informed the reasoned mind of Grayling when he says fake news is not the sound bite any more, but the "I-bite". In his words, the whole post-truth phenomenon is about, 'My opinion is worth more than the facts.' It's about how I feel about things.

Today, fake news on social media has become part of the Nigerian pre and post-election debate with the attendant consequence developing an online culture that has made it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction. The truth therefore is that, the process of fake news is not only corrosive of our public conversation and our democracy; it has equaled a few claims on WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, Instagram and Twitter with the same credibility as a library full of research publications. In today's era of post-truth, everything is relative, stories are made up all the time and there is no distinction between truth and falsehood and more importantly, one doesn't need facts, s/he needs just lies. One ready example here has to do with the sitting president of Africa's largest democracy who was forced to refute repeated claims that he had died and a clone (Jibrin from Sudan), was now running his office. For the avoidance of any shred of doubt, the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari pinned his denial on his official Twitter handle thus, *This is the real me*, dismissing the allegation as *ignorant rumours*.¹⁰

To understand the phenomenon of Post-Truth, we must start with understanding truth and in particular the philosophical foundations of truth. In retrospect, there have emerged four truth-theories of truth, all of which share a common thread that truth exists, but are divided on grounds of what constitute the determinants truth in a

9. Frans de Waal, *Bonobo: The Forgotten Ape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 157

10. Stephanie Busari, "How Fake News was Weaponized in Nigeria's Elections", CNN, February 15, 2019, Accessed Monday 18th March, 2021

proposition. What then is truth? That truth of truth is that truth exists as an incontestable truth of truth. Defined, positively, *Truth is what is as it is the way it is in itself as it is*. The proposition *man is man by virtue of its being* (its constituent essence) as man is *truth*. Defined negatively, *truth is not what it not the way it is not as it is not in itself as it is not*". Thus, colour white is not colour black by virtue of the essential absence of whiteness. We shall here consider briefly, four theories that advance the truth thesis in order to distinguish what is true and what is false in relation to governance issues in the Buhari regime namely,

1. The *correspondence theory of truth* which posits that whatever corresponds to observable reality is true. This theory applies more in scientific corridors where experiments are conducted to verify (or disprove) a hypothesis. herein, correspondence theory is used to assume that what we observe in the experiment is what is true.
2. The *coherence theory of truth* which states that claims are true if they follow logically and coherently from a set of axioms (or intermediate propositions). If and when arguments are conducted in violation of the rules of logic, they are rejected as false. Questioning the credibility of one's opponent in an argument is an example against this theory.
3. The *pragmatic theory of truth* which holds that what is true is what is useful or beneficial to an individual. According to this theory, whatever is useful to one or beneficial for one, is true. This approach holds that, ideas are evaluated for ends, not means. Thus, this theory is most concerned with 'practical consequences', not theoretical ones. It is the practitioner's epistemology.
4. The *post-modern/consensus theory* of truth believes that what is true is what everyone agrees to be true. This theory plays an important part in the scientific method as it throws up compelling and convincing

propositions that assume the truth of observed reality that corresponds and coheres with facts. The trouble with this theory lies in the fact that, a group of conspirators may more likely reach a consensus based on mere tentative conclusions on what is true and known about the world and issues that are often aren't able to be verified in practice¹¹.

These theories of truth as they stand are traceable to traditional models whose origins can be located in ancient Greek philosophical doctrines of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. What this class of theories suggests is that the truth or the falsity of a representation is determined in principle entirely by how it relates to "things" by whether it accurately describes those "things". If and when things are described as they are in themselves as they are, it is said to be true. On the other hand, if things that are, are described as they are not, it is said to be false and fake.

The trouble with Fake news is that, emotions more at work than rationality. As is common with fake news, bad faith is gloried in matters of information and communication. Good practice dictates however that, if, and when two people argue in good faith about their personal opinions they will almost always come to the conclusion to "agree to disagree". However, an argument in *bad* faith thrives on masking one's opinion to appear as the whole truth when it is not the whole truth. In this way, logic and epistemology which together sustain objective facts- truth are replaced by appeals to emotion and personal belief- fake news enabled by technology. Yuval Harari¹² aptly adds here that, what still makes the current trend of fake news different is technology. According to him, this tool enables us to tailor

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11. Cedric Chin, The Four Theories of Truth As a Method for Critical Thinking <https://commoncog.com/four-theories-of-truth/> accessed on 4th July, 2023.
 12. Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* (Kinneret-Zmora-BitanDvir, 2018); Yuval Noah Harari, "The Truth about Fake News," YediotAhronot, December 20, 2018, <https://www.yediot.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-5430064,00.html>; Yuval Noah Harari, "Yuval Noah Harari Extract: 'Humans are a Post-Truth Species,'" The Observer, August 5, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2018/aug/05/yuval-noah-harari-extract-fake-news-sapiens-homo-deus>.

propaganda on an individual basis, and match the lies to the individual prejudices. The reality today is that, many people no longer take seriously the truth value of statements we express in support our beliefs, nor do many people realize the disjunction between statements we express and the underlying beliefs we hold due largely to ignorance¹³, disinformation¹⁴, misinformation¹⁵, Missing information¹⁶ and Self-deception or bad faith¹⁷. The argued point here is that, humanity must not resort to willful ignorance under any guise to trade in falsehood; knowing something to be true but consciously choosing ignorance.

The challenge of logic and the value of epistemology calls to question what individual politicians or information professionals can do to check the source of, and spot fake news. First of all, it would help to acquire some training in identifying logical mistakes in reasoning dressed up as rational arguments¹⁸. One of Muhammadu Buhari's favorite weapons against his perceived traducers is the *argumentum ad hominem*, typically described as an attack on a person's character or physical appearance as an alternative to confronting issues¹⁹. Not long after the Buhari regime took over in in 2015, the president took off to London to recant two campaign documents that propelled him to power thus making his “a government conducted by intentionally false and manipulative information”²⁰. This is in addition to the use of thousands of N-Power beneficiaries who have been incorporated into

13. Don Fallis correctly observes this in "The Varieties of Disinformation" (2014, 136)
14. Don Fallis (2009) notes in *A Conceptual Analysis of Disinformation* that, while disinforming may not require that the source of the misleading information intend to deceive people, it does at least require that the source of the information *foresee* that people will be deceived
15. <http://bid.ub.edu/en/39/frohlich.Htm>tt Nota
16. Carole Cadwalladr, “Interview with Daniel Dennett,” The Guardian, February 12, 2017.
17. Carole Cadwalladr, “Interview with Daniel Dennett,” The Guardian, February 12, 2017.
18. The University of Texas at El Paso has published a *Master List of Logical Fallacies* (Williamson, S. D.) which is available as open courseware.
19. Farooq Kperogi describes the Buhari regime as a troll factory, an online “human swine factory,” who label any news that makes them look bad “fake news.”
20. Farooq Kporogi “Propagandocracy and the Buhari Media Center,” <https://tribuneonlineg.com/the-buhari-propagandocracy-and-the-rhetoric-of-fake-news/> March 4, 2017 accessed on March 18tt, 2022

the Buhari Media Organization BMO as a propaganda and mind-management industry that employs thousands of people that sucks up millions of naira monthly to flood online comments with pro-regime propaganda, smear and libel government critics, invent slanderous falsehoods against critics, magnify the slip-ups of critics and use that as a crutch to deflect focus on the government's unending fraud, etc. is an example in point. In the Buhari presidency, lies, propaganda, sophistry and illusions are promoted and sustained in politics and governance in the most unethical communication practice.

As we seek to inform humanity, we must always direct our cognitive mechanisms towards the truth that makes society happier and less miserable. This calls for transcendental knowledge which capacitates humanity to discern beyond the appearances and mere sophistry, to the *noumena* and reality. We need transcend artificial logic, empower our epistemic ideas towards alternative positions in our search for truth. Descartes' skeptical approach seems attractive here. This approach enjoins us to be sceptical of the body of every knowledge, information and ideas that treats as criminals or is against social groups, even on the basis of real isolated events that promotes instrumental values, because this interpretation is biased by default. Lastly, it further commands us to be skeptical of every information/idea that attacks or targets persons for their characteristics rather than discussing ideas or actions for their intrinsic value.

As epistemic agents, humanity must complement *meaning* with *sense*. This means that we must not only promote a culture of a collectively shared complex of socially constructed signification, we must also deconstruct meaning to suit the uniqueness of man, and commit ourselves to creating a better life and a more humane world. This grounding logic was long contemplated by Immanuel Kant as the basis of human actions when he enjoined humanity to so “act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as

a means to an end, but always as an end”²¹. That is, objective facts must influence and shape public opinion more than appeals to emotion and personal beliefs.

Post-Truth and the Buhari Presidency

The era of post-truth, truth has been sullied with, and by propaganda and reality relativised to the extent that human power depends on creating and believing fictions. In Nigeria, politicians have smashed the political orthodoxy, due to ignorance, incompetence, lack of interest and in the process developing three personality disorders, namely, narcissistic personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, and paranoid personality disorder²². They have turned our fledgling democracy into a *kakistocracy* (Greek, *kakistos* (κάκιστος), meaning the worst. By implication, the Nigerian government is run by the worst in the society; by those least qualified, competent or principled. In the Nigerian experience, the *kakistocrats* are aided and abetted by two leading political parties that have presided over our fledgling democracy in the last twenty-three years namely, the All Progressive Congress- APC which has ruled for Seven years and People's Democratic Party- PDP that presided over Nigeria for sixteen years²³. These Parties not only lack every semblance of moral principle; their historical foundation is shaped by a sense of justice that is out of tune with contemporary political realities. The result is a veritable tidal wave of deception, falsehood and untruth which calls for redemption; of matching our way to the world outside Plato's *cave*.

Plato's allegory of the cave calls to mind the power of knowledge, truth and redemption. Here, Plato casts his own long shadow to invite us to free ourselves from the chains of slavery and away from mere shadows of reality to make our way

21. Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Ellington, James (3rd ed), (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1993), 36,4,429

22. Psychology Today Editorial Staff, 2017.

23. A.S. Ihuah, “Information, Communications Technology and the Post-Truth Challenge in Nigeria: Beyond Logic and Epistemology” *Philosophy and Praxis* 9 (2019): 137

to the world outside the cave. It is a shadow that does not promote ignorance but enables us to see the light. The Socratic profession of ignorance enlightens us by challenging our own, individually or professionally, and society's ignorance. It declares that truth matters in a society that hopes to remain democratic and just.

In our various corners of existence; individually and collectively, we are under obligation to promote truth by challenging the ignorance of information seekers and patrons and to cultivate their own competence; collectively, through programs that promote information literacy. It is our duty to challenge easy answers to complex questions and make available resources that inspire insight in information seekers and the world. This is the way out of Plato's *cave* (of ignorance) and into the light beyond a mutated logic and epistemology. This is the point long advocated by John Milton when he wrote: “Let Truth and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter”²⁴ Similarly, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, in a famous (dissenting) opinion wrote: “[W]hen men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas – that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market.”²⁵ The simple truth here is that, truth has never, at any time or in any activity, been high on the agenda of *Homo sapiens*. In religious worship, political practice or economic engagements, falsehood and false stories have an intrinsic advantage over truth when it comes to uniting people, even for selfish, dangerous and retrogressive agenda²⁶. Harari says

24. John Milton 1644 cited in “Free Speech, Fake News, and Democracy, Alvin I. Goldman Board of Governors Distinguished Professor, Rutgers University
25. See *Abrams v. United States* 1919: 630.
26. Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto and Premier of Northern Region is very much guilty of this as captured here, “This New Nation called Nigeria, should be an estate of our great grandfather, Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the North as willing tools, and the South, as conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us, and never allow them to have control over their future” - quoted in *The Parrot* of October 12, 1960, (cited by Oyeyemi, 2015; Awhefeada, 2018; and Anenga, 2018).

this much that, “Truth and power travel together so far, but sooner than later, they go their separate ways”. He adds;

If you want power, at some point you will have to spread fictions. If you want to know the truth about the world, at some point you will have to renounce power. You will have to admit things – for example about sources of your own power- that will anger allies, dishearten followers or undermine social harmony.²⁷

Three questions require our urgent attention here. Firstly, should we serve power or truth? Secondly, should we aim to unite people by making sure everyone believes in the same story? Thirdly, should we let people know the truth even at the price of disunity? Studies have shown that unity is prioritized over and above the question of truth and trust which have long been at the center of communication ethics inquiry.

While “no human groups, organizations, institutions, or states could succeed without the background assumptions of truthfulness”²⁸, it cannot be ignored that truth and truthfulness are grounded on the individual's active intention either to deliberately misinform and/or disinform others or to unknowingly uttering a falsehood²⁹.

Here understood, it is in the character of the human species to choose power and authority in order to control the world. In doing this, humanity unfortunately promotes myths and falsehood to the disadvantage of trust and integrity, the core ethos of good journalism and enlightened communication³⁰. While truth may appear

27. Yuval Noah Harari, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2008), 241-242

28. S. Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York: Random House US, 2011).

29. W. Wilcox, The Staged News Photograph and Professional Ethics. *Journalism Quarterly*, 38 (1961): 497–504.

30. There are many examples of news outlets doing it right with open, in-depth corrections and explanations of mistakes include: 1. *Dateline NBC's Faulty GM Crash Test*: (<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1993-03-23-1993082146-story.html>). 2. The New Republic and Stephen Glass' Fabrications: <https://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/1998/09/>

powerless and defeated in the face of power and authority, it has intrinsic strength and value that has no viable alternative once destroyed.

The rise of Post-Truth and deconstruction has thrown open for us the reality that, all truth is not only subjective and perspectival, there is no such thing as *the ultimate truth*. And if there is truth, the germane questions are, of whose truth, to what end, to what purpose? Like the spider's web, truth is the secretion of the subject, the spider spinning its web, adopting it to its prey. Truth is thus contextual, conditional and always an interpretation, a choice among so many infinite democratic possibilities. Such is the bent of the Buhari post-truth political regime that has foisted the dubious agenda on the Nigerian political space which itself created the political communication informed by the strategic use of rumours and falsehoods sustained by centralized mass news media gatekeepers. It should be noted that the Buhari regime, felt threatened by truth and so respond by delegitimizing truth itself, and replacing the consensus for truth with an alternative consensus, one for Post-truth. This culture of lies was adopted as a philosophy of governance that abhors rationality and truth. For this regime therefore, Post-Truth is not just the antithesis of truth, it is also its enemy, it appeals to consensus (for Post-Truth) as a way of undermining another consensus (for truth). As it were, the distinctive feature of the phenomenon of Post-Truth in the Buhari regime is that, it uses the arsenals of truth against truth itself by borrowing the same theoretical foundations of Truth to undermine the foundations of Truth³¹. This makes the Buhari presidency a totalitarian regime in the moulds in the tradition of Nazism wherein the connection between lying and truth is an ideology of governance. It could thus be said of this

bissinger199809) 3. Los Angeles Times Staples Center Scandal: (<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-dec-20-ss-46240-story.html>). 4. The New York Times Jayson Blair Controversy (<https://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/11/us/correcting-the-record-times-reporter-who-resigned-leaves-long-trail-of-deception.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>).

31. Truth, Lies and Tweets: A Consensus Theory of Post- Truth, Vittorio bufacchi, volume 47 issue 3.

regime in the voice of Arendt that, "... to some extent fascism has added a new variation to the old art of lying-the most devilish variation- that of lying the truth"³² with paid government agents fabricating facts, promoting lies and united in forcing citizens to accept lies as the truth.

A journey away from fakes and to an enlightened communication suggests a culture of intellectual hygiene. This requires a new instrumentality for the acquisition of a knowledge that is grounded on *justified true belief*, devoid of Francis Bacon's famous *Four Idols*.³³ Idols in Bacon's view are characteristic errors, natural tendencies, or defects that beset the mind and prevent it from achieving a full and accurate understanding of nature. Bacon points out that recognizing and counteracting the idols is as important to the study of nature as the recognition and refutation of bad arguments is to logic. Avoiding these idols or potential deceptions or sources of misinformation and disinformation beclouds our knowledge of external reality that empowers us to aim and communicate the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The question to be answered is whether the Buhari Presidency qualifies to be counted among the nations of truth tellers. George Orwell is reported to have said that "politicians along the entire political spectrum lie and make their lies sound truthful". This prophetic *aporia* has unfortunately been adopted by the Buhari presidency as a Political language. Under the Buhari Presidency, the Fulani umbrella bodies including Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria

32. Arendt, Hannah, "Approaches to the 'German Problem,'" In *Essays in Understanding*. Jerome Kohn (Ed.). (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 111.

33. 1. Idols of the Tribe are abstractions in error arising from common tendencies to exaggeration, distortion, and disproportion. 2. Idols of the Cave are those which arise within the mind of the individual that roams about and are variously modified by temperament, education, habit, environment, and accident. 3. Idols of the Marketplace are errors arising from the false significance bestowed upon words, and in this classification Bacon anticipated the modern science of semantics. 4. Idols of the Theater are those which are due to sophistry and false learning.

(MACBAN), Miyetti Allah KautalHore Fulani- Socio Cultural Association, Gan Allah Fulani Development Association, MobgalFulbe Development Association, Fulani Title Holders Association, Pastoral Resolve, Jonde Jam Fulani Youth Association, Fulani Nationality movement (FUNAM) and TabitalPulaaku (Nigeria Chapter) and other ranking Fulani leaders promoted Ignorance, misinformation, disinformation and self-deception, coming across as if they are the only people with rights and interests in the Nigerian Project. Hannah Arendt's statement more than any succinctly speaks to this castts their intentions,

The result of a consistent and total substitution of lies for factual truth is not that the lies will now be accepted as truth, and the truth be defamed as lies, but that the sense by which we take our bearings in the real world –and the category of “truth vs. falsehood” is among the mental means to this end –is being destroyed³⁴

When for example the Buhari Campaign Organization (BCO) sought to change the narrative about the Benue massacre to portray Muhammadu Buhari as *Mai-Gaskiya* (man of integrity) to be voted in the 2019 elections, supporting evidence was immaterial to prove their case. For them, the Benue people were to blame for the killings. It did not matter to them that their belief not only lack a true value but carries only the sound of truth for their likes who want to believe it. It has long being confirmed that the killings in Benue as elsewhere have been the handiwork of the armed Fulani militia, (who pose as pastoralists) who have long being declared the 4th deadliest terror group in the world after ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab³⁵

Clearly therefore, the Buhari post-truth presidency in conjunction with the Caliphate arrogated to itself the power of deciding truth and falsehood narratives. The narratives that were previously considered to be false or impossible have today

34. Hannah Arendt, “Truth and Politics”, edited by Baehr, Peter, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), 545–575

35. Press Statement by the Tiv Professionals Group titled, Fulani Militia Herdsmen Have Crossed the Line! held at the NUJ House in Makurdi, 20th March 2017.

been repackaged and forced on other ethnic nationalities as the whole truth. Farooq kperogi chronicles the limitless lies of the Buhari regime as examples of the many lies, misinformation and disinformation that has not only served to mutate truth, logic and knowledge, but has also diminished the Nigerian economy and politics.³⁶

Towards a Complimentary Ontology for a New Nigeria

That Nigeria is living far below her potentiality for greatness is a truism. More than anything, the eight years of lies under the Buhari regime destroyed democracy, compromised the economy and rubbished social cohesion. This much was confirmed by the coordinating minister of economy under the succeeding regime of Tinubu, Wale Edun that, the current inflation in the country was blame on printing of trillions of naira during the administration of President Buhari without productivity. In his words; “The ₦22.7 trillion printed by the central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) through ways and means overdraft for the federal government from 2015 to 2023

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36. For instance, on February 18, 2017, the Buhari regime lied that Nigeria was the “second largest producer of rice in the world” and attributed this information to CNN. *Premium Times* found that Nigeria was not even among the top 10 rice producers in the world and that the reference to CNN was a prevarication. Lauretta Onochie, Buhari's social media aide, has been caught countless times passing off stock photos of road construction in other African countries as evidence of the regime's infrastructural upgrade of Nigeria. In October 2018, APC's official, verified Twitter handle passed off a photo of a rice farm from India to tout Buhari's “rice revolution in Nigeria.” In February 2018, former Agriculture minister Audu Ogbeh lied that the Thailand ambassador to Nigeria had told him that Buhari's Government was responsible for the collapse of seven of its rice mills in his country. The ambassador told the Nigerian news media he never had any such conversation with Ogbeh. The Cable also found out that, outside of the ambassador's disavowal, Ogbeh's claims were totally made up. In October 2018, Festus Keyamo, now a minister in the Buhari regime, downloaded a photo of an abandoned rail track in the Middle East and said it was a photo of a rail track in Nigeria until Buhari came to the rescue. Much earlier in 2014, Kayode Ogundamisi, one of the best paid diasporan Buhari Media Center (BMC) trolls, intentionally shared a fake photo of Congolese trekkers and said it was Boko Haram refugees fleeing in Adamawa. Read: *The Buhari Propagandocracy and the Rhetoric of “Fake News”*
<https://tribuneonlineng.com/the-buhari-propagandocracy-and-the-rhetoric-of-fake-news/> accessed on March 13th, 2022.

landed Nigeria into hyper-inflation”³⁷. What this means is that, the helpless and hapless Nigerians were left to their own devices while the privileged few took everything to themselves. Under this regime of lies, Buhari also mortgaged Nigeria's crude oil for twenty-five (25) years to obtain \$3 billion loan³⁸. While this loan was meant to boost Nigeria's foreign reserves and defend the naira, as was lied to Nigerians, the naira further depreciated significantly thereby defeating the purpose of the loan. This is aside from the many lies of the regime that the modular refineries as well as the Dangote refinery that were commissioned will be supplied crude by NNPC. It is now no longer news that the regime lied to Nigerians. The NNPC that has 20% stake in Dangote refinery cannot supply enough crude oil for Dangote refinery or the modular refineries in the country. This is the tragedy that has befallen Nigeria under the Buhari regime.

This regime of lies and propaganda has over the last eight years blinded Nigerians

37. The Special Investigator on the CBN and Related Entities, Jim Obaze, has accused Emefiele of unlawfully lodging billions of naira in at least 593 bank accounts across the United States, United Kingdom, and China. These transactions reportedly occurred without the necessary approvals from the CBN board of directors and the CBN Investment Committee. The report also reveals that Emefiele contracted the redesign project to De La Rue of the UK for £205,000 pounds after the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Plc expressed its inability to deliver within the required timeframe. The investigation further exposes that ₦61.5 billion was earmarked for the printing of new notes, with ₦31.79 billion already paid. As of August 9, 2023, ₦769 billion of the new notes were in circulation. The report claimed that Emefiele also manipulated the Ways and Means of the CBN, with alleged connivance by his four deputy governors. It further exposes the creation of a fictional presidential subsidy and an expansion of the Ways and Means portfolio to accommodate financial irregularities. Documents reportedly reveal instances where senior CBN and government officials padded approved amounts, leading to an alleged misappropriation of funds. In contrast, Buhari's fight against corruption was supposed to be one of his main campaign promises when he ran for president. He promised to recover looted funds from previous administrations and prosecute those involved in corruption scandals. However, his efforts have been largely ineffective and controversial. corruption scandals. under Buhari regime by Alade Abayomi Adeleke December 26, 2023 Accessed on march 19th 2024.

38. August 19, 2022 - <https://www.reuters.com/authors/felix-onuah> accessed on March 18th,

and cloned a set of religious, regional, and tribal extremists. The regime divided Nigeria on religious, ethnic and party lines but united them in hunger and made them relatives in hardship, friends in poverty and, neighbours in bad roads, partners in insecurity and brothers and sisters in complain. This regime failed the Nigerian state from a formerly epistemic purity of the past thus unveiling in the process a conflict of *truth* and *facts* as opposed to falsehood, misinformation, missing information and propaganda in many areas of statecraft. Aided by material, intellectual corruption and the poor leadership recruitment process, this regime instilled a political culture that created a huge gap between the anticipated gains of democracy and democratic dividends.

Conclusion

The foregoing discourse argues the conclusion that, humanity has seen the advent of *Post-Truth*; the era of Anti-Enlightenment in which truth and reality is rejected and replaced with arrogant anti-positivism, propaganda, misinformation, disinformation and the transmission of fakes news (lies and untruth). I have argued that the journey of truth telling must always balance our viewpoints, and try to combine the idealism of Plato with the practical method of Aristotle, it must derive from Plato a breath of vision and Aristotle's depth of penetration as well as Socrates' utility and be a sworn enemy of sophistry like *Diogenes*. Truth without a reasoned deconstruction of the sources of knowledge is fake news. I argue further that, under the Buhari presidency, there was clear loss of respect for truth and facts hence the decent into a dark period of epistemological murk, poverty of ideas and economic uncertainty never ever experienced in Nigerian political history. Given this culture of deliberate deceit, the Nigerian state lost respect for truth and facts, and the desire to understand the world on the basis of truth and facts³⁹. Today ethnic nationalities have been polarized, the economy has been shattered, politics has been disordered. With shameless, systematic and unceasing lying that has made the distinction

39. Carole Cadwalladr, "Interview with Daniel Dennett," *The Guardian*, February 12, 2017.

between fact and fiction, true and false none existent. This scenario only proves that, the Buhari regime of lies and propaganda cloned leaders who, for want a an appropriate identity could be referred as *Bad Samaritans*⁴⁰ whose intentions for Nigeria may be worthy though, their poor understanding of leadership requirement and history of where they are coming from leads them into policy errors. Equipped with a tool kit that contain falsehood, propaganda, misinformation and missing information, the actions and or inactions of the Buhari presidency have impacted more to enslave the Nigerian people than help to develop them. The regime has consciously and consistently developed new political institutions and unpopular policies intended to deprive Nigerians of their legitimate right of accessing power and good governance.

The naked fact is that these lies and propaganda have produced poverty, disunity among ethnic nationalities, the political leadership and foisted criminality and youth restiveness. I submit here that, the Buhari Presidency that was characterized by an apolitical culture alien to known rules of democratic practice and governance policy had not only compromised Nigerian democracy, it ruined the economy, fanned the embers of ethnic and religious bigotry, and rubbished social cohesion. What Nigeria needs today is the reconstruction of reality and truth and subject Knowledge/information to the triple filter test of not only being *true*, it must be *good* and *useful*. The Nigerian leadership must take upon itself the task of rebuilding its belief in reality and respecting the noblest pursuit of truth independent of the inherited Buhari regime of the truth of lies.

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