

## **Nigeria, a hawks-public: Diran Ademiju-Bepo's *No More the Taming Hawks***

<https://doi.org/10.70118/TACJ0010>

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses Diran Ademiju-Bepo's *No More the Taming Hawks*. This play metaphorically critiques Nigeria's political leadership as a "Hawks-Public," characterised by predatory governance and systemic corruption. Through vivid metaphors such as "Hawks-Cellency" and "Supreme-Hawks-in-Council," the play portrays a leadership class prioritising self-interest and exploitation over people-centric governance. Employing prioritising qualitative methodology, the study dissects the symbolic and narrative elements of the play, revealing the parallels between its fictional Hawks and the realities of Nigeria's political elite. Drawing from the Realist Theory of Conflict and Reader-Response Theory, this research interprets the cyclical nature of leadership failures and broken promises, framing Nigeria as a nation ruled by Hawks who thrive on chaos and power struggles. The paper further examines the play's thematic critique of dictatorial tendencies, coup-driven power shifts, and the erosion of traditional values. By exploring the symbolic clash between Hawks and Doves, the study highlights the need for unity and collective action among Nigeria's "Doves"—the peaceful and virtuous citizens—to restore the ideals of democracy. The findings underscore the play's success as a satirical mirror of Nigeria's political absurdities, challenging the audience to confront societal flaws and advocate for transformative leadership. Ultimately, the paper posits that *No More the Taming Hawks* serves as an artistic and political call to action, urging Nigerians to transcend divisive self-interest and forge a unified front for national renewal.

**Keywords:** Political Satire, Nigerian Leadership Critique, Realist Conflict Theory, Drama and Governance Analysis

## Introduction

The dramatist uses his work to make commentary on issues surrounding him. Through his work, the dramatist can advocate and persuade others to take actionable steps towards bettering their societies. The dramatist can do this successfully through his works because he is “a member of society, so naturally, his artistic sensibilities are shaped and sharpened by the socio-economic contradictions and political happenings of his time” (Dandaura, 2002, p. 179). The dramatist sometimes uses satire to make caustic statements about society. This is because satirical works aim at “hurting us so that we can amend.” (Bamidele, 2001, p. 40) The aim of adopting satire in his work is often so that the dramatist can prick the consciences of his readers/audience. Bamidele (2001, p. 40) states, “Even when we laugh, we see through the glen and reflect on our inadequacies.” Like other dramatists, Diran Ademiju uses his play *No More the Taming Hawks* to make a vital commentary depicting the “Achille’s Heel” of the Nigerian political space. A political space that is only a vicious cycle of failed and aborted promises by failed republics masquerading as change catalysts. The play accurately lampoons the Nigerian leadership and governance system, describing its actors as preying Hawks with a high thirst for corruption. This paper aims to analyse the Nigerian political system that is turning the country into a ‘Hawsk-Public’, not worthy of a republic. Diran depicts a timely and thought-provoking picture of a republic adrift in tumultuous oceans.

As a post-Osofisan generation playwright, ‘Diran Ademiju-Bepo, in his play *No More the Taming Hawks*, sparks a revolution against the series of failed Republics thrown up by the political system in our country, Nigeria. Using the African total theatre tradition of ritual and storytelling narratives, he passionately conveys his message(s) to the nation. He painted the metaphor of Flights on the canvas to depict Nigeria; in doing this, he believes that we had a Take-Off moment in history as a nation. This is likened to the military take-over of power, especially the January 15, 1966 coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, to redeem the nation's image since the country had been run aground for him and his team. To wake up and discover that the military intervention was only but a worse narrative. In describing the spine of incidents in the play, the playwright whets the reader's appetite thus, on the blurb of the attractive 79-page book, divided into ten parts: the take-off and the flights that follow. This paper adds to various political commentaries on Nigeria's failed leadership system. It pricks the consciences of the ruling elite to repent from Hawks syndrome and the Nigerians with patriotic spirit to emulate the unity of the doves in the play.

## Literature Review

This study adopts dual theories of play analysis. It employs the theory of Realist Conflict and the Reader-Response theory, which originated from hermeneutics. According to Olu (2012), “theory is a set of ideals of varying status and origin which may interpret or explain some phenomena”. The realist theory of conflict shares both theological and biological doctrines and traces the roots of disputes to an apparent weakness and flaw in human nature. A human nature seen as selfish and desperate to pursue individualised interests is defined as power. In the words of Kegley and Wittkopt (1981), “...politics is essentially and unchangeably a struggle among self-interested states for power and position under anarchy, with each competing state pursuing its national interests. By implication, thus, it is a struggle among individuals (politicians) for power and position of authority. The founding father of the realist theory of conflict is the Greek historian Thucydides, who wrote the seminal account of the war between Athens and Sparta. The core and crux of this theory is that people are naturally narrowly selfish and ethically flawed. People would exude insatiable lust

for power and strive to gratify against all odds, including staging coups and giving false and unrealistic promises (Olu, 2012, p. 87).

This theory is suitable for this study after considering the insatiable lust for power by politicians or failed republics at the detriment of others, as it almost always results in failed, unrealistic and aborted promises. Often, they climb the dizzy heights of political power for selfish gains, as demonstrated by the hawks in Diran's *No More the Taming Hawks*. The realist theory of conflict is used to weave and analyse the central conflict in the play introduced by the playwright as a result of the struggle for political power amongst the characters in the play. We will be seeing this in detail in the play analysis. On the other hand, the Reader-Response theory is adopted to accommodate the researcher's response to the text *No More the Taming Hawks* by Diran Ademiju-Bepo as a direct mirror of the society and the researcher's invention of the term "Hawks-Public" inferred from behaviours of the hawks in the play and the interpretation of the country Nigeria as a "Hawks-Public", not worthy of a republic. Reader response theory, or reception theory, emerged as a reaction against the New Critical insistence that all meaning was contained entirely within the text without regard for external factors. "Reader-response theorists argue that reading, making meaning, is an active process, not a passive one; readers engage with texts and form interpretations based on subjective experiences and what the text says. Some branches of reader-response theory examine individual reader's responses, often from a psychological or psychoanalytic perspective; others look for the social parameters within which interpretation takes place, arguing that "interpretive communities" establish particular reading modes. Theorists associated with reader-response theory include Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, E. D. Hirsch, and David Bleich" (Awuawuer, 2020, p. 32). The relationship between reader-response theory and the play understudy is critically analysed in the analysis of the play.

Biodun Jeyifo (1985), commenting on the critical cardinal aim of drama, posited thus: "... drama deals at a highly concentrated ... intense level with the contradictions of social existence. A dramatic piece which does not, in one form or another, deploy as its organising structural criteria a physical or emotional conflict, a moral or spiritual contest of wills, or a confrontation between contending principles is almost inconceivable. Equally important is the fact that drama does not merely subsume conflict merely as its organising structural motif; beyond this, drama also axiomatically attempts a resolution of sorts, a provisional synthesis in the conflicting pulls within its constitutive action ..." Lending his voice on the role and function of literature, Ngugi (1981, p.5-6) stated "Literature results from conscious acts of men in society. At the level of the individual artist, the very act of writing implies a social relationship: one is writing about somebody for somebody. At the collective level, literature, as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity, embodies in words and images the tension, conflicts, contrast, and contradictions at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. It reflects on the aesthetic and imaginative planes of a community's wrestling with its total environment to produce the basic means of life ...." As Wilson (1988, p. 48) stated, "Art may question society's view or reaffirm them, but it cannot escape them". Drama is an art, and as such, it mirrors or reflects life. It does not try to encompass the whole of life at one time. Instead, it selects and focuses on a specific part of the total picture. Throughout history, drama has concentrated or focused on one subject: human beings. To confirm

Barranger (1995, p. 3) states, "Drama is a way of seeing men and women in action, of observing what they do and why they do it... because human beings are both drama's subject and its means of expression, drama is one of the most immediate ways of experiencing another concept of life: of what it means to be human."

Throughout history, some playwrights have written primarily to entertain their audience, and others have written with a serious purpose: to call attention to injustice, make a statement against war, and raise moral or philosophical questions. To corroborate this, Barranger (1995, p. 3) writes, "Some playwrights write to expose

truths about realities of social injustice, some write to make political statements about people, economies and political system. Playwright Wright a play to express some aspect of reality, emotions, and feelings connected with all of humanity, some measure of experience, vision, or conviction about the world.” This is evident in many works of art, such as *No More the Taming Hawks*, where the playwright exposes Nigeria’s sad political realities using the metaphor of the Hawks and Doves.

Kobina Sekyi in Ghana, Soyinka and Clark in Nigeria exemplify these trends on the West Coast of Africa. Disillusionment, political power tussles, alienation, and betrayal were the essential outcomes of independence-generated plays exploring anti-neo-colonialist, anti-neo-imperialist issues all over Africa. Blacks have struggled to create a dramatic culture to “articulate problems, ideas, beliefs, experiences, in propounding paths of change and illuminating the most profound aspects of the human being (Obafemi, 2012, pp. 29-30). In this same vein, the plays *The Angel* by Ahmed Yerima, Obanla, *The Travails of our Heroes* by Abiodun Macaulay and many others expose the truth about the realities of social imbalances. These imbalances include corruption, political assassination, abuse of power, godfatherism, coup and lust for power, which *No More the Taming Hawks* strongly detest in the actions of hawks in the play, especially in the character of Ajagunla's Hawkscellence. These imbalances have destroyed the fabric and essence of our nationhood and eroded confidence and trust between the Nigerian politicians and the masses they claim to lead. And to arrest these menaces, drama stands tall. The role of art in addressing political issues dates back to the very origin of art itself. For instance, according to (Augusto Boal 1979, p.1), “Those who try to separate theatre from politics try to lead us into error- and this is a political attitude... The argument about the relationship between theatre and politics is as old as theatre and as politics”. Boal believes this is because theatre is politics, and politics is theatre. Political theatre/drama is a term that has been used to refer to three different phenomena: theatre, in this case, a drama that comments on political issues; political action or protest that has a dramatic quality to it; and any action by politicians that is intended to make a point rather than accomplish something substantive. In the history of drama, therefore, there is a long tradition of performances addressing topical issues, especially those germane to the society itself.

This encourages consciousness and social change. The political satire performed by the comic poets at the theatre greatly influenced public opinion in the Athenian democracy. Those earlier Western dramas, arising out of the politics or democratic city-state of Greek society, had a ritualistic and social significance that enhanced the relevance of the political issues being examined by drama. Drama challenges an audience member's beliefs and encourages them to assess their moral values critically. Indeed, the essential functional independence of drama and politics can be illustrated by specific Indigenous performances that have remained unchanged for many years under various political parties, systems, and orders. Although government and politics may be helpful to man as a social animal, they are partially inevitable or always necessary. Drama is political if it concerns the state or takes sides in politics. According to Kirby (1979, p. 9), “It is an art that is intentionally concerned with government that is intentionally engaged in or consciously takes sides in politics”. Drama is an intellectual drama as it deals with political ideas and concepts, usually in an attempt to attack or support a particular political position. Political commentary in the form of drama often explicitly points out the institutions and aspects of government that should change; it usually describes and supports the exact nature of these changes.

John McGrath observed, as documented by Kritzer (2008, p.121) in his essay, “There is no such thing as a depoliticised world”, “While drama is not the only art with political dimensions, it offers a unique forum for the political by involving audiences in a perceptible if not fleeting, social reality through the operation of its conventions. Evidence of the close and perhaps intrinsic relationship between politics and drama can be found in the long history of governmental regulation of drama in degrees and

forms that have not been applied to music, visual art, or written fiction. Drama's most basic political potential lies in its paradigmatic relationship to the polis: within theatre's space, assembled citizens view and consider representations of their world enacted for them in the immediacy of live performance." Additionally, Nadine Gordimer (2013, pp. 115, 121) has described fiction's relationship with works and those of other writers served legitimately the politics they believe in, it is "because the imaginative transformations of fiction ... help people understand their natures and know that they are not powerless." In the course of interpreting Roberto Bolano's novel, 2666, Paul Martins (2016, p. 87) summarises the function of a political commentary as a response to texts that "thematically represent ethical and political issues" that "intersect with the interests of the academy (the critics, literary scholars, or the entire enlightened community)"

Schechner (1993 quoted in Kritzer (2008, p. 121) said, "Art's subject, structure, and action is a social process". Michael Kustow (1987) cited in Kritzer, 2008, xv) similarly describes theatre as both "an art and ... a model of living together". Writing of political processes, the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1965), quoted in Kritzer (2008, p.25), argues that "a necessary constituent of political freedom is a space in which freedom can be exercised- "a place where people could come together". Political artists embrace the opportunity to lend their voices and call attention to social and political problems. They embody talent, optimism, and a sense of admirable personal responsibility. Therefore, drama and politics are inseparable.

It is also germane to state that art, drama in particular, and democracy have a twin existence. Politics and drama derive from the same source: people and the community, playing roles and finding expressions and solutions to life-threatening issues. In this regard, we must always take more than a cursory and superficial view of Shakespeare's characterisation of the world as a stage." On this same stage, Diran, in *No More the Taming Hawks*, engages the audiences and readers, tackling the political issues in the country via the symbolic choice of Hawks and Doves.

In the Nigerian situation, politics and issues of a "fundamentally political nature", as democracy, as Amuta (1989, p. 56) argues, "has always occupied a central position in African literature". In the case of Nigeria, be it the Yoruba Travelling Theatre, the exotic arena of modern drama, Or even the participatory squares and circles of popular, community, and development drama demonstrate political sensibility and a robust engagement in politics. Incessant changes in government are expected under the pretence of falsehood and fake promises. From inception to date, political drama has been a viable form of drama, even the most practised today, as seen in many Nigerian dramatist plays. As stated earlier, drama interrogates many political misgivings in the society. One Nigerian play that addresses these issues is *Obanla* by Abiodun Macaulay. As it is seen in *Obanla*, a play about political tussles and assassinations in Nigeria, when Oba Fiwasaye is dethroned by his chiefs and replaced with Balogun Arobiojo, a warlord, their motive was clearly expressed in the opening scene. The chiefs and Arobiojo, with his soldiers, invaded the palace. It is a bloody coup. The palace soldiers were called, and King Fiwasaye and his wife were incarcerated. The chiefs advocated for removing Fiwasaye because he did not listen to them. He did not cooperate with them. This underscores the reality of the rotten underbellies of Nigeria's political system, in which only crooks survive, and those who stand on the truth are often ousted brutally. This is also reflected in Diran's *No More the Taming Hawks*, where the politics of enthronement and dethronement for selfish reasons via coups within the Hawks-in-Council reign supreme.

Arobiojo in *Obanla* was a warrior and a soldier whose ambition was to sit on the throne and rule his town perpetually. This is also found in the character of Ajagunla in *No More the Taming Hawks*, who enthrones himself forcefully to reign over the Royal Hawks with no intention to give way to any democratic process, a typical behaviour often exhibited by Nigerian dictators. Arobiojo, his wife, and the chiefs in *Obanla* and the Hawks-in-Council in Diran's *No More the Taming Hawk's* reasons for wanting

power differ from why Nigerian leaders eagerly crave power. Nigeria experienced her first coup in 1966, led by Colonel Kaduna Nzeogwu. It was a bloody coup that led to the assassination of many leaders like Oladoke Akintola, Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa and many others. The country experienced many coups after that, with each leading figure in the coup convincing Nigerians of his pure intentions and reasons for seizing power, to turn into monsters like Ajagunla in *No More the Taming Hawks*, which, after seizing power through a coup, transforms himself into His 'Hawks-Cellency'. Nigeria is not alone in this coup experience, as similar occurrences are common in other African countries, such as Ghana, Burkina Faso, Liberia, Libya, Egypt, Ivory Coast, etc. Coups brought in Rawlings of Ghana, Samuel Doe of Liberia, and Gaddafi of Libya, to mention a few (Obafemi 2012, p. 86). And recently, Africa has witnessed the rebirth of military coups since August 2020 in Niger, Burkina-Faso, Mali, Guinea, etc, all with the promises of good fortunes. Indeed, the reverse is often the case after taking overpower, just as experienced in *No More the Taming Hawks*.

Dramatists such as Femi Osofisan have also questioned dubious politics in his plays, such as *Who is Afraid of Solarin*, a battle of political titans, then the plights of the rich and the poor in *Morountodun*. Tor Iorapuu's *April 1421* is also a condemnation of sit-tight leadership in Africa and Nigeria, specifically as attempted by Olusegun Obasanjo in 2007, also condemning electoral malpractices, election rigging, maiming, and assassinations of political opponents in the quest for power. Therefore, over the years, drama has been concerned about society's politics and its negative and positive impact on the citizens. Ahmed Yerima has also lampooned the Nigerian political leadership in many of his plays, addressing serious and worrisome sociopolitical issues in Nigerian society. Julius Adeoye (2013, p. 7) states, "Most of Ahmed Yerima's plays can be discussed as socio-political realities because their thematic preoccupations are current societal issues. Even when the play is not overtly speaking the language of politics, it is covertly aligning itself with the struggle of the generality of the people. For Adeoye, "Yerima discusses actual events, people, professions, and politics in *Kaffir's Last Game*. Ubong Nda (2016 p. 17) stated that Yerima's *Kaffir's Last Game* "is an artistic exercise in political note-sharing between two African nations. Because man by nature is a political animal, politics largely dominates arts discussions and themes the world over, and *No More the Taming Hawks* is not an exception, as the play is woven together by episodes of political conflicts between the 'Royal Doves' and 'Hawsk-in-Council'.

Another politically relevant play of Yerima is *The Sisters*, described by the playwright as "about battle with bitter truth and painful reality", which reveals the vanity and deceit characterising the lives of the high and mighty in society. The play also stresses the vagaries of political power and social status. The fact that the play deals with the life and sudden death of a president of an African nation is, in itself, political. The president has ruled for twenty years and is preparing for another term of five years. This is after he has served four continuous terms of five years each in office. The play can be seen as an allegorical statement on the life of General Sani Abacha, Nigeria's late head of state. Similarly to *The Sisters* by Yerima, *No More the Taming Hawks* presents the greed of seat-tight syndrome in Nigeria in the character of Hawks-in-Chief. Though, in reality, Abacha ruled for five years (August 1993-June 10, 1998) as a military head of state, he was preparing to transform himself into a civilian president before his untimely death. *The Sisters*, which discusses the sudden death of a serving Nigerian president, presents a "tortuous movement of shocking revelations" about the lives of the characters. The play reveals a shocking reality that the sisters are afraid to face. No doubt, dramatists worldwide are concerned with the socio-political intrigues underpinning their societies. "The belief of New Critics that "literature is metaphorical and symbolical" (Frank J. D'Angelo, 1978, p. 32) is hardly contestable. The dramatist often finds himself using tropes as part of his/her creative tools, which, in fact, according to D'Angelo (1978, p. 34), "represent the power of the imagination in its effort to grasp the world figuratively". "Political power therefore, its misuse, covetousness and the fierce tussle for it are the recurring motifs underlying dramatic

actions” In contemporary plays such as Johnson’s *The Fight Has Just Begun*, Okafor’s *The Lion and the Iroko*, Idegu’s *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* etc., politics takes centre stage.

Drama focuses on the affairs of men as they interact with their fellow men and their societies. According to (Awuawuer, 2020, p. 33), “authenticates why Ola Rotimi, as a dramatist, was committed and concerned with issues of survival of the society. These can be seen in all his dramatic creations, beginning from his classic, *The Gods are Not to Blame* (1971) through *Hopes of the Living Dead* (1988) to *If a Tragedy of the Ruled* (1983) and *Holding Talks* (1979). Indeed, Nigerian theatre artists see themselves as waging a war on behalf of society. They see themselves as performing a function of social responsibility towards their fellow citizens.” Diran, in his *No More the Taming Hawks*, has joined the troop of social and political crusaders in the country. *No More the Taming Hawks*, like other Nigerian political dramas, hold facts, opinions, and strategies on the state of political leadership in Nigeria. This social and political crusade of the dramatist is rooted in the spirit of love, harmony and collective will as the dramatist believes no cock, no hen, no goat, no keg of palm oil is demanded...for sacrifice... (for the joy, peace, and stability of the world) but love (p. 16). The text is optimistic despite years and seasons of gory tales through the cultural and socio-political history of the country. The play text fights against hatred, anger, terrorism, nepotism, sectionalism, godfatherism, violence, and self-centred politics, among other vices that retards national development.

## Analysis and Discussion

Engaging in Diran’s *No More the Taming Hawks* critically, one can sense the chaos and uncertainty in the land. A sense of hopelessness darkens the crest of a new dawn in search of hope and the quest for power preoccupying mortal beings’ minds. With a thought-provoking silent question of where lies the solution? The playwright’s symbolic representation of the characters as ‘Hawks’ and ‘Royal Doves’ is apt and commendable. Hawks are, by nature, fierce and top predators in the animal kingdom who prey on their targets. A deeper probe of this symbolic representation sees hawks in their usual chaotic character, as a perfect representation of Nigeria’s detractors and usurpers whose bellies are filled with disorder, conflict and violence, and constantly preying on those they seek to lead, while the ‘Royal Doves’ representing the few good men and women in the country that seek nothing but peace as it is typical in the God-given character of doves, as symbols of peace, love, and hope. Considering the hawks’ grip on the doves in the play, one will not be out of place to deduce that Nigeria is better described as a ‘Hawsk-Public’ (Republic of Hawks), practising a government of the Hawks by the Hawks and for the Hawks. As a global parable relevant for us as a nation, the playwright pricks our consciences and thinking faculties never to forget in a hurry. The litanies of empty, vague, broken, unfulfilled, and rotten promises we have been made by a series of usurpers masquerading as leaders continue to live in our memories. The actions and inactions of the characters mirror the rotten political episodes in our country, Nigeria.

As a symbolic colony populated by doves (the peaceful) and hawks (the chaotic) who have co-habited for seasons, conflict sets in, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere immediately after the death of the king dove. The death of the king dove throws open the race for the throne. Especially among the heirs, Tomide, Maderin and Rohunfade (the heiress and their only sister), to wear the beaded crown of their father for an interim period. The colony at first echoes with joy, having escaped the wrath of the gods. However, as Rohunfade is about to sit on the throne, a predator fowl flies into the midst of the celebration, causing commotion and scattering the doves and the entire colony, perching on the throne, to the amazement of all. The intrusion by the hawk birthed a burning conflict that would later become the reason for the chaos in the

play. The realist theory of conflict becomes the researcher's suitable theory for critically analysing the conflict set in by the intruding hawk.

When the hawk intrudes, to their surprise, they declare that the hawk is a bushfowl that should not have any reason to be among the domestic fowl. Interestingly, not only does the hawk intrude on the gathering of the domestic fowl, but it also breathes fire and invites intense conflict by suspending customs and traditions. It disbands the Council of Elders, transforms himself into His Hawkcellency and Commander-in-Chief of the Hawks Forces, Ajagunla Asagbade and invites his friends to join him, making it a 'Hawks-Public'. After that, the colony knew there was no peace, but episodes of one conflict led to another. What brought the doves and hawks into a head-on collision is political power. And if two or more people want the same political power, conflict must set in. This perfectly applies the realist conflict theory to interrogate the nature of political conflicts between political animals. In this case, the political disputes between the Hawks themselves and between the Hawks and the Royal Doves should be interrogated. Using this theory, the researcher discovers a motif that unites all the hawks and doves in the play, which is 'self-interest'. In pursuing this self-interest, the hawks fight the doves and even end up fighting themselves and staging coups against each other. For instance, Asarinle, a close friend of Ajagunla, also dethrones Ajagunla in a coup. And Asarinle, too, gets dethroned by another hawk, Adaboaye. The coups and counter-coups have one underlying reason: the quest for political power, resulting in conflict.

The twist in the drama unfolds when the intimate relationship between Wande/Asagbade and Rohunfade is revealed during an affair, a relationship which he wants to revive at all costs while still a usurper of her throne. The conflict heightens when Rohunfade challenges the intruding hawk to reclaim her legacy with His Hawkcellency, vowing to resist at all costs. Again, interestingly, a deeper probe into the series of conflicts in the play, with a critical interpretation of the symbolic representation of the dove and the hawks one finds the doves, led by the disbanded Council of Elders, the heirs, and Regent-designate; forgetting their intrigues and insincerity. Now strengthened by their unity of purpose, they constitute a severe opposition to the intruding Hawk. After seasons of promises and cancellations, eventually, His Hawkcellency fixes a date for a return of the people's inheritance. However, the climax comes when, on the threshold of glory for the land, the chief hawk of the right hand, Asarinle, stages a 'palace coup', forcing him to surrender, only for him to also preside over another season of fake promises. The people's dreams and hopes flee into oblivion as Rohunfade, the symbol of the struggle, joins the Hawks colony. With the Hawks having a firm grip and total control of the colony, including recruiting the likes of Rohunfade, who is seen as the symbol of genuine struggle, to join the Hawks, thereby throwing hope to the wind, the researcher stands on the shoulders of readers-response theory to declare the colony which is a reflection of Nigeria, a 'Hawks-Public'. Using the realist theory of conflict, the researcher understands the cause and effect of the conflict in the play, informed mainly by greed, selfishness, and the hunger for political power. Thus, this justifies the realist theory of conflict, which states that all humans are inherently selfish and always pursue selfish interests (s).

The play *No More the Taming Hawks* argues that the endless failed promises by Nigerian politicians have made the country suffer from political epilepsy and trust deficits, turning the country into a colony of bearing hawks who destroy people's livelihoods and take life at will, which again, aptly justifies the researcher's interpretation of the republic as a 'Hawks-Public'. The reader-response theory gives the researcher the latitude to interpret the characters' behaviours vis-à-vis the behaviours of Nigerian politicians and qualify the country as truly a 'Hawks-Public'. The brutal invasion of the bush hawk, known as His Hawkcellency, its disorderliness and blatant disregard for the norms, custom, and tradition of the Royal-Doves,



discarding them and transforming himself into an untouchable and unquestionable Hawkcellency, is a stark reality and a perfect description of the typical Nigerian dictatorial characters who rudely snatch elections or rig themselves into leadership positions. Another reality of the Nigerian political system displayed by the hawks is the disrespect for the rule of law, dispersing all the doves (good men and women), then transforming themselves into the mightiest and the untouchables in society. But, since their whims and caprices are often what reigns just as the whims and caprices of his Hawkscellency reign supreme with such impunity in the play, the republic, therefore, is once again interpreted against the backdrop of readers-response theory as a ‘Hawks-Public’.

Also significant is the staging of the coup by Asarinle against his trusted friend, His Hawkscellency Ajagunla Asagbade, making him abscond from the throne and Asarinle presiding over the Hawks-Public to perfect another season of failed promises. It is typical of a Nigerian dictator/politician to betray his close ally with the deceptive assurance to bring change and or hope, then get into the office to execute and display the same thing his predecessor was doing, sometimes even worse than the predecessor. A system of hawks ousting hawks - ‘Hawks- Public’. The Hawks’ continuous taming of the doves depicts Nigeria, where the worst amongst us continue to tame the doves, the good men and women in society. In the play, three moons later, another Hawk, Adabaoye, rides in on the crest of the chaos and bungled dreams. Is he a hybrid as Surroa Gate? Will the Hawks continue to tame the Doves when the latter are supposed to tame the former? The question in the audience's minds is how will the stolen heirloom be retrieved... and fortified against future hijacks. As long as it is not jealously guarded and fortified against future hijacks by hawks, the republic will continue as a Hawks-Public, which will be the continuous justification of the researcher’s interpretation.

One can see the playwright’s creative prowess in dramatising the existing relationship between the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak. And the recognition and eventual enthronement of the people’s regent, the people’s choice. It is like the determination to make our vote count in Nigeria. This hope given by the playwright is needed to transform Nigeria from a ‘Hawks-Public’ to a Republic. The play takes extra courage to save and serve the land in the face of oppressive and predatory forces, taming the civil forces and complex challenges of nationhood. Aside from failed promises by Nigerian predators, many burning issues of national concern are raised in the play: the constant clamour for restructuring, the threats of secession, farmers-herders clashes, high-profile looting on an industrial scale, terrorism and evil insurgency that threatens the peaceful coexistence of the nation etc. For the playwright, the fake promise of change and renewed hope by the government of the day is nothing even to mention, for there is never any change, nor is there any hope being renewed. Sadly, we are only faced daily with episodes of stack hopelessness. Through Awoyale, priest of the Oracle in the play, we read: “... It is only those in the world who are beating a new melody; a new rhythm, which you mistake for a shift... The regency will be until the contamination is purified.” (p.13). In the above lines, the playwright casts a strong shadow of doubt if there is any positive shift or improvement in the lives of the commoner.

Despite these static and tragic moments in the country, we seem to be a people who never learn from our history things today, repeat the same tomorrow and expect a new and better result. Lamenting, Lameto, the human rights activist in the play, says: “We are, e a cursed people, a forgotten race. Never knowing their rights, never learning, never being willing to learn from their past. Like a people without a conscience... (p. 23). Just like the symbolic reigns of the hawks in the play is a movie of failed promises, the playwright presents the present political dispensation in Nigeria as a sham upon promises made. Our major roads are now littered with children begging for daily living,

people dying of hunger and starvation, etc. The playwright believes that we need the wisdom of the broom. Coincidentally, the deceptive symbol of the present 'All Progressives Congress, APC administration must be swept off the political stage as the next generation struggles for the coveted throne. The ancestral curse of electing our past afflictions into the dizzy heights of the highest seat in the land and expecting a Messianic miracle is a redundant way of thinking. OBANLA: ... My people, the wisdom of the broom. That is what the Oracle was talking about. Let us sweep away all unwanted deposits the Hawks through Asagbade may have left in our land. TOMIDE: And even the hawks themselves must be swept off forever.

This, the playwright believes, must be done to avoid sit-tight-syndrome as the country has been Bedevilled with the numerous attempts by our political leaders to promise one term in office but, after testing the corridors of power, will want to remain on the throne forever, irrespective of their poor performances and rotten governance styles. Upon ascending power, they do promise not to stay 'one day longer than necessary, but no sooner than later, those promises will be swept under the carpet, and fake, unconvincing reasons will be given for why they need a second chance to serve. Lamenting the rather unfortunate situation the nation finds itself in at present, the playwright puts to us the tragedy of how our innocent farmers are being butchered daily and their source of livelihood being destroyed. In Lameto's words: " ... Our land has now been turned into a den, surrounded by arms-bearing hawks, who destroy people's livelihood in the name of offending for their animals. They take life with such impunity never known in our history, leaving a trail of carnage, destruction, death, poverty, division, and evil in its wake. And you still say you will ... " (p. 59). This is not unconnected with the realities the nation is faced with these days: villages waking up to inhumane attacks claiming millions of lives and properties worth millions.

Yet the problem seems to have a sacred and royal backing that even cows have become senior citizens of the country and tagged 'Untouchable' for the life of a cow is now worth the ransom of the destruction of an entire village. Lawlessness and violence reign supreme like a country of hawks where survival control is by the strongest and fiercest. The play also condemns the undeserved detention of individuals who clamour for restructuring and secession. Meanwhile, Diran Ademiju-Bepo proffers a solution that he believes will end all forms of taming by the leaders, like hawks in doves' skin. The solution to him is a collective will and effort in the form of a revolution just as the doves, led by the elders and heirs, do away with their intrigues and differences and unite against the taming hawks. He calls on traders, farmers, market men and women, students, teachers, religious leaders, etc., to join hands in one accord and fight against all enemies of the state to salvage the nation from political hawks. To achieve this harmony, the playwright suffices that "no cock, no hen, no goat, no keg of palm oil is demanded ... for sacrifice (for the joy, peace, and stability of the world) ... but love" (p. 6). The play thus disbands hatred, anger, terrorism, nepotism, and insurgency, among other vices that negate national progress and rhetorically asserts, "How can we find harmony in the mouth of a fun?" (16). It also disbands regionalism, godfatherism and violence, which negates/destroys the cultural and socio-political structures in the country with the rise in self-centredness, tribalism, sectionalism and "democratic coup d' état" evident in election malpractices.

The playwright raises a few questions: is it plausible that the playwright believes, just like Asagbade, that our politicians, who have a phobia for truth and lust for power, will be willing to abdicate their seats no matter how poorly they govern? Aside from that fact, considering our political history, is it possible for a leader to abdicate by some conviction, as depicted by Asagbade, the antagonist in the play? Does the power transition between him and Asarinle not appear contrived, like the Greek Deus ex machina, too rapid that one could hardly see the connection? A not-too-circumspect reader or spectator would wonder why Asarinle has to die before Rohunfade takes

over power, and we are told the gods of the land intervene. It could be more commonsensical for a leader, too, i.e. for another to emerge. That may be the moral of this whole narrative. Unfortunately, moral lessons are expected in Nigeria; simple lessons are dismissed. Behaving like Hawks in *No More the Taming Hawks*, Nigeria, could best be described as Hawks-Public. A system of government where Hawks-Cellencies (The worst amongst us) reign supreme over The Doves (The best amongst us) instead of it being called a Republic where only philosophers, the purified, the good at hearts and the pure in intentions should co-habit, as posited in Plato's *The Republic*.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, 'Diran Ademiju-Bepo has come to prove the classical critic, Longinus, wrong, who once gave the verdict of no more masterpieces here. *No More the Taming Hawks* is a masterpiece for all senses of judgement and adjudication, written on the model of the past, addressing the burning challenges of the present Nigerian society and its contemporary challenges. It pictures the nation in flight, offering us a solution to our unfortunate situation as a country. It is a timely and apt drama for the issues raised, and a must-read for this nation's patriotic sons and daughters, for the nation's rescue is in the hands of a long lineage of taming hawks. The ultimate moral of the play is that it takes extraordinary courage to serve a land such as Nigeria, where predatory, preying, and "vulture-RIC" forces tend to tame civil forces and voices of conscience.) As the playwright's muse and predictions seek to win the day, Diran Ademiju-Bepo, in his evocative drama of power play and political control, *No More the Taming Hawks*, wears the emblem and crown of a nationalist, inspiring many and lots. In this critical analysis, the researcher answers whether the country is a republic or a Hawks-Public. The study resolves, based on the chaotic, fierce and disruptive nature of hawks as evident in the play, that the nation of Nigeria is a hawks-public that needs the unity of the doves, who are naturally peaceful and loving, to transform the country from a hawks-public to a republic.

Through adopting the realist conflict theory, this study has interrogated Diran's choice of hawks and doves as characters in the play *No More the Taming Hawks*. The researcher finds this symbolic representation apt and a timely reminder of the character of an atypical Nigerian politician who is by nature disruptive, dictatorial and disorderly, as reflected in the actions and behaviours of the Hawks-in-Council, namely, Ajangula, Asarinle, and Adaoboye. As a worthy voice in the literary space, Diran has contributed to the political advocacy in Nigeria in his *No More the Taming Hawks* indeed, for Nigeria to experience meaningful development and take back its pride of place in the world as 'The Giant of Africa', the doves who represent the excellent men and women, must collectively be united in uprooting the hawks who have for long, being preying on the nation's national patrimony.

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