

GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, democracy and democratic governance became a very attractive bride admired by most countries in the third world. Following the collapse of the First and Second Civilian Government of 1966 and 1988 respectively, Nigeria has experienced series of coups and counter coups under various regimes. The spirit of democracy and the hope of democratic dividends have remained very strong and attractive. The transition from Military to Civilian regime in May 1999, no doubt marked a new beginning of democratic life for the Nigerian State. This hope has brought a semblance of political transparency, accountability, good governance and political stability. This paper seeks to look at the Nigerian State, how it has been able to consolidate on her fourth democratic experience. It also traces Nigerian's historical evolution, her attempts at democratic governance, corruption, accountability and due process. This paper shall examine all this attempts at good governance so far and how well and suggest possible solutions.

Keywords: Democracy, Good Governance, Transparency, Accountability and Politics

INTRODUCTION

After a long occupation of the political arena by the military, Nigeria is currently trying to sustain democracy and democratic governance. Although the problems of nurturing and consolidation democracy are so daunting, the country has witnessed democratic governance for about 8 years now, the longest in its history.

Democracy is an avenue through which members of the society possess the choice of leadership and are allowed to represent them in the act of governance. Making the floor open for genuine development and regulation brings about democratization. Nigeria's march towards a constitutional democracy has been a chequered one marked by crises, coups, counter-coups and a 30 month

agonizing civil war. The collapse of the Balewa and Shagari civilian government came as a result of low concentration upon consolidating democracy. The two regimes came to an end due to military incursion into politics. The military coupists have always linked the reason for their action to unavoidable political crises, mismanagement and corruption.

The collapse of the first republic in January 1966 marked the beginning of “soldier go, soldier come” in Nigeria up on until 1999. This had been detrimental to the process of democracy consolidation in Nigeria. Colonialism that brought about the Nigerian state has been closely viewed as the basis of mutual suspicion and mistrust among political elites, which often have the propensity for crises as noted by Smith. (2005:34) Also Nnoli asserts that ethnicity and religious bigotry have been closely linked to the low level of sustaining democracy in Nigeria. (1995:203)

Ihonvbere on the other hand notes that “Nigeria’s federal system, which is essential for the nation’s viability has largely collapsed”.(1977:28.2) It is pertinent to note that the advent of the present democratic rule in Nigeria can be linked to attempts at entrenching and sustaining democratic governance around the world. This is with a view of the hallmarks of authoritarianism such as political instability, crisis, assassination, ethnic militia and many others are being reduced to the barest minimum level.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Arguably, conceptualizing words has often remained ambiguous. In order to ward off this ambiguity and to balance the concepts in the political parlance, this paper shall succinctly discuss operational meanings attached to some of the key concepts used herein, viz; democracy and democratization .

Democracy

The contesting nature of words like democracy, which often cannot be subjected to single meaning needs to be appraised. The ideological, historical and cultural variations largely explain the underpinning meanings, which democracy is subjected to in different times, regions and societies. Democracy has been variously defined and observed as a technique through which popular participation is enjoyed among the civil masses to decide their leader. In the same vain, Abraham Lincoln, the America President saw democracy as “government of the people, by the people and for the people”.

The understanding, from Lincoln’s view pointedly expressed that democracy is an avenue through, which popular participation of the masses are enjoyed in selecting their representatives.

However, a situation whereby election is marred by rigging and corrupt vices perhaps do not seem to represent a government “by the people, and for the people ”even if its “of the people”.

The basic contention therefore is that no compelling justification for democracy could oppose the view that people ought to be treated as political equals,(1998:15) which is the hallmark of democracy. In understanding this view, we can clearly state that for democracy to thrive, it must supersede any hegemonic disposition. Nevertheless, democracy should be based on honesty, decency and good governance whereby the will of the people in choosing their representatives is most honestly respected.

While Eyinla states unequivocally that Lincoln’s definition remains the most enduring (1998:34) Seward defines democracy as a “political system in which citizens themselves have an equally effective input into the making of binding collective decisions” (1998:15) This paper shall adopt the view of Eyinla when he said that democracy is an all encompassing phenomenon embracing accountability, representation and participation. (1998:77)

Democratization

An instance where democracy is examined with dictatorial tendency is said to be undemocratic. According to Seward, “the level of democracy in a system is importantly a matter of degree, in addition to a matter of presence or absence”(Ibid) Eyinla sees democratization as the equilibrium point; i.e. “not only by the power balance between the ruler and the ruled, but also by the level of reciprocity and interdependence between them”.(2007:68-69) He further argued that “the degree to which any given society allows the unimpeded application of the three conditions of representation, accountability and participation is indicative of its level of democratization.(Ibid)

Thus, democratization involves processes in which democratic regime is established, confirmed and conformed with internationally acclaimed barometric gauge of democratizing and democratization.(1989:87) In another development Onyeoziri argued that democratization needed to be situated within the following:

- a) the domain of individual and group rights and freedoms,
- b) the domain of popular and equal participation in collective decision,
- c) the dimensions of accountability of government to mass publics and constituent minorities,

- d) the dimension of the application of the principles of equal citizenship in all spheres of life-social, economic and political. (Onyeoziri)

He further stated that a “system that recognizes more of these rights has democratized more than one that recognizes only a few of these rights”. Sarabjit on the one hand adds that “there should be a balanced development of institutions with each institution performing the role specifically assigned to it.” (2002:60) some of these institutions are the judiciary, armed forces, electoral bodies, legislature and executive.

What can be clearly seen from the aforementioned is that the strict adherence to workability of rights and freedoms and those institutions are antidotes of ailing democracy and not just on paper. Seward’s contribution to Ryan’s view has it that “we cannot praise society for qualities which belong to it by definition rather than by political contrivance”. (Seward)

Democratic Indices

Good governance and democratic indices in any given society has to do with sustenance of myriad, political, social, and economic values resident in the minds of the members of the polity. Thus in the words of Imuetinyan “survival of democracy is strongly related to the political attitudes and beliefs of the members of the society”(2003:92) Attitudinal concept alone therefore cannot explain away political culture of any society. It is therefore undeniable that one must surely agree with the views of Imuetinyan as he further pointed that ;

“for democracy to survive its practitioners must possess a supportive political culture which refers to core political attitudes, beliefs, orientation and predispositions held on both individual and collective bases”(2003:93)

There is no gain say that among the agreed democratic indices are good governance, accountability, and transparency. For any society therefore to have become an acclaimed democratic society this indices must be present in her system ie both the individual and the government must be seen to making concerted efforts at accountability which presuppose judicious use of government funds, transparency in all facets of both individual and collective Endeavour, respect for human rights, rule of law, focused towards achieving a near egalitarian society. The concept of good governance in the words of scholars like Ramsamy in broad aspect encompass all aspects of human behaviour like social, political, and economic Endeavour’s.(2002) Likewise to another scholar Martins, it is

“the observance of the rule of law ,human rights, transparent, economic and corporate governance as well as the active participation of civil society and other non-state actors in national affairs”(1997)

From the foregoing therefore political stability becomes a mirage.This situation becomes so when the atmosphere is charged, when corrupt malpractices are not checked but rather glorified and the manner of conducting government and individual affairs become so fraudulent .In the words of Oroh

“good governance disappears, insecurity, is engendered and society is threatened and ultimately destroyed “. (2002)

The position of the Catholic Secretariat Forum becomes very descriptive and appropriate when it stated that corruption is responsible in large measures for broken promises, dashed hopes, and the shallow dreams that have characterised majority Nigerians today. The effect of bad governance are so numerous, they undoubtedly weaken the economic life style of the nation thereby generating political instability which in turn engenders general disorientation which has always been a ready tool in the overthrow of past administration as earlier mentioned be it military or civilian .The underlying question is that the key argument for this overthrow and political instability has always been bad governance.

Ingredients of Democracy and Democratic Governance

There are several yardsticks that may be used to measure the ingredients in the cooking pot of democracy. Perhaps, the most relevant is the economic factor. This position is boosted by Oche who opined that “a functional democratic system is premised upon the existence of a sound economy which is capable of meeting the needs and rising expectations of an increasingly socially mobilized society”.(2005:150-158) He went on to assert that “any attempt at imposing a democratic political superstructure on a depressed economic base which is incapable of meeting the basic economic needs of the plurality of society has the possibility of leading to political instability”.(Ibid) Another ingredient is development which connotes

“a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, political attitudes and national institution as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty” (Oche)

. Cardoso opined that democracy helps a country to

“Meet its historic tasks in the areas of development, social justice and the reduction of inequality”.

Noticeably the Nigerian democracy has thrown up issues of national sovereign conference, peaceful transition from one civil government, co-opted transition, guided transition, recalcitrant and piecemeal reforms and armed militants. (1994:2)

This situation is clearly manifested in the position of Ake who argued that

“instead of empowering the ordinary people, the democratization process is legitimizing their disempowerment”.(1973)

Ake further opined that as a result of this dichotomy the institutions of democratic governance will remain distorted and contradictory in their latent and manifest functions. And this is clearly the situation in Niger Delta area today, where a large number of the youths are jobless in the face of influence of their leaders.

Process of Decolonization and Implication for Democracy and Democratic Governance

It is an understatement to suggest that all African state abhorred colonialism. Frantz Fanon as cited by Falola and Babawole posited that liberation ought to be intensified against neo-colonialism. Thus, neo-colonialism has ensured that even after decolonization the erstwhile colonial masters still controls and regulates the affairs in their former colonies. Thus, the genesis of Nigeria’s political crises could be traced to the time of colonization as a result of the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914. This can be described as a forceful marriage of inconvenience that failed to carry out consultations among the marrying partners. Hence leadership struggles have continued to reoccur from time to time and threatened the establishment of democracy in Nigeria. This situation has further given rise to the problem of good governance, corruption, ethnicity, religious bigotry, political violence, travesty of justice, lack of political will, intolerance, insecurity, nepotism and arson.

THE INDEPENDENT CONSTITUTION AND PROSPECT OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

There are various ethnic associations in Nigeria. The major ones among these associations were the Egbe Omo Oduduwa formed in 1945, and the Ibo State Union formed in 1948.(1979:8-14)

The ethnic association later became agitative and gave birth to some very radical nationalist movements in Nigeria. This situation further led to one of the first constitution of development in Nigeria. The Richard constitution which was bitterly opposed by the educated elites who felt that they were not consulted and the constitution was not subjected to open debate. As if to make matters worse at the open debate in London where the constitution was subjected to, the debate lasted only twenty-nine minutes in a virtually empty house of commons.

In 1948 when a New Governor arrived it had already become evident that the Richard Constitution had reached its apogee and was in dire need of change. Sir Macpherson therefore came with his new constitution which had a very extensive and wide consultation in order to avoid the pitfalls of his predecessor. Thereafter new political parties emerged with the singular aim of conducting an election and eventual independence in 1960. Unfortunately however, all the parties that emerged were regional in outlook and ethnic in practice. The national executive of the various parties in 1958 were the NPC, 32% Fulanis, 19% Hausa; the Action Group was 68% Yoruba and the NCNC were 49% Igbo. (1988:6-22) With this composition little wonder that democratic governance did not reach anywhere in the first Republic because the seed of discord had been already sown. All these parties invoked in ethnic and tribal sentiment at the slightest perceived marginalization. These were also further strengthened by the elites who were the main advocates of ethnicity in whatever guise.

The Inheritors of the Colonial State: More of the Sane 1960–1965. The Balewa Years. Dynamics of the 1959 Elections:

Understandably, Britain and Nigeria took the ongoing before independence for granted. The issues of ethnic cleavage corruption and over beaming personality were swept under the carpet. Nigeria's idea to be ruled by a multiparty western type democracy became a mirage. The system therefore broke down as quickly as it was put together. Nigerian's parliamentary democracy lasted a little above five years from October 1960 to January 1966. Several factors were adduced for the collapse of the parliamentary experiment. But the one that strikes this author most is that of the winner takes all and the politics of ethnicity. In the words of Isichei (1983):

Apart from those who like the Sardauna belonged to a hereditary aristocracy, most politicians had made a desperate and successful struggle to escape from rural poverty. The frantic accumulation of wealth was meant to build a wall between themselves and poverty between their children and poverty. And like their predecessors the warrant chiefs whom in some way they resembled they were expected to be generous, by western standards absurdly generous, to relations, fellow townsmen and constituents. A successful man had to be seen to be successful – to wield power, to display wealth to spend it freely – or his constituents would begin to wonder if he was really successful at all.

With the creation of ethnic consciousness and the formation of parties along that line, little that the 1953 elections were froth with bobby traps.

Formation of the Federal Government and Effect on Political Stability

There were two federal elections in Nigeria between 1954 and 1959. Thus by 1960 when Nigeria became independent Alhaji Tafawa Balewa emerged as Prime Minister while Nnamdi Azikwe President of the NCNC President of the Senate and later Governor-General and President when Nigeria became a republic in 1963, Obafemi Awolowo was leader of the opposition in the federal legislature.(1983) There were various factors that saw the fall of the first republic and the subsequent emergence of Chief Jeremiah Obafemi Awolowo as the leader of official opposition in Nigeria. The immediate and major factors for this were the various political crisis in Nigeria. This included the Census Crisis of 1962/1963, the Action Group crisis in 1962, the federal election crisis of 1964, the Tiv Riot of 1964, the Western Nigeria election crisis of 1965.

Census Crisis: In 1962 the federal government carried out a census programme. The result of the census was protested and this led to another census in 1963. The 1963 census results were also contested, the western and mid-western states claimed that there were manipulations and that the figures were incorrect. From the results of the census, the North was made to be double both the East and West put together in figures. This naturally led to the fact that more seats were allocated to the North in the legislative council which meant that the North dominated other groups in the federation. The aggrieved groups contested the figures in the court but the case was dismissed. (ed)(1998:6-22)

Action Group Crisis: In 1962, there was an intra-party squabble/personality clash between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief S.L. Akintola. By the 1960 election Awolowo left premiership of the west to his deputy Chief S.L. Akintola and went to contest for the Federal House of Representative. However because his party did not do well, he failed to emerge as the Prime Minister, having lost majority seats; he became the opposition leader. Akintola the deputy leader became the Premier of Western Region. Awolowo however, being at the federal level sort to control the region. He wanted to perform various functions, implement major policies and fashion out major programmes in the west. Akintola on the other hand was not willing to allow this; Akintola saw Awolowo's actions as "*usurpation*" while Awolowo saw Akintola as a person with "*in ordinate ambition*". At the Jos Convention of the party, Akintola was dismissed with the instrumentality of the then Governor, Sir. Adesoji Aderemi (the Oni of Ife). Back in Ibadan however Akintola announced the removal of the governor, whereas Chief D.S. Adegbenro had been earlier on sworn in as Premier. The crisis was reaching its apogee, and precipitated a division in the Western Region's House of Assembly leading to a serious crisis.(1974:41). A state of emergency was declared in Western Region by the federal

government and Majekodunmi became the administrator. Awolowo and thirteen (13) others were arrested. Awolowo was arraigned before the court and sentenced to life imprisonment for “*conspiracy to commit treasonable felony*”. After six months, when the state of emergency elapsed Akintola was sworn in as Premier.(1971:84-90)

Federal Election Crisis 1964: At the time of the election Awolowo was still in prison. There were two main Alliances formed i.e. the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) and the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). There were allegations of favouritism in the registration process of candidates. It was believed that while the NNA members were given adequate time for registration, UPGA members were denied adequate and timely registration of their candidates, creating room for many candidates to be returned unopposed. This led to a boycott of the election by UPGA members. Even while the result was being contested, Tafawa Balewa was returned as Prime Minister forming the cabinet with mainly NCNC, NPC and NNDP members sidelining the AG members.

The Tiv Riot of 1964: In 1964 there was a minority resentment under the leadership of Dr. J.S. Tarka against the NPC controlled Northern Region over the Tivs. In the 1959 Federal Elections, Tarka was able to successfully identify Tiv exclusive symbolism against the Hausa-Fulani hegemony. He was to mobilize his people to identify with the call for the creation of a new state, the Middle Belt State, in order to satisfy Tiv local and national interests and upgrade the status of the Tor Tiv as the rallying point of Tiv local nationalism in order to stay attuned with those of the Emirs and other traditional rulers in the country. In the subsequent election that followed, Tarka’s united middle belt congress (UMBC) had an overwhelming victory with 85% of the Tiv votes in all the seven constituencies in Tiv land. The NPC won only 10% of the votes and thereby resorted to engage the Tiv in politics of revenge which was vehemently resisted. The aftermath was a bloody confrontation between the Hausa and Tiv which resulted in the loss of lives and property.(1966:50-55)

The Western Nigeria Election Crisis of 1965: The first general election was in 1960, by 1965 another election was due. Akintola had then formed the NNDP. During registration of voters, AG members were denied registration materials and in various places candidates were not fully registered. This gave the NNDP undue advantage and his party was declared the winner and various seats were returned unopposed, including that of the Premier and his deputy. It has been generally regarded that Awolowo’s inability to become the Prime Minister was the root cause of the crisis in the Action Group.(1970:65-70) This crisis further led to the Western Region riots. This was to further give rise to other issues like ethnic rivalry, census controversy, election rigging and corruption. The courts

did not help matters either, because attempts by the Action Group to use the law courts to halt the rape on democracy failed woefully. The party's injunction was dismissed. The series of riots that broke out naturally was too much for the frail political situation that just started. By January 1966, the army struck and put paid to Nigeria's first democratic experience. The main root cause of this was basically ethnic rivalry, political thuggery and corruption. As a matter of fact, Major Nzeogwu's words captured it rightly when he said:

Our enemies are the political profiteers swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent, those that seek to keep the country permanently divided so that they can remain in office as Ministers and VIPS's of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists...

The coup produced another counter coup and the resultant effect of all this was a thirty month civil war in Nigeria, the war lasted between 6th July 1967 – 15th January 1970.

Shortly after, Alh. Shagari took over government he constituted the Justice Ayo Irikefe Tribunal of Inquiry to look into the Sales of Crude Oil by the NNPC. In spite of this at the initial take off of the administration it is public knowledge that probity and accountability eluded the administration from day one. All these were a combination of ineptitude of the central government. Thus by the middle of the administration the nations foreign debt had risen from N3 billion in 1979 to a staggering N21 billion by the fall of the government. During this period too Nigeria earned N48 billion in a record period of four years, yet rice which was by this time the most staple food on an average Nigerian table climbed from N25 to N200 per bag. Import license became the best fraudulent manner of making money. All the government was able to do was the introduction of half hearted "Ethical Revolution" which had no meaning or effect in controlling the hydra headed squandering and graftsmania.(2006:63)

Closely following on the heels of administrative recklessness was the legislative angle. Legislative abuse ranged from refusal to stay in the ultra modern Festac 77 Hotel allocated to the Legislators to a N3 million telephone bill by 1982. There were other laughable issues like diplomatic passport for each member, secretariat staff and office, swimming pool, squash court and a special school for their children and the right to delay Nigerian Airways flights in and out of the country. The list was unending to say the least. A cursory look therefore at Alh. Shehu Shagari years revealed clearly that the second Republic politicians had refused to understand, democratic governance and what the ingredients of a true democratic dispensation were all about. It therefore did not come as a surprise when the army came calling again to sack these greedy, hungry and power-drunk politicians.

Diarchy or What? The Babangida Years

It is said that by the time General Ibrahim Babangida was finally forced to step aside between 1985 and 1993 he had created an Army of “anything is possible”. At the dawn of democracy on May 29 1999, Nigeria was confronted with a military that had gradually natured into one in which loyalty to an individual and self interest became the credo and torrent for survival and advancement in a dog eat dog situation. Therefore for an army that had tasted the “pepper soup” of power, it undeniably focused its attention, energy and sense of purpose on corruption, intimidating and near impoverishment of the nation through undemocratic, non accountable and non transparent actions and attitudes.

Babangida as head of state did not sit back and watch the nation drift into corruption. He decided to fight corruption as it assumed an unabated dimension. Both the 1979 constitution and other legislative and anticorruption methods had failed. He then set up the National Committee on corruption and other Economic Crimes with the terms of references as:

- Identification of the causes and possible extent of corruption in Nigeria.
- Examination of deficiencies in the existing legislation on corruption and other economic crimes,
- Suggestions for remedies that would lead to the curbing of the incidence of corruption including improvements to the existing legislation.

To some, these seem as an irony for to this group corruption became institutionalized under the Babangida years. To this group therefore some simple definition of corruption becomes relevant.

Corruption covers such acts as use of one’s office for pecuniary advantage, gratification, influence peddling, insincerely in advice with the aim of gaining advantage less than a full day’s work for a full day’s pay, tardiness and slovenliness.

Corruption again on the other is said to be the abuse/misuse of the official position, power, trust and public resources for the purpose of private gains. In the opinion of Ayua, corruption is

of a form of antisocial behaviour by an individual or social group which centers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, is inconsistent moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for

the material and spiritual well being of members of society in a just and equitable manner.(2001:vol 1.2)

By the time Babangida came into power, he was seen as a “benevolent” military dictator. As time however went on, Nigerians began to live in a dream of great expectations because of an elaborate and unending transition to civil rule. Babangida for the first time introduced a unique version of Nigerian home grown democracy known as option A4. It is argued that even though the system as clumsy as it was and full of bobby trap, was able to produce an acceptable political leader whose election was later annulled in June 1993.(2004: vol 3 no 1 & 2: 37) As a matter of fact some people believe that the president himself seemed to have had no notion of the limits as far as corruption was concerned. He was said to have enacted the banks and other financial institutions decree No 24 of 1989 to stop the Central Bank monitoring oil sales. The Gulf war proceeds to Nigeria was a whopping \$5 billion which was squandered away by all means of corruptible manner.(1999:54)

Babangida was characterized as the first Nigerian dictator so obsessed with power and its aggrandizing wealth, influence and glory. He was constantly manipulating, playing Maradonic moves, scheming, changing the game of democratic transition and selfish interest to perpetrate himself in office.

BEGINNING AGAIN: THE OBASANJO YEARS

Taming the Bull: Gen. Sanni Abacha

When Gen. Sanni Abacha assumed the mantle of leadership in November 1995, he promised to reduce the budget deficit and other corrupt practices. Government was at the centre stage of high looting. In most cases it was said that Abacha personally signed for monies from the Apex Bank in his capacity as the Chief Accounting Officer.

The signature of the head of state is law. Refusal to honour it is regarded as sabotage. Central Bank of Nigeria therefore obeyed lawful authority.

That was the view of an official of Central Bank when asked why the Bank honoured Abacha’s withdrawals without due process.By the time Abacha and family had finished with Nigerian economy it had rendered the once buoyant Nigerian economy prostrate. For many nations to enjoy democratic dividends or even deem to have attained any level of democratic growth, the indices of various growths would have been present in the system. It is no longer news that bad governance has been identified as the root cause of economy decline in Nigeria and several African and third world

nations. To this effect the World Bank began to advocate political reform approach to government growth.

Thus by the time Abacha died all the various indices of democratic governance had finally eluded the country and the nation had therefore degenerated to a state whereby most able bodied men and women were reduced to salesmen selling all sorts of junks from door to door.

The Shortest Transition

At the death of Gen. Sanni Abacha Nigeria was once more faced with another transition process. The immediate problem of this transition was that of distrusting Nigerians who have hitherto been led on series of futile attempts on democratic transition. The twin question therefore was whether the man Gen. AbdulSalami Abubakar who had just assumed leadership of the nation after Abacha's sudden death could be trusted to hand over power to a civilian democratic government or whether Nigerian like the proverbial tortoise may be patient to wait for nine months.

While organized committees like Joint Action Committee on Nigeria (JACON) and other western countries watched closely to see if AbdulSalami would line up to creditability, he proved critics and other watchers that he was honest enough. By 6th August 1998, he set up the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) charged with the responsibility of registering, and monitoring the activities of political parties and as well to conduct and supervise all elections.

To further demonstrate his sincerity, funds were released to INEC which was approximately 3.4 billion Naira.(2006:126-127) With that amount INEC immediately released the schedule of elections without the input of the ruling government. Thus, without further delay, INEC went into the process of a transition timetable, which began with political party formation, political party registration, campaigns and the actual election process.

By the time the presidential elections were held on February 28 1999 and result released by INEC on 1st March 1999 Obasanjo the presidential candidate for one of the new political parties. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was elected with a landslide victory of 18,779,154 votes totaling 37.2 percent of votes cast, thereby defeating his closest rival Olu Falae. With the declaration of Chief Olu Obasanjo as the presidential winner by INEC and his eventual swearing in as president and Command in chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria May 29 1999, the tenure of the shortest and perhaps the most or effective transition in Nigeria ended, though not without some hints of one scandal or the other in terms of suggested corrupt dealings.

By the time Abubakar existed from government his earlier warning of budgetary discipline was gone with the winds. He approved extra-budgetary expenditure of about N62 billion on April 22, 1999.(2001: vol 1 No.2 p.19-20) Although some of the projects were actually or urgent priority in terms of making adequate arrangement for the incoming government. These include N2.666 billion to House National Assembly members, upgrading of Ministers/Permanent Secretaries houses at Mabushi N250 billion, Apo Estate for legislators N1.400 billion, all in Abuja.

The ones that Nigerian however were skeptical about were N5 billion for Ministry of Foreign Affairs; N2.972 billion on contingencies N2.600 billion on Abuja-Shiroro 330KVA, N1.025 billion on aerial survey of mineral reserves and N1.102 billion on construction of United Nations Common Premises in Abuja.

Whatever the situation Nigerians were happy and willing even possible to forgive Abubakar all these sins if he would hand over quietly and quickly the reins of governance and leave the democratic arena for civilian politicians. Interestingly however as if spurred by the prayers of the people he handed over to Chief Mathew Aremu Olusegun Obasanjo on May 29 1999.

Return of the” Messiah”

Obasanjo on October 1 1979 then a General in the Nigerian Army, voluntarily handed over power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari, as the democratically elected civilian president of Nigeria, marking then the end of thirteen years of military rule.

During his inauguration ceremony in the full of glare all surviving former heads of state and senior military officers, Obasanjo did not spare any pleasantries on his criticism of past military regimes accusing them of presiding over blatant corruption, leading to instability and the weakening of all public institutions. Obasanjo thus vowed that “nobody, no matter who would be allowed to get away with breach of the law and perpetration of corruption”.

Following all this, he immediately announced the simultaneous retirement of all the four armed forces chiefs, the governor of the Central Bank and also the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation head. This was later followed by the suspension of all contracts, licenses, awards, approvals and appointments made by General AbdulSalami Abubakar.

From Obasanjo's actions and speeches in various fora he never left anybody in doubt as to the major planks of his administration which was said to be essentially pivoted on cleansing the Augean stable of the conscious virus-corruption, which was also a prelude to good

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