

Annulment of June 12 1993 Presidential Election and the Elusive Question for Democracy in Nigeria

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Abstract

Elections in Nigeria since her independence in 1960, have not been free, fair nor devoid of violence, primordialism and the undue influence of government. The combination of those factors result to the delegitimization of the democratic process and the resultant democratic heresy. However, the June 12 presidential election, of 1993 perceived to be won by Chief Moshood Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) against the Presidential candidate of the National Republican Conventional (NRC) Alhaji Bashir Tofa, is accepted to be free, fair and credible by local and international observers. Thus the annulment of the election, by General Babangida, generated a lot of controversy and almost threatened the continued existence of country (Kehinde, 1993:11). This work examined all the determinant variables, their interplay and the resultant death of Abiola. These include the recent conferment on him, the title of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Republic (GCOR) posthumously, the renaming of the Abuja National Stadium, to Moshood Abiola National Stadium, and the declaration of June 12 1993 retrospectively and prospectively as Democracy Day, and a public holiday, throughout the federation. This paper argues that the actions of the federal government, is neither here nor there. This is so, because the controversy that bedevilled the annulment has not been unravelled. Also, the alleged winner of the election, died in detention, of the offence of treasonable felony, hanging on his neck. We adopted secondary sources of data generation. The group theory propounded by Bentley in 1908, was used in this work. It is recommended that the federal government should first quash the charges levelled against the late Chief Abiola, grant a pardon to him and validate the election results; thereby posthumously declaring Chief Moshood Abiola, the winner of the election. In addition, his estate should be paid all the salaries and benefits inherent in the four years tenure, as the president of this country. This is a condition precedent for the rational and legal basis of the recent award and pronouncements by the federal government. Such an exponential act of magnanimity is also important to reconcile all Nigerians, particularly, the numerous victims, who died in the struggle for the actualization of a genuine democratic legitimacy in the country, as demonstrated by the outcome of that election, that favored Chief Moshood Abiola, as the conceivable winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential poll.

Keywords: Primordial, vote buying, vote-selling, annulment, treasonable felony, hegemony, democratic heresy, crackpot dictatorship, posthumously.

Introduction

The declaration of June 12 as Democracy Day, commencing from last year by the Federal Government of Nigeria, is a very thoughtful and remarkable gesture. . The observance and enjoyment of the holiday by the citizens of this country also remind those of us of voting age, as at that time of their pyrrhic victory, in ensuring democratic governance in Nigeria that was completely annihilated by the crackpot military dictatorship, headed by General Ibrahim Babangida, and his close military cohorts.

It was an event difficult to forget in the annals of the history of this country. There is no doubt that the set of reactions that followed the annulment were analogous to those that precipitated the crisis of the civil war of 1967 (Egbo, 2002 .95). General Obasanjo, sequence to the affirmation of the birth of the third republic in 1993, declared May 29 that he was sworn in as President as Democracy Day and public holiday. The public holiday had been observed for over twenty years before it was changed by the regime of President Buhari to June 12, which tallied with the election of Chief Moshood Abiola. The action by the regime of President Buhari was a tacit admission of the perfidious electoral process that led to the emergence of that government headed by the retired General Obasanjo, against the sovereign will of the people that were clearly demonstrated in the electoral process of June 12 1993. It was a clear admission that the former date was not only designed to deflect the attention of Nigerians, but out rightly fraudulent and to deceive the citizens of this country.

Sequence to the declaration of June 12 as a democracy day and public holiday, the federal government, has made further pronouncement intended to honor and immortalize the acclaimed winner of the June 12 presidential election, Alhaji Moshood) Abiola, of the blessed memory. It awarded the title of Grand Commander of the Order of the Republic (GCOR) on him, and renamed the Abuja National Stadium, to Moshood Abiola National Stadium. (Presidential Broadcast, Radio Nigeria, June 12, 2019). It is pertinent to note, that the honor of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Republic is a singular honor awarded to prominent citizens of this country. Nevertheless, it is crucial to note, that despite the foregoing actions of the federal government, the ambiguities of the annulled June 12 presidential elections have not been resolved. They have rather exacerbated the problem of resolving the issues and questions that followed or heralded it and the subsequent mystery.

In any event, however, before presenting those issues and questions of the June 12 annulled elections, juxtaposed with the recent acts and declarations of the federal government, it is necessary to reflect on the events of June 12, 1993, at least to refresh the recollections of those Nigerians that were alive at the time, and to bring those facts, to the knowledge of millions of Nigerians, who were not yet born as at the time.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This work adopted the group theory. The main proponent of this theory was Author F Bentley. He popularized it in his work called “the process of government” in 1908. The thrust of the theory is that a substantial number of ethnic or social groups tend to share divergent and primordial interest and rivalry in any societal setting. They are continuously engaged in the struggle for power and the subjugation and control of one another in their environment. In other words, Bentley was of the view that group interaction, is the driving force of political relationship among them. He further, postulated that group activities constitute the basis of social interactions, administration of their affairs, legislation, and adjudication. In this connection, Bentley was of the realization, that politics is a group activity, and that each group is contesting against the other for power. Scholars, including Robert Piericel 1912, and David Truman 1922, among others, reinforced those views of Bentley.

The Relevance of this theory to this work

Reflecting on the postulations of Bentley and other scholars on group theory makes it very apt for this work. This is so because politics has been established as an enterprise involving different groups, and in the Nigerian context, different ethnic groups who are driven by primordial interest. Thus the conceivable victory of the late Chief Moshood Abiola, a Nigerian of Yoruba extraction, from the southern part of the country and duly supported by majority of the voters from the south and north, were not taken very kindly by most of the Hausa Fulanis from the north,, who saw it as a threat to their hegemonic control of power, that has hitherto long characterized the country's political spectrum. General Babangida and the other military generals,, would not have annulled the June 12 election if Toffa, the candidate from the north, had won, and thus the need to stop Abiola. That was done to avoid the change of power, in the country. Egbo (2002.98) Tribal and Ethnic alignments have always been the yardstick for success, in politics in this country. This is illustrated by the tribal inclinations of the three pre independent parties, namely the Action Group (AG) in the west, the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the North and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the East. Indeed the hidden agenda of the north was the total control of the country or to run a government in conformity with the interest of the north. This assertion was evidenced by the party slogan of NPC "One North, One People".

1.3 Methodology

This work relied on the secondary sources of data. Those historical and already existing data do not require access to respondents or the use of questionnaire. They are easier to collect, than the primary data and less expensive. The secondary sources of data used in this work include books, magazines, journals, periodicals, newspapers, and other printed and election materials. The study used content and descriptive method of data analysis.

ii. The Landmark of Democracy in Nigeria

The demise of the second Republic under the leadership of President Shehu Shagari in December 31, 1983, led to the emergence of General Mohammed Buhari, as a dictator. General Ibrahim Babangida, sequence to a successful palace coup, led to the removal of the former head of state, General Buhari. Shortly on assumption of office, ,General Babangida made a broadcast, assuring the nation of how committed he was to an elected government, and the resolution of his administration to set that action in motion very soon. In his own words, he stated that the focus of his administration was "to sanitize the polity, build a strong economy, and organize a durable transition of power to the civilians". Henry and Ofoegbu (1980.248)

It was pertinent to note, that one of the most spectacular achievements of the General Babangida's administration was the reduction in the proliferation of political parties, that emerged for the would be elections to two. Perhaps, in doing this, the regime diffused the usual ethnic rivalries between the three major ethnic groups, and their tribal leaders that Grandford Young (1993) described as: "a three person game, with holding shares, ultimately by the electoral mechanism. The three actors enter the contest, with a given demographic allocation of 29% for the Hausa/Fulani, 20% for the Yoruba 17% for the Ibo if they succeeded in mobilizing fully their cultural community".

Those parties were the People Democratic party (PDP) and the National Republican Convention, (NRC) Perhaps the General intended the two parties, to adopt the ideological inclinations of the two existing parties, in the United States, namely the Democratic Party, being liberal in its ideology, and the Republican Party being conservative in its ideology. Thereby baptizing them” as a little to the right and a little to the left” In furtherance of the foregoing, he promulgated Decree No. 19 of 1987 that created the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC.) This was the agency that was charged, with the responsibility of conducting the elections. To that effect, he commenced the most prolonged transition program that was to end in 1990 (Egbo, 2002:94). This was in contrast with his earlier promise on assumption of office in August 1995 that his regime will be brief and will not stay long in office. Series of elections were held at the various levels of state Houses of Assembly, Governors and for the National Assembly elections, under the platforms of the two political parties that he imposed on the country. Babangida, in this vein, promulgated Decrees 13 and 52 of 1993, which constituted the legal thrust for the presidential election. It is worthy to note, that these decrees made the provision for the elections to be carried out with substantial degree of certainty, and thus no going back in the exercise (Egbo, 2002:84-87).

The climax of those elections was the Presidential election that was held in June 12 1993, and were contested by the two candidates of the two political parties, earlier mentioned, and that were approved by him, namely the Social Democratic Party (SDP) having its Presidential candidate as Alhaji Moshood Abiola, and the National Republican Convention (NRC) having her presidential flag bearer as Alhaji Bashir Tofa, respectively. This singular election took a departure from the previous elections in this country since her independence. As it was devoid of ethnic and religious proliferations of political parties, and drawing their supporters largely from their ethnic and religious base (Ngwuta, 2007.65). Also, the Independent National Electoral Commission, under the leadership of Professor Humphrey Nwosu did a superb job in the conduct of the elections. It adopted the Option A4 Formula, and the election process was carried out very smoothly. This election, which was adjudged by both local and international observers, to be the most orderly, peaceful, free and fair election ever held in Nigeria since her independence, was annihilated almost at conclusion, when Babangida ordered that the election should stop , and the seizure of further announcements of results.

In that connection, he announced the repeal of Decrees 13 and 52 of 1993, which was the driving force, for the exercise. General Babangida in his usual whimsicality stated that his action was informed by the need to save the judiciary from integration. In his words, “In order to save the judiciary from further ridicule and erosion of confidence, and that a delay of seven days by INEC, in order to comply with the court injunction of June 10, 1993, before conducting the election could have saved the nation of the subsequent crisis and upheaval”. In contrast, Abdul Karim Dayalan is of the opinion that Babangida was not honest, *ab initio*, as he intended on “...establishing a climate of political unpredictability, legitimizing corruption policy inconsistencies and somersault...”

It is pertinent to note, the ouster clauses of the military that precluded the courts from adjudicating on matters relating to the elections of June 12, 1993. In addition, Babangida could have easily promulgated a decree, that would have superseded the court’s injunction or advised the (INEC) chairman to delay the elections to enable the agency comply with the court order,

if he was less perfidious, in that all important enterprise, that would have reversed our seemingly endless political crisis, but he failed to do.

According to Professor Nwosu, the results from twenty one (21) states in the country, had been collected and announced, and the results from one (1) state, was being awaited, when the order came in, to stop further announcements. He also stated that the presidential candidate of the National Republican Convention, (NRC) Alhaji Bashir Tofa, and his running mate, had already sent in a congratulatory message to the conceivable winner, of the presidential poll and flag bearer of the Social Democratic Party, Chief Abiola and his running mate, prior to the stoppage of the election. Listening to the same recorded voice of General Babangida, on June 12 2019, the same date, in the network news, he stated that the annulment of the election, was predicated on” the best interest and corporate existence of the country, as paramount.”

It was a tragic event for the country, and her well-wishers all over the world. Virtually all Nigerians, both home and abroad did not buy that idea. Many thought it was an afterthought, and the progression of the hidden agenda of General Babangida, to prolong the stay of the military in power. Also, many scholars, believe that there was no rational basis, for the annulment of the election, The reactions of Nigerians, sequence to the annulment was unprecedented, as it threatened the corporate existence of the nation Kehinde (1993.11). Both the civilians and the military were apprehensive, of what may be the outcome of this rape, of the democratic growth and consolidation, in the country. It was in the mist of this upheaval, that General Babangida decided to “step aside”, and hurriedly established, an interim national government, headed by a Yoruba man, Chief Ernest Shonekan, invariably to appease the Yorubas. There was no doubt, that the interim government was destined to fail. Equally devoid of any doubt, was that Babangida himself, was not honest in constituting it, and knew it was just a makeshift arrangement, designed to allow General Abacha achieve his ambition of becoming the Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This position was reinforced by Eddie Iron’s view of the annulment, as thus:

“the wind is blowing and exposing the anus of the hen for all to see; (News watch 1993.38).

This is so, because it was always believed that General Babangida, from the start, “Know who will succeed him, and who will not succeed him”. This view was informed by the fact, that he retired all other senior army officers, when he was “stepping aside” and left General Sani Abacha in office. Also, the decree establishing the interim government, provides that in the event of resignation or death of the head of the National Interim Government, the most senior officer in the government will take over. General Sani Abacha was still the defence minister, and the most senior officer, while others were gone (Egbo, 2002:100-101).

There was the firm resolve and patriotism of the head of the Interim government, Chief Shonekan to move the nation forward (Broadcast to the Nation 1993). However, events seemed to be out of his control, as the actions and or inactions of the government precipitated its demise and the subsequent seizure of power by General Abacha, as a result of the purported resignation of Chief Ernest Shonekan. As he happily congratulated him, in his own words:

“For accepting to head the interim government, and for demonstration of great courage, of taking on the daunting task of heading the interim national government and even a greater courage to know when to leave”.

All those events, followed the decision of the Lagos high court, presided over by Justice Dalakpo, that ruled that the interim government has no legal basis or legitimacy, as General Babangida had left office, at the time the decree establishing it was promulgated. Subsequently, Abiola and his huge supporters, were embolden by that decision of the court, as he proceeded to declare himself, the elected president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This led to his subsequent arrest and incarceration by the regime of General Sani Abacha. He was charged for treasonable felony and that significantly brought the demise of the efforts, towards the actualization of the June 12 1993 presidential election results.

However, it is pertinent to recall the efforts of the late Chief Moshood Abiola’s wife, Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, for the actualization of the late husband’s conceivable mandate, and her resultant death. Listening to the part of the recorded speech of General Sani Abacha on the Network News, he stated that by Abiola declaring himself president, he wanted to cause a breakdown of the peace and crisis in the country, and thus his subsequent arrest. Suffice it to say that Chief Abiola having been charged to court, by the regime of Abacha, remained in custody until his death, as he was never granted pardon by General Sani Abacha, of the blessed memory.

iii. The Mystery of the Annulled June 12 1993 Presidential Election

Reflecting on the foregoing, facts, vis-a-vis, the recent pronouncements and actions of the federal government, the following questions are raised:

1. Did Abiola win the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria?
2. If so, why did the federal government under General Babangida annul the election?
3. Are the actions of President Buhari’s government an admission by conduct that the late Chief Abiola, was elected the president of this country, based on the results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission, and by extension, a tacit validation of the annulled June 12 presidential election result.-
4. If so, what are the legal implications of the action of the federal government to our polity?

Although the election results, so far declared portrayed Abiola as the winner of the election, nevertheless, he was at best the conceivable winner, and has no legal authority to declare himself the president of Nigeria.

It is pertinent to note, that the actions of Chief Abiola in that regard was based on his not being properly guided, as to the legal consequences of his actions and inactions,. It is obvious that he went to court, to challenge the legality of the Interim National Government, under the leadership of Chief Ernest Shonekan, established by General Babangida in the heat of the annulled June 12 presidential election. The court in its wisdom, declared the Interim Government unconstitutional, null and void. But the court did not declare Chief Abiola the winner of the election. It was as a result of the vacuum created by the judgment of his lordship, the Honorable Justice Dalakpo, of the High Court of Lagos State, and the consequences of the decision, to the volatile polity, that General Abacha stepped in. Apparently to contain the

momentum, it engendered, and to defeat the actualization of the annulled June 12, presidential election, through the use of armed forces, as opposed to negotiation or diplomacy.

Our electoral laws and the constitution set out the procedures, for one to be declared the president elect, and to become a president. There is no doubt that the June 12 election was not completed, neither was Abiola declared the winner. However, the available results clearly demonstrated that Abiola, was at the verge of winning the election. Thus the basis of the action of the Federal government, to declare June 12 as Democracy Day, has not addressed the ambiguity of the undeclared results of the June 12, neither has it answered the question of whether Chief Abiola won the election. Most scholars believe that Moshood Abiola did not commit treason, and that it was Abacha that committed treason, by refusing to allow the will of the people, to prevail (Odeh, 2003:36-43). However, it is worthy to note, that a coup, is a forceful takeover of government and has the effect of superseding the existing grundnum, if it succeeded, and a treasonable offence, if it fails. Suffice it to say, that General Abacha succeeded, in imposing himself on the people, and against their will, and to that extent, did not commit treason.

The next issue or question that calls for an answer was why did General Babangida annul the June 12 election? Although he has consistently stated that the annulled June 12 election was for the interest of the nation, but the citizens are yet to know why June 12 election was annulled. Perhaps it was conceivable that those in government, now and before, including, General Abdusallam Abubakar, General Olusegun Obasanjo, General Babangida, General Abacha, now deceased and General Buhari knew why June 12 election was annulled. Assuming that the conjecture aforesaid, was true, or in the affirmative, yet the answer to the second issue has not been provided. And every Nigerian want to know why the June 12 presidential election was annulled.

Another issue, that is yet to be addressed, is whether the federal government was validating the June 12 presidential election results, and thus setting aside the annulment of the said results, by General Babangida, and declaring Chief Moshood Abiola the winner and the elected president. That threshold question, despite the conferment of the honor on Chief Moshood Abiola has not been answered. That was because in the eyes of the law, the June 12 annul led election was still valid, as no competent court, nor any act of National Assembly vacated if the decision of the previous government. The offence of treasonable felony levelled against Abiola might have died with him, according to our criminal law but the government, has to make a categorical pronouncement, to that effect. Thus, the inaction of the federal government, in that regard has left many Nigerians confused.

Perhaps the June 12 presidential election annulment, which many Nigerians believed was a constitutional aberration or should I say the worst military decree was analogous to the Dred Scott decision of the United States Supreme court, that killed the Missouri compromise by a Judicial stroke of the pen. That piece of legislation, allowed slavery in one state to be admitted into the union and disallowed slavery in the other state that sought admission. In this instance, Georgia, a free slave state and Missouri a slave state were admitted into the Union. The Supreme Court, of the United States, presided over by Chief Justice Rogger Tuner, and holding it unconstitutional, as it deprived the right of a citizen of the United States to own a property, quashed the Missouri compromise. In his own words, the black man came to that country,, as an “article of merchandise” to be bought and sold. It was this infamous and

horrendous decision that precipitated the civil war, and the successful defeat of the confederate forces. That also led to the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution, for the abolition of slavery, and making the freed slaves, their descendants, and those that were born in the United States, citizens. In the same vein, the validation of the annulled June 12, will give all Nigerians, the sense of belonging, in this connection, as equal citizens.

However, the foregoing, presupposes the passage of such a bill National Assembly, and assented to by the President, to become law. And in the event of the refusal of the president to sign into law, to become the law of the land by the appropriate two third votes of the joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate. They have not addressed that issue, and therefore, the annulment is still in force. In that connection, the recent action and pronouncement of the Federal government and, inaction of the National Assembly, in that regard, is to say the least, a mix signal to the discerning Nigerians. Hence, the fourth issue of whether Abiola won the June 12 1993 presidential election has not been resolved.

It is a fact that Moshood Abiola died, while being incarcerated or detained in prison an institution exclusively under the federal government. It is also a fact, that he was arrested for the offence of treasonable felony, a serious offence punishable by death or many years in prison, as was the case of late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was later pardoned. It was also a fact that the federal government, under the office of the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, did not initiate or file any *NolleProseques* a legal process, indicating the intention of the federal government to withdraw the offence. This is so despite the position of the law that the offense died with him. There was no doubt that the president, in his exercise of the prerogative of mercy, can pardon the late Chief Abiola of the alleged offence. However, I clearly listened to him, in his broadcast, awarding the honor on Late Chief Abiola, the Grand Commander of the Order of the Republic (GCOR) and renaming the Abuja National Stadium, as Moshood Abiola National Stadium. I never heard him say anything about his pardon, posthumously. Such a proclamation is a condition precedent, to the award and other pronouncements in favor of Abiola, to be valid under our law. That was the position, one will state, with due respect to our President and the National Assembly to say the least. The mystique perception, that the awards will make Abiola very happy in his grave, is to say the least absurd.

Now assuming that the Federal government in favor of Abiola resolved all the issues raised above. The next issue was the legal effects of the mandate given to him by Nigerians, as their elected president, and that was wrongly denied of him by the power that be, as at then. Equitable estoppels would preclude the federal government from denying Abiola all his rights, and privileges, as the elected President in the June 12 presidential election. His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, while announcing the honor accorded to the late Chief Moshood Abiola, did not address him as President Moshood Abiola. And the federal government cannot blow hot and cold, at the same time. Therefore, it is our humble opinion, that the federal government and the national assembly should do just that.

Now assuming that the above set of facts are resolved in the affirmative, the estate of the late Moshood Abiola, that is, his children, wives and close biological relatives, are entitled to be paid all the salaries and other benefits due to Chief Moshood Abiola, as our elected President, though denied the mandate by the military government. It is only when those are done, that the late Abiola would be justly and equitably treated. Equity regards that which ought

to have been done, as having been done, Nigerians, are still getting mixed signals, from the federal government, and are in the dark, in respect of the annulled June 12 presidential election..

While listening to the pronouncement of the president, no mention was made of Professor Humphrey Nwosu. It was his ingenuity that navigated the country out of the tribalism and political hegemony that has been our stock in trade, in the result of June 12, presidential poll. The integrity and apolitical posture that this great patriotic Nigerian demonstrated in his determination to break that factor in the Nigerian political equation, would have not seen the light of the day. Hence, it is imperative, that the honor due to this singular personality should be accorded to him. The Presidential election of June 12 1992 was the landmark departure of this country, to break away from the democratic heresy that has been the definition of our political equation, since independence. Hillary Bellock defined heresy as thus:

“...The dislocation of a complete and self supporting scheme, by the introduction of the novel denial of the essential part therein.

The most essential part in our democratic process is the right of the people to elect their leaders, and the preservation of that right by the power that be. And that is the whole essence of sovereignty.. That was what the June 12 1992 presidential election attempted to achieve, but was aborted by the military, devoid of any rational or legal basis. The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Wesbemy V. Sanders*, (1964), fleshed the imperative of the right of the people to vote in the preservation of their other rights out as follows:

“No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a choice in the election of those that make the laws, under which, as good citizens they must live. Other rights even the most basic are illusory, if the right to vote is undermined.

Democratic heresy has been pervasive in Nigeria since the annulment. The wishes of the electorates are not respected but grossly denied. The denial of the most essential part, in our democratic process, is the refusal of the will of the electorates, expressed through the ballot, boxes most often to prevail in Nigeria. Until when the values sought to be entrenched in our democratic culture under the instrumentality of June 12 is distilled in our political processes, and practices, and the prohibition of vote buying and selling, undue influence and outright use of brutal force, intimidation and political assassination are eliminated, and all the issues raised in this paper are addressed, the recognition of Abiola, by extension, the renaming of the Abuja National Stadium to Moshood Abiola National Stadium and the award of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Republic (GCOR) by the federal government, would be a mere academic exercise, and would still leave the mystery of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election unresolved and the souls of those Nigerians, who perished and suffered very serious injuries, sequence to the annulment, unsung heroes of this nation.

Iv. The Quest for Democracy in Nigeria

Since the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, and the dissolution of all other democratic institutions that preceded it, and the promise of General Ibrahim Babangida, General Abacha, and General Absusalani Abubakar, to restore democracy, and allow the wishes of the people to prevail, have to a large extent been a mere wishful thinking. Suffice it to say that the annulment created a culture of despondency, disillusionment and hopelessness in the people, as they see all the political institutions, put up by the government, as a mere deflection of the June 12, 1992 and thus not worth their time. The annulled June 12 presidential election, which could be described as the hallmark of democratic legitimacy, has given birth to the endless quest for democracy. That was evidenced by the various elections that have taken place, since the annulment and their quest for identity, credibility and their resultant failures to achieve international best practices. This view was reinforced, by the opinion of the United States, and the European Union (EU) observe mission, that described the 2007 general elections, as relatively free fair and credible.

This paper has reviewed the interplay of fraud and manipulations of the General Babangida's ill-fated transition to civilian elected president and the ill-conceived interim national government, which was the last resort, to rescue the country, from disintegration, due to the annulment (Odeh, 2003-40-42). Although the move by General Babangida and some of his cabal in the North, to appease the Yorubas, having given them what rightly belonged to them with the right hand, and retrieving it with the left hand, was to appoint the son of the Yorubas to head the interim national government. Yet this was not acceptable by them, nor water down their resolve to actualize June 12. Indeed the cream of the Yoruba race rejected it (Uketa, 1993). This was evidenced in their resolution describing the government, headed by one of its own as:

*“undemocratic”, unconstitutional illegal,
illegitimate and unacceptable”.*

Although the head of the interim government contended that it was not in search of identity, yet it was really indeed devoid of identity, and this explains, why it did not last long. One would want to ask, why despite the resolution of the Yorubas and the decision of the Lagos high court, it continued to exist, until, Chief Shonekan's purported resignation, and take over by General Abacha? The simple answer, one would say, is that it was the evolution of the incremental conspiracy, against the consolidation of democracy by Chief Shoncan and all others. Thus the interim national government, was neither a democratic nor a military government, but was an interim measure, put up by General Babangida, to avoid being burnt by the hurricane of June 12, 1993, annulled presidential election.

The death of general Abacha, led to the intervention of General Abdu Salami to engender democratic governance and the subsequent emergence of the fourth republic. This was done though the instrumentalities of the elections held in the country. It is imperative to note, that none has demonstrated the resolve and the unity of purpose, demonstrated by the generality of all Nigeria's of all tribes and religion, in the annulled June 12, presidential election. We are going to briefly, examine the previous presidential elections of 1999, 2003,

2007, 2011, 2015 and 2019. Suffice it to say that all demonstrated that we are still in quest of a genuine democracy.

General Abdul Salami Abubaka, set in motion the election of the 1999 presidential election. This election which can aptly be described as the harbinger of the fourth republic, consisting of the 2003, 2007, and 2011 elections, did not demonstrate any substantial growth, in the democratic consolidation in the country. This was so, despite the proliferation of political parties. Thus unlike the two parties that were allowed to contest the elections, under the General Ibrahim Babangida, thirty parties were registered to contest the elections, suffice it to say that virtually all the parties, produced candidates to contest in the various positions, in the election. Most scholars, have often argued, that the proliferation of political parties, were to encourage grassroots participation. However, considering the economy of the country, and ideological differences, as the basis for parties, one is at a loss, as to why so many political parties, would be registered in Nigeria.

The military were serious to demonstrate a departure from the fraudulent and deceitful electoral practices of General Babangida, and thus poised to produce an elected president. The emergence of General Olusegun Obasanjo, as the flag bearer of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was shrouded in controversy, right from his party primaries. In fact, the late Dr. Alex Ekwueme, who was perceived to be more qualified and competent, was sidelined. He never took this kindly, and struggled to reverse the trend. There was no gainsaying of the fact, that the 1999 election was monitored by the military and that reduced the chances of rigging, but it was not free, nor fair, and did not attain that goal. It was generally noted by the local and international observers, that the election was not only massively rigged, in favor of the National Party of Nigeria, (NPN) but were characterized by other irregularities, such as the stuffing of the ballot boxes, with pre-thumb printed ballot papers. It was in light of the foregoing, that the former president of the United States, whose Carter Foundation monitored the election, refused to endorse, the outcome of the presidential election and started thus:

“There was a wide disparity between the number of votes observed at the polling stations and the final result that has been reported from several states. Regrettably, therefore, it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the outcome of the presidential election”.

This observation of the former President of the United States, to a large extent reflected the views of other international and local observers, as to the large degree of rigging, that characterized the election that brought the emergence of General Olusegun Obasanjo, as the elected president of this country. Most scholars have described the 2003 election, as a battlefield conducted at the home front. Obasanjo having been helped to rig himself into the presidency in 1999, under the instrumentality of the People Democratic Party (PDP) and realizing that he has out lived his usefulness, was determined to rig himself back to the office, and at all cost. Thus, he set in motion, all the agencies of the state, to achieve victory at all costs. Writing on the level of malpractices, and rigging in the 2003 to date, Egwu and Egwu (2006, 158-159) noted as follows:

“During the last general election, as in many others in the past, political opponents were simply assassinated and people property destroyed. Political leaders are highly instigative of this callous behaviour. They bought guns, cutlasses, petrol, hemp and alcohol for hopeless and directionless youths, who wrecked havoc on hopeless masses in the name of election. Yet we speak of democracy in antidemocratic personality as we see in most of our leaders, even in OBJ, who can never foster democracy”.

Odeh, writing on the poor performance of Obasanjo, and his resolve to run for a second tenure, noted that his reluctance to accept the verdict of the people, led to his achieving victory through:

“an elaborate use of all the nations security agents, and the nation’s resources available to him and deal with those who dared to take the exalted seat from him. So much blood has continued to be shed; so many human life has been destroyed by the greedy politicians, who turn out youths, as political thugs to kill and maim, instead of keeping them in school to prepare them for a better future.

Describing further, of what took place on April 12 and 19 2003, as a People’s Democratic Party’s convention. The author wrote that the members of the party turned themselves, as lords of the manor. The 2007 election was massively rigged. President Olusegun Obasanjo under the leadership of Professor Murice Iwu, the Independent National Electoral Commissioner, the Inspector General Police and all the other security Agencies, helped the outgoing president to anoint his surrogate, Alhaji Umaru YarAdua, as the elected president, despite the protest of the various organizations, against his being sworn in, in May 29, 2007. Indeed the Nigeria Labour Union and the Nigerians United for Democracy, all resisted the swearing in of the president elect, but were subdued by the resolve of Obasanjo (Odeh, 2007. 76-79). It was so that:

*..., Olusegun Dakosta, advocated that:
“...what would solve the Nigeria problem is only a revolution now (Dakosta, 2007).*

In addition, Chief Ganni noted as follows, over the 2007 election;

“...It is now clear that we are going to move from electoral robbery to electoral Armageddon. If nothing is done about this one, and I am calling for the cancellation of everything. If nothing is done then democracy is doomed for all time”.

Also Wole Sonyika noted that:

“...Obasanjo in the last few years completely blocked the possibility of Nigeria moving forward”.

In its editorial captioned ‘Criminally Subverting the Peoples Will’, the News Magazine of April 30, 2007, wholly condemned the outrageous subversion of the will of the people and imposing, a candidate, that is not duly elected by them. The 2011 and 2015 elections have taken the trajectory of the previous ones as regards to the abuse of the power of incumbency, subversion of the will of the people, and the outright conversion of the sovereign wealth, to achieve the desired political results, and the resultant democratic heresy.

In 2011, General Buhari, alleged that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) stole his mandate. He sought redress up till the Supreme Court and lost. It is believed that the rigging of the 2011 presidential election precipitated the Post Election violence that took the lives of many Nigerians, including Youth Corps members that were posted to the northern part of this country. Also, the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections were not devoid of malpractices. This is informed by the fact that, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, though he refused to contest the outcome of the election, asserted that he conceded victory, to avoid the shedding of the blood of innocent Nigerians. Alhaji Atiku Abubaka, the Presidential candidate, in the last election, under the platform of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) challenged the election result, up to the Supreme Court and lost. This was so, despite the e allegedly, evidence of rigging that heralded the re-election of President Mohamed Buhari.

V. Conclusion

It is the our humble opinion, that the recent declarations by the president, and awards to late Chief M.K.O Abiola can only be meaningful, and address the wounds of those Nigerians, who suffered in that elections, and console those families that lost their dear ones, sequence to the turmoil, that followed the annulment, if the recommendations herein are followed or implemented.

Recommendation

That is why we believe that the only approach to solving this lingering doubts, anger and exasperation of Nigerians, is to validate the result of June 12, 1993 and declare Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the elected president, posthumously. Also, to pay his family all the salaries and benefits inherent thereto. This singular act of the president will no doubt receive the majority votes of the joint session of the National Assembly, to meet the constitutional threshold. It would exponentially transpose the political landscape of this country, and our realization of the mach sought after in Eldorado, as envisaged in the conceivable outcome of the June 12, presidential election.

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