

The Fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria, 1979 – 1983 : A Lesson for the Future

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria, 1979-1983: A lesson for the future. It discusses the enthronement of the Second Republic in Nigeria. It analyzes the critical factors responsible for the demise of the Second Republic. The role played by the Military Coup of December 31st 1983 also came to focus: The paper demonstrates that the political elites of the Third and Fourth Republics did not learn from the mistakes of the Second Republic. Data for the study was obtained extensively from the secondary sources like books, newspapers, articles, journals, theses, dissertations, and projects: The paper also relied on oral interview as primary sources. The study found that the election conducted in Nigeria in 1979 was supervised by the military hence the votes of the electorates counted compared to 1983 elections which witnessed disastrous electoral malpractices. The paper demonstrated that violation of the constitution, election rigging, thuggery, misappropriation of public funds, corruption, indiscipline, unemployment, scarcity of food, poor education and health facilities contributed to the demise of the Second republic. The paper concluded that just like the political elites and Leadership refused to learn from the mistakes of the First Republic, the politicians of the Third Republic (1985-1988) and those of the Fourth Republic beginning from 1999 did not see the need to avoid the political blunders of the Second Republic hence our political system, continues to witness thuggery, corruption, indiscipline, manipulation of results, violence, killings of innocent Nigerians and Litigations.

Keyword: Republic, Politics, Corruption, Coup, Fall.

The Fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria, 1979 – 1983: A lesson for the Future

Introduction

The fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria has generated much heated argument among historians. While some expressed the view that the military coup of 31st December, 1983 has destroyed the most efficient democracy in the world, others joined hundreds of Nigerians to congratulate the military men for a job well done.

Whatever the view of scholars, one point is clear, our politicians made a mockery of democracy which eventually led to the sudden fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria on 31st December 1983.

It is an irony of fate that Nigeria described as the giant of Africa” made a mess with the parliamentary system of government from 1960- 1966 January and again the Presidential system from 1979-1983 December, when the military men organized a successful coup described in “a Daily Time Publication on military takeover of the Federal Government of Nigeria on December 31st, 1983, as bloodless and painstaking operation (Daily Times, September, 1983).

It was Nigeria’s pride that she achieved her independence with minimum disturbances, but, it is rather unfortunate that after independence Nigeria has been gravitating in a spiral of political violence. In Nigeria, politics has become an essential features of the people means of achieving economic wealth (Tamuno, 1972:4-5).

The national election conducted in 1983 witnessed massive post-election violence following the declared landslide victory of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in Oyo and Ondo States considered to be stronghold of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Several persons lost their lives and large scale destruction of property was recorded (Alemika, 2011).

The Second Republic collapsed on 31st December, 1983 because of the anti-democratic practices of the party leaders. These leaders used their positions to illegally acquire stupendous wealth through

government contracts and other deals as well as *massively*rigging election. The multi-party system in Second Republic, notwithstanding all the efforts to avert or prevent irregularities still witnessed the most rapid politics of aggrandizement and open robbery of the treasury (Yagub, 2002:12).

In actual fact the democratization witnessed maneuvering and manipulation of political structures, institutions and actors, in the end we only succeeded in creating a defective foundation on which a solid democratic structure can neither be constructed nor sustained. Therefore in the Second Republic the multi-party system failed to deliver democratic consolidation because of undemocratic activities, lack of ideology, politics of money, corruption and bribery.

Hopelessly frustrated, one may be forced to ask at this point a fundamental question- what are the features of a good government? An attempt to answer this question would enable us to see if our hungry and ambitious politicians really worked in conformity with these features. There are many features of a good government. Prominent among them are:

First a good government should be democratic. That is, a good government should work with the principles of democracy. Democracy is a form of government in which all adult citizens share through their elected representatives. A government which encourages and allows rights of the citizens such as freedom of speech, religion, association and listens to public opinions (Cowries &Hornby, 1973). It goes with the assertion of the rules of Law, majority rule and accompanied by respect for the rights of minorities.

Again, democracy can be defined as a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people collectively and administered by them or by officers. Huntington is however quick to point out that a political system is democratic, “to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote (Quoted from Olarinoye 2017).

As a sign of appreciation of democracy as a feature of good government, the French revolution and Napoleonic Wars were allowed to see the light of the day because of the influence of “Code Napoleon which emphasized the fundamental human rights. Due to the declaration of the rights of man entrenched in the revolutionary ideology, the revolution was received with popular enthusiasm in Hungary Prussia, Spain, Italy, Germany. Although there was opposition to Napoleon’s repressive tendencies.

This reveals beyond all reasonable doubts that all citizens always crave for liberty fraternity and freedom which Shagari’s administration misused hence there is little wonder that the Second Republic of Nigeria fall.

Second the implementation of the constitution is another feature of a good government. One would recall the work of that great philosopher “Montesquieu” who advocated for separation of powers by a system of checks and balance. Montesquieu also expressed the view that the rule of law is supreme. He is a French man who wrote the book. “Spirit of the Laws”. Montesquieu believed that the three arms of government differ in nature and for the smooth running of government, these three arms or organs of government need to be separated (Montesquieu, 1747). He posits that to avoid oppression and tyranny, those who make, interpret and implement the Laws should be different, as it would guarantee’ liberty, freedom and would provide a safeguard against too much concentration of powers in a single authority (Ibid).

In juxtaposition of this, the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was based on the decisions of “A11 African conference on the Rule of Law, Lagos, Nigeria, 1961. It consisted of 194 judges, practicing lawyers and teachers of Law from twenty-three African nations as well as nine countries of other continents under the auspices of the International Commission of Jurists (All African Conference, 1961).

The following agreements were reached at the conference:

(a) The rule of Law is a dynamic concept which should be employed to safeguard and advance the will of the people and the political rights of the individual. In addition to establish social, economic, educational and

cultural conditions under which individual may achieve his dignity and realize his legitimate aspirations in all countries whether dependent or independent (Ibid).

(b) The Rule of Law is of universal validity and application as it embraces those institutions and principles of justice which are considered minimal to the assurance of human rights and the dignity of man (Ibid).

© The Rule of Law depends not only on the provision of adequate safeguards against abuse of power by the executive but also on the existence of effective government capable of maintaining law and order and ensuring adequate social and economic conditions of the life of the society.

The conference concluded that for these conditions to be fulfilled. The following ingredients are essential. There must be:

- i. The existence of an Executive invested with sufficient power and resources to discharge its full functions with efficiency and integrity.
- ii. A legislature elected by democratic process which is not subject, whether in the manner of its election or otherwise to the manipulation by the Executive.
- iii. An independent Judiciary which will discharge its duties fearlessly (Ibid).

In the light of the above therefore one can see how our politicians of the Second Republic really made a mockery of the 1979 constitution without the slightest attempt to implement the articles of the constitution.

Third, another feature of a good government is seen from the concept of social contract. This contract explains that when originally the people had given their assent to the existence of kings and government, there had come unto being a definite contract between the king or government and the people by which the King only ruled by the consent of the people. By the nature of the social contract the people were allowed to break the contract if the kings or government did not keep their side of the bargain which was to protect and promote the interest of the people and liberate them from oppression (Quoted from Ediagbonya, 1984).

Against those background, one would now discuss the reasons responsible for the fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria. One of the significance of History is that it enables people to learn from the mistakes of the past and prevent its occurrence in future. But our politicians in a bid to satisfy their financial urge saw nothing good in learning from the mistakes of the past which led to the fall of the First Republic in January 15th, 1966.

The Emergence of Second Republic of Nigeria

In 13th Feb. 1976, the Military Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated by Lt. Col. Dimka. His Chief of Staff, General Olusegun Obasanjo who was the second in command became the Head of State of Nigeria. He completed the transition process or programme, which General Ramat Murtala started, which ushered in the Second Republic with the election of Alhaji Shehu Shagari as the First Executive President.

A new constitution was drafted which saw the West Minister System of government previously used in the First Republic jettisoned for the American style presidential system. This new system of government was chosen in order to try and avoid the political problems attributed to the parliamentary system of the First Republic. The transition programme announced by the regime of General Murtala Muhammed was followed by a major debate in the Nigerian media. There was a general consensus that the programme should include a constitution making process, a lifting of ban on political activities and elections leading to the formal disengagement of the military from politics. Opinions differed as to how much time would be required to accomplish the transition programme (Kunle Amuwo and Yann Lebeau, 1984).

The debate ended when General Murtala Muhammed announced in October 1975 that the supreme military council had approved a five stage programme designed to ensure a smooth transition to civil rule (National broadcast by General Murtala, October, 1975). According to him, the first stage would be the appointment of a constitution drafting committee, the second stage is the formation of a Constituent

Assembly, the third stage would be a preparatory stage for elections which include the ban on political activities would be lifted on October 1978 and formation of political parties. The election makes up the fourth and fifth stage of the transition programme (The constitution Basic Provisions) Decree No. 32 of 1975).

In keeping to the promise of uninterrupted transition programme, the regime set-up 50 man Constitution Drafting Committee which was inaugurated on the 18th of October, 1975 by General Murtala Mohammed. Murtala Mohammed created six new states in February 1976 hence the number of states in Nigeria increased to 19 (State creation and Transitional provision Decree no 12 of 1976).

Unfortunately, General Mohammed was assassinated by Lt. Col. Dimka, though the coup failed hence the second in command, General Olusegun Obasanjo became the Head of State and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. To show seriousness in the completion of the transitional process, General Obasanjo in a national broadcast said:

Politically, this Military Administration drew up without any pressure from any quarter, a programme to return the country to Civil rule and we have religiously adhered to the programme (Obasanjo's Broadcast to the Nation, Friday, 14th July, 1978). General Obasanjo warned, "This Administration is committed to bringing about an elected government in 1979, through a peaceful process of free and fair elections and we will not tolerate from anybody or group, any act that is capable of diverting us from this goal, (Ibid). Again, he said:

"We all as members of this administration have no particular or special interest in who succeeds us. We are not interested in partisan politics and we have absolute confidence in the sense of judgment of our people. We will therefore, not tolerate anybody or any group of people using the name or office of any of us to canvass for political support on patronage. Any such action on the part of anybody will be ruthlessly dealt with (Ibid, p. 8).

Little wonder the transition programme was successful. It was done with much commitment and tenacity of purpose and a mission statement.

In September 1976, the Constitution Drafting Committee submitted its report. This was followed by the constitution of Constituent Assembly whose main function was to debate the draft constitution. The Constituent Assembly sat between October 1977 and June 1978 and rectifies the recommendations of the constitution Drafting Committee for a Federal, Presidential system of government modeled on the American System. It includes bicameral legislature at the Federal and unicameral Legislature at the state levels. It also ratified the recommendation of a multi-party system and separation of powers between the arms of government.

On October of 1976, 24 member federal electorate commission (FEDECO) headed by Chief Michael Ani was formed and the body was inaugurated in November 1976 by General Obasanjo. The electoral body became legal in May, 1979 (Electoral Commission Decree of May, 1977).

The new drafted constitution was published on September 21, 1978 and the ban on political activity was lifted. Political parties were formed and registered. Five political parties were formally registered to participate and contest for various political offices as provided by the 1979 constitution. These registered political parties were: The National Party of Nigeria, (NPN), The Nigeria People Party (NPP), The Great Nigerian People Party (GNPP), the Unity party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP).

In the final analysis, Alhaji Shehu Shagari won the presidential election under the banner of National Party of Nigeria (NPN).

The Causes of the Fallof Second Republic of Nigeria.

The years October 1979 to October 1983 had confirmed and compounded the painful paradox where Nigeria the self proclaimed giant of Africa and above all, an agrarian country had lived solely on imports. This period demonstrated the lack of capacity and ability by the ousted political leadership to harness and

manage for the overall benefit of society, the vast resources so generally placed at our disposal by nature. Many factors were responsible for the fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria. They include the following:

First was Mismanagement of Public fund. More than anything else, Shagari's government created a period of economic predicament due to mismanagement of fund. It is true that there is a world-wide economic recession. However, in the case of Nigeria, its impact was aggravated by mismanagement. It was the period of appointment of numerous ministers and political advisers to both Federal and State Government. Commissioners were appointed in each state in addition to numerous permanent secretaries. As if these were not enough, in each state was "House of Assemblies" housing at least 60 legislators. Appointment of chairmen of Boards and Government parastatals became the order of the ofday. The appointment of these chairmen was not based on merit but on partisan consideration.

This is no small measure helped to eat deep into our poor financial stand. In the House of Senate and Representatives were Senators and Members of House of Representatives who could not be counted for their numbers with special salary structure that could not be compared to other nations in the world. Today it is a popular saying that, Nigeria legislators are the highest paid in the World. Instead of the legislators concentrating on their official assignment, they devoted their time on deciding their salary scales, fringebenefits and unnecessary foreign travels but took no account of the state of the economy and welfare of the people they are representing (Ediagbonya, 1984:10).

To save this dear country from this financial predicament which the politicians caused themselves, they decided to resort to borrowing which incurred a high debt for the nation. It was a period of both internal and external borrowing; the aftermath of this was a weak balance of payment position.

The Head of the Federal Military Government, Major-General Buharirevealed in his address to the Nation on 7th April, 1984 that the mismanagement of fund was further worsened by lack of public accountability, "kick-backs and other forms of corruption, inflation of contract sums, illegal dealings on

foreign exchange, forgery, fraud and embezzlement (Major-General Buhari's address to the Nation, 7th April, 1984).

This financial mismanagement was revealed by the ex-Governor of Bendel State Dr. S.O. Ogbemudia that the debt of Bendel State Government now stood at N1.1. billions (Nigerian observer, November 10, 1983). In the same period, the Federal Government announced the disbursement of N96 million loans to Bendel State for the payment of arrears of salaries, wages and allowances. It is still a big question today in the minds of Bendeliteshow that money was spent.

In juxtaposition of this financial mismanagement on the part of our politicians, Nigerians were very shocked and sad to read on the front page of Nigerian Observer of January 20th, 1984 when the following revelations were made.

A total of N80,000 cash was found in the residence of AlhajiShehu Musa. N204,000 cash was found in the house of Aper-Aku, ex-Governor of Benue State, N42,000 cash was also found in the residence of ex-Vice President, Dr. Alex Ekweme.

N1 million in the residence of Imo State ex-Governor, Chief Samuel Mbakwe. Also a total of N3.4 million cash was found in the residence of the ex-Governor of Kano State, AlhajiSakinZumo. (Nigerian Observer, Jan. 20th 1984). This revelation made after the military coup reveals that our politicians were worse than useless. The political leadership and the elected representatives,those entrusted with the management of our collective affairs fed fat and spotted rosy and with robust checks. "Emperor Nero was fiddling while, Rome burnt"

Violation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

It was a period when the political class violated the constitution at will without regards. This was done intentionally to satisfy their political ambition. When the Executive branch of the government failed, the

people expected relief from the legislative branch which the legislative branch which was invested with the power in the constitution to check and balance to ensure that the executive provided good government.

The legislators however were in no position to check the drift of the executive since they were active collaborators. They were pre-occupied with other issues of no benefit to the people whom they were representing. There is no section in the constitution which enables the president to deport a fellow citizen. The president ignored the constitution by deporting the speaker of defunct Borno State House of Assembly by name Shugaba. This is the limit in which people could misuse the opportunity given to them Shugaba only returned to country through litigation because the speaker challenged the action of the president in the court and he won.

So the inability of our politicians to implement the constitution provoked the military men and the people of Nigeria. The action of the military which eventually followed led to the fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria.

Corruption and Indiscipline

Bureau Report 1987 says that corruption manifest itself in various ways “Its multifarious manifestations include the inflation of government contracts in return for kickbacks, fraud and falsification of accounts in the public service, examination malpractices in our educational institutions including universities, the taking and giving of bribes and perversion of justice among the police, the judiciary and other organs for the administration of justice (Bureau Report, 1987: 215). According to MAMSER Political Education Manual, the underlisted are forms of corruption found in our society.

1. Seeking and giving unmerited admission in our institutions of learning.
2. Receiving and giving bribe in office and private business circle.
3. Demanding of “friendship or “sexual gratification” as a pre-condition for promotion or rendering of service

4. Examination malpractices
5. Inflation of contract fees (MAMSER, 1989).

Without mincing words, all these features were all there in the Second Republic between 1979-1983.

Discipline is referred to as the ability of a citizen to control himself or herself at all times and restrain from corrupt or evil practices (Ojo, 2007: 244) it can also be seen as the training that corrects, models, moulds, strengthens or perfects particularly the mind (Ibid), while indiscipline means lack of discipline. It is a mode of behaviour, conduct or action that deviates from the acceptable norms and ethos of the society.

In the Second Republic in Nigeria, Arson and destruction of Government properties and vital documents became nearly the order of the day, they were the means by which fraudulent government officials eliminate all traces and clues that would lead to the discovering of crimes and fraud, they had hatched or had helped to perfect and consummate.

Millions of naira had fraudulently left the government coffers into private purses only to throw this nation into financial misery, hunger, disease and death. Corruption became a cankerworm in the national affairs, but since the leaders were corrupt, they could not correct corrupt practices. Many of those who held public offices used their positions of trust to grab public money placed in their care to the disadvantage of the common man. Corruption has become so pervasive and intractable that a whole ministry has been created to put an end to it.

Indiscipline went side by side with corruption. It was as a result of this indiscipline in the Nigerian society that after the termination of the Second Republic in December, 31st 1983, the war against indiscipline was launched by the military administration under the leadership of the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon. Suffice it to say that, the war against indiscipline has spread to all states of the federation. The inability of the civilian administration to wipe out corruption and indiscipline in the society was a factor that led to demise of the Second Republic of Nigeria.

Unemployment

Between 1979-1983 was a period where employees were disemployed and job seekers were unemployed. This indication was given by the Head of the School of Humanities, College of Education Agbor during a symposium titled. "How far is it correct to say that Military Intervention of 31st December 1983 has destroyed the most efficient democracy in the Nigerian society (Symposium at the College of Education, Agbor, December 31st, 1983).

One would recall that Brigadier Sanni Abacha in his first speech said "Unemployment figures including the graduates have reached embarrassing and unacceptable proportions (Brigadier Sanni Abacha Broadcasts 31st December, 1983).

To worsen the ugly situation, there was a ban on employment in 1981 by the Federal Government which made employment extremely difficult for all categories of job seekers.

In a country where there was no employment for people to earn a living, the military take-over was not a surprise. Unemployment problem in the country ushered in an era of robbery and Thuggery in the country. This period of civilian rule was characterized by insecurity to life and properties throughout the country because of the rascally and radical activities of the youths who were denied the sense of belongings due to unemployment.

Election Rigging and Thuggery

The 1983 election witnessed the worst election rigging in the history of Nigeria. Election is defined as the process or the act of choosing a person or persons for an office or for certain officers by the voters who are formally qualified to do so (Ojo, 2007: 17). It can be seen as highly organized channels of popular expression. It is through the system of elections that the public or the masses express their wishes. It refers to the act of electing or choosing candidates to represent the people of a given state or country in the parliament, executive and other governmental position according to the constitution of the country (Ibid).

The people world over grave for free and fair election. It is their expectation that their votes would count. That was not the situation in the Second Republic in Nigeria when election was not free and fair. And far from been credible. It was the uncivilized experience of the more you look and the less you see. Free and fair election is a situation where persons are free to vote according to their wish without any coercion or inducement, harassment and intimidation. According to Ojo, it means that the electorates are free to vote according to the dictates of their conscience (Ojo, 2007:124). It is an election conducted without incidents of rigging or electoral fraud and in which the qualified voters are free to cast their votes for the candidates, as well as the political parties of their choice without any inducement harassment or intimidation (Ibid).

The Presidential, Gubernatorial, Senatorial, Assembly and Representative Elections were characterized by rigging. The election rigging led to disputes in different parts of the country. No party was left out of the rigging exercise. The only political parties that could not complain of election rigging were those parties that lacked the resources to rig. The period witnessed stuffing of ballot boxes, under age voting and outright falsification of election results.

In the 1979 election, there was not much violence given the fact that the military played a supervisory role in the elections and transition. The only outstanding disagreement was the controversial Supreme Court decision on the winner. The military in collaboration with FEDECO, decided to appoint Shagari as the president by reinterpreting the meaning of one quarter of two-third of 19 (Alele, 2011).

In the 1983 election in Nigeria, the military had quitted the stage and did not supervise these elections. So those who could not demonstrate their acts of vandalism and thuggery during the 1979 elections now had the ample-time to demonstrate the vices in 1983 election. In fact the most violence of the mayhem took place in Ondo State where the carnage was so high. The obvious cause was the popular reactions against rigged gubernatorial elections which followed a National Party of Nigeria (NPN) candidate in an

overwhelming Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) State (Ibid). In this violent demonstration, the entire families of politicians wipe out and hundreds of houses were set on fire including the State Headquarters of FEDECO.

The so-called FEDECO, the organ charged with the responsibility of conducting the election was not an efficient organ. There were trouble here and there over the election results announced by FEDECO. A case in point was the election result announced by FEDECO in Ondo State in which FEDECO declared Dr. Akin Omoboriowo as the winner in the gubernatorial election held on 13th August, 1983. But the incumbent Governor Chief Ajasin convinced of a case of rigging charged the case to court. The court later declared a fresh election to be conducted in Ondo State (Ediagbonya, 1984) Chief Michael Ajasin won the election, Akin Omoboriowo was not satisfied, hence he decided to go to court again. The court later officially declared Chief Michael Ajasin as the winner of the election and was sworn in as the Governor of Ondo State. This was done after many innocent citizens have died.

There was also dispute between the then incumbent Governor of Anambra State, Jim Nwobodo and the Governor-elect, Chief Onoh. It was a matter of life and death before chief Onoh was declared by the court as the Governor of Anambra State. There was another case between Dr. Samuel O Ogbemudia, the Governor-elect and Governor Ambrose Alli of Bendel State over Gubernatorial election which was held in August 13th 1983. The hearing in the court began on Wednesday September 7th, 1983 (Ibid).

The Head of the banned Unity party of Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, condemned the conduct of the elections and said it witnessed the worst rigging ever in the history of elections in Nigeria.

Another strong criticism came from the Owelle of Onitsha at the end of the general elections in September, 1983. He wrote a letter to the ousted president Shehu Shagari advising him to resign as President because the election results were falsified.

Here is an extract from the letter: The Federal Electoral Commission, an appointee of the president of Nigeria, has announced the name of the person who shall be the president of Nigeria as from October, 1st,

1983. This announcement was made in spite of some outrageous violations of Nigeria's constitutional and statute laws, despite the deliberate flouting of legal edicts. These ambitious politicians are rejoicing that the party of their choice has won a glorious victory. Glorious? I would humbly describe it as an inglorious victory. History as my witness will yet demonstrate that it is a pyrrhic victory and it will ultimately vindicate the just...., (Daily Times Weekly Publication, September 28th 1983; 14-5).

In fact this reveals beyond all reasonable doubts that the elections of 1983 September was nothing free and fair. In fact the year 1983 witnessed many political upheavals. Politicians were at each other's throat. It was a period of thuggery. They allowed differences in opinion or personality clashes to disrupt the peace of the nation. Confrontation was the order of the day. In some states, many families were thrown into bereavement and perpetual sorrows, all because politicians wanted to emerge victorious at elections by all means.

FEDECO, an organ responsible for conducting the election was an artificial organ without any amount of credibility. It was full of contradictions. One would recall how the Federal Court of Appeal sitting in Kaduna struck out an appeal filed by FEDECO challenging an order of a Kano Court judge that fresh senatorial election be conducted in the Kano South-West constituency. The court rejected the appeal filed by FEDECO and also ordered the Federal electoral officer for the constituency and the returning officer to pay N400 costs to the respondent, a member of the Peoples' Redemption Party.

Other factors which led to the fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria were the inability of both the Federal and State Government to pay salaries to workers, poor health services and the laughable educational facilities.

With these categories of sad events in Nigerian politics, the military intervention of 31st December, 1983, which eventually led to the sudden fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria was over-due. With these conditions present, the fall of Second Republic of Nigeria did not appear as a surprise to the suffering masses because the ingredients of discontent were all present. So the military takeover was rather hailed as an act of

God perpetrated by the men in uniform who incidentally are members of the suffering society. In appreciation of the Military coup, the Nigerian Observer said "It initial general euphoria exhibited by a great number of Nigerians is any reliable index, the latest bloodless change of guards at the apex of the country's political life is very welcome (Nigerian Observer, 20th January, 1984).

A Lesson for the Future

This is another dimension to this paper. It focuses on whether the politicians of the Third and Fourth Republics learnt some lessons from the mistakes of the Second Republic which led to its demise.

It is quite an irony of fate that the politicians and Government of third and fourth Republics did not learn from the bitter experiences of the Second Republic which led to the military takeover of 31st December, 1983.

General Babangida succeeded in making Nigeria a two-party system, the National Republic Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP). Yet he succeeded in plunging the nation into a more violent nature when he cancelled the Presidential election, 12 June, 1993 (The Guardian, 2011). General Babangida stepped aside in August 1993 which paved way for an interim government led by Chief Shonekan which was swept into oblivion following the palace coup led by General Sani Abacha. Abacha was suddenly struck with death while he was planning to transform himself into civilian president (Nwolise, 2005).

The 2003 general election was conducted by the Obasanjo's administration during which electoral violence added to the political assassinations. The president himself warned early in 2002 that politicians were raising private militias that could make the 2003 elections bloody and indeed it was bloody. (Adebayo and Omotola, 2007). The general observation and conclusion of Nigeria regarding the 2003 election was that no election could be conducted in Nigeria under a civilian government without corruption, electoral malpractices and violence of highest order.

As if this was not enough, president Obasanjo as the 2007 election drew near, told Nigerians, other Africans and world at large that the 2007 elections would be a do-or-die affair (The, tribune, 12th March, 2011). For instance in 2007 elections, in Rivers State, a police station was attacked and burnt by unknown assailants, also the INEC offices in Onitsha North Onitsha South, Nnewi South and a local government office in Akwa North, Anambra were burnt in protest. Soldiers clashed with angry voters in Nasarawa State. In Oyo State, PDP Thugs beat up opposition party officials and hijacked ballot boxes (The Guardian, May 20th 2011). Just to mention but a few.

In 2011 election, the electoral violence took a very ugly tone in Northern region zone. There were cases of stuffing of ballot boxes, underage voting and outright falsification of election results. Infact, with regard to post election violence, the leadership Newspaper had it on their front page:

Post election violence in Nigeria as 121 people have been killed and 15,000 people have been displaced; Kaduna 50 victims, Katsina 8 victim, Bauchi 16 victims; Gombe 17 victims (The Leadership, April 20th 2011).

The situation was not different in other parts of the country. These electoral vices were replicated in 2015 elections in Nigeria. Hence one would be correct to say without mincing words that the Third Republic Politicians did not learn any lesson from the mistakes of the Second Republic. Even the issue of violation of the constitution, election rigging and thuggery, corruption, indiscipline, inability of Governments to pay salary to workers and embezzlement of public funds which brought the Second Republic to an end are manifesting on daily basis as they were visible in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 elections in Nigeria.

Conclusion

It is quite unfortunate that the political elites of the Second Republic of Nigeria made a mess and mockery of democracy which eventually led to the demise of the Second Republic when the military took over. The period between 1979-1983 demonstrated the lack of capacity and ability by the ousted political

leadership to harness and manage for the overall benefit of society the vast resources so generously placed at our disposal by nature. The period witnessed mismanagement of public fund, violation of the constitution, corruption, indiscipline, inability of Governments to pay salary, poor educational and health facilities. Violence and the rate of unemployment was at geometrical progression.

With all these catalogue of sad events in Nigerian politics, the military intervention of 31st October, 1983, which eventually led to the sudden fall of the Second Republic of Nigeria was over-due. Many Nigerians celebrated this military takeover.

It was that glorious Saturday morning of 31st December, 1983 that the termination of the era of our corrupt politicians of the Second Republic came to the hearing of million of Nigerians. It generated popular enthusiasm among Nigerians who have been suffering under the hungry politicians. Infact Sanni Abacha's radio broadcast that Saturday morning raised the hope of over 75 million Nigerians who lived four years of despair, frustration under the turpitude of the Second Republic.

Unfortunately the Third Republic failed completely and the Fourth Republic is almost, at verge of collapse because the political elites find it very difficult to learn from the mistakes of the Second Republic. Infact they learnt nothing from it. Just like the political class of the Second Republic did not learn anything from the errors of the First Republic. Infact, the five political parties registered by the electoral body in the Second Republic were dominated by the same crop of politicians who were notorious in the First Republic.

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