

“AGAINST THE RUN OF PLAY: HOW AN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT WAS DEFEATED IN NIGERIA”

Prestige, Lagos, 2017, p. 204. ISBN: 978-978-54609-9-5

The interface of religion and politics is glocal. Although Adeniyi's interest in this book is not about this relationship, there is certainly no way that politics in Nigeria can be completely weaned or divorced from religion. The immediate focus of Adeniyi's book is on the personal, family, internal, external, party and national conspiracies that led to the defeat of former President Goodluck Jonathan in 2015 general elections. In this chronicle, Adeniyi carefully selected some important and memorable national and international events that took place in the Jonathan Presidency with the hindsight to highlight how power was lost and won in a unique way for the first time in the political history of Nigeria.

The emergence of Jonathan as President after the demise of President Yar 'Adua was not as smooth as many thought it was. But the harder bargain was his interest to run for the 2011 and 2015 elections. Zoning debate within the then ruling party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was rife, especially among the northern leaders who argued that a northerner ought to have been voted for to complete the second term of Yar 'Adua and return power to the north. The emergence of Jonathan readily resulted in northern ethnic solidarity for a candidate who had been defeated roundly thrice earlier – General Muhammadu Buhari. Of course, political intrigues were at play, which ultimately resulted in the supposed agreement for Jonathan to run for a term only.

Political truths are not moral truths. Thus, if Jonathan promised he was going to run for one term, it was a mere political truth devoid of morality, it seemed. It was this that led to the massive move against him. His (mis)management of internal political disagreements in his party that led to the decampment of five state governors and their supporters, his wife's unguarded and melodramatic slips, the public wrangling with former President Obasanjo, the Boko Haram insurgency and the Chibok Girls saga, international conspiracies, the media unfavourable reportage, not to talk about corruption, worked together to rob Jonathan of the 2015 elections.

There were options opened to Jonathan during the elections and shortly after. The suspicious creation of polling booths in the north, the high volume of distribution of Permanent Voters' Cards in Boko Haram ravaged zones more than many peaceful states in the south, the inveterate and unhindered access of undegraded voting in the north could have propelled a swift reaction. Even though Jonathan was going to concede power to an opponent without bloodletting as expected by some international observers and countries, and even among many

citizens, some members of the PDP still put up some actions, at least, to demonstrate their loyalty to the President. Incontrovertibly, the concession of power to Buhari even before the final announcement of the results went a long way in restoring peace in Nigeria. It was a historic and unexpected statesmanlike act. The pact signed by the major players in the 2015 elections to accept the results would be viewed in the light of what would have happened if Jonathan had refused to concede.

For the All Progressive Congress (APC), it was not also an easy task to engage an incumbent president and have him defeated. Buhari had to be worked on; at least, he had to pretend to be what he was not in order to be acceptable to the electorate. His religiously fanatical postures had to be mellowed down by pretentiously romancing with Christians and their leaders, attending one Christian meeting and the other. Jonathan did not lose sight of religious intervention in Nigerian elections as he went from one church to the other, campaigning for votes. The Reverend Father Mbaka's ambidextrous and controversial prophecies and later stark support for Buhari cannot be undermined in the run up to the elections and shortly thereafter. For Bola Tinubu, people's recourse to religion to work against others, especially him, was heartrending. The Muslim-Muslim ticket which was thought about by the APC was viewed as a political plus for Jonathan, hence Tinubu had to be dropped. As Tinubu said: "There has been one form of attack that has troubled me. That is the attack based on religion. Those who exploit religion should be wary. For there really is a God and He does not like it when you play with His people or use His name to do the opposite of what He intends" (p.120). The recourse to Pastor Enoch Adeboye by Professor Yemi Osinbajo being tipped for the Vice President also had a religious colouration. The declaration of Dame Patience Jonathan: "There is God o" which went viral attests to the recognition of human powerlessness in the face of national difficulty and a revert to divine intervention. The labelling of APC as a Muslim party would probably have worked against it if not for the strategic and astute election of some key officers who are Christians.

Adeniyi aptly dissect Buhari's government as failing to live up to the promise it made during the elections. History, he says, is repeating itself "in bigger proportions today" (p.200). "Two years in power, there is nothing to suggest that Buhari is prepared for the office he spent 12 years campaigning for" (p. 202). This leaves the mantra 'Change' to yet a philosophical debate.

Certainly, Adeniyi has harped on the gross failure of leadership in the political history of a country described as "impossible" and "one of the world's most problematic federations" (p. xiii). Although leadership is critical to national development, the level of consciousness and preparedness of the people and their readiness to rise up to make a change in leadership cannot be over-emphasised. This ought to have been part of the campaign to rescue Nigeria from the burgomasters that masquerade as its leaders. The 2019 elections may yet provide a

veritable opportunity for the people, but it seems that it is yet lost ahead of time. Only time would prove this wrong.

Benson Ohihon Igboin¹

Примљен: 15.05.2017.

Прихваћен: 20.10.2017.

¹ Department of Religion and African Culture, Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria. E-mail: bensonigboin@gmail.com