

Commentary, February 12, 2015

NIGERIAN ELECTIONS: THE POLITICAL PLOT AS A PSYCHODRAMA

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The approaching of elections compels whoever is concerned to pounder Nigerian politics and so happened to the Author of this short commentary.

The first word that was churned out was fugue, defined by Merriam-Webster's dictionary as, "A disturbed state of consciousness in which the one affected seems to perform acts in full awareness but upon recovery cannot recollect the acts performed." The next one was "bacchanalian revel", a term employed by Hegel terms for his Phenomenology. The American philosopher Robert Solomon, influenced by this term, described this book as "a maze of obscure forms, linked together by whim, struggling to reach clarification by devious or impossible routes." Those are also words quite apt to describe Nigeria and its political phenomenon. Well, the last but not the least word was "speaking in tongues", which of course does not help the people, for it is meant to wow to make any sense out of the Babel. It merely jars their ears.

The things that happen in Nigeria generally, and in politics in particular, defy logics. Take, for example, Expo Milan 2015. Nigeria accepted to participate, but in less

than three months to go the land given her to build her pavilion is still without anything on it. The delegation the Italian government sent to Abuja was assured that Nigeria was not withdrawing, but as soon as the group left, the Nigerian government, like one who drank the amnesia-inducing Lethian water, forgot all about it. The Expo organizers thus saw themselves plunged into the Strait of Messina, barricaded on both sides by Scylla and Charybdis, but the philosophy of "the show must go on" prevailed. Now the event will take place, though with an empty land like a big ozone hole in the firmament, thank God, constellated by beautiful structures from other countries.

Nigeria is not a normal place, and so things stand on their heads. This is why money, for instance, has become God and thus worshipped. This is also why a senator earns more than 2 million dollars per year, while a worker on minimum wage earns something more than 1 thousand dollar for the same period, and so needing about 1,600 years to earn a senator's annual salary. Not even a mere opinion is reliable, or an event certain till it has passed. It is a place where gurus, for example, wake up one morning and declare their support for a candidate and the next

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day they deny it. A candidate does not win election here because of a rich agenda, but because of lies told with the conviction of truth, religious and ethnic sentiments brazenly played out, rigging and other shenanigans.

Election time is not the best of times for Nigerians, because it exposes us. It shows how limited we are, in spite of the “shibboleth” of being the giant of Africa. We believe what we do is part of what is called democracy, yet the alternation of power is fought by the incumbent with all his might. Yet again, the president bestrides Montesquieu’s tripartite system like a colossus, with its two elephantine legs pressed on the judiciary and the legislature to cow them. Even representation, a synonym of democracy, is conceived solely as self-representation, where the winner takes it all; the people represented can go to hell. They exist only during election and are coaxed through different means to vote as expected. The Greeks, it seems, invented democracy to make us shibboleths. So we replace voting with test for the candidates, and without any sitting chairperson, we will continue to practice democracy alla Nigeria, i.e., farcical democracy.

Come March 28, Dr Goodluck Jonathan of the People’s Democratic Party (Ppd), the ruling party, and Gen. Muhammadu Buhari of All Progressives Congress (Apc) will face the electorate. There are also others, but the contest is between this duo. Jonathan, in spite of being generally seen as clueless and without character, has all

the advantages of an incumbent, apart from having as his voters a good chunk of the Ibo, the southern minorities, and a smattering of the Hausa-Fulani. Buhari, on the other hand, will be voted for by a throng of the Yoruba, the Hausa-Fulani and all those hit by misrule and the economic malaise engendered by massive corruption. It is not going to be an easy contest, and neither is it going to be free and fair – if it is not disrupted.

Nigerians are light years away from being enlightened politically, and so their own nemesis. They are not yet ready to throw out a corrupt and do-nothing leader, who happens to relate to them by tribe, religion or geopolitical zone. Ordinarily, they give the impression of being smart but upon closer examination they reveal to be as gullible as other humans. This is why a president needn’t bother to do anything to earn a second term; all he needs to do is to point at phantom enemies personified by religion or tribe. The opposition is no less adept at this game; it also uses the same weapon, and will likely reproduce all the vices of the incumbent when its leader eventually wins. It does not matter if this leader is an acclaimed saint; the crossbreeding that takes place will obviously modify his Dna. Even when this doesn’t happen, his election bankrollers must surely have their way. This means that looting, which has moved from mere millions in naira to billions and trillions in dollars, will climb to “zillions”. This is bad news for Nigeria.