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Interrogating Obi and ‘Obidient’ Movement in 2023 Nigerian Presidential Election as a Spring

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Abstract

Peter Obi was a little-known political figure until he resigned his membership of the Peoples Democratic Party to pitch his tent with Labour Party. His finding of Datti Ahmed from the north as a running mate for the 2023 presidential election was a notable plus in integrity, capacity and competence. When they were comingled with the Nigerian social media savvy youths and started speaking to the post-Endsars protest political language of the youths who were shunned and bullied to leave the street barricades to form political parties to run elections (as they were then not too young to run for the highest office in the land) every political space went berserk. When the two groups were galvanized by serious political-actors in the old brigade who were interested in seeing that Nigeria shifted away from retrogression arising from economic and political leadership failures, the table was set and a movement was born. This research which is doctrinal in method begs several issues considering whether the movement has come to stay or it is a flash in the sky in a night of heavy rainfall. How far will the movement go after it has been cheated out through the ballot? Now that it has been referred to the courts by the same State and party which rigged it out in the election from the first division to the third, will the same State and party

which controls the judiciary not throw-out the symbol and movement out from the court windows? Assuming but not conceding that they are also made to lose in the courts by the Judges, will the movement be able to survive till another circle of election in 2028? These are the critical issues agitating this study. It is found in this study (drawing from some perspectives of well-known researchers on the subject) that the State, its agencies and the political party in power are not ready to allow the movement to survive and see the light of the day even as brief as it has so far survived. Every attempt is being made at all cost to strangulate the movement because it does not mean well for their ‘business as usual.’ The concepts being preached by the movement are revolutionary in practical terms. It says there is no more to loot and share, that there is going to be hourly pay, politicians may have to be retired because politics is not a business but a pastime, that the era for conspicuous consumption economy must give way to production and people with character deformities must be exposed and shown the way out of public office. It is suggested that whether the movement forms a government not, it must be accommodated for peace to rein or a spring may erupt.

Keywords: Nigeria, Presidential Election, Peter Obi, Political Movement, Spring

Introduction

Movements have all along been in the background of the history of the political development of Nigeria. There had been the Zikist Movement which was inspired by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Awoist Movement which was better known as the Action Group in the western region under Chief Obafemi Awolowo. It can be argued that the appearance of the Action Group led to the loss of the political control of the country by the south due to the irreconcilable differences between Dr. Azikiwe and Chief Awolowo. It can also be stated that the level to which Awolowo brought ethnicity to play in politics was another contributory factor in the loss of the grip to the north. It brought a major division in the politics of the south. Such tenacity for ethnic proclivity did not show in the north. The north seems to have gathered and coalesced on the umbrella of a unifying universal religion and a widely internationally spoken Hausa language in West African sub-region.

In the north there had been the Sardauna Movement or Sultanate Movement which was far more favoured by the colonialists because of its conservative political posture and interested in the unity of the north at the beginning of the Nigeria experiment but later sprout out to become the most formidable political machinery till date in Nigeria. These movements in the political history of Nigeria have largely controlled the businesses of government till date especially in their various regions. Of ‘movement’ actually it is only the Zikist movement that has been so characterized in Nigerian political literature. Action Group

was more of a well-structured political party from the outset even as it grew from a tribal association of descendants of Oduduwa the founder of the Yoruba race. The Sultanate was equally of a political party called the Northern Nigerian Congress in control of the northern space since independence arising from the Sokoto Caliphate that was founded by Utman dan Fodio in about 1800 and thus was never a movement strictly speaking as it had always been in government and not a political underdog as Action Group. The brief period that it lost the grip of power in Nigeria was the date of ascendancy to power of Gen. Aguyi Ironsi to the date his regime was toppled. In fact, the first coup in Nigeria was initiated for its annihilation but it came back like a phoenix via its military wing.

So many positive things have been stated about the Obi-Datti movement and campaign for the presidential election that took place on 25th February, 2023. The coinage 'obidient' is the brand of Peter Obi and Datti Ahmed as the carriers of the unusual third force mantra that erupted from the 'ossified bipartisan political architecture that grew from the social media and tallied with the lived lives' and social experiences of many Nigerians in the prelude to the 2023 presidential election (Amuta, 2023) ^[4]. As this study is being conducted while the result of the election is being challenged by the movement before the Election Petition Tribunal the Tribunal's decision of which shall be tested on appeal before the Supreme Court of Nigeria, if need be, the study shall proceed on the premises of the facts currently available and at hand. And as the study shall necessarily be gauged at a later time in the future after the outcomes of the judicial proceedings, an attempt shall be made to discuss the issues without running-foul of the case before the courts, as a significant part of the subject matter is now subjudice. What shall therefore govern this study for purposes of clarity are facts, statements, commentaries that where at the disposal of the researcher shortly before the study is published if accepted by publishers.

Secondly attempt shall be made in the study to state as far as possible the names of the dramatis persona involved in the narratives. Language which may be demeaning shall be found of very highly placed individuals in the Nigerian political environment. The choice of the language shall be excused. This is because the authorities cited in the study have yielded to the use of such language for which 'poetic license and academic permission' is granted. The conclusions reached in this study shall be the exclusive preserve and responsibility of the researcher but the facts and their tendentious nature shall continue remain within the public domain. The prompting of the study was the declaration of the President elect. The trigger of the study was the rejection of the result by the 'obidient' movement and the curiosity for the study was the challenge of the Buhari administration to the movement to approach the judiciary for a review of the electoral processes and the result and declaration if anyone or party on the ballot was dissatisfied instead of taking to the streets in protests or such other devious mechanisms of redress that may yield to break down of law and order which may not be condoned by the administration.

The aim of this study therefore is re-introspective in that it seeks to recapture what existed before the judicial processes (of litigation) began. If the study is able to re-construct that history from the available literature which is not in short supply, then an attempt shall later be made to revisit the

facts in the lights of the judicial outcomes. A point shall however be made as an aside in the course of this introduction, that the judiciary in Nigeria is like civil service. It knows what to do quickly and what to delay. If a poor man approaches the Nigerian civil court, his case may last till death, but if a rich man goes to the Nigerian court judgment is swiftly rendered in his case almost in his favour because the depth of a litigant's purse in Nigeria determines where the scale of justice tilts. The judicial policy in Nigeria is to ensure that election petitions are dealt with quickly, as they are sui generis, because they affect directly the instruments of government and any dispute as to office and occupation of office is or ought to be dealt with timely so that the streams of governance can follow without encumbrances. However, the outcome of the judicial process shall not in any way be considered in comparative relationship with the outcome of this study as they are separate issues altogether.

Wehmeyer (2023) ^[26] has set the tone of this study by the high trajectory that he seemed to have placed the Obi-Datti team and 'obidient' movement in the period shortly to the close of campaign. He believed that Obi 'wants to lead Nigeria into a 4th Industrial Revolution by investing in new technologies. To support the private sector to build and operate refineries, to invest in infrastructure, pipelines, transportation etc.' Wehmeyer continues, 'He wants to move the economy from consumption to production. He spiced up the political landscape and ushered it into a new political era by targeted use of social media.' Very critically, these were actually the aim and the philosophy of the Obi-Datti campaign which was clearly laid out in rallies, speeches and reports across the country. Having excellently determined the lay of the land in the Obi-Datti campaign, same Wehmeyer went for the jugular, 'it remains to be seen whether the old way of doing things based on ethnicity, religion and connection has been superseded by one based on character (integrity), capacity, commitment and individual choice and Obi promises to leave no Nigerian behind.'

With the deepest respect to Wehmeyer, he has been proved right in the last instance. The country, Federal Republic of Nigeria, has demonstrated through its leadership under President Buhari and its electoral institution, the Independent Electoral Commission under Professor Mahmood Yakubu that she is not yet ready to move from the 'old way of doings things' to the new. The election was brazenly rigged in the sense that the processes mapped out for its credibility were deliberately bungled and sabotaged by the same institution that was voted close to 4 billion dollars for the outing. The BVAS and IRev machines were bungled as soon as it occurred to the state that the obidient movement was coasting home with victory even as Ositadinma was reporting that, 'we are going to hold the Commission accountable for their actions...INEC...should not scuttle the desire of the people by doing the bidding of money-bag politicians.'

Although the issue donated by Wehmeyer has been answered in a slipshod and slapdash manner, another is being donated in the public domain: whether the judiciary in the circumstances of this election will be the last hope of the common man or whether the old way of doing things based on the highest financial bidder, connection and government-in-power dictation will supersede. This study is prodded to reach a similar affirmative resolution that the old way of

doing things shall have it. But gain, time shall tell. Let time tell. What this study is about to look into critically was a phenomenon whose secret was spontaneity, whose advocates grew into massive adherents, whose believers grew into a massive movement which saw a 'lone man in black attire with a different message delivered in a horse shy voice' become a star figure in every public space that latched into a little-known minority Labour Party and the rest became history (Amuta, 2023)^[4].

Statement of the Problem

How long is the 'obidient' movement going to go in Nigeria? Is it not a flash in Nigerian political firmament? What ideology undergirds it and what are the chances of its survival? The movement awoke the consciousness in the Nigerian youths to see in the candidacy of Obi and Datti the special purpose vehicle through which 'to take back their country' from their oppressors and to ensure that 'going forward' their political participation shall be vigorous, active and result oriented. Having heralded a new era presaged by the dissatisfaction with the old parties of Peoples Democratic Party and All Progress Congress, the movement sought to use the instrument of the Labour Party as the third force to wrest power from the ancient regime. Head or tail, the PDP and APC were considered as the same coin.

The movement which according to Aboh & Okoi (2023)^[1] is hinged on visionary and accountable leadership, fostering an environment of creativity and innovation, espousing transparency and diversity, youth participation in the political process, sought to contrast itself with the corrupt past and poor performance rating of the past regimes. It was therefore an onslaught on the old parties through the 2023 presidential election to help shape the path to social reconstruction or create the conditions for a descent into chaos and anarchy.

The trigger of the movement was Obi's defection from the Peoples Democratic Party to Labour Party which created an upsurge in youthful voters' registration, organization of mass rallies all over the country in key cities like Lagos, Benin, Port-Harcourt and Kano, reawakening of the consciousness of the youths to the failings of the government and governance and the revival of hope in the youths that 'a new Nigeria is possible'. Can these be possible and not a flint-movement in the life of a nation? But Okonkwo (2023)^[20] on another breath believes the 'Obidient movement' was triggered way back by the 'Endsars protests' that gave birth to 'a new Nigeria'. It was a protest in which the Nigerian youths called out police brutality to be addressed. Hitherto, the special police squad had the will to brutalize the youths in the streets and at police check points on the nation's highway. They took it up and eventually many police stations were burnt down, hundreds of police officers were killed and the youths equally suffered casualties. In the end, a Panel of Enquiry was set up in almost all the states of the federation to look into the crisis and what gave rise to it.

One of the outcomes of the protests was youths' dissatisfaction with the status quo and their resolve to take over the instrument of government through the ballot and to engineer for youthful representations at all levels of government. 'Not too young to run' bill was placed before the National Assemble to rekindle the hope of the Nigerian youths in the national government and a greater attention

became focused on the affairs of the youths. Put clearly, has Africa come of age, has the youths of Nigeria decided to take over from the military in the dynamics of regime change. Can the ballot now constitute the medium through which the anticipated good governance is going to come? It may have been scuttled by the refusal of the Independent Electoral Commission to announce the correct result for now but the future path to progress appears to have been planted by the 'obidient movement.' Or is the 'obidient movement' a repetition of history?

The Zikist movement was one such case in the colonial history of Africa in which the nationalist movement donated the solidarity for the emancipation of the colonies on Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. It was an assemblage of youths, artisans, workers, students, and politicians all over Nigeria under the leadership of Zik of Africa to gain political independence under a liberation struggle but Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe cast the revolutionary motive overboard, became pacifist and sought to deal with the colonialist in compromised posture and got 'independence on a platter of gold'. The youths and revolutionaries who gave Zik of Africa the huge mandate became disillusioned and disenchanted and recourse to Chief Obafemi Awolowo's camp to continue the struggle. In the end both the revolutionaries and Zik paid dearly for it and the continent of Africa became fractionalized with each nation state going on its own (Onwe, 2023)^[21].

Theoretical Framework

Populism

The political candidate for a national election for the presidency in a country like Nigeria which is called the headquarters of poverty in the world who sides with the less fortunate members of the country, who believes in the rights and powers of the common people in their struggle with the privileged elites who side with the large corporations, who amass enormous private fortune and demonstrate intellectual superiority is a populist. Furthermore, if you believe in the right of the ordinary working people to have the strongest say in the administration of the people and things, then you are a populist. Populism is thus the belief in the power of regular people and in their right to have control over their government rather than a small group of political insiders or wealthy elite (<https://www.vocabulary.com>).

Populism is another word for democracy for as defined by a US President, Abraham Lincoln, it is a government of the people by the people and for the benefit of the people. The extent to which these theoretical frameworks apply to this study is far reaching. The obidient movement is known to be populated by the youths who are conducting its affairs in campaigns and rallies without any mega money and financial inducement for the symbol of the movement; and the movement is nascent and not known to have any serious government affiliation. The members of the movement have been working around a hitherto minority Labour Party known as the party of the masses.

The philosophical ideas which the movement have been espousing in the economic and political sectors since taking up the national stage are people oriented if not revolutionary such as part-time legislature, hourly pay for workers, reduction in the cost of governance, drifting from consumption to production, revisiting the oil and gas sector to refine fuel through the national refineries and link the gas to the energy sector.

Spring Theory

What started as a four-man tweet was to become a Tsunami and before the wicked and unproductive politicians could know what was afoot, a nightmare of a movement on the doorway in Nigeria (Maduka, 2023) ^[11]. A spring is usually a terminology used to describe what took place in 20th century Europe when intermittent protests, revolutionary political movements or waves occurred. It originated from the European Revolutions of 1848 which was often referred to as the 'spring of Nations' or the 'springtime of the People' (<https://www.dbpedia.org>). The last to be heard about springs were the revolutions that swarm across the Arab world leading to the ouster of the regimes in Libya under Gaddafi, Egypt under Hosni Mubarak and all. It swept across like a cyclone and in a twinkle of an eye, it was all over (The Editors of...2023). It had been difficult for political parties to win power through the ballot in the Islamic countries because of the overbearing influence of religion and its dominance over the politics of the sphere. It was after the spring that they were able to shake off the influence and control of fundamentalists (Hamid, 2014) ^[9]. In Nigeria the reactionary regimes of the Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress have replicated the situation in the Arab world to a significant extent.

As Amuta (2023) ^[4] has states the confrontation between popular movements and unpopular regimes has mostly given rise to instability as those regimes which try to quell the confrontations by force of arms have either failed or have been thrown out of power or brought down from power. On the other hand, if they succeed in putting down the revolts of the mass movement, authoritarianism and triumphalism of the worst genre are enacted with endless instability. The most such a successful authoritarian regime has attained in recent times, is to usurp the spirit of the popular movement and foster graver autocracy as in Turkey under Recep Erdogan, Russia under Vladimir Putin, Hungary under Victor Orban, Philipines under Rodrigo Duterte, Brazil under Jaiye Bolsanario and Poland under Jaroslaw Kazynski.

The Nigerian spring that led to the obidient movement was described as a youthful coup-detat which began when Obi decamped and moved from the Peoples Democratic Party to Labour Party which later party was hitherto unknown. His preachment of moving from consumption to production twisted the neck of the Nigeria public to his direction and the youths became his volunteers without financial inducement with the desire to root out the greedy political parties and their money bags. They were largely structure-less and were poking their fingers into the eyes of the looters following up their looting spree to expose them to the public. It became a movement about what President Kennedy postulated to the Americans. It was not about what to loot and share in the Nigerian enterprise but what to contribute to the development of the country and how to bail her from those holding her down from advancing like her post-colonial colleagues of Asia (Singapore and Malaysia). It was a movement versed with youthful energy, peopled by internet savvy youths and determined to retire the old politicians that have ruled the country since independence. It was undeterred by state propaganda, tribal sentiments and inspired by the ethos of character, competence, capacity and merit.

It was a spring and a movement that has exposed the bigotry and reactionary underbelly of pseudo radicals in the mould

of Professor Wole Soyinka who had had the myth of youth followership across all the political divides of Nigeria but had regrettably displayed the height of moral decadence when he regarded the movement as a fascist genre. For Maduka (2023) ^[11] the Nobel Laureate 'had the temerity to carpet a whole nation by impliedly alluding that we should accept the outcome of such a fraudulent election' as normal. Soyinka's argument can be approximated as meaning that 'there is no perfect election in the world. A President elect has been declared by an independent electoral umpire, the rest is for the judiciary to determine. The 2023 election is the best and better than the 1999 and 2007 elections for which the then President elect, Alhaji Shehu Musa Yar'Adua had to apologize to the nation' and the world in 2007. Maduka continues, 'A man so revered has become an ethnic jingoist, nepotistic and brainwashed-arrogant.' The spring was hatched and carefully executed by youth movement strategists, a political strategy that must be a case study for political scientists and analyst now and in the future.

Third Force Theory

The third force theory came into the political lexicon of Nigeria in about 2015 when it had become obvious that the Peoples Democratic Party had dominated the Nigerian presidency since 1999 when the fourth republic was flagged off by the military regime of Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar. The regime released Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo from prison and the Peoples Democratic Party donated its presidential ticket to him and his running mate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. By the turn of 2015, the party had ruled Nigeria for an unbroken period of 16 years and came up with the boast that it was going to dominate the Nigerian political firmament for another 60 years.

The challenge that the Peoples Democratic Party threw to its political opposition then was urgently required to be demystified. The challenge was informed by the fact there was no strong opposition as the landscape was littered with splinter groups and parties (for instance, Labour Party, African Democratic Party, Peoples' Redemption Party, National Conscience Party, Social Democratic Party and African Action Congress) that did not have the required national outlook to give the Peoples Democratic Party a run for its money and followership having taunted itself as the largest party in Africa. Some of such splinter parties were the ones led by Gen. Muhammadu Buhari in the north (Congress for Progressive Change) and Chief Bola Tinubu in the west Social Democratic party. Gen. Buhari had used his party structure to run for the presidency for the third time to no avail and in each outing, he failed woefully in the south east and did well in the north. In fact, he never got up to five percent in the east where Peter Obi hails from. Therefore, for some unseen forces 2023 presidential election was 'a pay-back time' against the east which he had called a dot in a circle and denied critical infrastructure except the second Niger Bridge.

In the third outing he equally approached the Supreme Court but he was thrown out and thereafter he wept and made some statements to the effect that he was no longer up for party politics and later that the baboon and the dog would be soaked in blood in the 2023 election. In the thick of these three consecutive campaigns of failure to clinch the presidency, the fact of his character as 'Mr. Clean' and anti-corruption crusader formed in the psychic of the Nigerian

public mind. Chief Bola Tinubu and his political ally, Chief Bisi Akande began the political crusade of reengineering the west and the north into an alliance leading to collaborating with Gen. Buhari to launch the All-Progressive Congress and placed its formidable structure before Buhari-Osibanjo ticket that propelled the duo into the presidential campaigns of 2015 that shot them into national reckoning. The emergence of the trio (of Buhari, Tinubu and Akande) consummated the birth of the first major 'third force' in the modern political history of Nigeria.

Oke (2022) ^[18] sees the third force theoretically as an assembly of like-minded politicians determined to make government work and function for the 'many and not the few'. It is actuated towards translating words into action. And in the process of doing so, political power is needed and it can only be gained through political participation in the 'dirty and murky waters of politics'. Usually, the 'third force' surfaces whenever the need arises to change the status quo of the balance of power. The members of the force are usually part of the old bloc it seeks to change but who are no longer in sync with the old bloc due to factors related to varied or varying political interests. The third force believes that the old bloc has deviated from the direction that political action ought to trend. It sees change as a necessity and galvanizes such like minds to take change-action.

The third force is like a 'special purpose vehicle' for aggregating all shades of ideologies and characters for the common 'enemy' being the status quo and the idea of the group is to bring down the old bloc from power. However, a drawback for all third forces is hanker to win elections largely by strength of ideas and manifestoes which normally requires more than one circle of election and voters education in political spaces such as Nigeria where there are apathy, mass illiteracy and corruption of the electoral system and process (Oke, 2022) ^[18].

Conceptual Clarification

Political Party

A political party is an organization that coordinates members and candidates of the party to compete in a particular country's elections. It is a group of persons organized to acquire and exercise political power. (<https://www.britannica.com>). It is common to the members of the party to hold similar ideas about politics and parties may promote specific ideological or policy options (Wikipedia <https://www.definition.net>). It is aimed at winning elections, operating a government and influencing public policy. The main characteristic of a political party is the agreement of the members on some policies and programmes for the society with a view to promoting the common good (<https://www.toppr.com>ask>question>).

Political Movement

A political movement is a collective attempt by a group of people to change government policy or social values. It is usually in opposition to a status quo and is often associated with an ideology. They are usually related to political parties on the point that they both aim to make an impact on the government and sometimes, political movements give birth to political parties (Wikipedia <https://www.definition.net>). It may be organized around a single issue or a set of issues or around a set of shared concerns of a social group. In contrast with a political party, a movement is not organized to elect members of the movement into government office; rather, it

aims to convince citizens and government to take action on the issues and concerns which are the focus of the movement. It is thus a group of people working together to achieve a political goal.

A movement's scope may be wide or local, national or international. Some are aimed to change government or its policy some are aimed at broadening the rights of certain disadvantaged groups of people in a polity or inclusion of the rights that may widen the net for such groups. It expresses national aspiration such as separatist agitations or struggle for political liberation (Freebase <https://www.definition.net>). A social-political movement has four stages of life cycle: emergence, coalescence, institutionalization or bureaucratization, and decline.

Party and Movement

The difference between political parties and movements is essential in the determination of the issues in this study. A party is a structured and prescribed organization while a movement is amorphous only held together by beliefs around which people cleave spontaneously and organically. It is an invisible meeting of minds that develops its code of conduct from a loose understanding of the emission of its inspirer. Hungry to capture power, it tries to overrun the status quo which has locked the members and many others who are not necessarily members of the movement out of the power equation (Amuta, 2023) ^[4]. For the critics of the 'obedient' movement (Amuta, 2023) ^[4] they may have to visit the four walls of a school to understudy the current dynamics in populist and mass movements across the world. They are driven by the media and are largely uncontrollable because they take a life of their own. They obey themselves and their major drivers and inspirers.

Literature Review

A third force in political parlance is an electoral upset in which rather than the opposition defeating the sitting government, a third party (thus a third force) does so. It is like coming from behind to overtake both the opposition party (the second party) and the party in power (the first party) to defeat and win the national election (Kolawole, 2022) ^[10]. In a detailed analysis of the configuration of a third force, Kolawole opines that the typical challenges of such a force is the short period of time within which the force is to emerge and the war chest required to kill two enemies with a stone.

In the third world which Nigeria has relapsed into before the 2023 general elections for which the General Buhari administration is largely responsible for, the contentions before a third force were not only time and money, the major contenders with their well lubricated party structures would not be ready to let go with political power without a seasoned fight. In fact it is a do-or-die for the soul and survival of the ancient regime. Further, the voters do not switch over loyalties quickly because they are poor, illiterate and used to the peanuts that usually fall as crumbs from the tables of politicians. Voter education is essential in the emergence of a third force and this would always face brick wall of old political divides, animosities and privileges. Political blocs are oiled by political parties and politicians over time all over the world. There are spaces whose populations have bestowed their loyalties and consciences to their politicians who dominate such spaces running into several decades in relationships built through the

instruments of religion, ethnicity, money and geography.

Buhari Administration's Negatives

Citing Adio Waziri in, *Is Nigeria due for another electoral upset?* Kolawole believes that to bring about a political upset, 'You need a formidable political machine or movement capable of taking advantage of the obvious weakness of the established order, capitalizing on the widespread discontent, and matching the status quo in grit and wiles for votes in all the nooks and crannies of the country.' In the prelude to the 2023 election, the disenchantment with the Buhari administration was widespread. The administration was so unpopular on all fronts that it is imperative to recapture the essential details so that the circumstances in which the 'obedient movement' arose against the administration can be understood.

First was the 'Endsars protests' which were so well organized by the youths that even the President elect, Alhaji Ahmed Bola Tinubu was chased abroad and humiliated thereat. The Lagos State government was so thoroughly rattled that the Oba and traditional ruler of Lagos and his Palace were sacked. The ancestral home of the Lagos State Governor was equally sacked by the rampaging youths who saw the Buhari administration as approximating into a police state. Hundreds of police officers and civilians were killed. Much as an enquiry was set up, the youths made a vow that the 2023 general election was going to be determined by them otherwise the nation may not have to exist again.

On the security front, the Buhari administration became suspected of working hand in gloves with Islamic fundamentalism especially when he postulated that an attack against Boko Haram was an attack against the north. The Minister of Communication whose confirmation by the National Assembly was vehemently opposed, Isa Pantami, was linked with Boko Haram and Islamic State of West Africa which were deadly insurgents operating across the north from the Lake Chad in the north east to Zamfara State in the north west. Millions of lost lives have recorded across the country and millions more were displaced from their ancestral homes across the northern region. Northern Nigeria became a zone of undeclared war with the Islamist contending with the Federal and State governments over territorial spaces with the Islamic militants controlling vast swathes of land in the north and dictating to local populations not to engage in electoral processes and civic activities and installing an Islamic State Governor in the north eastern space. Ethnic Fulani added a grave and worrisome dimension to the crisis all over the country with claims of grazing pasture, continuing and concluding the conquest of the south (currently being foiled by the Middle belt) and converting the entire country into an Islamic theocracy.

The state of militant Islamism accentuated the religious and ethnic divide across the country. The Buhari administration proceeded to mull the decision to tax the churches in the country and moved further to dethrone the General Overseers of many of the Pentecostal Missions majority of which were controlling large followings in the south. The balance of followership in religion was observed to be in favour of Christianity against Islamism. Christianity was beginning to gain ascendancy in the north than Islam in the south due to the depravity and bloodletting culture that have become recently associated with Islam. And one of the

latent causes of the crisis across the country was observed to be a revisionist-revivalist tendency in Islam across the sub-continent which may partly have influenced the notorious bent on propping a Muslim-Muslim ticket for the presidency in the 2023 race to Aso Rock seat of power in Abuja, Nigeria. The desire to assert control and following which had been scuttled by the incursion of colonialism and imperialism (which structures have been inherited by the Nigerian state) was therefore the underlying factor in the cause of the crisis in modern Nigeria. To this extent Obi and 'obedient' movement is not only a candidate of the youths but a candidate of the church in Nigeria the Peoples Democratic Party having also fielded a Muslim candidate to the chagrin of its prominent members like Governors Wike of Rivers, Ortom of Benue, Makinde of Oyo, Ugwuanyi of Enugu and Ikpeazu of Abia (Our Reporter, 2023) ^[23].

On the economic front, the Buhari administration did not only perform worst than its immediate past contemporaries (since 1999 when the fourth republic commenced), it performed worst than it did when it took over as a military regime from Alhaji Shehu Shagari. In a short space of time his administration did not only suffer from two terrible recessions that cause so much hardship on the citizens, it introduced disastrous economic policies that were most inauspicious like the redesigning of the currency months to the general election and making cash unavailable in the economy thereby inducing the inflationary rates out of control and killed several thousands of small and medium scale enterprises. In the process of implementing these economic policies, unemployment shot to 33 percent. Fuel scarcity was induced and the one fell swoop removal of oil subsidy was implemented and the price of fuel became deregulated.

In the Niger delta, the Buhari administration confronted the militants and killed the father of the scion of MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) Tompolo Government Ekpemukpolo at Warri in a raid giving rise to the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) which held down the stream of oil production in the region until the Federal government collapsed financially in two recessions leading to re-approachment between the oil militants and the Federal government and the subsequent award of the pipeline surveillance contract of N48 billion to Global West Vessel Specialists Ltd – a firm in which the militants had interest.

In the east, the Buhari administration continued a vicious and conspiratorial government against the Ibos and engaged in the clandestine infiltration of the east with herdsmen-farmer conflicts over grazing and farming land arguing that the administration was in the process of recovering the grazing routes and water courses established during and after the colonial times. The administration characterized the Ibos as a dot on a circle and not worthy of the attention of its administration since the region did not vote for it in all five elections it contested consequently, the region was hived from the National Railway Plan but managed to get the second Niger Bridge.

History is not always on the side of the third force in politics due to the fact that it is always a dark horse in the race of two strong parties (Kolawole, 2022) ^[10]. But in 2015 a major upset occurred in favour of the Buhari administration that was captured in negative performance indexes above. That was because the Jonathan administration was portrayed in similar or worst light. Therefore, a third force was possible

in the circumstances of the failure of Peoples Democratic Party and All Progressive Congress in 2023. What drives democracies is not the docility but the vigilance of the citizens. If the citizens are to remain lukewarm about the activities of government in corrupt regions of the world like in West Africa sub-region where decay has resulted from the use of evil-money of corrupt politicians to buy the youths to abandon their participation in the political process then democracy is defeated and descent to military dictatorship resumes. In such regions, ethnicity, religion and party determine the rules and successes of the political process not competence, accountability and vision. For instance since 2010 more than 40 coups and attempted coups have taken place in Africa and half of these military interventions in the political process have been in West Africa and in the past three years six have been successful (Bukarti, 2022) ^[5].

Historiography of Obidient Movement

Several accounts exist on the literature already as to the origin of the movement. The historical analogy of Zikist movement and Obidient movement has been made out. This is in respect of the nature and life of the movement whether the huge support which it is currently enjoying can be sustained and not betrayed by Mr. Peter Obi as the Zikist movement was once betrayed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe. An ancillary is thus whether the youths who have bestowed their support on the movement to take back their country on the mandate of Obi-Datti flagship have the same ideological belief and orientation with the flag bearers or the flag bearers are using the youths to achieve their political aim of capturing state power and later to let down the guards and ditch the aspirations of the youths.

The knotty issue is: how did a wealthy capitalist become the avatar of political disruption from Labour Party? (Okiche & Egbejule, 2023) ^[19] Not much is known about the ideological inclination of the Nigerian youths and not much can be deciphered from their social media write ups and agitations. As for Obi, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that his ideology is firmly within the framework of democratic capitalism. Very few concepts have actually shifted Obi and the obidient movement from mainstream Nigerian political actors. Such concepts can be identified as the desire of the obidient movement government to cut down on the cost of governance, introduce hourly pay, scrap such offices as the office of the first lady, change from consumption economy to a productive one, patronize Nigerian made products like motors assembled by Nigerian nationals or industries, reengineer the oil and gas sector to relief it as the mainstay of the economy and rework the refineries to gain self-sufficiency and value-addition in the sector.

The extent to which it can be concluded that the movement and Obi are all on the same page is yet to be seen. And this has equally been scuttled by the old bloc which has deftly used the instrument of the Independent National Electoral Commission to rig the election in favour of the old bloc with Alhaji Ahmed Bola Tinubu as the holder of the certificate of return being currently challenged before Nigeria courts as at the conclusion of this study. However, a remark of a prominent member of the movement is to the following effect, 'We are the third force. The next thing is building a formidable team that will change the narrative. Nigerians should expect something different because the party is ideology-based' (Odunsi, 2023) ^[17].

A second origin of the obidient movement has been traced to the emergence of the current administration of President Buhari. This ancestry is on all fours with the theory of the third force. It postulates that the emergence of the All Progressive Congress has to do with the deft political movement which the current President elect, Ahaji Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Chief Bisi Akande made to Gen. Buhari after the later had contested for the presidency for three consecutive times without success under the CNC. The duo fashioned an alliance with the north which was already in the grip of Gen. Buhari and wedged him with a vibrant Professor of Law and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) and a scion of the Awolowo dynasty as a running mate. The arrival of the All Progressive Congress as a grand alliance between the north and the west was seen as a third force movement to chase the Dr. Goodluck Jonathan administration out of power.

The campaigns were supported by such Islamic fundamentalists like Boko Haram sect that saw to the kidnap of Chibok school girls and the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja to demonstrate that the old bloc of the Peoples Democratic Party must be pulled down. Nobel prize literary giants like Professor Wole Soyinka undeservedly condescended on the President's better-half as 'shippopotamus' and a faked coffin of the ex-President was paraded across Lagos and Nigeria. In all humility, the Jonathan administration conceded victory stating before then that his hold unto power was not worth the blood of any citizen and abstained from disputing the outcome of the election in a court of law unlike Gen. Buhari did three consecutive times.

The campaign for the ouster of the Jonathan administration was further supported by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo who had ruled through the Peoples Democratic Party for two tenures of eight years and fingered the possibility of a third tenure through a constitutional amendment (but failed) and even took to the harshest extreme of publicly destroying his party card. In all these, the impact of the youths was not registered except to mount the rostrum of the Endsars protestation when it became clear that the Buhari administration was intent on following the path of a police state.

The third account of the origin of the movement can be traced to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who became dissatisfied with the performances of the Gen. Buhari administration which was bedeviled with the illness of the President leading to lengthy oversea medical trips, heightened insecurity all over the nation through Islamic fundamentalism; insurgency and herdsman-farmers conflicts across the middle belt. To no avail Obasanjo sought to put up a third force against the Buhari administration in the 2019 election calling it a 'Coalition for Nigeria' to change the fortunes of the country while stating that Gen. Buhari should dismount from the horse having failed Nigerians (Akinsuyi, 2022) ^[2]. Chief Obasanjo's failure in the third force agenda led to a straight fight between Buhari and Alhaji Atiku Abubakar who was the Vice President to Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. Atiku Abubakar in the 2019 cycle of election took Peter Obi as his Vice-Presidential running mate. But again the 'obidient movement' did not happen because there was no credible force in the front runners that the Nigerian youths could identify with. In frustration arising from his inability to raise a third force to oust Buhari from power in 2019, the revered veteran of Nigerian statehood purportedly declared that he was retiring from

partisan politics.

But the veteran was not hanging up his political robe but was merely flying a kite. In conjunction with Chief Ayo Adebajo and Chief Edwin Clark, Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo saw the future in the 2023 general election and decided to see to the possibility of healing the major wound of the last war by desiring to zone the presidency to the south-east. Gen. Obasanjo vigorously and openly initiated the obidient movement and linked up with Chief Mbazulike Amechi a first republic Minister and sold the powerful idea of a third force to the east. The General who was a master strategist and who knew the open wound of the Ibos then invited Obi through other intermediaries to exit the Peoples Democratic Party into the Labour Party which was by then under Professor Utomi and spring a national swing and a national change.

A near authentic account of the origin of the obidient movement may have to come from the movement and Labour party themselves and to this extent, the groundwork of Amuta (2023) ^[4] and Ndujihe (2023) ^[13] are helpful. The Labour Party announced the entrance of Obi and his movement in the following terms, 'the grand entrance of Peter Obi and the mass movement of his teeming supporters and followers nationwide...confirm to the whole world that the 2023 election is as good as won by our credible political alternatives to the ruling APC and PDP especially with the growing backing of the Nigerian people who are already extremely tired of the mal-administration of APC and PDP governments at all levels.' As canvassed by Aina (2022) ^[3] Nigerians and the youths particularly became disillusioned and aware that the two parties represented the ancient times and that they were one and the same thing and none of them carried the interest and aspiration of the youths or did they represent the 'perturbs or grievances of the masses of the impoverished people' of the country.

The Labour Party joined forces with 'the Rescue Agenda' of the Third Force Movement of Nigeria initiated by the Professor Pat Utomi led National Consultative Front which adopted Labour Party as the Third Force Mega Rescue Platform for Nigeria in 2023 with over 20 million members. Obidient Movement joined six other parties on the banner of Allied Political Parties and the National Consultative Front (the umbrella of the third force) to join the Labour Party for 2023 polls. Ndujihe continues, 'the leaders of the third force movement cut across party lines to include Professor Attahiru Jega of Peoples' Redemption Party, Professor Pat Utomi of Labour Party, and Senator Saidu Dansaudau of National Rescue Movement. Others are African Democratic Congress, New Nigeria Peoples Party, Social Democratic Party and Allied Peoples Movement. Ex-Governor Musa Kwakwanso was later to pull away New Nigerian Peoples Party and used it to run his race for the 2023 presidential election.

In painting the dramatic turn of events leading to the emergence of Obi and obidient movement, a spokesperson of the movement, Okonkwo states, 'the youths stormed the party secretariat of Peoples Democratic Party to demand for Obi' as the candidate of the party in the 2023 presidential election but they were shunned and scorned. They went on not only to destroy the very fabric of the Peoples Democratic Party and pulled Obi away from the fangs of the Party but carried him shoulder high to the secretariat of the Labour Party and imposed or foisted Obi on the Party and declared, 'We are the structure' vowing that they 'will not

give shi-shi or pay shi-shi' to anybody to make Obi the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. According to Okonkwo, and which was borne out by all evidence and experiences thereafter, 'the battle line' became 'drawn between the old and the new.'

It was not just a momentum alone or was it a distraction as Obinna was later to submit. The 2023 general election was to completely change the narratives of how elections were to be campaigned, conducted and won. Even if it was a distraction to the ancient regime represented by the likes of Governor Soludo of Anambra State, Sanwolu of Lagos State, Wike of Rivers State and Okowa of Delta State or the likes of Senator Dino Melaye of Kogi State and the 'mascot of the Atiku Abubakar Peoples Democratic campaign' or Festus Keyamo SAN and ex-Minister Femi Fani Kayode, (the mascots of the All Progressive Congress campaign) it was a movement towards voter participation and enthronement of real democracy and change the nation had been itching and yearning for. It was no longer 'business as usual' where money, party structure and influence based on ethnicity, religion and geopolitical zoning was the order of the day. The campaign became issue based and such issues became the character, competence, youthfulness, integrity, frugality as Obi and Datti moved across the country on the campaign train.

As it later came to be unfolded, Obi and the obidient movement became the largest voting bloc in Nigeria and announced its appearance on the Lagos-Ibadan voting corridor which is the highest in Nigeria, demystifying for the first time in history after independence and after Azikiwe-Awolowo feuds, ethnicity and tribe in the determination of the voting pattern in southern Nigeria. In the north too, the bright qualities of Datti Ahmed resonated and also de-shinned the renegade duo of Tinubu-Shettima (Okonkwo, 2023) ^[20].

Youths and 'Obidient' Movement

Perhaps Nigerian youths have got to take the credit for the rise and if necessary, the fall of the obidient movement. As Ozekhome (2023) has rightly demonstrated, the Endsars protests of 2020 presaged the origin of the obidient movement. The protests indicated that the Nigerian youths have come of age and had become increasingly restive, enlightened and audacious in the quest for change and a better country of theirs and their fundamental rights as guaranteed under the Constitution. Their righteous indignation was made palpable and a structure-less and amorphous component of the society then taunted to be leaderless became the rejected stone that has ironically become the cornerstone of the 2023 general election, the new face of the Nigerian democracy and the bugbear of both the state, the incoming regime and its coterie of shameless and barefaced criminals doing advocacy of the reactionary incoming regime. Everything the advocates spew into the public no longer sync and sink with the youths. The more they wrought schemes like cloning Peter Obi's double identity in United Kingdom to criminalize their 'saint' the more the guiles fall apart like a pack of cards before the youths. The more the Nobel Laureate turns up at the national stage to pontificate on the stolen mandate of his friend the more the ethnic bias and bigotry that had been latent in him all these years get exposed in true and red colour to the extent that he could not determine who is fascist between

the current government, the incoming government of his tribal acolyte and ex-drug convict and the Nigerian youths. Where Senior Advocates of Nigeria like Festus Keyamo had previously denied the existence of a drug scandal they came to the tribunal to admit it but raise plea of statutory limitation with the youths learning and sharing the follies of their oppressors before the whole wide world.

Initially the ancient regime represented by such politicians as Governor Soludo of Anambra State (the home State of Peter Obi and ex-Governor of the Central bank during the administration of Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo) thought that the social media followership which the obedient movement and Obi was gaining would not culminate in physical and actual support in votes and argued glibly that the movement was incapable of winning more than three states in all. They did not believe that it was purely an organic crowd of young people who believed that the dominant system and ancient regimes have failed the youths and that they were out to oust them from the pinnacle of power (Eleke, 2023) ^[7].

Obi and the Youths

For the Obi and the 'obedient' movement there are far reaching areas on which they are on all fours. They were exceedingly aware of the extent of their prowess in the political process. For Obi, 100 million who live in poverty and 35 million who do not know where their next meals will be coming from constitute the structure of the movement. For the members, they were as circumspect as believing that if Obi did not win the election in 2023, ten to fifteen percent of the votes they are able to grab can essentially prove to the old generation 'sucking the country dry' that the game is up and that the beginning of the end has come for the two old political parties that have held the nation prostrate since 1999. The youths have found that the concern of the old generation is not the squalid condition of the masses of the people.

The youths were aware that they were using the Obi-Datti team to channel their grievances against the system; that the old faces of the veteran duo of Tinubu and Atiku can only help their campaign of the demolition of the old bloc; that the duo and their cohorts had presided over the nation since 1999 noting that it was unfortunate for the electoral process to throw up such aged politicians in a population whose median age was 18. Susan Abies, an obedient, (as cited in *Our Reporter*, 2023) ^[23] then proceeded to conclude that voting Obi did not mean a one stop shopping for fixing the country, but that it was a right step in the right direction or a way forward.

Stating that the 'office of the citizen' is the highest office in the country 'obedients' like Aisha Yusuf (as cited in Akinsuyi, 2022) ^[2] claimed that what they needed was not an emperor but a president accountable to the citizens. Young media savvy supporters replaced their socio media, facebook photographs with Obi and the barge of the Labour Party. They mobilized funds for the campaigns and elevated Obi into a cult personality if not a saint. For Ndubuisi & Orjinmo (2022) ^[12] populism is the most adequate political theory in the definition and pigeonholing of the obedient movement but they decline the characterization. They called themselves 'obi-don't. We are the structure. We cannot be distracted and we cannot give up.' They called themselves the 'coconut head generation' because they are 'self-willed, independent and contemptuous of the old order'

But supporters of Obi-Datti and their movement were not

only the youths. As at the conclusion of this study and as at the last count the other 'obedients' are Obasanjo, Adiche, Babangida, Utomi, celebrities like Psquare, Okey Bakassi, and Chidi Mokeme etc.

Why the Movement?

What then made them to cleave to the movement? Okonkwo, one of the foremost spokesmen of the movement believes that the youths and the critical supporters verified the previous performance of Datti Ahmed whilst being a Member of the House of Representatives and Peter Obi whilst being the Governor of Anambra State. Then, Anambra State became first in poverty alleviation, infrastructure, investment, and first to reclaim mandate through the court using it to introduce staggered election in 2007 and won without a structure through All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). Obi downplays the privileges of power and god-father politics. His tenure in Anambra State was not only debt free but was highly commended by International Agencies and donors (Okiche & Egbejule, 2023) ^[19].

Obi and the movement did not return from the 2023 campaign empty-handed. Again for Okonkwo and Odunsi, they got the first party and candidate to produce a third force; first candidate to win 12 states without structure (Alex Otti as Abia Governor elect); first party to capture about 40 seats (8 Senators and 30 House of Representatives Members) at the 10th National Assembly, first to present a bus driver (Thaddeus Attah, as House of Representatives member, Eti-Osa Federal Constituency, Lagos State) and a motorcycle rider (Donatus Matthew, as House of Representatives for Kaura Federal Constituency, Kaduna State) as National Assembly members dislodging great legislators of the old bloc. They became the first to win the Federal Capital Territory FCT, Abuja (through a female Senator elect, Ireti Kingibe) from the PDP and APC and first to defeat Tinubu and Okowa in Lagos and Delta States. They demystified the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and exposed all its rigging strategies to the point of idiocy through the internet. They are before the Election Tribunal claiming to have won 25 percent of votes in at least 24 States and that Tinubu was not qualified to run because of his false bio-ancestry, drug conviction, schools and certificate forgeries and discrepancies, and other related integrity issues like dual citizenship of Nigeria and Guinea the headquarters of narcotic-cocaine in Africa (Thegeniusmedia, 2023) ^[25].

Role of Handset

The availability of the internet and the role of the handset for every youth played the most significant role in the emergence of Obi and obedient movement as the third force in the politics of 2023 general election. Since the introduction of the internet by the Gen. Obasanjo administration, the country has not been the same again. The youths have become usefully engaged and have come on top of the political system and in control of information. The use to which they have put information available in the net has enhanced their head start in the business of politics. All over the space they have gained the control of the information network and politicians have come to rely on them to pass messages to the public. They have also become gateways through which feedbacks are got from the public to the politicians. Although much havoc may have been done

through fake news and cloning of information, they have done more good than evil in the political process exposing the very recesses of information in the travel of lightening. Any political information and even secrets are kept if the youths are prepared to do so and anytime they no longer see the politician as worthy of their loyalty and confidence, the information goes into the public domain. The youths have all become journalists, analyst, authors, writers, programmers, photographers, content developers, advertisers, salesmen, event managers all rolled into one without much formal training. The younger they are the more versatile and curious they are. With a handset on their palms the world is on their palms. One (as cited in Chukwura, 2022) boastfully stated, 'We are going to put in our money, we are going to put in our time to ensure that (Obi) gets there for the new Nigeria.' Indeed, the origin of the movement is attributable to the youth who were self-willed, independent minded and contemptuous of older politicians according to Chukwura who reported another as posting, 'We the youths are no longer moved by the temptation to collect bribes or money in order to forfeit out destiny for another four years.' The movement was organized by multiple small youth groups who have the common desire to unseat the establishment using Obi-Datti team to air their grouses against the state. Another stated in Chukwura's report, 'It is not Ibo, it is not Yoruba, it is not Hausa. It is beyond tribe.' It is about Nigeria.

The obidient movement made excellent use of the internet so much that its level of mobilization and attacks on the ancient regime was incalculable. It was the support base that was very strong that made it to be tagged a 'movement.' They did not only put non-state actors into the brink, they turned out to be the non-state actors throughout the electioneering period. It was only in Lagos State in the aftermath of their defeat in the presidential election that non-state actors (in Tinubu camp in the moulds of Oluomo) could be found chasing Ibos out of polling units with the youths literally cursing President Buhari, the President elect Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Governor Sanwolu of Lagos State for disenfranchising them. With the creation of WhatsApp Groups labyrinth of trenches were laid against the non performing politicians and their two giant parties.

The Obi revolution as Odunsi (2023) ^[17] called obidient movement made more than 90 million voters (mainly youths and those they convinced and mobilized) to vote at polling units that increased to 176,846 nationwide arising from their stakes in the campaigns. In Bukarti's report over 12 million new entrant voters entered the polling registers nationwide and on the whole, over 78 percent of voters were youths between the ages of 18 and 35. In yet another report by George (2022) ^[18] young people accounted for half of voting strength in 2019 and 84 percent of the recently registered 10,490 voters were youths of 34 and below. Obi campaigned with so much popularity and clarity of focus that he stated that he believed that voters in a nation on the brink would eschew religious, ethnic and tribal loyalties which had been the philosophical touchstone upon which the Peoples Democratic Party and the All Progressive Congress had dominated the ballot hitherto and since 1999. He was the only candidate of all who could 'speak to the nation's problems in terms of proffering solutions' during the trail of the campaign (Obadare, 2022) ^[15]. The rest were either blundering from pillar to post or throwing vitriol on him and his movement. The obidients saw themselves as the structure

and Obi as the next President of Nigeria. Even when they knew that they and their inspirer had been robbed of the mandate, they were fistful approaching the court and the conviction lingered amongst them that their party won the election but was edged out by the gangster state and its stranglehold on the agencies of the state (Amuta, 2023) ^[4]

Obi-Datti campaign promises of inclusion and accountability resonated far and wide but it was more of the peoples' desire that made the day than that of Obi who only leveraged on it to push the duo of Tinubu and Atiku to the fringes of contemplation. Obi's increasing popularity after winning the 2023 election but was denied the mandate as the President elect has brought so much pressure on the lackluster government of Gen. Buhari to the extent that several illegal schemes became the pastime of the camp of the illegally declared President elect such as cloning a second Obi personality in United Kingdom and mounting pressure on him to go abroad on self-exile for safety. Yet he pulls large following more than the President elect who is soliciting for recognition across the world (Nzeshi, 2023) ^[14].

Descent into Spring

Given the abysmal negatives in performance, a third force was urgent and a spring was in the cauldron. The Buhari administration capped its 'ignoble exit' with a rigged election in which its electoral umpire (INEC under Professor Mahmood Yakubu) declared Alhaji Ahmed Bola Tinubu as the President elect to be sworn in on 29th May, 2023 on an 'abominable Muslim-Muslim ticket' that did not capture 25 percent of the 36 States of the Federation and 25 percent of the Federal Capital Territory FCT, Abuja. It has been argued by Bukarti (2022) ^[5] that an aborted election or one fraught with irregularities of the nature that occurred in 2023 or outrightly rigged can weaken a country's political and moral authority to ward off illegal and unconstitutional change of regime. The running mate of Peter Obi, Datti Ahmed, has equally canvassed before the national space that such flawed electoral processes can induce military takeover and that they are in themselves civilian coups and any attempt to swear in a President elect with a stolen mandate would amount to a military coup.

As the development was captured by Amuta (2023) ^[4] immediately Tinubu was declared the President elect by the electoral authority, heaven was let loose and it became the past times of the ancient regime and its cohorts to pour invectives and condemnation on the 'obidient' movement for the nightmare it made ancient regime to pass through during the campaigns. 'Respectable citizens with previous records of sanity and respectability joined the fray of frying obidients as the most despicable group ever to come to earth.' The worst was to call them miscreants of IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra). In the United States of America, the Information Minister (Alhaji Lai Mohammed) who had been said to be known to put positions inside out had called for the trial of Obi's running mate Datti Ahmed for treason for inciting insurrection (Nzeshi, 2023) ^[14]. The evidence of such incitement in the face of the constitutional rights of the duo to claim their mandate before the election tribunals flies off-handle. Minister of State for Labour, Festus Keyamo SAN had repeatedly tried to rope the duo with unfounded charges of treason and insurrection and argued that the youths cannot in one breath be claiming that they are crossed against the old bloc and at the same time

endorsing Peter Obi who is a chip of the old bloc. But the youths promptly retort that he is not running for himself but on behalf of the young people who endorsed his frugal attitude and cutting the cost of governance making the 61-year-old become the first credible third force party candidate since the return of democracy in 1999 (Our Reporter, 2023)^[23]. Femi Fani Kayode (a virulent ex-Minister of Aviation who has pending corruption charges before the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission EFCC) had also thrown darts at the duo for unfounded allegations that the running mate of Obi is a Mauritanian (way after being a Member of the House of Representatives). Professor Wole Soyinka who had once claimed that on returning from exile during the NADECO days he found to his delights that the President elect's wife, Senator Remi Tinubu, brought him sets of cooking utensils, condescended on the 'obidient movement' as 'fascist' mobs. But Amuta (2023)^[4] submits, in a post election climate in which the President elect is daily gasping for life and breath being locked down in a credibility war with an Obi and a movement that came third, how come that the obidients suddenly morphed into fascists after an election they won but was denied them?

The characterization of members of the 'obidient movement' as fascist drew attack from world-class novelist, herself an 'obidient', Chimmamanda Ngozi Adichie, in condemnation. Professor Soyinka had been quoted before the election and the rise of the 'obidient movement' as saying that, 'only in Africa will thieves be regrouping to loot again and the youth whose future is being stolen will be celebrating it.' Now, he is being told that 'the irony of life...(is that now) the youths are trying to stop the thieves from re-grouping and you of all people who said this a couple of years back are now talking, defending "the thieves" and thrashing the youths. What a despicable irony!' Soyinka had since fallen into public opprobrium and disrepute that may never be redeemed as by the last outing, the Nobel Laureate was feigning hearing problems and engaging in unfounded sanctimonious diatribes of previous illogical altruisms. The man dies in all who keeps silence in the face of tyranny and between Soyinka and the obidients, things fell apart.

For Amuta, the truth is that the emergence of Obi and the obidients is the first credible threat to the power base of Nigeria's long standing decrepit gangster state and Professor Soyinka belongs to 'its support cast of open and disguised defenders and trumpeters.' And unfortunately, the die is cast as in every Nigerian youth, the desire to validate the election is high and they have become a hungry band, home and in the Diaspora, desirous of creating a country they can be proud of. 'They wrote their prologue in Endsars' (protests and riots) and have demonstrated their powers in the 2023 election with Obi-Datti merely activating the latent and bitter grouse they have nursed against the state having seen themselves as the new Nigeria. 'They have seen a simple man in black speaking a new political language devoid of tribe, religion and arrogance' with an opportunity to take back their country.

Conclusion

The perspectives that Maduka has couched the issues involved in interrogating the obidient movement are still compelling: Is Nigeria to be ruled by 'vampires in human skins or frustrated by those whose characters and identities are ...distorted with uncertainties whose aim to rule is not

only dubious but to maim, destroy and kill their fellow citizens with state terrorism and security agencies'? No. Maduka believes that Nigeria should be ruled by 'healthy, competent, honest persons with capacity, integrity and a sense of justice.' And that Nigeria should be liberated from the bondage of a stolen mandate. Maduka went further to indict outgoing President Gen. Buhari. He states, 'A man like Buhari who promised a free election as his last legacy has turned out to be the first beneficiary of the worst election ever conducted in Nigeria.'

However, the prospect of this study is whether going forward, the obidient movement can survive the harsh strictures it has suffered in the hands of the State and its Independent National Electoral Commission. Having taken the baptism of being brazenly rigged out of the vote from the first to the third position, and having currently gone to court, is the Nigerian court ready to redeem the obidient movement from the certain oblivion that a loss at the Tribunals is likely to inflict on it? Assuming but not conceding that the obidient movement is thrown out of court, does it have the signatures and capacities for continuing till another cycle of election in 2028? Only time shall tell. But certainly, the scimmages that shall ensue between the movement and the Nigerian State if it does not re-approach the movement and integrate it into the scheme of things as a reactionary States is wont to do, would be loud, hot and sharp.

Recommendations

- Any government that shall assume office after the court challenge may have to incorporate the obidient movement as part of a government of national unity.
- The obidient movement should keep its flag flying by getting relatively more structured.
- The Independent National Electoral Commission should be aided by the International Community (the United Nations) in the conduct of presidential elections and declaration of results to ensure that they are guided by the Constitution.

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