

# African leaders and trust deficit culture: Power, politics, and the Nigerian polity under General Ibrahim B. Babangida (1985-1993)

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## Abstract

*The phenomenon of military coup d'états, a feature especially of Nigeria and African countries, became the institutionalised method for changing governments after independence in 1960. This cycle of military régimes supplanting civilian governments tagged itself as a 'corrective' form of governance aimed at bringing to an end the misrule, ineptitude and corruption of the preceding government. Paradoxically, military rule has proven to be an aberration, dysfunctional to political development and the epitome of corruption and human rights violations. This paper traces the heightened waves of military incursions, with particular emphasis on General Ibrahim Babangida's regime, and the failures and successes of his administration so as to establish the appropriateness of the phrase "African leaders and the trust deficit culture within the context of Nigeria polity during the period under review".*

**Keywords:** African leaders, Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida, military regime, and deficit culture

## Sumário

*O fenómeno de golpes de estado militares, uma peculiaridade especial da Nigéria e países africanos, tornou-se o método institucionalizado de mudança de governos, depois da independência, em 1960. Este ciclo de regime militar suplantou governos civis, etiquetou como forma 'correctiva' de governação com objectivo de trazer um fim de desgoverno ou má administração, inaptidão e corrupção para o governo seguinte. Paradoxalmente, o poder militar tornou-se uma aberração e disfunção para o desenvolvimento político, assim como epítome de corrupção e violação de direitos humanos. Este artigo traça a elevação das ondas das incursões militares com particular ênfase sobre o regime do General Ibrahim Babangida, desaires de liderança e sucessos da sua administração, de modo a estabelecer o uso apropriado da frase "Líderes Africanos e Cultura Deficitária de Confiança" dentro do contexto de organização de governo da Nigéria durante o período em revista.*

**Palavras chave:** líderes Africanos, Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida, Regime Militar e Defice Cultural



## Introduction

“Good leaders”, according to Rotberg (2004), produce results, whether in terms of improved standards of living, basic development indicators, abundant new sources of personal opportunity, enriched educational opportunities, skilled medical care, freedom from crime, or strengthened infrastructure. Rotberg (2004), however, opined that “bad and despicable leaders tear down the social and economic fabric of their lands; they impoverish their increasingly downtrodden inhabitants. Bad rulers oppress their peoples, depriving them of liberty, prosperity and happiness.” (Rotberg, 2004:9) It is against this backdrop that this paper examines President Ibrahim B. Babangida (IBB) who, in 1985 when he assumed office, outlined a number of actions and policy positions that would be responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of Nigerians. Prominent among these were his resolve to eliminate corruption, solve the country’s serious economic problems, and hand over power to a democratically elected government by the end of 1992 (Omoigui, 1985).

Paradoxically, President Babangida soon established a reputation as a deceitful politician who, despite his lofty rhetoric, did not meet the standards he set for himself between 1985 and 1993. During this period, human rights abuses, including ethnically based attacks, became widespread. The press was also silenced. There were also grim reports of assassinations, phantom coups, and the disappearance of opposition figures (Joseph, 1996, 601:193-200; Joseph, 1999, 359-76) all in an attempt to silence critics. Indeed, Babangida’s style of leadership not only earned him nicknames like ‘Maradona’, ‘Machiavelli’, ‘Master of the Game’, and ‘Evil Genius’, but it provides useful insight into the trust deficit culture of African leaders.

To put this discussion in its proper historical perspective, this paper examines the policies of the Babangida administration in light of the phrase ‘African leaders and the trust deficit culture’ to establish its appropriateness within the context of Nigeria polity during the period under review. In doing so, the paper makes a critical analysis of the following: a brief survey of the emergence of the administration and the legitimacy problems it initially faced; the administration’s human rights posture; its economic policy, particularly the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP); and the implementation of the transition to civilian rule.

## The origin of the administration

In the early hours of August 27, 1985, the voice of Major General Joshua Dogonyaro of the Nigerian Army, heralded by martial music, told a weary and bewildered nation that power had been seized in a palace coup from General Mohammadu Buhari and Major General Tunde Idiagbon by Major General Ibrahim Babangida, who thereafter declared himself ‘Military President’, becoming the first military president in Africa and probably the world (Folarin, 2010).

A combination of reasons given to justify the coup d’état ranged from massive corruption

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<sup>1</sup> Although it was purportedly reported that Gloria Okon ‘died’ in detention, another report made available by Nigerian journalists suggest that she was smuggled out of the country by her highly placed military sponsors.

to general economic hardship as a result of the austerity measures in the country due to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stalemate initiated by the Shehu Shagari regime (Olagunju & Oyovbaire, 1991). Other allegations included Buhari-Idiagbon's high-handedness culminating in the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree Number 2 of 1984, which gave Major General Tunde Idiagbon's Chief of Staff the power to detain anyone labelled a security risk for up to six months without trial (Omoigui, 1985). Also criticised was Decree Number 4 of 1984 by which two journalists of *The Guardian* – Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor – were jailed by the Buhari regime. This decree was promulgated to prevent journalists from reporting news embarrassing to government officials. These decrees, among others, were considered to have almost turned the country into a “virtual military garrison” (Fawole, 2003: 150).

These local crises and the mismanagement of certain external affairs such as the ‘Dikko crate affair’ leading to a Nigeria-Britain diplomatic face-off, the xenophobia leading to the expulsion of West African aliens during the Shagari era, and the IMF stalemate, were a huge embarrassment to a nation regarded as a regional leader. These, according to Babangida, had compromised Nigeria's international standing and made the country a laughing stock abroad. In addition, the new administration lashed out at Buhari-Idiagbon's foreign policy:

Nigeria's foreign policy was characterized by inconsistency and incoherence. It lacked the clarity to make us know where we stood in matters of international concern to enable other countries [to] relate to us with seriousness. Our external relations have been conducted by a policy of retaliatory reactions (Babangida, 1985:3; Omoigui, 1985; Folarin, 2010).

Apart from the discontent of senior military officers like Babangida, more mundane reasons adduced over the years for the August purge, were many and varied. For example, in an unpublished thesis titled “Military Involvement in Politics in Nigeria: The Effect on Nigerian Army,” written in 1989 by the then Major Habibu Idris Shuaibu, claims that the reason for General Babangida's putsch against Buhari was that he did not offer positions to junior officers. Another unconfirmed report for example, suggests that Colonel Dogonyaro's promotion to Brigadier, delayed by Buhari, may have infuriated him and his sympathisers. Clearly, these were the perspectives (if true) of some of the junior and middle ranking officers who were used to execute the coup, but this does not explain the coup at the level of its originators (Omoigui, 1985).

With regards to civilian involvement, other unconfirmed reports speculate profound displeasure on the part of Chief MKO Abiola, a business mogul who was alleged to have helped finance the 1983 coup. Abiola, it is claimed, was upset not only with the decision of the Buhari regime to seize and auction a large consignment of his newsprint meant for Concord Newspaper (which had allegedly been smuggled into the country), but also with an inquiry into the possible role of a relative in the drug trade (Osahon, 2010). This, the story alleges, motivated Abiola to financially assist Buhari's removal. But Abiola was not the only disgruntled figure in the private sector, as unconfirmed reports identified other individuals with business interests like Dantata to have a



personal grudge against the Buhari government (Omoigui, 1985). All sorts of calamitous events kept occurring at the time, including the arrest of one Ikuomola for trying to smuggle a large consignment of cocaine out of the country. He indicted a son of one of the Dantatas and they were both tried and sentenced to death. The Dantata family unsuccessfully mounted pressure on the Supreme Military Council to commute the sentence to life. This development, it is believed, heightened division among members of the Supreme Military Council, with a high-ranking military benefactor siding with the Dantatas. (Osahon, 2010). This and Gloria Okon arrest in 1985 at the Aminu Kano International Airport for a drug related offence, created serious friction in the hierarchy of the Nigeria Military. <sup>1</sup>

Regarding the role of intellectuals, Professor Omo Omoruyi, who claimed to be 'privy and party' to Babangida's "personal decision to overthrow the government of Major General Muhammadu Buhari," revealed that President Babangida "came to office without a political programme and with no modality for putting one in place" (Omoigui, 1985). Major General MC Alli (retired), on the other hand, described the coup as "an enigmatic, sleek and sophisticated purge received with press-inspired fanfare in August 1985" concocted by Babangida "in consort with northern officers, particularly of Middle Belt extraction based on the products of Regular Officer's Course at the Defence Academy." A cabal of company and field grade officers, who in due course, would come to be known as 'IBB Boys', executed the coup. Speaking with the benefit of insights gained as the then Deputy Director, Joint Services at Supreme Headquarters, Alli had this to say: "tensions between the Army (specifically Babangida and Abacha) and the Buhari regime (specifically Buhari and Idiagbon) came to a head when Ministry of Defence contracts and accounts were placed under scrutiny"(Omoigui, 1985).

Others like Naiwu Osahon are of the view that President Babangida had removed Idiagbon/Buhari from power to refute the heated allegation at the time about illegal drug links and to help the IMF/World Bank ruin the Naira and make the Nigerian market a dumping ground for American and European junk and decadence. The marginalisation of the Naira suited Babangida's Machiavellian streak to quell mass protests of abject poverty, hunger, and basic survival pre-occupation. For example, the terroristic power of massive foreign exchange reserves in a private person's possession is limitless as a tool for forcing a pauperised populace to acquiesce to the self-perpetuation antics of a potential despot (Osahon, 2010).

In an effort to consolidate himself in power, the Babangida administration from inception promised, among other things, to safeguard the fundamental human rights and civil liberties of Nigerians. In good faith, he abrogated the draconian Decree 4 (Public Officers' Protection against false publication), freed political prisoners and reorganised the intelligence services when he signed the National Security Agencies (NSA) Decree No. 19 of 5 June 1986 into law.

The next section takes a critical look at Babangida's policies and programmes to know the extent to which the leader followed them in fulfilling his promises. Thus, the discussion here will dwell on the administration's human rights record, the Structural Adjustment Programme, corruption, censorship of the press and transition to civilian rule.

## Human rights record

The UN Commission on Human Rights observes, among other things, that governance is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realisation of human rights. Good governance accomplishes this in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption, and with due regard for the rule of law. The true test of 'good' governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights (United Nations Human Rights Report, 1996-2012).

In virtually every political system, there are a number of institutional mechanisms to safeguard the inalienable rights of man. The strength and efficacy of these safeguards differ from state to state and mark the level of political development-cum-democratic consolidation in each state. The constitution normally stipulates the catalogue of fundamental rights of citizens. Indeed, in the case of Nigeria, the 1999 constitution guarantees the following civil and political rights: The right to life (section 33); the right to dignity of (the) human person (section 24); the right to personal liberty (section 35); the right to fair hearing (section 36); the right to family life (section 37); the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (section 38); the right to freedom of expression and of the press (section 39); the right to peaceful assembly and association (section 40); the right to freedom of movement (section 41); the right to freedom from discrimination (section 42); and the right to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria (section 43) (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Without a doubt, Nigeria's successive constitutions from 1960 to 1999 made these rights justifiable so that citizens, whose civil or political rights were infringed upon either by another individual or group, could institute legal actions against such individual or body for redress (Ojo, 2006:15-29).

It should be recalled here that President Babangida, in his August maiden broadcast to the nation, made many mouthwatering promises to Nigerians but the administration's volt about-face on human rights issues less than a year after its inception, kept many wondering if his promises were a mere political ploy to win the support of the people so as to legitimise his government. Arguably, throughout President Babangida's tenure, the government ignored the rule of law, which required government to exercise its power in accordance with well-established and clearly written rules, regulations, and legal principles (Human Rights in Development, 1992). Government agencies like the police, the State Security Services and Directorate of Military Intelligence perpetrated these abuses and operated with absolute impunity. Aside from creating horrifying detention conditions, torture centres were operated primarily to silence critics.

Arguably, the optimism that heralded Babangida's coup was short-lived following a myriad of brushes the administration had with organised bodies like the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), and Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC). A major recurring theme in the ASUU-Babangida regime confrontation was the poor state of university education in the country. ASUU argued that this was due to the combination of three factors: inadequate funding, lack of internal autonomy and poor remuneration of Nigerian universities (Olusegun, 2011). The first major crisis that prompted government's proscription of the union in



July 1988 (it would be recognised again in August, 1990 and proscribed in August 1992) was ASUU's rejection of an apparent government decision to de-emphasise university education. This was a position of the IMF as canvassed at the meeting of Vice-Chancellors of African Universities in Harare in 1986. The argument was that only pre-university and technical education was cost-effective in Africa (Amuwo, 1995). Continued struggle prompted the new proscription of ASUU, but by then it made little sense because the union had become better organised and more radicalised. An Association of University Teachers (AUT) rapidly replaced it nation-wide (Amuwo, 1995). While still not recognising ASUU, Babangida's regime was forced to sign a historic agreement with the union on 3 September 1992. Eventually, an ASUU member could trace Babangida's precipitated departure from Aso Rock partly to ASUU's "role in destroying the regime's myth of invincibility and refusing to be bought" (Ibeanu, 1993: 8-9; Olusegun, 2011).

Students' political activism and idealistic radicalism are the most dreaded by governments all over the world. President Babangida's regime was not an exception. Governments in general have tended to use students and their unions as progressive support enclaves in pursuit of both legitimacy and popular appeals. In their traditional role as a bastion against all forms of retrogression and reaction, (Olugbade, 1990:5,1,39-57) NANS, like ASUU, was proscribed several times, but it continually defied the regime, meeting in Ibadan, its headquarters, and in other major cities of the country, often with the knowledge of either university authorities or state security services (SSS). In late May of 1991, students became the target of a renewed siege which began in response to an ultimatum issued by the proscribed NANS. They demanded that suspended students be reinstated, student unions on several campuses be unbanned, and reforms in university administration be initiated. In an attempt to nip the protest in the bud, a number of students were arrested in the days before the ultimatum deadline. These arrests resulted in nationwide protests on campuses, culminating in deadly clashes between students and armed security agents dispersed to quell the protest. NANS remained the voice of Nigerian students and its major political manifestations under Babangida during the anti-SAP riots of 1988, 1989 and 1991, which drew support from a cross-section of other non-State associations throughout the nation (Amuwo, 1995).

In later years, NANS' foot troops showed signs of fatigue, leading to a diminution of *aluta continua*, both at the rhetorical and practical level. Several factors were responsible for this development. These included: massive infiltration of the high command of NANS by State agents brandishing material incentives for good behaviour; the use of State governors and royal fathers to divide NANS' highest hierarchy; and deepened pauperisation of students on campuses, a direct consequence of the diminishing incomes of their parents, guardians and sponsors in civil society. Other factors were the alarming rate of campus closures in the last four years or so, with the grave consequence of students losing an academic year; and the resultant pressures of kith-and-kin on students to earn their degrees added to their own legitimate personal ambitions to leave school

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<sup>2</sup> The Babangida administration offered him appointment as chairman of the defunct Peoples Bank of Nigeria Limited, established in 1989.

and pursue their respective careers. This does not suggest, however, that NANS was bought over by the Babangida regime far from it. State coercion rather brought NANS closer to ASUU and NANS consistently supported ASUU's many attempts to restore the fading glory of the country's Ivory Tower (Amuwo, 1995).

The Babangida era slowed the growth of labour unions and decimated what was left of them after the Buhari administration. According to Comrade Abdulwahed Omar, the present NLC President, the Babangida regime caused the NLC (the umbrella body for labour unions) serious setbacks and reverses (Soji-Eze & Komolafe, 2009). Of the many forces against its survival, Omar said "10 years after its formation in February 1988, the congress was dissolved by the military junta of General Ibrahim Babangida, a dissolution that was to last for 10 months" (Soji-Eze, & Komolafe, 2009). An administrator was appointed over the affairs of the NLC for 10 months before the election of Comrade Paschal Bayfau as the new NLC helmsman. As Iyayi noted:

"A radical wing of the Nigerian Labor Congress, led by Mallam Ciroma, was in control of labor affairs when Babangida came to power. Well-informed about the role of Labor in pre- and post-independent Nigeria, Babangida's overall strategy was to replace the radical wing with a moderate, if not conservative, faction. The killing of four students of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (ABU) in May 1986 and the subsequent solidarity march against the genocide, as a section of the Press called it, provided an alibi for the first attack. NLC headquarters in Lagos were sealed up; it was thereby accused of provocation and insensitivity to the national economic emergency; the executive of the Congress was dissolved and a sole administrator appointed to run its affairs." (Iyayi, 2008; Olusegun, 2011).

By 1988, there was a massive government infiltration of the union at its national convention in Jos where the government sponsored a group led by Shamang to cause a schism within the NLC. Comrade Pascal Bafyau, leader of the Railways Union, whose members' economic woes were well-known under Babangida, became the president of the Congress. As Iyayi argues, Comrade Paschal Bayfau was very close to the General. Indeed, several of the Congress' policy somersaults, both on labour union and political matters before and after the 12 June annulment, could be traced to Bafyau's extensive informal networks with the military regime (Iyayi, 2008; Olusegun, 2011). Enumerating the missteps of the NLC under Bayfau, Iyayi noted some bizarre labour political options, which included the establishment of a political association that sought license from the regime to participate in Third Republic politics and indecision about supporting calls by Campaign for Democracy (CD) for public disobedience for the recovery of Abiola's presidential mandate (Iyayi, 2008; Olusegun, 2011).

For Ali Ciroma, the SAP project was the mother of all evils that the Babangida junta imposed on Nigeria, where dissident voices like labor unions and the NLC were clamped down, arrested and muzzled by the military president (Komolafe, 2009). However, Ali Ciroma believes the evil



intent of the regime was heightened after the annulment of June 12, 1993, where pro-democracy groups including labour, were victims of the burning repression unleashed on the Nigerian people. However, organised labour was getting stronger and more resilient in its activities at that time. It was also at this time, in 1989 precisely, that labour unions were again restructured to become 29 affiliate unions to the Nigeria Labour Congress (Imhonopi & Urim, 2011:244-245).

Government high-handedness was not only directed at members of ASUU, NANS, and the Labour Congress. Other special interest groups including the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU) and Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), among others, ran afoul of the government and were outlawed (Omoigui, 1985). It should be noted here that for a government that laid claims to safeguarding human rights, acting on the contrary to avowed human rights left many questions unanswered.

Suffice it to say that this was only the beginning of worse things to come as the incessant arrests and detention of Nigerians under trumped up charges became the stock-in-trade of a government that promised to uphold human rights. Indeed, the people who became regular visitors to the police station and other military detention facilities were civil rights activists. For instance, Justice Ayorinde Legali sentenced Chief Gani Fawehinmi, a radical lawyer and an ardent critic of Babangida administration, to a 12-month imprisonment for contempt of court, an offence that ordinarily attracted at most a three-month prison term. The Judge, however, justified his action on the premise that the sentence was to serve as a deterrent to Fawehinmi and his radical cohort to stay off anti-government cases. It should be emphasised that Justice Legali's action was not only an abuse of judicial process but also a clear indication that the judgment was the dictate of a government that laid claim to the rights of its citizen. Without doubt, Legali's action was symbolic of the biblical 'hands of Esau and voice of Jacob'. Another activist who was a victim of persistent harassment and intimidation by the police and security agents was Dr Beko Ransome Kuti, leader of the Committee on the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR).

For making remarks which government considered inflammatory, derogatory, and seditious, Ransome Kuti did not only lose his chair on the Board of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, but was periodically taken for questioning. Femi Falana was also harassed on numerous occasions, apparently because of his role as defence counsel for Jennifer Madike, a Lagos socialite arrested on 12 May, and his involvement with student union leaders (Olusegun, 2011). Although these persistent human rights abuses by members of the police and security forces became an important focus of domestic human rights groups in 1991 and a major point of criticism of the government (Human Rights Watch, 1992), these issues were not given the seriousness and attention they deserved by the government.

The Babangida administration, like most military regimes in Africa ruled by military decrees, shielded itself from being questioned by regular courts in the country. In 1991, the government used the State Security Decree 2 (Detention of Persons) of 1984, the most widely abused and feared decree which provided for virtually unlimited detention without trial to continue to hold relatives and acquaintances of suspected participants in the April 1990 coup attempt. Prominent



among such detainees were Gloria Mowarin, the girlfriend of a suspected coup financier. Others included Gloria Awhirin and Rhoda Ackah, sisters of Great Ogboru, the alleged coup leader, as well as Dorah Mukoro, wife of Major Saliba Mukoro, an alleged coup participant (Againstbabangida.com). Remarkably, the then executive directors of the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, Clement Nwankwo, and the chairman of the CRP's Lawyers Committee, Tayo Oyetibo, were grilled by officers of the Directorate of Military Intelligence about their defence of Dorah Mukoro (Human Rights Watch Report, 1992).

One of the most damaging effects of military rule on the justice system was the use of special tribunals. Lacking internationally recognised judicial safeguards, they heard a variety of cases considered by the government to be particularly sensitive. Those who were convicted, in some cases, had no right of appeal (Olusegun, 2011). Even though others appealed to a Special Appeal Tribunal, the government then had to confirm the appellate decisions. Until 1991, military officers sat on tribunals along with judges, but according to Decree 9 of 1991, tribunals consisted of one civilian judge. While this change appeared to be a positive development, it did not address many of the fundamental problems of the tribunals, including a presumption of guilt, inadequate legal representation, disproportionately stiff sentences and strictly circumscribed provisions for appeal. In addition, the continued existence of a parallel court system weakened the authority of the regular courts (Human Rights Watch Report, 1992).

The true picture of this unprecedented infringement on the rights of civilians is brought to the forefront clearly by Tai Solarin,<sup>2</sup> who opined, "Babangida's human rights policy is hitting zero and there is absolutely nothing to score." He faced punitive repercussions over the years for his criticism of the Babangida government. Indeed, Nigeria's poor human rights record is parallel to Zimbabwe's record under Robert Mugabe. Mugabe stands accused of directing state-sponsored violence using security agents and militias to commit human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture and killings of opposition members with little or no accountability for these crimes,' also, 'the government has not made any genuine effort to investigate, much less discipline or prosecute any of the individuals responsible' (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The US and the EU used the claim of human rights violations to impose punitive economic sanctions on the Mugabe government in early 2002 (Lynette Mhlanga, 2012).

It is imperative to state here that the handling of the coup d'état in 1989 and 1990 further elucidates the poor human rights policy the Babangida's administration professed to pursue. Examples of government abuse of power are legion. For instance, Major General Mamman Vatsa, who allegedly masterminded the phantom coup of 1986, was tried along with other coup suspects under the Treason and Other Offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree 1 of 1986. The coup plotters were found guilty by the Special Military Tribunal and on 6 March 1986, General Vatsa and other conspirators including Lt. Col. M. Iyoshe, Major D.I. Bamidele, Commander A.A. Ogwiji, Wing Commander B.E.N. Ekele, Wing Commander C. Sakaba, Squadron Leader Martin O. Luther, and Squadron Leader A. Akura were executed despite pleas for clemency by well-meaning Nigerians and other international figures and bodies (Vanguard of 13 March 1999). Closely linked to this



was the case of Major Gideon Orkar, who along with a dozen others, was shot in 1990 for a coup attempt against General Ibrahim Babangida. Despite the fate of Major Orkar and others, some of the plotters like Major Saliba Mukoro fled to the United States, earned advanced degrees in criminal justice, and became a Mississippi Valley State University professor prior to returning to run for a governorship in 2011 (Gideon Orkar, for a Nigerian coup, <http://www.executedtoday.com/tag/ibrahim-babangida/:1990>). If the coup plotters did not receive spontaneous public support, it was due to the calculating instinct of Nigerians for personal safety (Ihonvbere, 1991:601-626).

## **Babangida's economic policy and the structural adjustment programme**

In the late 1970s and culminating in the 1980s, African countries, like their counterparts in other developing parts of the world, were confronted with massive economic decline and an overbearing debt burden, accentuated by the global economic down-turn (Nwagbara, 2004). Consequently, the absence of necessary finances brought to a halt the implementation of vital national programmes of economic development and political modernisation. This warranted the option of seeking aid from international financiers, which was not easily forthcoming due to uncertainties about the ability of borrowing countries to pay after accumulating huge debt. As a result, subsequent granting of financial assistance was tied with stringent conditions within some form of structural adjustment in the internal structure of the economy of the borrowing countries (Nwagbara, 2011:30-41).

The IMF's prescription to countries seeking financial assistance is that they stabilise their economies by fulfilling conditions such as adopting policies of fiscal and budgetary austerity; exchange rate devaluation; 'getting the prices right', stimulating investment instead of consumption; cutting real wages; cutting public expenditure; prioritising external debt service; devaluing currency; increasing real interest rates; and liberalising imports. States seeking assistance are required to comply with these guidelines in return for balance of payment assistance. The World Bank and creditor clubs also collaborate with the IMF and jointly insist on the fulfillment of conditions and the receipt of an IMF seal of approval before concluding any meaningful agreements. The Nigerian government was no exception, in large part; there was willingness on the part of Nigeria to fulfill the majority of the conditions required by the World Bank and IMF. However, the state became involved in deadlocked negotiations with the multilaterals for three years over its refusal to comply with some key conditions (Okome, 2000).

Babangida made a startling move when he subjected Nigerians to a year-long dialogue on whether or not the country should accept a multi-billion dollar financial aid package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to keep the economy afloat. Capitalising on the Nigerian people's acceptance of the package because its stringent measures for reducing Nigeria's debt would have had negative economic repercussions, Babangida suspended talks with the IMF in the spirit of his people. In the alternative, he offered Nigerians his own economic recovery programme, which included many of the proposed IMF prescriptions (Sussman, 1993). The implementation

of these prescriptions led to many unpleasant consequences like soaring unemployment rates, a high cost of living due to wage cuts and withdrawal of subsidies, and a skyrocketing inflationary situation occasioned by currency devaluation, among others. In fact, the implementation of this economic policy came at a time when Nigeria was beset by a charged political atmosphere fuelled by crushing economic hardship, which hit most families (Nwagbara, 2011:30-41).

The combined effect of these discrepancies increased discontentment and opposition from organised interest groups and members of the general public. The most prominent and vocal opposition against SAP came from the public sector employees ably represented by ASUU and the NLC. Being articulate and having an advantageous position in society, organised labour was able to mount public enlightenment campaigns against the adoption of the SAP by educating the general public on the adverse implications of such measures on their well-being and those of the yet unborn next generation (Nwagbara, 2011:30-41).

Thus, in a frantic attempt to earn legitimacy and credibility for itself and its transformation policies, Babangida's administration embarked on a series of strategic responses that were sometimes involved the subtle inclusion and exclusion of opposition and others, overt repression and incarceration (Nwagbara, 2004). Sponsors of SAP probably believed that a more authoritarian regime was a prerequisite for successful implementation of SAP (Bangura, & Beckman, 1993). However, the presence of military dictatorships in the nation's political scene and their use of repressive decrees could not stop organised labour from using strike action's whenever the need arose. At best, such legislation only caused a temporary setback to organised labour after some immunity against the harsh and hostile confrontations of the military was developed (Nwagbara, 2011:30-41).

## Corruption

Corruption woven deep into every fabric of the country's political and socio-economic life (Aiyede, 2008:37-54) is indeed the major explanation for the general, acute development tragedy that impeded on social and economic growth as well as the effective utilisation of resources in Nigeria. From its mild manifestation in the 1960s, corruption grew rapidly at an alarming rate during the Second Republic (Aiyede, 2008), as it had become an instrument of regime legitimisation and stability during the several years of military misrule in Nigeria. During the period under discussion, corruption became so pervasive and ravenous to the extent that it became the major reason for all military coups and authoritarian takeovers in the country. Indeed, Babangida's regime, like many military regimes, became entangled in and ended up epitomizing corruption, the same reason they took over power in the first place. Indeed, during the Babangida autocratic regime, for instance, corruption was raised to the level of state policy and allegation of corrupt practices were treated with utmost levity, destroying all the achievements of the previous administration. Gboyega has this to say:

The benign treatment of corruption in the early years of the Babangida administration foretold a much more conscious instrumental use of corruption to ensure regime stability. For a military administration, Babangida's government was unique in its



unconcern about corruption within its rank and among public servants generally; it was as if the Government existed so that corruption might thrive (Gboyega, 1996:3-12).

A few years after taking over power, some of the worst offenders who were found guilty and were serving various jail terms were released from prison on the pretext of Babangida's human rights posture. Ribadu, former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), further reiterated this point. While speaking at the 3rd Media Trust Annual Dialogue in Abuja on the theme 'Corruption: The Trouble with Nigeria', he categorically acknowledged that IBB was the mastermind of institutionalised corruption (Ribadu, 2006) in Nigeria. According to him, "Public officers accused and convicted for corrupt practices were given as much as five lifetime jail sentences each and all their ill-gotten wealth confiscated," (Ribadu, 2006) were returned to the corrupt politicians (Gboyega, 1996). This, he said, was done under the Forfeiture of Assets (Release of certain Forfeited Properties) Decrees No. 24 and 50 of 1993. Ribadu further opined that rather than encourage and promote the virtues of accountability, respect for the rule of law and patriotism, the Nigerian leadership destroyed institutions that sustain the growth of society, unleashing on the rest of the people an army of blind loyalists with explicit instructions to do whatever it would take, or using brazen theft and violence to strengthen their stranglehold on power. Indeed, Ribadu further remarked "There is perhaps no other country in the world where absolute power corrupts absolutely than Nigeria" (Ribadu, 2006).

From 1985, when General Ibrahim Babangida seized power, he made it clear in no uncertain terms that his government was all about 'settlement.' Thus, all government contracts, appointments and institutions became a means of patronage and settlement. This argument was made even more forcefully by Becquart-Leclercq's study of corruption in France when he states it clearly that:

Corruption functions like grease in the gears; it has an important redistributive effect, it is a functional substitute for direct participation in power, it constitutes the cement between elites and parties, and it affects the effectiveness with which power is exercised (Becquart-Leclercq, 1989).

The monumental institutionalisation of corruption during the infamous Babangida era continued into the General Sanni Abacha and General Abdulsalami Abubakar regimes. By the time the trio left power and the democratic experiment began in 1999, Nigeria had been nurtured and indoctrinated into a system of institutionalised corruption that touched every facet of life for an unbroken period of 14 years from 1985 to 1999 (Nwobu, 2012). To sustain and boost the regime's legitimacy, Babangida made even more extensive pay-offs to various groups of people and organisations in civil society. These included: Ecumenical Cathedral Abuja, 50 million Naira; Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, 30 million Naira; Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria, 20 million Naira; Zik Hall Zungeru, 40 million Naira; Arewa House Kaduna 35 million Naira; Yakubu Gowon Centre, 30 million Naira; Nigerian Union of Journalists National Secretariat Abuja, 30 million Naira; Nigeria Labour Congress Secretariat Building Fund, 50 million Naira, among several others (Committee for Defense of Human Rights 1992:35). He attempted to compromise some vocal critics by settling them and those he could not recruit, he fired where possible, detained, killed, or hounded into exile (Osahon, 2010).

The *News Magazine* 20 December 1993 edition captures clearly the administration's economic profligacy and massive corruption culminating in the mismanagement of a US\$ 2 billion Gulf oil windfall in 1991. Jeffrey Robinson's book, *The Sink*, aptly captures Babangida involvement in the oil windfall thus: "Of the US\$ 120 billion siphoned out of the Nigerian treasury into offshore accounts by dishonest politicians, US\$ 20 billion is allegedly traceable to IBB directly as President from 1985 to 1993" (Osahon, 2010; Olusegun, 2011:169). Babangida's mismanagement of taxpayers' money includes 400 million Naira wasted on the Better Life Project, US\$ 200 million siphoned from the Aluminium Project and other instances of colossal corruption at all levels of government too numerous to mention. This was the trenchant description of the Nigerian state, which became more relevant and forceful in 1993 than it was in 1960. The World Bank and other international sources of information put his total loot from the Nigerian treasury at over US\$ 35 billion (Osahon, 2010; Olusegun, 2011:169). The African state of Angola is another case in point. *The Economist* in 2000 observed in an article that:

"The Angolan government earns around \$3.5 billion a year from its oil, the bulk of the money bypasses the budget, disappearing straight into the hands of the presidency. Angolans call the nexus of the presidency, the Central Bank and Sonangol, the state oil company, the Bermuda Triangle, the place where money vanishes without a trace. (*The Economist*, January 2000, 48) it is speculated that most of the money goes either to buy new weapons to fuel the devastating, never-ending war against the UNITA rebels, or to finance the lifestyles of the super-rich with whom the president has surrounded himself. This lucky bunch is alleged to arrange arms purchases with greater regard for the size of the backhanders than for the value of the weapons. When the cash runs out, the powers that-be take out short-term, high-interest loans, guaranteed against future oil production. Thus the entire profits from Angola's oil production for the next three years are said to have already been spent" (*The Economist*, January 2000:48).

Highlights of the Pius Okigbo Panel on the Reorganization and Reform of Central Bank of Nigeria set up by Abacha in 1994 included a critique of the economic policies of the Babangida administration, the waste and mismanagement that characterised the government, and the indictment of the Central Bank as a regulatory organ which was under the direct control of the head of state. Specifically, the Okigbo Panel identified poor supervision, dearth of qualified personnel, corruption, poor management of the economy, inept management of foreign reserves, lack of independence, and the proliferation of two-branch banks. In short, the report concluded that the Central Bank of Nigeria had completely failed in its primary responsibility of supervising other financial institutions and managing the economy (Abdullahi, 2005: 3).

Zaire presents another example of an African country plagued by systematic corruption. One estimate from 1970 puts the amount of the annual government-operating budget that was 'lost or diverted' under the rule of Mobutu Sese Seko (for thirty-two years the strongman of Zaire), at



60 percent (Callaghy, 1984:89). Zaire, under Mobutu, was the exemplar *per excellence* of what Stanislav Andreski termed 'kleptocracy' to differentiate it from simple corruption, which is merely the practice of using the power of office for making private gains in breach of laws and regulations nominally in force (Andreski, 1968:92). This scourge is not peculiar to Africa; in South America, General Marcos Perez Jimenez, former military dictator of Venezuela, notorious for brutality and corruption, provides another example of a corrupt leader. As at 2001 when he died, he was estimated to have siphoned \$250 million from the state treasury (*South Florida Sun-Herald*, 24 September 2001).

## Censorship of the press

The print and electronic media has been immensely active as a channel for the dissemination of information, sensitisation and conscientisation of the citizenry with insights into the goings-on in their environment and around the world (Nwagbara, 2010). The media has been described as:

... as a watchdog is in recognition of its watchful and critical role against the bad practices of the government and private individuals... The media have been irrepressible in holding the citizenry, particularly the political leaders accountable in Nigeria (Omoera, 2010: 35-6).

To successfully bring these responsibilities to fruition, the media must maintain its principal features, which include critical independence, democratic constructiveness and commercial viability (Bruns, 2008, 65-79; Oyeleye, 2004, 157-168; Kuper & Kuper, 2001, 355-376). The Nigerian press, which for years was regarded as the most vibrant in Africa, was increasingly vilified under the Babangida administration (Human Rights Watch Report, 1992). The relationship between the government and the media, contrary to Babangida's promise in 1985, became badly frayed as he began unleashing his policy of intimidation and harassments on media houses over the years. His administration closed down newspaper houses and arrested journalists who reported on sensitive topics they felt would tarnish the image of the government. For instance, Government slammed a six-month ban on *Newswatch* Magazine simply because it made public their decision on the J. S. Cookey Committee on the political future of Nigeria, before they officially made it public. But "roughly a month to the end of the ban the President pardoned the outfit and immediately granted it an interview where he declared that the magazine is very close to his heart" (*The African Concord*, 31 August 1992). In a similar development, the *African Concord*, another leading news magazine, suffered the same fate in April 1992, when *The News* outfit was also sealed by security operatives for an interview with Chief Anthony Enahoro, an elder statesman and former Minister of Information, who called for a national conference and expressed some critical views of the Babangida Administration.

Also, three newspapers in Lagos owned by John West Publications were temporarily shut down for what was described as 'embarrassing publications' against the president and his wife and on the Jennifer Madike's case with the caption "IBB, Maryam [Babangida] named in Jennifer's

deal". This story appeared in the *Lagos Evening News* and reported the contents of a letter purportedly written by the chair of the Drug Law Enforcement Agency in which he justified the need to detain Madike under Decree 2 (Human Rights Watch, 1992; Olusegun, 2011). The editor and news editor of the paper were arrested, detained and released after a few days.

Foreigners were not spared in the administration's crusade of gagging the press. For instance, William Keeling, a correspondent for the *British Daily Financial Times*, was expelled from Nigeria and declared *persona non grata* for allegedly writing damning and inaccurate articles "ostensibly to cause mischief and disharmony among Nigerians and between Nigeria and the rest of the world." The government's statement cited an article in which Keeling had accused the government of not reporting about half of the extra five billion dollars that it was estimated to have earned from higher oil prices during the Gulf war (Human Rights Watch Report, 1992). Indeed, Babangida's high-handedness directed at the press fit the profile of right-wing General Ordia Fujimori of Peru, who after coming to power through a coup in 1948, fined, arrested and exiled many journalists over the course of the following eight years, while several news magazines and newspapers were either closed or occupied by troops. At the beginning of his presidency, he introduced the *Ley de Seguridad interior dela Republica* (Law of Internal Security), which made verbal threats against the freedom or material interest of any Peruvian citizen punishable by expatriation or imprisonment and fine. Similarly punishable was 'news and information of a false or tendentious nature, destined to upset the public order or damage the prestige or credit of the country' (Gargurevich, 1991:191).

An entirely new dimension of the intimidation of journalists was introduced in 1986, following the murder of Dele Giwa, then editor-in-chief of *Newswatch*, via a letter bomb allegedly planted by members of the state security apparatus. Rumours' making the rounds at the time was that Dele Giwa stumbled on some vital information regarding Gloria Okon, a drug mule suspect convicted and sentenced to death in London, and threatened to publish the story even when he was presented with a cash bribe. Efforts by Gani Fawehinmi to investigate and prosecute those responsible directly and remotely, was frustrated by the military. In spite of Babangida's complicity in Mr. Giwa's death, he resolved to remain silent even when he had the opportunity to set the record straight at the Human Right Violations Investigations Commission setup by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2000 with the mandate "to establish the causes, nature, and extent of human rights violations between 15 January 1966 and 28 May 1999.

The Babangida government also promulgated the Treason and Treasonable Offences Decree No. 29 of 1993. This decree announced a prohibition on promoting "ideas that minimise the sovereignty of Nigeria" and contained a litany of restrictions on the press, including punishment by a ten-year prison term or stiff fine or both for publishing "false information"; the establishment of an office for each paper in Abuja within one year; and an order to submit all newspapers to the Information Secretary (Human Rights Watch, 1994). A special military tribunal established under the Treason and Other Offences (Special Military Tribunal) Decree 1986 would try an offence under this Decree (Lagos Judiciary Library, 1993). This decree was later repealed by Decree no. 63 of 1999.

Arguably, press censorship is not peculiar to Nigeria; most governments on the continent



are guilty of this crime, which has resulted in an unfriendly environment for journalists. Indeed, Babangida's regime can be compared to Col. M. Gadaffi's regime in Libya. Gadaffi, apart from having a reputation as one of the world's longest serving dictators before his death in 2011, is a good example of an African leader with a trust deficit. Indeed, Gadaffi, during his 42-year reign, had a reputation for press censorship state-sponsored terrorism for personal gain, and corruption.

## **Nigeria's foreign policy and the Babangida regime, 1985-1993**

Nigeria's international image in the 1970s, according to Babangida, was of Nigeria's "rise to greatness", while the 1980s opened the chapter of "the decline to the state of a bewildered nation," as a result of domestic happenings such as electoral violence, a high rate of corruption, economic mismanagement, oil doom, and the ridiculous role assumption in Africa (Otubanjo, 1989). These developments ultimately had grave consequences on Nigeria's regional leadership (Babangida, 1985:3).

From Babangida's geo-strategic partnership in Africa, commitment to regional security, conflict resolution, and economic diplomacy, it was very clear that the regime had an unapologetic and uncompromising resolve to keep Nigeria's number one position in the continent. To achieve this, the regime began a policy of damage control to Nigeria-West African relations, which were at its ebb owing to Buhari's perceived xenophobia against West Africans. The Babangida administration provided assistance to needy West African states, and committed to a peaceful settlement of disputes in the region. The enormous regional and global burdens, which included Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somali, Chad, Togo, Namibia and South Africa, were costly in maintaining global visibility, at variance with national economic development, and contrary to the principles of economic diplomacy. In Liberia alone, Nigeria provided up to 80 percent of the ECOMOG troops (contributing 15000 out of the total 17000 soldiers) while spending up to US\$ 12 billion (Ayam, 2004). According to Ayam, (2004a):

No other West African country but Nigeria would have been able to spearhead such an operation. Representing the interventionist phase of Nigeria's foreign policy, it has shown the dominant position of Nigeria in ECOWAS and the region (Ayam, 2006 b: 19).

Nigeria was a financially committed member of ECOWAS and was reputed to be not only the highest due-paying member of the organisation, but also a major financier of ECOWAS programmes and projects. It made a regular contribution of one-third of ECOWAS' annual budget. In terms of financial commitment to the OAU, Nigeria was assessed higher than most African states for statutory contributions and, as Bukarambe notes, it was responsible for between eight and ten percent of the total regular budget of the OAU (Bukarambe, 2000).

General Babangida's administration spearheaded the boycott of the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games in 1986 to compel the west to stop apartheid South Africa from its racist imperialism in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Adeyemo, 2002), and frowned on the situation of a South



African military base in Equatorial Guinea, a close Nigerian neighbour to the south, considering this as abominable to its principle of secure neighbourhood, anti-apartheid stance and a threat to its national security. Pressure on Equatorial Guinea eventually compelled President Obiang Mbasogo to expel South Africans from the country (Fawole, 2003). The decisive and tactical roles in African affairs earned Nigeria a number of international positions. These included the headship of the UN Anti-Apartheid Committee, chairmanship of ECOWAS during three consecutive terms, secretary-generalship of the Commonwealth of Nations, President of the UN General Assembly in 1989, presidency of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), executive secretaryship of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and chairmanship of the OAU in 1991, with Babangida himself at the helm. One of his striking achievements was the establishment of the African Economic Community aimed at integrating African economies (Folarin, 2010).

Babangida's era represented the 'golden age' of Nigeria's claim to regional leadership. The administration accomplished the grand African role conceptions of the Murtala-Obasanjo, while declaring its own fresh perspectives in unambiguous terms. Although at a very high price, Abegunrin's observation aptly captures the period: the foreign policy exhibited Charles Dickens' aphorism in his *Tale of Two Cities* "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (Abegunrin, 2003).

It is regrettable to state here that the government's huge spending to keep fulfill its international role promises was having more excruciating economic effects on the populace. In West Africa, Babangida was criticised at this time for his wastefulness, lack of strategic objective, and rationale, particularly in the intervention of Nigeria in Liberia. For instance, a group reasoned that these roles were accumulating serious economic costs for Nigeria at a time when the domestic economy was overstretched. Nigeria faced the SAP and the huge cost of nation building at home, and thus resorted to soliciting for African Development Bank (ADB) loans and the ECOWAS Fund (Folarin, 2010).

Indeed, aid was in some cases unsolicited and some nations turned Nigeria down in suspicion and curiosity about Nigeria's genuine intentions. Nigeria's huge spending for the cause of West Africa was considered an avoidable wastage of national resources. This is in line with the general assumption that Nigeria's African policy was characterised by a mere show of wealth. Throwing wealth around Nigeria's neighbours was simply an essential feature of African policy (Bukarambe, 2000:58). Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso also opposed Nigeria, condemning its actions in Liberia, for instance, as a surreptitious means to dominate the region and subsume Francophone nations in its imperialism. They, thus, supported Taylor with arms and funding, and allowed their borders to be used for gunrunning, among other things, by the Taylor movement (Folarin, 2010).

The outcry of the citizens, lack of support for Nigeria's regional and global quests, and the litany of ethnic and religious conflicts at home, created a moral problem for Nigeria in its 'corrective' roles in Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa: Nigeria needed more 'corrective roles' to play in its own internal affairs. Indeed, Babangida was berated in the latter part of his reign for the serious image problem generated by (Adeyemo, 2002) a sporadic increase in the rate of drug peddling and unbridled corruption, with advance fee fraud (419) becoming a very embarrassing credibility crisis for Nigeria in the international community. There were also suppressions of civil society



and human rights abuses arising from protests against the SAP reform policy that constructed a grievous spatial economy (Folarin, 2010).

The worst legitimacy and image problem the Babangida administration created was the continued cancellation of elections leading to the adjustment in transition timetable. The crises in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and South Africa where Nigeria was passionately involved were caused by the same kind of leadership and ethnic crisis that Nigeria could not tackle at home. The military was holding on to power for too long, had become an instrument of internal colonisation, and were no less promoting internal ethnic hatred and sectional imperialism than in South Africa. The spectre of horrible domestic problems and banality of the Babangida response had negative effects on the regime's image in African and global politics (Saliu, 1999; Saliu, 2006). The Babangida administration was criticised for a lack of continuity in General Buhari's foreign policies, which were jettisoned by him (Folarin, 2010).

## **Babangida and the transition to civilian rule**

The history of Nigeria is replete with failed elections and the abortion of democracy occasioned by electoral fraud, among other factors. Since the country's independence, the phenomenon of electoral fraud has perpetuated a political culture that has made the management of a credible electoral process that will usher a smooth transition of government a "noble dream" (Ogbeidi, 2010:43-56). It will be recalled that soon after taking over power from General Buhari in 1985, General Ibrahim Babangida consistently guaranteed an eventual return to civilian rule.

Paradoxically, President Babangida, in order to perpetuate himself in power, relied on strong-arm tactics and a tightly controlled programme that derailed the transition to the third Republic. Indeed, in his highly regimental transition to civilian rule, Babangida prohibited all independent political parties that the AFRC replaced on 7 October 1989 with the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and the National Republican Convention (NRC), aimed at maintaining an ideological balance. The two parties were to be national in outlook and organisation, and politicians were to be imbued with a high ethos which government sought to instill in the people. The government further claimed that such controls were necessary to eliminate the ethnic, religious and regional violence that plagued the country in the past. Intriguingly, elections in the country were conducted using an experimental method known as the 'open ballot', in which voters queue up behind the poster of their chosen candidates rather than the secret ballot, as provided by Nigerian law. The possibilities for voter intimidation inherent in the open ballot system were obvious (Olusegun, 2011: 62; Human Rights Watch, 1992).

Despite several years of manipulation of the transition to a civilian government, the Babangida administration conducted elections in 1993, which, although with minor exceptions, was applauded as free and fair by international and local election monitoring groups. The election was generally considered to be free and fair, partly because of the adopted open ballot system. Chief Moshood Kashimawo Abiola of the Social Democratic Party gained 57% of the votes cast from 16 states (Transition Monitoring Group, Final Report on the 1998-1999, 2002:9). Results from the remaining states were still being collated when the Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, in a special

broadcast on 24 June 1993 annulled the 12 June 1993 election, suspended the National Electoral Commission and (Ogbeidi, 2010: 43-56) also repealed Decree no. 3, 52 and 13 of 1992 and 1993, which provided for the transition to a civil rule programme (Olurode, 1983:2).

Providing justification for annulling the election, President Babangida argued among other things that: "...these steps are taken so as to protect our legal system and the judiciary from being ridiculed and politicized both nationally and internationally..." he further stated that Government would not fold its arms or despair in the face of this unfortunate and unwarranted situation which is fast eroding the esteem, honour and confidence with which the public holds the nation's judiciary..." (Ogbeidi, 2010:43-56). Following the cancellation of the elections, the Campaign for Democracy (CD) organised peaceful demonstrations in Lagos during which hundreds of human rights and pro-democracy activists, labour leaders, academics, students and workers were reported arrested or killed by military and security forces (Human Rights Watch, 1994).

In addition, waves of protests unleashed against the Babangida's administration by associations like the Campaign for Democracy (CD), Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), and Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), as well as the National Association of Nigeria Students (NANS) and Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), coupled with international pressure compelled President Babangida, to step down and handed over power to an Interim National Government led by chief Ernest Shonekan. Although Shonekan, who many saw as a surrogate of the Babangida regime, was named Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, Defense Minister Gen. Sani Abacha actually held the reins of power. It was, therefore, no surprise to Nigerians when Shonekan resigned after only four months, transferring power to General Sani Abacha, who assumed control and removed all remnants of Babangida's stillborn plan to reschedule democratic elections (Kaiser, 2005).

One of the most unfortunate effects of the annulment was the impetus provided to the divisive influences of ethnicity and regionalism, which have tainted Nigerian politics since independence. The strong showing throughout the country by Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim from the South, would have provided the nation's more than 250 ethnic groups an unprecedented opportunity for unity, which was lost in the post-cancellation crisis.

## Conclusion

African leaders fall short of their promise when they vie for public office to fight for the people and promote good governance. Indeed, President Babangida, in spite of his proclamation during his August 1985 maiden broadcast to the nation to strive for the rule of law, transparency, equity, and accountability, displayed an attitude of contempt and disregard for Nigerians. In collaboration with his lieutenants, Babangida ruled by draconian decrees and edicts, many of which negated the jurisdiction of the courts and trampled on the fundamental human rights of the people. Arguably, he jettisoned the majority of his promises, thus proving the trust deficit culture as to be as endemic in Nigeria in particular as Africa in general.



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