

6-12-1998

# Trends. Abacha's Demise: Thoughts on Death in Life

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## Recommended Citation

Editor (1998) "Trends. Abacha's Demise: Thoughts on Death in Life," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 23 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol4/iss23/3>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: Trends. Abacha's Demise: Thoughts on Death in Life

Author: Editor

Volume: 4

Issue: 23

Date: 1998-06-12

Keywords: Death, Dictator, Nigeria, Sani Abacha

Will the death of dictator and general Sani Abacha lead to significant improvement for the lives of most Nigerians? The Nigerian populace, diplomats, analysts, and informed citizenry throughout the world are in the process of placing their bets. But regardless of where the chips fall, one must be struck with the significance that beliefs about death have for the political life.

Belief that a physical, mental, and spiritual death surely follows life can underlie motives to stay alive regardless of moral cost--avoiding an involvement in preventing or ending or attenuating politically motivated atrocities in life that would risk death. The same belief, however, can underlie motives to risk death through living life on the edge--engaging in political and military conflict in a mercenary spirit because the material life is all there is. Beliefs in impending death through disease have motivated political leaders to the heights of wisdom and multilateral beneficence and the heights of folly and malignant narcissism as the sands of life trickle away. Belief that certain beliefs are worth dying for can make or break national character, a military force's morale, and--consequentially-- preserve life. And belief that death during the attempt of killing infidels ensures an eternal life in a blissful heaven impels terrorism in a life that is not heaven.

So what is certain about events in Nigeria? Beliefs about Abacha's death, beliefs about death, and death will significantly inform the future of life. (See Ajaja, D. (June 10-11, 1998). Abacha: The inside story. Ghanaian Chronicle(Accra), <http://www.ghana.africaonline.com/AfricaOnline/newsstand/chronicle/1/homepage.html>; Knight, K.H., & Elfenbein, M.H. (1996). Relationship of death anxiety/fear to health-seeking beliefs and behaviors. *Death Studies*, 20, 23-31; Kujenya, J., et al. (June 10, 1998). Mixed feelings trail Abacha's death. *Post Express(Ogun(Nigeria))*, <http://www.postexpresswired.com>; McFadden, R.D. (June 9, 1998). Nigeria dictator dies and sets off leadership crisis. *The New York Times*, pp. A1; A10; Thalbourne, M.A. (1996). Belief in life after death: Psychological origins and influences. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 21, 1043-1045; Thalbourne, M.A. (1996). Varieties of belief in life after death: A factor analytic approach. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research*, 90, 268-291.) (Keywords: Death, Dictator, Nigeria, Sani Abacha.)