
Nigerian Military, Nation-Building and Development, 1979-1999

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Abstract: *The question often asked was: Could the military have been in power without achieving anything? Why did they venture into governance? This was against the background that military rule was variously said to be worse than the worst civilian government. Yet, the military were vindicated after an examination of the roles they played in Nigeria between 1979 and 1999. In the build up to the evolution of the Nigeria's modern military, it was observed that the military was prodded to take over power from the First Republic political leaders for obvious corruption and nepotism before the eruption of the Biafra-Nigeria civil War (1967-1970). It was concluded that the military acquitted itself through its contributions to peace and unity; and to the task of nation building.*

Keywords: military, Nigeria, civil, corruption, nation building, nepotism, peace, unity, vindicated.

INTRODUCTION

The onus of this paper lies in examining the roles and efforts of the various Nigerian military regimes since 1966 in national development and nation-building. It will not emphatically critique military rule as undemocratic, but undertake a full consideration of their contributions to socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. It is periodized between 1966, when the first military intervention occurred in Nigeria, and 1999 at the inception of her Fourth Republic.

The Role of the Military in National Development

Military rule is undemocratic and could be termed a subversion of the citizenry of any country. Yet, the military in the Nigerian context acquitted itself in national development, the sustenance of peace and security; and in the onerous task of nation building. The military intervened in 1966 partly in response to

the yearnings of the civil society nexus internal security threats and unbridled corruption and nepotism among Nigeria's First Republic political leaders (Max Siollum, 2009: 21-23).

Rehearsing Sadiq Dikwa, Gulvi S. Yakubu and Ndukwe O. Kelechi (2012, 75) on the military, and how the institution could be harnessed for national development, on the one hand and how the military has harnessed itself in the socio-economic and political spheres in Nigeria, on my own. These two seeming hypotheses arise against the background that members of the military are among the best trained and professionally united Nigerians. As a processes of the Nigerianization of the military were trained in the best military schools in Sandhurst in England and in India. Well-educated senior Nigerian Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) who served under British officers in the colonial army were sent for six-month courses at the Officers Cadet School at Eaton Hall and in Chester or Mons at Aldershot, both in the United Kingdom. The armoured corps and artillery cadets were trained at Mons while those in the other army services trained at Eaton Hall. Dikwa, Yakubu and Kelechi raised the question regarding the probable benefits that have accrued to Nigeria after such investments on these ... officers (2012, 75). In the contention of D. O. Nocllass (1979), Nigeria has not benefitted much from these well-trained officers both in active service and on retirement. Many of them end up in officers' messes where they would drive to and discuss intellectually as time permitted in order not to die of boredom.

Since attaining independence on October 1960, Nigeria has contended with intractable challenges, such as political instability, abuses and corruption. The electorate who became disillusioned seemingly welcomed the intervention of the military. A general recap of the post-Independence period painted Nigeria's Federal State as split-prone. The political scene was characterized by chicanery, rivalries and mutual mistrust among the ethnic groups and the regional-based political parties. The 1964-1965 general elections, other than witnessing poor voters' turn out, occasioned unbridled violence that led to the death of more than 2000 Nigerians, especially in the so-called 'Wild-Wild-West. This state of the nascent State resulted to an intended correctional coup d'état on January 15, 1960; a counter coup d'état six months later; and the eruption of a civil war between the Federal Republic of Biafra identifiably led by the Igbo and their political and military leaders and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Before the Biafran revolt were the Operation Zero led by Adaka Boro of the Niger Delta and the scream of 'ARABA' by Northern Nigeria elders when General Aguiyi Ironsi instanced a 'Unitary' government with the enactment of Decree No. 34. All were drums of war engendered by the fear of domination and, perhaps, an eventual circumscription of one ethnic group by another; one region by another; and by one section of Northern, Southern or Eastern by another.

The period before May 30, 1967 laid the foundation for military interventions in the politics and leadership of Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, the thrust of this paper examines the overall roles of the military, particularly in national development and in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy and diplomacy.

It must be recalled that General Aguiyi Ironsi had in Decree no. 34 of 1966 imposed a 'Unitary' system of government in Nigeria. This was not favourably accepted by the North that felt they were disadvantaged in several fronts especially educationally and feared a Southern domination in the event of Independence and its aftermath. This and other factors, such as ethnicity and religious bigotry, led to the counter coup

d'état in which Aguiyi Ironsi was killed. Ever since, discontent among the agglomerating units in Nigeria has been on the increase and, futuristically, the hopes of when this will abate is not envisaged.

The Military and Economic Development

General Yakubu Gowon who took over the reins of government from Aguiyi Ironsi, unarguably, was the first military leader in Nigeria who spearheaded national development. The discovery of hydrocarbon oil in the closing years of the 1950s and further prospections indicating oil in commercial quantities enhanced Nigeria's national and international outlook by her becoming a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971. Between 1972 and 1974, Nigeria suffered from a drought crisis and heightened rural-urban migrations in search of paid-for-labour. These factors affected agricultural productivity with inclement weather and abandonment of farms in the rural areas.

Many of the economic reforms have been made to stem Nigeria's economic woes. Yet, most of the reforms have not yielded much result consequent on a premeditated British economic policy vis-à-vis her colonies regarding reaping optimal colonial benefits; non-self-realization of Nigerians; and unpatriotism.

The military took over power in 1966 and ruled until 1979; and back again in 1983. The incursions of the military into political leadership, unarguably, helped in shaping the economic, social and political foundations of the post-independence period. The first and major task of the military was the reintegration of the Biafrans after Civil War. General Yakubu Gowon undertook the policy of the 3Rs - Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation. It dawned on Gowon that the implications of the policy were daunting since it entailed the provision of shelter, foods and clothing. There was also the need to transit to civil rule which was truncated by the 1966 coup *d'état* and Civil War between 1967 and 1970. The end of the war policies went on relatively well but the transition to civil rule was postponed to a later date as the necessary modalities were not in place. Especially, nerves had to be calmed and the processes of instilling unity fast-tracked.

The National Development Plan and Indigenization Policy

It must be mentioned that with the huge revenues from hydrocarbon oil, the government of General Gowon had enough resources to embark on the needed developmental programmes; although this created inflationary pressures. The Udoji Awards which increased salaries and occasioned a spending spree of workers led to a galloping inflation. Efforts were made towards decolonizing the Nigerian economy. The Second National development Plan (1970-1974) provided resources for the reconstruction embarked on in the post-War era; and enhanced the Indigenization Policy which tended to give greater share of the economic investments to Nigerians as well as in the control and ownership of economic establishments.

The Indigenization Policy snowballed to the promulgation of the Indigenization Decree of 1972 which addressed and concluded that foreign capital was unpopular since it tended to be outwardly growth-oriented and internally economically inimical to national economic growth. Yet, it led to the unequal distribution of wealth and income as few Nigerians acquired the shares sold-off by foreign companies. Although there was growth in infrastructural development, the working class was nonetheless badly affected.

Towards the end of 1974, the global economy began to fluctuate and nose-dive. Oil prices declined considerably to the extent that by 1975, it became necessary to evolve another National Development Plan. The Third National Development Plan (1975-1980) was enunciated under the Gowon administration at the peak of the hydrocarbon oil boom. Hardly did Gowon finish saying that Nigeria had money excepting how it could be spent that the downturn in the global economy force Nigeria to resort to borrowing. Her economy was pawned to multinational companies and donor agencies; and the concomitant creation of inflationary pressures for the working class and the entire citizenry. Yet, the Third National Development Plan enhanced further infrastructural growth.

Revenue Allocation

Revenue allocation has been intended to augment the often meager resources of some unviable States in Nigeria. But it metamorphosed into the main revenue source of government resources in the maintenance of services, pay their staff, pay for essential supplies and finance capital projects. Resultantly, the States' governments' financial viability, even as supposedly autonomous units, came to depend on the 'Centre' for the revenue shared at the end of every month.

But the creation of the 12 States under Gowon, the revenue allocation formula changed to such an extent that the States became pariahs and solely dependent on the Federal government for their survival economically. Although there was no clear-cut gauge on how much fiscal power was to be given to the units of government, it was determined through national policies. The Federal government became so fiscally dominant that the States became vassals to the centre. The Federal government had upper hand, as a result, economically; and the method of allocation of revenues to the other tiers of government which were, as mentioned earlier, intended to help them wriggle out of the worst financial pains and especially meet up with contractual commitments failed because they often got less than expected and by abusing the little they got. The States, therefore, became negatively affected in the execution of their socio-economic services generally.

The economic standing of States vis-à-vis their responsibilities was stifled the more by the ownership and control of minerals and mineral oil; and lands which were entirely in the hands of the Federal government. Additionally, the control of imports and exports, mining rents and royalties, company and petroleum gain taxes were in the hands of the Federal government. Thus, the relationship between the Federal government and the States remained unbalanced; moreover, the military ruled as by fiat.

The political events and economic imbalances enhanced discontent that on February 13, 1975 another military coup d'état led by Brigadier General Murtala Muhammad took place. Murtala commenced work as Head of State by demobilizing the military, downsizing the civil service and increased the number of States from 12 to 19. The creation of more States was intended to weaken regional and ethnic ties. Rehearsing S. G. Ikoku (1985), these measures by Murtala created dissatisfaction in the rank and file of the military that he was assassinated on February 13, 1976. Murtala was succeeded by Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo who paid more attention to preparing Nigeria for civilian rule. The Second Republic enunciated by Obasanjo which lasted from 1979 to 1983 was marred by a weak political coalition, the end of the oil boom, the strain of recession and fraud in the 1983 general elections. Major general Muhammadu

Buhari, consequently, overthrew the Shehu Shagari administration that was installed by the Obasanjo regime in January 1984 in the bid to end widespread and flagrant corruption. The often-described as harsh administration of Buhari was also overthrown in August 1985 by Major General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida who declared a National Economic emergency in 1986; took Nigeria through a rigorous Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the acceptance of a World Bank loan with conditionalities after sustained protests and debates (Dikwa, Yakubu and Kelchi, 2012: 78).

The Military, National and Economic Development: A Review

In order to underscore and put into perspective the role of the military in national and economic development, it becomes imperative to review their achievements since the First Republic that was inherited by General Yakubu Gowon.

Gowon's Era

The system of revenue allocation was paramount in Gowon's 'Nine Point Programme'. Consequently, the Dina Commission was set up in 1970 to review the then existing revenue allocation formula and evolve a new one. The Commission condemned the historical approach which although constitutional suggested the creation of an instrument that would enhance development planning and national integration. On implementation, the Federal government was still the receiver of a greater percentage of onshore, offshore royalties and of all oil revenue; further relegating the States to dependency (E. E. Osaghae, 1998: 54).

The Dina Commission also recommended the establishment of a permanent National Planning and Fiscal Commission; and of the expansion of the Federal government intervention into the social sector by a system of grants in aid. These recommendations although rejected by the Federal and States' Commissioners of Finance were ostensibly implemented (A. Ademoyega, 1981: 20). The sharing formula was through the 'Distributable Pool Account' (DPA) as contained in the Independence Constitution of 1960. Hitherto, the Raisman Commission on Revenue Allocation had in 1958 recommended that the DPA should belong to the regional governments while 5 percent of the total/accruing income goes to the Federal government. At de-regionalization and the creation of States, the revenue allocation formula metamorphosed into direct allocation to States on the basis of derivation, giving 50 percent of the revenue from Excise Duty on tobacco to the Federal government while the remaining 50 percent went to the States.

Another common feature of the Gowon era was the heavy spending of the Federal government, although consequent on the oil boom, in aid to other African countries for developmental and humanitarian purposes. Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Mozambique received various sums of money in aid at their independence, while Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Somali received humanitarian aid for the fight against drought and natural disasters (A. Iwayemi, 1979: 51).

The census issue also preoccupied the Gowon administration. Population figures of the agglomerating units determined representations in the Federal legislature and of participation in political power. The Gowon-led administration, therefore, engaged in heightened enlightenment programme in order to

depoliticize census; and that it be perceived as precursor for effective planning nexus technical and economic gains.

The Murtala Muhammad and Olusegun Obasanjo Era

Having overthrown General Yakubu Gowon in a bloodless coup *d'état* on February 13, 1975, Murtala Muhammad embarked on corrective administrative measures. He reversed some unpopular laws, such as stopping Governors from being members of the Supreme Military Council (SMC) and curtailed the powers of some senior civil servants or those referred to the "Super Bureaucrats". The Federal government under Murtala took over university education and established six new universities. The Murtala-led government reorganized the more than 250 labour unions into eight (8) all under the aegis of the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC), now, Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC). Panels of inquiry were also set up to investigate the issue of abandoned property, the Indigenization Decree and that of revenue allocation.

When Murtala Muhammad was assassinated on February 13, 1976, by D. S. Dimka, he was succeeded by General Olusegun Obasanjo who immediately instanced policies that focused more on enhancing the economic fortunes of Nigeria. The bedrock of the economic changes was agro-based. The policy was to grow Nigeria's foreign exchange earning power; and to stem foods scarcity resultant from the decline in her hydrocarbon oil fortunes. The agricultural policy was pursued with the establishment of institutional and administrative machineries that were intended to aid the development of the rural areas and harness her agricultural potentials: mobilize healthy men and women into the area of foods production.

Obasanjo's efforts were streamlined into the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN). It had the sole goal of utilizing the abundance human and material resources within the country for the production of crops and livestock. It was also intended to enhance self-sufficiency and reliance in the production of basic food items and raw materials. Summarizing the policy of agricultural development code-named Operation Feed the Nation is as follows:

- i. The mechanization of agriculture; and
- ii. The encouragement of all Nigerians, farmers, civil servants, among others, to participate in farming.

Consequently, modern farming equipment were imported and distributed to State Committees that were mandated to assist farmers increase the hectares of lands during farming seasons. These implements were hired out to farmers at subsidized rates and the land clearing was supervised by extension workers from the States' Ministries of Agriculture nationwide (Chibuzo Ogbuagu, 1995: 96).

Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation yielded positive results (Central Bank of Nigeria, 1987: 21), namely:

- i. It revolutionized farming through mechanization;
- ii. It re-introduced the importation and distribution of modern farming implements, such as harvesters, tractors and planters, among others;
- iii. It increased private sector participation in agriculture, thereby, increasing the level of investment in the sector;

- iv. It led to the establishment of Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) in 1976 in various parts of the country. The ADP which was intended to be the pivotal for agricultural development was assisted by the World Bank. The ADP was generally intended to stimulate the agricultural sector through the provision and development of input delivery system; and
- v. It resulted to the establishment of River Basin Authorities (RBDAs) with 18 sited in various parts of the country with the multi-agricultural development goals that embraced:
 - a. Land development and provisions of infrastructural facilities; and
 - b. The production of farm items, livestock and fish within the Authorities' areas of operation.

The Murtala/Obasanjo regime which the later continued after the assassination of the former, engaged in changes that were instituted by the Gowon-led regime. These were:

- i. A review of the revenue allocation formula which reduced the regions and, later the States to beggarly positions. Obasanjo set up the Aboyade Ojetunji technical Committee to review the revenue allocation formula in 1977. The three-tiers of government as recommended were to get adequate revenues that would enable them discharge their lawful duties. The Committee also recommended that population; even development, equality, geographical relatedness, derivation and national interest were to be considered before the allocation of revenue to any tier of government. The Distributable Pool Account (DPA) was replaced with the Federal (Federation) Account. The revenue formula became 57% to the Federal government, 30% to the States and 10% to the Local Government Councils. In addition to the 10% revenue accruable to the Local Government Councils, internally generated revenues by the States were to be given to them with a 3% special grant. Yet, the Ojetunji Committee like the Dina Commission, did not curtail the dominance of the Federal government, but guided revenue allocation till the end of the Obasanjo regime;
- ii. Equally amended and reviewed was the Indigenization Policy which had put the ownership and control of foreign businesses in the hands of Nigerians in 1975 as was recommended by the Industrial Enterprises Panel. However, the review by the Obasanjo regime enhanced the government's disposal to acquiring lands for developmental and agricultural purposes; and
- iii. The Murtala/Obasanjo regimes made the following contributions in the industrial sector to include:
 - a. It expanded the oil sector that in addition to the NNPC, it allowed multi-national oil explorers, such as ELF and AGIP to prospect and drill oil. Contracts and agreements were reviewed with oil majors with Nigeria benefitting with lower rents than other countries, such as Venezuela and Libya; and
 - b. It started the Iron and Steel Industry at Ajaokuta which had lingered since the 1950s in 1979. The steel complex was designed to produce about 5.2 million tons of steel a year; and was intended to be the largest steel industry in Africa (Osaghae, 1998: 71).

The Mohammadu Buhari Regime

The Economic Stabilization Provisions Order

The Buhari administration did not entirely digress from Shehu Shagari's short and medium term austerity programmes. It realized that the problem with the economic recovery blueprint was not the lack of appropriate strategy but the absence of the will, discipline and ethics in the public service to implement it

as well as with the government agencies' refusal to take useful advice for their economic management. It was, therefore, the inherent weakness on the part of those charged with managing and implementing the policies evolved to grow and develop the Nigerian economy (G. O. Iheukwumere, 1985: 31).

Buhari (Nigerian Tide, 1985) espoused a welfarist programme that had the common man as focal point; and was more concerned with making the prices of foodstuff and other essential commodities affordable. In his words:

We would like to measure the rate of growth and development of our economy not in theoretical economic concept of GDP or GNP but on how well the average Nigerian now lives This administration is more interested in this area than in propounding theories of capitalism, socialism or other 'isms'.

Reduction of the Labour Force and the Probing of Economic Saboteurs by the Buhari-led Administration

The Buhari-led administration embarked on the reduction of the country's labour force in order to reduce the level of wastages and huge expenditures by the Federal and State governments on salaries and allowances. The number of Federal ministers was reduced from 40 to 18; and States' ministries were pegged at 9 only. The administration abandoned the 1976 Local Government structure that was created by the Second Republic government which increased local governments to more than 1000, readopting the pre-Second Republic structure of 301 units. The number of Foreign Missions was reduced to the extent that some Foreign Missions' bases were run from nearby large Foreign Missions.

The administration also set up panels to probe major agencies, parastatals and individuals, such as the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) that handled the bulk of the Abuja contracts. Contracts and import licenses were reviewed in order to check improprieties in the signing and awarding of contracts in the Second Republic. Politicians and party stalwarts were probed commencing with the President and Vice-President of the Second Republic. Governors of States were also probed by special military tribunals and those found guilty were sentenced to long terms in prison especially Governors from the southern States of Nigeria. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), at this time, protested the inappropriate application of legal procedure which as observed was that those arrested were guilty and had to prove their innocence. This, as Buhari argued, will provide no avenues for wasteful probes of public officials who misapplied or stole government funds and property. Those who were complicit were locked up until they cleared themselves or plea-bargained (Nigerian Tribune, January 6, 1984).

Rehearsing Osaghae, apart from Shehu Shagari and Alex Ekwueme (who was the Vice President) with some Governors, such as Ajasin of Ondo State, Lateef Jakande of Lagos State, Balarabe Musa of Kaduna State and Clement Isong of Cross River State, majority of other political leaders received long terms of imprisonment for their offenses. For example, Adamu Atta of Kwara State was sentenced to 21 years on a six-count charge while Barkin Zuwo of Kano State and Ambrose Ali of Bendel State, received sentences for up to hundreds of years; and were forced to refund all the money they had corruptly taken (Osaghae, 1998: 172-173).

Decree No. 4 of 1984

This decree stated that anyone who published anything that embarrassed any of the governments of the Federation or an officer of such a government shall be guilty of an offense under the Decree. Only Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor and the newspaper they worked for - The Guardian that were prosecuted under the Decree.

It is true this Decree was intended to check the excessive use of the freedom of expression, yet, it snowballed to the curtailment of civil liberties of the citizenry' and to the dangerous concentration of legislative, executive and judicial powers in the hands of only one arm of the State.

Change of Currency Colours

The Buhari-led administration changed the colours of the Nigerian currency with the sole aim of:

- i. Checking illegal trafficking of the country's currency; and
- ii. Controlling the counterfeiting of the currency.

These efforts were actually counterproductive as it eroded the value of the Naira in the world's money market. It did not equally stop trafficking as reports showed some weeks later of trafficking in the new currencies at various border communities. Thus, all that was needed was strengthening the existing laws and regulations for them to become effective deterrents on the violation of the rules. Yet, the change of currency colours was the immediate reduction in the amount of money supplied into the economy - a policy which could have been achieved through the Central Bank of Nigeria without changing the colours of the currency (Iheukwumere, 1985: 55-79).

Creation of an Enabling Environment for Economic Revitalization

Faced with a dwindled economy, the Buhari-led administration did all it could to promote economic reinvigoration and growth. This policy referred to as the War Against Indiscipline (WAI), seemingly like the ethical revolution of the Shehu Shagari regime was more vigorously pursued in execution. It helped to reduce lawlessness, unpatriotism, corruption and indiscipline. The WAI was phased into three, namely, the Queuing Tradition which taught orderliness; the Work Ethics stage; and the Patriotic and Nationalistic stage. Generally, members of the WAI Brigade and soldiers went about enforcing orderliness, patriotism and nationalistic tendencies.

In the creation of enabling environment, the Buhari regime emphasized self-reliance. This idea was inconsistent with the philosophy of trade liberalization and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The regime consequently encouraged the local sourcing of raw materials needed for manufacturing. This pursuit alone lowered the dependence of the country, although temporarily, on the advanced/industrialized nations; and conserved the country's foreign exchange (The Guardian, March 21, 1984).

The policies of the Buhari administration, most of which seemed harsh, had obvious disadvantages. It led to the dismissal of workers without due process. It did not curb corruption also as civil servants resorted to self-help as they used all means to enrich themselves not knowing when they will be laid off. In addition to no job security was the rationalization of the public service which included the massive retrenchment of workers; the introduction of wage freeze and the rapid reduction of government expenditure in public service. These were concomitantly part of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) and Paris Club's conditionalities tied to the Structural Adjustment Programme. Also considered was the commercialization of State-owned enterprises rather than the privatization of Federal government owned companies.

The harshness of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime in the implementation of its policies created disaffection among the citizenry, especially the masses. It could not revamp the shambled economy it inherited nor managed it adequately. It was overthrown by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida in 1985.

The General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida Era

The economic situation in the country in 1985 was best exemplified by the Gross National Product (GNP) which went down from US\$830 per capita in 1983 to US\$250 per capita in 1989. This was further underlined by the World Bank listing Nigeria as a low-income country in 1989. The leadership of the country embarked on unprecedented borrowing from multi-national corporations and donor nations that in 1989 Nigeria had the largest public debt more than any sub-Saharan State (Dikwa, Yakubu and Kelechi, 2012: 83).

Babangida's major contribution to the economic development and growth of Nigeria was the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. SAP was intended to increase domestic production and institute financial and import restrictions which were, in turn, expected to grow and strengthen the economy. Generally (Dikwa, Yakubu and Kelechi, 85), it was intended to:

- i. Control the value of the Naira by creating the Second-tier Foreign Exchange Market;
- ii. Strict control of money supply and credits;
- iii. Cause a budget deficit of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) pegged at 4% of;
- iv. Privatization of major State-owned companies together with a new industrial policy;
- v. Easing of trade restrictions and debt rescheduling; and
- vi. The floating of the Naira against international currencies in March 1992.

In 1990, the Babangida administration adopted a three year rolling plan system that could readily be modified as circumstances changed. The three year rolling plan was intended to:

- i. Reduce inflation which had averaged 20% or more annually between 1973 and 1984;
- ii. Maintain infrastructure since Nigeria could not maintain her best developed transportation systems in Africa before now;
- iii. Achieve agricultural self-sufficiency; and
- iv. Generally reduce the SAP burden.

The contribution of agriculture to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at this time, in spite of SAP, declined to 39.2% in 1988. The hope that the agricultural sector would contribute more to the GDP was further

dashed in 1991 when drought forced the Nigerian government to increase foods import substantially. However, the manufacturing or industrial sector progressed to 10.0% in 1988 consequent on the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decrees of 1972, 1977 and 1981 which facilitated indigenous majority ownership. These Decrees were relaxed in 1985 in order “to encourage foreign investment and, thus, stimulate the economy.

In addition to efforts made at improving the agricultural and industrial sectors were the privatization and commercialization of a number of parastatals and government-owned enterprises. Efforts were made at increasing electric power generation, enlarging and modernizing communications systems, maintaining existing transportation systems, reducing overdependence on oil and the creation of a national planning body.²⁷ But Nigeria lacked the financial muscle necessary for large-scale development; and had to take foreign loans to be able to implement its economic and developmental programmes.

Within the period of the Babangida-led administration, it is documented (Dikwa, Yakubu and Kelechi, 85) that:

[Nigeria] received a 1990 European Economic Community grant for rural development and telecommunications of 3.54 billion Naira ... under the (Fourth) loan Convention ... and a 1991 British loan of N23.3 million [pounds] to expand the electric power system. As a result of such borrowing(s), at the end of 1991, Nigeria owed an estimated US\$34 billion in external debt, 44 per cent was owed to members of the Paris Club ... and 20 per cent to foreign commercial banks. Throughout 1990 and 1991, Nigeria engaged in extensive debt rescheduling with Paris Club countries, such as Britain, Italy, Japan and Sweden.

Nigeria had also taken the European Currency Unit (ECU) 48 million loan under the Third Loan Convention for the development of palm oil refining facilities. The military, even before the Babangida regime, continued the expansion of hydrocarbon oil production notably through the discovery of an offshore field near Akwa Ibom; and embarked on the renovation of the crude oil refineries in Warri and Kaduna. Military efforts in this regard were the development of petrochemical plants; an oil condensate at Oso in the Niger Delta coast; and the planned construction of facilities to enable the export of liquefied natural gas from Bonny beginning from 1992.

CONCLUSION

The strictness of the Muhammadu Buhari-led administration vis-à-vis its seeming draconic policies, all aimed at instilling discipline, astuteness and curbing corruption and wastefulness, elicited disaffection from the citizenry. The implementation of the SAP conditionalities which decreased spending on social programmes also caused strikes and demonstrations by the citizenry and students. Military interventions were often taken as liberating from the excesses of civil leaders in corrupt practices, nepotism and obvious sectionalism. Yet, these same Nigerians were known to have complained about the decrees-prone governance and lack of rule of law. Moreover, military interventions were perceived as interim measure but transitions to civil rule became often postponed to the extent that interest groups, such as professional

associations, women's organizations and the media began to exert pressures in favour of democratic processes or governance.

The 1989 Constitution chaperoned by the military adopted the Presidential system of government which provided elective positions for the president, two legislative houses: one based on population (House of Representatives) and the other on States (Senate); and an independent judiciary. Elections were to be conducted into the three tiers of government. In 1989, Babangida rejected the applications of all political entities that applied to be recognized as political parties; and in October 1989 created two political parties, namely, the National Republican Convention (NRC) - "a little to the right of centre", and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) - "a little to the left of centre". This action was intended to curb ethnicity. On August 27, 1991, the number of States was increased from 21 to 30.

Babangida at the height of the clamour for civilian administration stepped aside for an interim government headed by Alex Shonekan. As the debate raged and the polity heated up, General Sani Abacha exited the Interim Government of Shonekan; and disbanded existing political parties and structures from the Federal to the Local governments. Abacha set up the national Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) under the Chairmanship of Chief Dagogo Jack; and five new political parties were formed. At the death of Sani Abacha having attempted to succeed himself and transit to a civilian president, leadership of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was assumed by General Abdusalami Abubakar. Abubakar changed NECON to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in August 1998 and which successfully conducted elections from December 5, 1998 to February 1999. Former military Head of States, Olusegun Obasanjo who was freed from prison ran as a civilian candidate and won the Presidential seat under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). A new Constitution largely based on the suspended 1979 Constitution was promulgated in 1999 and still upheld the Presidential system of government. Between the civilian and military governments, the reasons why one overthrew the other still subsist. No matter the extent of the positive roles the military played in the economic, social and political lives of Nigeria, a bad civilian government has always been adjudged better than any military government. Both, so far, have run wasteful and corrupt governments: wasting lots of human and material resources. The civilians ostensibly ran corrupt democratic governments since independence, while the military ran, at least, purposely unitary governments that were equally wasteful and corruptive.

Recommendations

The use of decrees and edicts in running governments without due respect for the rule of law made it seem that the military were better in governance. They were not bogged down by legislative processes. All military leadership programmes, both positive and negative, were implemented with fiat. But it is to the credit of the military that they made efforts in their political engineering at creating political parties that cut across ethnic, social, religious and political bases nexus the creation of the National Republican Convention and the Social Democratic Party. It offloaded regionally and ethnically-based political parties. When General Abdusalami Abubakar disbanded the NRC and SDP, and went back to the multi-party system, it was a return to the *status quo ante*; and unarguably to assuage the yearnings of Nigerians and political jobbers.

Consequently, to keep the military at bay would entail:

- i. The mobilization of the vast natural and human resources; and effect a “proper restructuring of Nigeria’s institutions;
- ii. The creation of an enabling environment, which policy was vigorously, if not harshly, implemented by the Buhari-led administration;
- iii. Nigerians being subjected to persuasive re-orientation and mobilization of the ‘citizens’ towards humanistic values, productivity and efficiency, social justice and welfare;
- iv. That good leaders are elected and who would respect the rule of law, promote patriotism, nationalism, self-reliance and self-sufficiency that in turn would make for sustained development (Dikwa, Yakubu and Kelechi, 91); and
- v. The pursuit of good democratic governance that must be underpinned by the citizens having access to education, income generating ventures, health services, safe water, good road networks; and agricultural farm inputs since it remains the greater employer of labour.

The above recommendations would make military interventions unnecessary and Nigerians to resist their incursions.

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