

Military Intervention in the Nigerian Politics and Its Impact on the Development of Managerial Elite: 1966-1979

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Abstract

The paper traces the evolution of the influence of the military governance in Nigeria on the development of managerial elite. It attempts a brief analysis of different coups that took place in the country. Using military leadership theory, the paper discusses how the military establishment engaged in strategic and tactical management of some sectors of the country, and how their beliefs influenced the development of different types of managerial elite in Nigeria's economy at different eras in the country's history. It illustrates some of the leadership failures and successes of the military institution in Nigeria.

Key words: Leadership; Managerial elite; Military intervention; Britain; Nigerian politics

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INTRODUCTION

The name "Nigeria" was coined by Flora Shaw, who later became the wife of Lord Lugard, the British colonial administrator, on 8 January 1897, which she used as the title of an article in *The Times* (Meek, 1960), to describe the vast land around the River Niger and its basin. It

was then called Niger-area, but after a long usage it was shortened to Nigeria. Mungo Park was exploring the River Niger when he stumbled into this vast area along the River. Nigeria presently has a population of about 150 million people; this made the country the most populous nation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The country has a population density of 145 inhabitants per km² (Nigerian National Population Commission: Abuja, Nigeria, 2001).

The country is located on the extreme inner corner of the Gulf of Guinea on the West African coast and there are over 250 nationalities in Nigeria. The three most populous nationalities are: The Yorubas in the South West, Ibos in the South East and the Hausa-Fulanis in the North; these three main nationalities constitute 65% of the population while the remaining 35% are made of minorities (Butts & Metz, 1996). About 250 languages are spoken in Nigeria (Ajulo, 1990), although some studies allude to 400 languages (Adegbiya, 2000).

The military took over the governance of the country through a very bloody coup led by Major Nzeogwu in January 1966 (Osoba, 1996). This coup was claimed to end the misrule, ineptness and corruption of the preceding five years of the civil rule (Osoba, 1996). The coup lasted for just a couple of days; it could not be said to be a total failure as "it set(s) the agenda of military rule in Nigeria as a 'corrective' form of governance against corruption and indiscipline and in favour of restoration of democracy and justice" (Osoba, 1996, p. 26).

Nigeria has been governed for a longer period by the military junta than by civilian rule after her independence in 1960. Starting from January 1966 to October 1979 and December 1983 to May 1999, the military has ruled the country for about 30 years. It is also interesting to note that the first colonial Governor-General, Lord Lugard was also a British soldier; he was the person that amalgamated the Lagos Colony, the Northern Protectorate and the Southern Protectorate together to become what his wife named Nigeria in 1900.

The history of the Nigerian Armed Forces can be traced to 1863 when the Governor-General of Lagos, Lt Glover of the Royal Navy, organised 18 Northern Nigerians into the so called "Glover's Hausa". This became known as the Hausa Constabulary in 1887 (Arnold-Baker, 2001). Their functions included: (a) protecting the lives and properties of the British residents in and around Lagos, (b) protecting the British traders, and (c) protecting the British trade routes around Lagos. The Hausa Constabulary and the Royal Niger Constabulary (the troop of the Royal Niger Company raised in 1886), formed the West African Field Force. The first Battalion was formed on the 26 August, 1896, while the second Battalion was formed in 1898, with the third Battalion being added in 1898 (Ukpabi, 1987).

The West African Field Force and the Northern Nigeria Regiment were amalgamated in May 1900, under the command of Lord Lugard. In 1914, the Southern Nigeria Regiment and the Northern Nigeria Regiment were amalgamated to form the Nigeria Regiment of the West African Frontier Force. In 1956, during the visit of Queen Elizabeth II, the remaining troops from the North and South Regiments, not forming part of the West African Frontier Force, were renamed Queen's Own Nigerian Regiment (QONR). Later the same year Britain granted military autonomy to her dependencies and QONR was renamed Nigerian Military Force (NMF). During independence in 1960, the name changed again to become the Royal Nigerian Army. As soon as Nigeria became a Republic the name was changed again to the Nigerian Army and with the other two forces, it was designated the Nigerian Armed Forces, the name which remains up till today (Welch, 1995).

Despite the country becoming a Republic, the Nigerian Armed Forces were structured according to the British military system and to implement British oriented doctrines; their training programmes from the simple to the complex, both in content and methodology, were done in Britain and in British fashion. The size of the Armed Forces was small but disciplined and used mainly for ceremonial duties until January 1966 when they became involved in the Nigerian politics (Janowitz, 1971).

The coups and counter coups that started in 1966 ended in the Nigerian civil war in 1967. The civil war could be said to be what brought Nigerian military out of its shells as the army grew from a mere infantry force of about 6000 to one of over 250,000, equipped with heavy weapons and supported by air and naval power. It was this same war that eventually eroded the military's trust of civilian leadership. The Nigerian military was trained in the "British notion of military professionalism that stressed civilian control of the military" (Butts & Metz, 1996, p. 21).

The military system in Nigeria comprises Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy and the Nigerian Air Force; currently, the population of the Nigerian Armed Forces is about 76,000.

1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

There are many leadership theories that have been applied to conceptualise military leadership style, for example, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, situational leadership and others. Many of these theories fall into what Blair and Hunt (1986) described as context-specific orientation leadership theories. However, in this study, we focus specifically on context specific military leadership theory (Blair & Hunt, 1986; Wong, Bliesey, & McGurk, 2003). We will discuss Hunt's (1991) extended multilevel leadership model which has corresponding relationship to the military's delineation of roles and functions such as warfare, doctrine, leader development and command (Wong, Bliesey, & McGurk, 2003).

Hunt's (1991) extended multilevel leadership model provides rich foundation for analysing military leadership theory. Wong, Bliesey, and McGurk (2003) observe that Hunt's model was informed by the stratified systems theory propounded by Jaques (1989). They argue that Hunt's model underscores the importance of environmental and organizational factors impacting on the strategic level and direct face-to-face leadership.

Hunt's multilevel leadership model stresses critical and pluralist approaches in gaining, using, and assessing leadership knowledge. It emphasises the critical tasks and individual capabilities required at each level of leadership. According to Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003), the critical tasks are the direct product of the key mission, strategy, and organizational design elements unique to each level of leadership, while the individual capabilities comprises the leader's background factors, preferences, capabilities, and skills at each level.

Hunt analyses the effects of external environments such as sub-cultural and climatic environmental factors on leadership, including the performance and organizational effectiveness at all levels of leadership. Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003) argue that the extended multilevel leadership model is especially useful in a review of military leadership for several reasons: 1) It emphasises both the vertical and temporal aspects of leadership that go beyond the horizontal face-to-face interactions at the lower levels of the organization; 2) it provides a valuable framework for summarizing military leadership because its use of systems, organizational, and direct leadership levels has some parallels in the military's stratification of warfare functions into the strategic, operational, and tactical levels (U.S. Army, 2001a). It is important to stress that the tripartite functions of the Nigerian Army are strategic, operational and tactical levels. According to Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003) at the strategic level function of the military leadership, national policy takes preeminence and national resources are used to accomplish strategic military objectives; at the operational level, major operations and campaigns are fought; while at the tactical level, the military battles and engagements

are fought. Similarly, Nigerian military used the nation's resources to accomplish military strategic, operational and tactical objectives and goals. More disappointingly, they used part of the national resources and huge revenues obtained from the nation's "rentier oil economy" (Omeje, 2006) to further their personal economic interests. However, we will concentrate our discussion on the systems leadership domain of Hunt's (1991) model, which corresponds with the strategic level where top military officers in Nigeria influence and shape the national policy and socio-economic development of the country.

1.1 Systems Leadership Domain

Hunt (1991) contends that at the system leadership domain, leaders operate in volatile, complex, and ambiguous circumstances. Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003) argue that systems level leaders operate at the apex of organizations. The military leaders at this domain function at the highest national and international levels by interacting with high-level political officials. In the Nigerian Army, the system level leaders, like Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003) found out among their US Army counterparts, interface with the external environment; they are usually three- and four-star Generals, with between 25 and 30 years experience in the military. However, there are many differences between the Nigerian Army and their US Army counterparts. While the US military leaders are professionals, who subordinate themselves to the civilian authority, the bulk of Nigerian military leaders are political profiteers, who are insubordinate to the civil authority. Given the fact that the Armed Forces have governed the country more than their civilian politicians since her 52 years of independence, it is possible to argue that only a marginal number of the Armed Forces will remain truly professionals without being tainted by political career.

1.2 Critical Tasks of Systems Leaders

According to Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003), the critical tasks required of military systems level leaders include the functions enumerated in the extended multilevel leadership model and others responsibilities mentioned by researchers such as (Mintzberg, 1973; Day & Lord, 1988). Also, Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003) referring to Jacobs and Jaques' (1990) study, state that the two key tasks of senior military leaders are to provide a sense of understanding and purpose to the organisation and to tap sources of resources. The Nigerian Army's top leaders tap and manage resources by mobilizing, controlling and directing those who hold the resources. Given the increased critical task and complexity of managing the society, few of the top military leaders enhanced their academic and management potentials, while a larger majority failed to develop their mental capacities by accessing advanced, scholarly, esoteric, theory building liberal arts, social sciences, and business

management bodies of knowledge (Amujo & Melewar, 2011), in the tertiary institutions to cope with a more advanced and highly educated civilian population. Wong, Bliesey and McGurk (2003) add that the primary critical task of strategic leaders as enunciated by a US Army War College study is to create vision for organizations. They state that other cardinal strategic tasks include shaping culture, managing relationships within the army, the national policymaking apparatus, representing the organization to society, and leading change within the military (Magee, 1998). In some cases, the top echelons of the Nigerian Army provided strategic visions for the country and managed relationships within the army and the national policymaking apparatus as demonstrated by the military administrations discussed in this paper. Importantly, the military administrations made some strategic decisions (Bourgeois, 1985), but some of them lacked visionary leadership (Bass, 1985).

2. BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF MILITARY COUPS IN NIGERIA

The intervention of the military in the political scene of Nigeria was not totally a surprise to most political observers and thinkers. This is because nearly all the pre-colonial ethnic groups in the country were ruled by traditional rulers who were more or less dictators (Yesufu, 1982). The military's first intervention in politics in January 1966, was celebrated by the people due to the perceived corruption among the public office holders, oppression and intimidation of Western Region government by the ruling Northern People's Congress-National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. It should be mentioned that many of the former British colonies in Africa had gone through what can be referred to as military rule immediately after the British left. From Ghana to Nigeria to Sierra Leone to Pakistan to Zimbabwe to Uganda, to the Fiji islands - the list is endless (Jackson & Rosberg, 1982).

The first military intervention in Nigeria was through a very bloody coup led by Major Nzeogwu on 15 January, 1966 about five years after independence on 1 October, 1960 (Osoba, 1996). The coup was led by five majors, Nzeogwu, Ifeajuna, Okafor, Anuforo and Adegboyega, and it was expected to end the tribalism and corruption (Falola & Heaton, 2008), including misrule, ineptitude and political crisis in Western Region orchestrated by the ruling Northern People's Congress, which characterised the democratic rule. Unfortunately, the coup was not consummated successfully, the senior military hierarchy frustrated it, and Brig-Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi was installed as Head of State in January 1966. On 29 July, 1966, Gen. Ironsi's government was overthrown in another violent coup, while Lt-Col. Yakubu Gowon was installed as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Gen. Murtala Mohammed succeeded Gen. Gowon on 29 July, 1975. Murtala was assassinated on 13 February 1976 in an aborted coup and his Chief-of-Staff, Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo was installed as the new Head of State. However, Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo successfully handed over power to the democratic government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari on 1 October, 1979. On 31 January, 1984, the military struck again and Gen. Mohammed Buhari came into power. On 27 August, 1985 there was a palace coup which toppled the Buhari regime and brought in Gen. Babangida's regime.

After he annulled the fairest elections in the history of Nigeria, popularly called the June 12, 1993 elections, that produced multi-millionaire business tycoon, M.K.O Abiola as president, Babangida was shoved out of power by a groundswell of popular national protests against the annulment of the 1993 elections. He reluctantly handed over power to Ernest Shonekan, a civilian who was "second in command" to Babangida in his experimented short-term diarchic system of government. Chief Shonekan was overthrown by Gen. Abacha on 17 November, 1993, who died on 8 June, 1998. He was succeeded by Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar on 9 June, 1998; Abdulsalami later handed over power to the democratic government of Olusegun Obasanjo on 29 May, 1999.

2.1 The Military Governance and the Evolution of New Managerial Elite

In this section, we will examine the development of managerial elite during the military governments of Gen. Gowon and Gen. Obasanjo. The governments of Gen. Aguiy Ironsi and Gen. Murtala Mohammed were excluded from our analysis because each of them was short-lived i.e. they ruled the country for about 6 months each.

2.2 General Yakubu Gowon's Government and Rational Administrative Elite (1966-1975)

General Yakubu Gowon came into power through the 29 July, 1966 counter-coup in Nigeria. On his ascension to power, Gen. Gowon appointed top politicians, technocrats, military officers and public office holders as federal commissioners. The managerial style of Gen. Gowon's federal commissioners could be described as a rational administrative managerial style. The rational administrative managerial style means Gen. Gowon and the federal commissioners appointed by him were guided by rational thinking in their decision-making, policy making, socio-economic strategy formulation and policy execution. The rational administrative managerial federal commissioners of Gen. Gowon included Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Federal Commissioner for Finance), Chief Anthony Enahoro (Federal Commissioner for Information), Alhaji Aminu Kano (Federal Commissioner for Health), Alhaji Lateef Olufemi Okunnu, (Federal Commissioner for Works and Housing), T. S. Takar, Ali Munkunu, Wenike Briggs, Dr. R. B. Dikko and many others. The military officers included Air Commodore Dan Suleiman (Federal Commissioner

for Special Duties), Maj-Gen. Henry Olufemi Adefowope (Federal Commissioner for Labour), Lt. Col. A. A. Ali (Federal Commissioner for Education) and others. The rational administrative managerial elite comprised small top military officers, which correspond with Jacobs & Jaques's (1990) senior military personnel and Wong, Bliesey & McGurk's (2003) system level leaders; including high ranking politicians in the aborted First Republic and some technocrats. The rational administrative managerial elite were characterised by a logical, structured and sequenced approach to decision making; they were concerned with enhancing the welfare of the people, planning the social system, formulating socio-economic policies and building enduring infrastructures in society, in an ordered, planned and systematic way. They operated a mixture of bourgeois and feudal moral standards, and attempted some form of distributed powers to contending regions of the country through their appointed representatives. They made socio-economic policies that protected the civil society from an encroaching military institution, and built the virtues of vigorous and focused military government. They provided social services and defended expressive "lifestyle" of freedoms.

Through the instrumentality of the rational administrative managerial elite, Gen. Yakubu Gowon enacted the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion decrees 1972, which was further reviewed by Obasanjo's government in 1977. They facilitated the first indigenous attempt by Nigerians to participate in the corporate management of their economy. The policy encouraged indigenisation of top management echelons of some corporations by divesting foreign majority ownership that dominated the Nigerian economy since 1880s when the early corporations such as the National African Company and later Royal Niger Company came into the country, to indigenous majority ownership in the 1970s. More importantly, the policy reduced foreign ownership of shares in major industries across various sectors of the economy. Consequently, a handful of privileged top military leaders and civil servants, including some business people and a few professionals, who benefited from the social policies of the earlier leaders of the nation such as Awolowo, Azikiwe, Balewa and Bello in the first republic, purchased some shares relinquished by foreign investors and became considerably wealthy.

It is important to provide a prelude to this development. In the pre-independence and post-independence era, the Nigerian economy was dominated and controlled by foreign nationals. The European investors, predominantly the British entrepreneurs and skilled personnel, constituted the top echelons of the management of top-rate corporations in the country. During this time, the Lebanese acted as middle-men (Falola, 1990; Olutayo, 1999) and they engaged in distributive and export trade and other services. A few members of the privileged Nigerian elite, the commissioned agents of foreign industrialists and

trading houses, were operating at the base of the economic ladder where they were performing peripheral economic services. This group of Nigerians was not happy with their peripheral functions in the economy after independence, and had been at loggerhead with the British and some European investors that dominated the economy, right from the colonial period up to the 1970s. Whenever Nigerian traders established a profitable new line of business, the European companies would move quickly to drive them out of business (Forrest, 1995; Olutayo, 1999). The 1972, 1978 and 1982 indigenisation legislations were promulgated due to pressures mounted by the indigenous business class on the military leadership. However, there was a meeting of interest between the Nigerian business class and the military leadership as evidence suggests that both benefited immensely from the largesse that resulted from the policies. Many of them became board members of choice blue-chip corporations. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the indigenization policies were meant to satisfy primordial self-interests rather than the national development interest. For example, through these legal instruments, the military leaders, their collaborators in the civil service and private business, acquired large interests in banking such as First Bank of Nigeria, Union Bank of Nigeria, United Bank for Africa and others; automobile assembly plants such as Peugeot, Leyland, Volkswagen, Fiat, and Daimler-Benz; oil & gas such as Shells, Mobil, Chevron, Elf and others.

The leadership style which the rational administrative managerial elite adopted in managing every facet of the Nigerian social, political and economic systems provides opportunity to theories on their pragmatic management tradition. While providing robust policy initiatives, the rational administrative managerial elite assisted Gowon in managing the civil war economy under the guardianship of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Federal Commissioner for Finance. Shortly after the war, Gowon's rational administrative managerial elite pursued the infrastructural development of the nation. In 1972, Gowon introduced an indigenization decree called the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Act, which brought some measure of indigenous control over many sectors of the Nigerian economy. With high in-flux of oil revenue, Gen. Gowon's administration pursued the post-war Second National Development Plan vigorously. He expanded the education sector; he constructed new schools, created six new federal universities in April 1975, introduced free, compulsory primary education, instituted a National Youth Service Corps programme, established new oil refineries, constructed new airports, seaports, expressways, supported industries to produce at optimum capacities, and inaugurated a housing programme.

Additionally, Gowon's rational administrative managerial elite introduced the reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes after the civil war in 1973; the war economy was managed professionally by

the Federal Commission for Finance, Obafemi Awolowo, whose frugality and parsimony ensured that Nigeria did not incur external debt during the war between 1966 and 1973. The post-war reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes were meant to reconcile the Biafrans and their Nigerians counterparts, and rehabilitate the displaced people of the Eastern Nigeria and reconstruct many of their facilities and infrastructures damaged during the war. The post-war economic programmes accelerated the economic and social development throughout the nation; for example, the war led to the Four-year (1970-1974) post-war reconstruction and development plans such as the Second National Development Plan; East-Central State Programme of Post-war Reconstruction; Mid-Western State Development Plan; Rivers State Development Plan; and the South-Eastern State Development Plan (Awotona, 1992). In spite of Gowon's monumental contributions to the nation's development, his administration faltered. For example, Gowon adopted military approach in handling of the university lecturers' strike and the university students' protests that led to the death of Kunle Adepeju at the University of Ibadan in 1971; this made many Nigerians to lose interest in his government. In addition, the cancellation of the controversial national census with its huge expenses, rising corruption among the state governors, federal commissioners (ministers) and top public officers in the state and federal ministries, and his renege on handling over power to civilians in 1976 and others, eroded public confidence in Gowon's leadership. Thus Murtala and his colleagues overthrew Gowon in a palace coup on 29 July, 1975 while Gowon was attending an OAU conference in Kampala (Lipschutz & Rasmussen, 1989).

2.3 General Olusegun Obasanjo's Government and Participatory Development Elite (1976-1979)

When Gen. Murtala Ramat Mohammed was assassinated in an abortive military coup on 13 February, 1976 his Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo was nominated to replace him. Gen. Obasanjo's administration adopted a participatory development approach to the nation's socio-economic development. The participatory development managerial style means Gen. Obasanjo and his federal commissioners were guided by the desire to deepen the participation of top Nigerian military officers and top private business executives in the management of the economy, decision-making, policy making, and policy execution. Some of the members of Gen. Obasanjo's participatory development managerial elite included top military officers such as Major-Gen. Henry Adefowope, Federal Commissioner for Labour; Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, Federal Commissioner for Petroleum; Major-Gen. Shuwa, Federal Commissioner for Trade; Gen. Mohammed Magoro, Federal Commissioner of Transport; Gen. Theophilus Danjuma, Chief of Army Staff; Gen. Joseph Garba, Federal Commissioner for External Affairs; Air Vice Marshal Mouktar Mohammed,

Federal Commissioner of Housing and Urban Development; Lt. Col. A. A. Ali, Federal Commissioner for Education. Also, Chief Ajose Adeogun, served as the Federal Commissioner for Special Duties and others. The participatory development elite designed the socio-economic programmes and engaged critical segments of the elite population in the development agenda of the government. During Obasanjo's administration, the participatory development elite constituted a small minority of top military brass described by Wong, Bliesey, and McGurk (2003) as system level leaders that often operate in the general environment, which consists of socio-economic, educational, legal, political and cultural aspects of a society. Additionally, the civilian segment of participatory development elite included economic and state policy-planning elite that held the power to influence the direction of the nation's economic development.

Participatory development involves a deliberate planning, control and direction of the economy by an amalgam of central military and civilian authority for the purpose of achieving the socio-economic objectives in society. Gen. Obasanjo's participatory development elite approached the management of Nigeria's economy through the implementation of the Third National Development Plan. It must be emphasised that the enactment of the Nigerian Enterprise Promotion Decree in 1977 (indigenisation policy) by Obasanjo was a premeditated legal instrument to deepen the participation of Nigerians, especially the top military brass, top public technocrats and their trustees in private business sector, in the investment and running of the economy, including the corporate governance direction of the nation's business. The participatory development elite systematically used the Nigerian Enterprise Promotion Decree in 1977 to penetrate boardrooms of many corporate organisations hitherto controlled by some foreign interests. The primary objectives of the participatory development elite in enacting this policy were to create opportunities for Nigerian indigenous businesspeople, maximise retention of profits in Nigeria, and raise the level of capital and goods production in the country. The economic elite working in tandem with the top military and political elite used the policy as a strategic intervention in the corporate sector to prevent foreign monopoly of the commanding heights of the nation's economy. It limits the participation of foreigners in some productive sectors of the corporate economy, thereby opening opportunities for Nigerians to participate in the ownership and control of some choice organisations in the banking and manufacturing industries.

Besides the corporate sector of the economy, the participatory development elite, composed of indigenous businesspeople and the senior military system level leaders, expanded agriculture to boost food production by creating the River Basin Development Authority Scheme, the Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme, and the Operation Feed the Nation. They established petrochemical industries, promulgated the

Land Use Decree in 1978, founded some Commodity Boards and nationalised British Petroleum, among others. Gen. Obasanjo's administration invested in iron ore and steel by establishing Aladja and Ajaokuta steel complexes; he built oil refineries at Warri and constructed the Murtala Mohammed International Airport in Lagos in April 1979. Obasanjo's participatory development elite expanded and invested in the education sector by introducing Universal Free Primary Education, created the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board in 1978 to conduct admissions into the universities, and established some universities of agriculture and research institutes. Also, Obasanjo's political and economic elite promulgated a new national policy on education called the "6-3-3-4" system of education, designed to stimulate rapid scientific, technical and vocational education, and promoted a self-employment culture. They led a campaign against corruption by creating the Corrupt Practices Bureau, the Assets Investigation Panel, and the Public Complaints Commission, to deal with corrupt malpractices in public and private sectors.

The participatory development elite pursued local government reform by creating the Local Government system as the "third tier" of government. They established the Federal Electoral Commission in October 1976 to conduct general elections and the Constitution Drafting Committee that crafted the 1979 Constitution. On 1 October, 1979, Gen. Obasanjo successfully handed over power to a democratic government led by President Shehu Shagari amidst controversies such as allegations of electoral rigging, National Party of Nigeria (NPN) of the former President Shehu Shagari to manipulate the election results, among others. The perceived rigging of the election results led the aggrieved political party leaders such as Obafemi Awolowo of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), Aminu Kano of People's Redemption Party (PRP) and Ibrahim Wasiri of the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP), to engage in judicial struggle against Alhaji Shehu Shagari's National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in order to invalidate his victory in the Supreme Court. However, the bane of his socio-economic programmes was poor implementation, over reliance on the petroleum economy, neglect of the traditional agricultural exports, high importation of food, the promotion of import-substitution, the auto assembling plants and the use of expatriates in the economy. Also, there was the rising menace of corruption in high places, which made his anti-corruption campaign a mere window dressing. Additionally, Gen Obasanjo's insensitivity and misreading of the academia led him to increase students feeding fees, which sparked violent riots across some universities in 1978. In response, some anti-riot military personnel were drafted to quell the riots; in the mayhem Akintunde Ojo was shot dead at the University of Lagos and about nine other students killed in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This led to the popular "Ali Must Go", a call for the resignation of Col. Ahmadu Ali, then federal commissioner for education; this event eroded the credibility of Gen. Obasanjo's government.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is observed that the military leaders have left their footprints in social, economic and political spheres of Nigeria, although the perception of most Nigerians is that the Nigerian military does not have what it takes to manage the country (Ihonvbere, 1991). For example, Ajagbe (1990) suggests that the Nigerian army is the least respected institution in Nigeria; this is because most of them were (and still are) not well educated due to the fact that most of them were hurriedly recruited to fight the civil war between 1967 and 1970. Ihonvbere (1991) perceives no difference between the military and the civilian governments that they had overthrown. Nearly all the former military Heads-of-State including the senior and middle-level officers, and the rank and file that rail-road them into political office through coup d'état, were aware of their unpopular actions; this was why they all promised to hand over power to democratically elected politicians as soon as practicable. In some cases the handover promise was a strategy to secure public acceptance of their unpopular incursion and a ploy to hang on to power indefinitely. It should be emphasised that among all the military governments in Nigeria since 1966 up to 1999, only Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd) who handed over to Shehu Shagari in 1979 and Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar who handed over to Olusegun Obasanjo on 29 May, 1999, did so successfully (Luckham, 1971); while Generals Gowon, Babagida and Abacha failed to hand over power to the civilians.

However, it is possible to theorise that the circumstances that produced Obasanjo's and Abdulsalami's administrations were responsible for the ways they hastily and successfully handed over power to democratic governments. Obasanjo's government was a child of circumstance that came into power due to the assassination of Gen. Murtala in the 13 February, 1976 coup d'état, while Gen. Abdulsalami's came into power due to the sudden death of Gen. Abacha in office. None of them "legitimately" led or rode on a coup to office. They became Heads-of-State by circumstance. To some degree both suffered a "legitimacy crisis" because they rode on the crest of misfortunes that befell their bosses to power. The unconstitutional manoeuvres and corrupt use of money to manipulate the legislators by Obasanjo to secure a third term mandate in 2006 belie the fact that he voluntarily handed over power in 1979. He must have done so because of the crisis of legitimacy of his administration and the tragic circumstance that produced his government.

Some of the best private secondary schools and universities in Nigeria are owned by some retired military officers; the boards of directors of most blue-chip companies in Nigeria today are dominated by retired military officers (Nigerian Guardian Newspaper, 2008). Right from 1999 up to now, retired military officers dominated the rank and file of the ruling People's

Democratic Party, and some of them have served or are serving as state governors in some states. The reasons for the ex-military officers' access to plum political offices and top corporate boardroom positions are not far-fetched. One, some retired senior military officers were in control of power and economy for a very long time, some of them had corruptly enriched themselves by stealing public funds. Two, these retired officers possessed huge wealth that they can use at every opportunity to pave their ways into top federal and state political offices such as members of the senate, national and state house of assemblies, chairmanship of political parties and local government. Three, some of them had acquired civil education by going to business or management schools and universities in Nigeria and overseas, therefore, they were able to combine brain power with financial power which they acquired while in charge of the management of the country's economy for over thirty years (Welch, 1995).

The Armed Forces of Nigeria were, up till January 1966, seen in the public only on ceremonial occasions usually on 1 October, the national Independence Day anniversary, when Nigeria got independence from Britain. During this time, they often perform ceremonial parade and the Air Force officers engage in the usual colourful air display. Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country has experienced almost 24 years of dictatorial military rule. With the demise of the First Republic in January 1966, the authoritarian military rule was only interrupted by a brief period of democratic rule in the Second Republic between 1979 and 1983 (Lewis, 1994). Military rule is viewed as an unconstitutional act because the Constitution of Nigeria clearly stated that the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this constitution.

This is not to say that the military coups in Nigeria were not foreseen as it was obvious that there was no way the neo-colonial social formations inherited by Nigeria with its attendant features such as mass disarticulation, confusion, dependence, foreign domination, alienation of the people from the state, an unproductive and dependent dominant upper class, and structural economic dislocation, could have guaranteed a stable polity following political independence on 1 October, 1960 (Oni & Onimode, 1975; Onimode, 1982).

The perception of most Nigerians is that the Nigerian military does not have what it takes to manage the country. For example Ajagbe (1990) wrote that if there is any institution that is least respected in Nigeria, it is the Nigerian army. Therefore, it is puzzling to explain a situation where some semi-literate and literate officers, whose only qualifications are unguarded accessibility to lethal weapons, primary or secondary school certificates, and officers' military education in Sandhurst and Mons,

govern the most populous African nation, which has a coterie of highly endowed manpower resources on the African continent. Kehinde & Onanuga (1990) added that now soldiers are part of national problems, rather than problem solvers. With the benefit of hindsight, the Nigerian Armed Forces are beginning to realize how their inordinate thirst for power and mismanagement have plunged the nations into crisis.

Ihonvbere (1991) did not see any difference between the military and the civilian governments; he observed that the military government has been relatively more decisive in reaching certain decisions while in power, but it has also, like the civilians, been plagued by fractionalisation, corruption, waste, and the abuse of power. Therefore, it can be concluded that Nigeria's past military rulers were psychotic dictators that mistakenly perceived fear for respect and public adulation for support; unfortunately they seized power with depressing frequency and often dominated the political process even under civilian regimes and have been a major obstacle to enduring democracy in the country.

Nearly all the past military Heads-of-State that rode to power on the crest of a coup were aware of their unpopular actions, therefore, they all promised to hand over to the civilians as soon as practicable. Nigeria is said to symbolize and epitomize the pathology of civil-military relations in Africa (Butts & Metz, 1996). The military regimes that ruled the country, in most cases, were probably aware of their managerial incompetence in running all the facets of the economy and polity, thus they always co-opted civilians into the running of the country. In many cases, the civilian professionals, technocrats and academics often dominated the list of appointed federal commissioners or ministers, state commissioners, and heads of public services.

Some boards of directors of most blue-chip companies in Nigeria today are dominated by retired military officers. The reason for this development is that the military officers were in control of the economy for decades and they used the lever of power to position themselves in the boardroom decision making. Additionally, with the aid of the Nigerian Enterprise Decrees of 1970s, political manoeuvres, corrupt enrichment economic patronage and exposure to higher education at home and abroad, they have strategically penetrated the corporate environment.

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