

EX-SERVICE MEN AND GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA THE CASE OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

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***Abstract:** By May 29, 1999, Nigeria Fourth Republic was inaugurated. Before now, the military had scuttled three previous attempts at democratic governance. Military rule is universally regarded as an aberration hence democracy is not only an attractive option but a rational and inevitable one (Babangida Ibrahim, July 4, 1991). However, the predominance of ex-service men in governance, the commanding height of the economy and our traditional institutions in a democratic Nigeria strongly suggest military rule in disguise. It means the failure of the Nigeria political system to free its administration from the stranglehold of its armed forces. One effect of the above is the militarization of our political institutions, the society and the politicization of the Nigeria army. Traits of military regime replace basic democratic tenets. The paper adopts the content analysis methodology and concludes that until the dynamics of true democracy which requires commitment, constitutionalism, due process and good governance are entrenched to consolidate Nigeria democracy, the success of civilian rule in Nigeria is in doubt.*

**Keyword:** Ex-Service Men, Government, Praetorian Trap, Civilianization, Civil- Military Relation.

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## INTRODUCTION

A Major setback to democratic rule in Nigeria has been incessant military incursion into politics. Reasons which borders on Political decay reflective in instability, corruption, authoritarianism and violence; partly explains military involvement in politics in Nigeria. Scholars have agreed that military in politics is both an aberration and a direct challenge to the constitution of any Nation. Albeit Nigeria is currently under democratic dispensation (4th Republic) the circumstance of the regime birth and the preponderance of ex-military

men in the political, economic, social, cultural sectors and our traditional institutions suggest that democracy of the fourth republic is a continuation of military rule in disguise. It means that our political system is still under trap by the military.

The goal of this paper is to x-ray factors responsible for the inability of the Nigeria political system to free itself from the influence of the military. It will through a framework also provide an understanding of the seeming stable civil-military relation in Nigeria forth republic.

### OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

- a. **Ex-Service Men:** This includes all those who were once in the Nigeria Armed Forces. They include retired military men, navy, air force, police, custom and other ex-paramilitary men.
- b. **Government:** Akanbi, (2004) constructed governance to mean ability of a government to maintain social space; guarantee law and order, promote or create conditions necessary for economic growth and ensure minimum level of social security. It implies efficient and effective public administration, good public policies and sound management of National resources. It incorporates the features of accountability of public officials, transparency in government procedures and process, reliable flow of information to the citizenry, freedom of the press and strict adherence to the rule of law.
- c. **Praetorian Trap:** Dare (1989) define praetorian trap as a situation in which a political system is unable to free its administration from the stranglehold to its armed forces. Through praetorianism the military seek complete domination of society. Military interest is continued through civilianized military officers. This could be either from the club of serving or retired military corps. It could also be from their civilian allies sympathetic to the departing regime interest. This guarantee regime interest, protection, continuity and re-entry into politics by the military. This is because the forces that made it possible for military in politics are left intact. The forces in question, is the exploitative economic system that is outwardly oriented and create alienation between the centre and the units.
- d. **Civilianization:** By civilianization, we mean attempt by military leaders to perpetuate themselves in office by resigning from their military positions to contest elective posts as retired civilian. E.g. Ex-President Rawlings of Ghana, late Mobutu Sesseko of DR-Congo, Jaja Jamin of Gambia, Charles de Guile of France etc. Civilianization ensures regime continuity. In Nigeria, the regime of Gen. Gowon, Gen. Babangida and Late Gen. Abacha made abortive attempts on regime continuity. Incidentally, the President Obasanjo's regime also made an abortive attempt at regime prolongation in a democratic Nigeria.

- e. **Civil–Military Relation:** Centre to the above is the supremacy of the constitution of a state. A constitution defines the conditions for the exercise of legitimate power: who shall exercise political power, how they should exercise their powers and the limits of these powers. All constitutions specify the major organs of government, what kind of people shall be eligible to occupy positions in those organs and how those organs will be selected and removed. Many constitutions also outline the organs of government, agencies and describe in detail their interrelations.

Under the Nigeria's constitution, the relationship between organs of government is explicitly stated. Here the Armed forces are expected to be loyal to civilian authority. This is the tenet of the classical western political literature. According to the classical theory, the duties and roles of the professional soldier is subordinate to and subject to civilian control. They therefore advocate strict non-political professionalism for the Army to ensure stable democratic civil-military relations.

#### **MODELS OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS**

Three models of civil-military relation are adopted in this work. The first is the classical or western model. This model is predicated on strict military subordination and submission to civilian control. The model also encourages professionalism within the Armed forces which in turn limit the military to matters of military concern.

The second model is the communist model. Permulter (1970) says in this model, "the Army is dependent on the political party. Here the military is seen as an instrument of the political party which helps the party to maintain its hegemony over state and society". The CPUS in old Russia is an example.

The third model is the praetorian model. This model is characterized by weak and fragile political institutions. This is in addition to the inability of weak and often corrupt politicians to control the Armed forces. Here civil-military relation is the direct opposite of the western model. It is a complete rejection of the doctrine of civilian supremacy of the western school.

Of these models, the praetorian model best explain governance as it relates to civil-military relation in Nigeria. The fourth Republic is our case study.

#### **CIVIL-MILITARY RELATION IN NIGERIA IN RETROSPECT**

The Nigeria State is a British creation so is the arm forces. Colonial Nigeria State thrived on an economy within the central-periphery relationship between British authority and Nigerians. Later global political events aided Nigeria Nationalists to gain independence in 1960. Unfortunately, post colonial Nigeria State maintains the status quo of colonial Nigeria State. The State has been described as neo-colonial, class oriented, patrimonial and renter in nature. It operates a centralized federal government which makes Nigeria

federalism a unique one of sort. It will be recalled that at independence the economy is centre to all social political economics and religious intrigues. For example, the lack of indigenous entrepreneur made the state the quickest route to capital accumulation. The struggle for the centre between the political class and the military became a common cause of political instability in the state. An unstable state with weak political institutions and economy approximates a failed/praetorian state.

In a praetorian state, there is the absence of effective political institutions capable of mediating, refining or moderating group political action. According to Huntington (1968), in a praetorian state the political institutions are not only weak, but social forces confront each other nakedly. Each group employs means which reflects its peculiar nature and capabilities to decide upon office and policy. For example while the wealthy bribe, students riot, workers strike, mob demonstrate, the military intervene in politics i.e. coup. The difference here is that the techniques of military interventions are simply more dramatic and effective than others. This implies direct military intervention in politics.

It all began in 1966 when the Nigerian military excused itself into politics. This they attributed to the desire to reinforce National unity and eradicate corruption. Six months later, the opposite became the case. Intra-elites intrigues within the military and political class progressively led to the 30 months fratricidal war in Nigeria. Successive military regimes in Nigerian only terminated in May 29th 1999. Under military regimes in Nigeria, civilian-military relations is built on the fusionist theory which recognizes that bureaucracy and politics as well as government and administrative experts and politicians are all symbiotically inter-related (Permulter, 1970). What Permulter means is that modern society has become so complex that power has become so diffuse and organizations so highly differentiated that governance involves and must involve civilian experts and military non- experts, civilian policy makers and military policy implementers or vice-versa (Nwankwo 1999). Critics however approximate this arrangement to diarchical militarism in favour of the military as far as hierarchy and authority is concerned.

The fusionist theory according to (Nwankwo 1990) was the bedrock of all military regimes in Nigeria. For example, while the late General Ironsi allowed state affairs to be run by bureaucrats, there were a large number of civilians in the exco of General Gowon. The civilians were referred to as super permanent Secretaries and for whom Gen. Gowon claimed responsibility for decisions made by them. The General Obasanjo's regime choice of successor enables access to power in post military era. The prolong disengagement exercise of the General Babangida's regime apparently meant for self succession and the Gen. Abacha's appointment of civilians in his regime support Nwankwo's position.

Other instances of the fusionist theory include the emergence of "bureaucratic economic militariat" (Oyediran, 1988). The oil boom of the 1970s, the promulgation of the Nigerian enterprises decrees of the 1972 and 1977 facilitated the fusion of common

interests of Nigeria's ruling oligarchy represented by the military elites, the civilian bureaucrat and representatives of the multinationals. This class later dominated almost all facet of life in Nigeria; military domination of the society peak under the imperial presidency of General Babangida and Late Gen. Abacha. Under decree 17 of 1985 General Babangida had the sole power to decide any issue in the land. The General Abacha's regime re-enacted the imperial presidency with decree 107 which enables oral decrees take precedence over rule of law. In both instances the proclivity of Ex-military generals who wield financial control was rightly captured thus--- an increasing number of retired senior military officers combine chairmanships/directorships of their own private businesses with part-time appointments to key governmental posts and parastatals relating to agriculture, commerce and industry, in addition to interlocking directorships of many foreign companies incorporated in Nigeria (Dare 1989).

Under the SAP programme Ex-military officers, crony's and serving officers became beholden by regime favouritism and bribery. Under the privatization and the commercialization programme; state-own industrial and commercial undertaking were either sold to ex-military men and their civilian partners or conglomerate that can be linked to ex-military men. In the political realm, the defunct SDP and NRC were seen as military parties' model after the Nasserist/Baathist Party in Egypt, Syria, Iraq as well as the foundational regimes in Latin America and South East Asian. In the traditional institutions of governance, ex-military men are prime beneficiaries. The emergence of ex-sultan Dasuki and the late Maccido are two cases in point with military influences.

In other instances, ex-military men have been crowned or turbine as traditional rulers. Examples include Sani Sami-a retired major General and former Governor of Bauchi State as the Emir of Zuru in Kebbi State. Major Jokolo (retired) as Emir of Gwandu, Naval Captain Tamlyan-king of Ogulaha Kingdom and Major General Mujakpero as the newly crowned Orodje of Okpe Kingdom in Delta State.

In the Social Cultural realm, the Admiral Ndubiusi Kalu (Rtd.) led transition committee of the Ndigbo Ohanaeze and its secretary Col. Achuzia (Rtd.), are good points in entrenched military interest in post military Nigeria society.

#### **CIVIL-MILITARY RELATION IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC**

The General Obasanjo's regime came into being on May 29th, 1999 after 33years of military dictatorship. It was midwife by the General Abubakar's regime. The general opposition to military rule and the threat to military image and professionalism were among factors that aided the birth of the Fourth Republic. Democratic governance is built on consultation, dialogue, persuasion, consensus and most importantly, the rule of law which make democracy conceivable and understandable (Eso, 1999). An analysis of the democratic experiment so far confirmed the crises of civil-military relation in the Fourth Republic. If anything, our nascent democracy is adjudged as being under threat by entrenched military interests. For example, in the political realm, the birth of the fourth

republic was facilitated by the military. The formation of parties and party flag bearers all have large dose of military connections. While the PDP had General Obasanjo (Rtd.) as its flag bearer in the first tenure, four ex-military officers contested the presidential ticket in the 2003 elections. These include General Obasanjo of the PDP, Gen. Buhari of the ANPP, the late Odumegwu Ojukwu of the APGA and Major Gen. Ike Nwachukwu of the NDP.

At the state level ex-military men also show their hands either as party bearers, commissioners, board members or party executives. Examples include Olagunsoye Oyinlola, ex-military Governor of Ogun State, the immediate civilian Governor of Osun State and a one-time senator of the federal republic of Nigeria. He is a decampsee of the ANPP party to PDP. DSP Depriye Alamiyesigha of Bayelsa State was a retired air force officer. In Anambra State, we have Robert Akonobi Retire Colonel and former military governor of Edo State, Tunde Akogun Retired Colonel and late Anthony Onyearugbulum former governor of Ondo and Edo State made an unsuccessful bid for Edo State Governorship in 1999 and 2003. At the National Assembly, we have both at the upper and lower chambers, Senators Tunde Ogbeha, former military governor of the Old Bendel State, David Mark, a retired Army General and now the Senate President.

At the National and State party level, we have Dr. Ahmadu Ali as one time National Chairman of PDP. Olabode George former military governor of Ondo State was once national vice chairman of the PDP in the South West. Late Augustus Aikhomu former naval Chief and General Babangida's second in command was once a member of the board of trustees of ANPP. Others include General T.Y. Danjuma, General Babangida, Buba Marwa both PDP Presidential aspirants in the 2007 elections. Not left out are General Aliyu M. Gusan, Mohammed Jega, Brigadier General Tanko Ayuba, Abba Kyari, Bramah Yusuf (Elected), Group Captain Senebe former chairman PDP Delta state and wing commander Biakpara ex-commissioner also in Delta State.

In the Economic realm, ex-military men are key players in the Banking, insurance, shipping, farming and manufacturing sector. These include General Theophilus Danjuma who is the managing director of Med Africa Group Ltd. Chairman, First Universal Trust Bank, Chairman, Nigeria-American Line Ltd, Chairman, Sahel Publishing Company. Others include Major General George Innih- Director Broad Bank, Major General David Ejoor (Rtd.) Director Public finance group and Alpha insurance. The list is not exhaustive rather; it is a representation of ex-military officer's influence in the larger Nigeria society which is regarded as extension of military rule in disguised in the fourth republic. Ironical retired junior officers of the Nigeria arm forces under the aegis of ex-service men and regional transport scheme have little or no regard for traffic rules. There are reported cases of clashes between serving policemen, traffic warders and the ex-service men and legional transporters.

The conclusion one could draw from the above is that the larger Nigeria society has been militarized and the military civilianized. Events later confirm this. For example the executive and legislative relationship vis-à-vis style of leadership largely illustrate military mannerism in Ex-President Obasanjo's relationship with his former exco, the legislative arm of government and the larger Nigerian society as a whole. The President was alleged for executive disregard for rule of law and resolutions of the legislative houses. President Obasanjo was also accused of unilateral decision over the relocation of the Nigerian Ports Authority, National maritime Authority; Nigeria Railway Corporations and the shipper's council back to Lagos. The President also refuse to conduct personnel audit of federal workers despite the ₦500,000 set aside for it. The President was equally accused of favouritism and discrimination against the Core North and in favour of his kinsmen in crude oil lifting, contract award and appointments (Tell, 2004).

Other instances of executive recklessness and absolute disregard for the rule of law include the increase in pump price of petroleum product in 2002 inspite of opposition from the organized sector of the public; the setting up of caretaker government by both the federal and state governments in violation of section 7 (1) of the 1999 constitution, the control of primary schools by the Federal and State Government through States Primary Education Management Boards (SPEB) and the Universal Basic Education (UBE) in violation of the 1999. The punitive expedition against Odi in Bayelsa State violated section 215 (2) (c) of the 1999 constitution (Tell 2004). Yet the poor inter governmental relations between the federal government and the Lagos state government over monthly allocation on the issue of local government creation by the latter and the brazen disregard for the order of Nigerian high court to reinstate the 49 unjustly sack lectures of the university of Ilorin are examples of a civilianized military dictator.

## CONCLUSION

Retired military officers like every eligible Nigerian have the right to contribute their experience and expertise to the building and development of their father's land. They could therefore seek elective positions in a democratic setting. However; given the circumstances of the regime birth- a transition programme midwife by a departing military regime intent on protecting their interest in post military era, the negotiated withdrawal through civilianized military officers ensure continued military regime in disguised. Our political system is therefore caught in a praetorian trap. What we have then is a militarized democracy in which the commandist posture of the military era still dictate intergovernmental relations and between the executive and legislature.

One implication of the above is that of a society under military siege as ethos, languages and character of public discourse between individuals, groups and intergroup have become completely militarized. The proliferation of ethnic militias, especially in the Niger Delta, spate of Robbery by soldiers and policemen, the settlements of communal conflicts in military fashion and the general insecurity in the country are attributed to prolong military rule. Therefore, the seeming stable democratic civil-military relation of the

fourth Republic is a ruse. What we have is an extension of military rule in disguise as such the relation is still in favour of the military. The true test of a stable democratic civil-military relation will come when a civilian president without any military influence or background will assume the throne of leadership in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We begin with the recommendation that in term of civil-military relation, it is the military who can work out a relationship that can lead to some civil-military equilibrium and not the civilian political authority (Agbese, 1999). The above rightly captured the fact that our administration is still in the grip of military hence the paper is of the view that constitutionalism and rule of law should be the cornerstone of our democratic experiments. Secondly, professionalism by training and retraining will limit the military to matters of military concern alone.

The paper is also of the opinion that a deliberate design on the part of the authority to encourage formal or informal contacts between civilian and the soldiers should be encouraged. This could be at such formal centre as the Nigerian Institute for policy and strategic studies Kuru. Retire military officers could be more involved with community affairs. This will remove the seeing complex between the civilians and the military since both will see themselves as Nigerians. Lastly, good governance index by the sanctity of the constitution and constitutionalism which should engendered true federalism should be our watch word.

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