

FROM CIVIL RULE TO MILITARIZED DEMOCRACY: EMERGING TEMPLATE FOR GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, authoritarianism has manifested itself through years of military rule marked by intimidation, absence of debate, disregard for civil rights and the rule of law. This has produced an intolerant environment, in which the language of politicians remains militaristic and people still use violence to settle issues. The return to democracy in 1999 acted like the springboard for the release of pent-up feelings by the people who seized the opportunity to express themselves more freely and forcefully in some instances. The multi-dimensional conflicts (and now in addition to the *Boko Haram* terrorism) in which Nigeria has been enmeshed since the emergence of the present civilian rule are indeed threatening the existence of the country. Yet, the deployment of the army and other security agencies by the present administration to oversee simple civic exercises like electioneering and legislative proceedings or harassing opposition parties or mounting road check points in major cities of the country gives the impression that the present civilian political leadership is incapable of consolidating democracy without the military involvement. This paper examines the country's democratic experiment since 1999 within the context of universally acceptable values of democracy and its slide to authoritarian civilian rule in Nigeria.

Key Words: Governance, Civil Rule, Militarised Democracy

Introduction

Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. Today, the country has a population of over 155 million¹, 41 percent of whom are under the age of 15. It has the largest

¹ The last population census had in 2006 put the population of the country at 140 million. However, there are different data emanating from various sources regarding what the current population might be. For instance, the Central Bank Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi quoted 167 million (2012); Nigerian

military and the largest economy in West Africa. Geographically, the size of Nigeria is a little more than twice that of California, but its political system includes 36 state governments, 774 local governments, and over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own layers of authority and loyalty structures. By all measures, Nigeria is a dominant force in West Africa, and yet there is a notably fragile relationship between the state and its citizens (Forest, 2012:20). The country has a presidential system of government with an executive President, a judiciary and a bicameral National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives). Each state has an elected governor who, like the president, is limited to two four-year terms. Each state also has an assembly based on population and a judicial high court. Ninety percent of funding to the states and localities is provided by the Nigerian federal government, largely from oil export revenues. Much of this funding is provided through federal oil wealth-sharing program in which each of the 36 states has calculated shares. These shares are based on a formula which includes population, level of development, and sources of oil revenues.

Apart from two brief phases of civilian government (1960-1966 and 1979-1983), the current dispensation is the third serious attempt (from 1999 onwards) to establish a lasting democratic political system. In between, various military regimes ruled after gaining power through coups d'état and palace coups. The first two coups d'état, in January and July 1966, triggered a civil war (1967-1970). Only in 1979 was the military, under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo, forced to retreat to the barracks. By 1983, a second attempt at democratization failed and the military under Major General Muhammadu Buhari took over again. Almost two years later, a palace coup brought General Ibrahim Babangida to power. He initiated a tightly controlled package of economic reforms and a democratization program which, however, was meant to fail.

After the annulled elections in mid-1993, General Sani Abacha took over power in November 1993. Until Abacha's sudden death in 1998, Nigeria suffered under its worst military dictatorship, and this experience contributed to the complete loss of legitimacy of military rule. General Abdulsalami Abubakar cleared the way for elections and the transfer of power to an

Demographic Statistics, 170 million (2012); IMF, 150 million (2010); World Bank, 162 million (2011); West Africa Demographic Profile, 158 million (2010).

elected president (BTI, 2012:3). Consequent upon the long years of military governance, the obvious outcome would be militarized political culture, manifested in the political behaviors of the dramatis personae in the democratic arena. The Nigerian civic culture was eroded and militarized culture imbibed. Thus, the rule of operation became that of order, combat rather than dialogue, disregard of court orders and violation of human rights became the tenets of militarized civic culture in a democratic dispensation. These values and norms are unknown to democracy (Frank, and Ukpere, 2012:288).

The current Fourth Republic has outlasted previous civilian government and, as observed by Lewis (2011:2) there appears to be an elite consensus on the utility of democratic institutions. He however, adds that “a succession of flawed elections, the dominance of the ruling party, and scant evidence of political accountability have all undermined the legitimacy and stability of democratic rule. Weak institutions- including the legislation, courts, police and civil service- foster continuing problems of governance”. As will be discovered, this paper examines in part, the validity or otherwise of Lewis’ submission in respect of the underlying correlation between the seeming “elite consensus” and “utility of democratic institutions” in Nigeria.

Electoral Democracy and Governance in Nigeria: An Overview

In some developing and post-communist countries, democracy has been a superficial phenomenon, blighted by multiple forms of bad governance: abusive police and security forces, domineering local oligarchies, incompetent and indifferent state bureaucracies, corrupt and inaccessible judiciaries, and venal ruling elites who are contemptuous of the rule of law and accountable to no one but themselves. Many people in these countries -- especially the poor -- are thus citizens only in name and have few meaningful channels of political participation (Diamond: 2008). There are elections, but they are contests between corrupt, clientelistic parties. There are parliaments and local governments, but they do not represent broad constituencies. There are constitutions, but not constitutionalism.

With a focus on Africa, Adetula (2011:13) contends that the weak governance environment in Africa is characterised by underdeveloped institutions of democratic accountability, and this situation presents an extraordinarily high risk for democracy. Underdeveloped political parties,

weak civil society, an over-concentration of power at the centre, non-separation of the branches of government, and lack of transparency and accountability characterize political life in many African countries. Indeed, there is a fear that this trend could undermine the foundations of democratic transition. In its electoral democracy designation, Freedom House (2012) explains that the presence of certain irregularities during the electoral process does not automatically disqualify a country from being designated an electoral democracy. A country cannot be an electoral democracy if significant authority for national decisions resides in the hands of an unelected power, whether a monarch or a foreign or international authority.

Electoral democracy therefore, is based on the principle of free and open competition among alternative political parties, representing divergent policy programs, groups of candidates, and sectors of society, so that citizens have a range of genuine choices at the ballot box. If party organizations are unduly constrained, then this limits the ability of citizens to articulate their demands, express their preferences, and hold rulers to account (Norris, 2004:5). In other words, the will of the people manifested in the election of their representatives elected in a free, fair, credible and transparent atmosphere constitutes the leitmotif of the democratic process. For democracy to thrive, therefore, there must be a level playing field for all contestants to public office. Furthermore, there must be fully operational variables such as a free press, independent judiciary and an informed and discerning electorate, capable of making rational choices among competing ideologies and candidates put before them by the various political parties (Oyebode, 2012).

These are the essential elements that are lacking in many African democracies such that they can easily be labelled competitive authoritarian regimes². As opined by Karl (2005) we are witnessing regimes that have elections and tolerate some expressions of pluralism but violate other principles and procedures of democracy so severely that they have been called ‘delegative’,

² According to Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *competitive authoritarian regimes* are civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which fraud, civil liberties violations, and abuse of state and media resources so skew the playing field that the regime cannot be labeled democratic. Such regimes are *competitive*, in that democratic institutions are not merely a façade: opposition parties use them to seriously contest for power; but they are *authoritarian* in that opposition forces are handicapped by a highly uneven—and sometimes dangerous—playing field. Competition is thus real but *unfair*.

‘hybrid’, ‘illiberal’, electoralist’, ‘semi-authoritarian’ or ‘contested autocracies’. Of course, free and fair elections are not enough. Equating democracy with mere holding of elections or assuming that such elections will subsequently generate further and deeper democratic reforms down the line commits ‘the fallacy of electoralism’. While regular multi-party elections do not necessarily guarantee the establishment of a democratic state, no state can be said to be democratic if it does not hold regular elections according to a set of rules that are fair to the political parties involved. It is in the light of this that Diamond (2007:9) opines that there is the need for a vigorous and pluralistic civil society that is monitoring what government does, scrutinizing government budgets, expenditures, and legislation, raising questions, and demanding reforms.

This observation is further expatiated by the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, in its assessment of Democracy and Governance in Nigeria particularly with regards to the oligarchy that ceaselessly holds the country to ransom: Authoritarian rule by an institutionalized oligarchy constitutes the main structural obstacle to deepening democratic rule in Nigeria. The oligarchs are composed of self-serving politicians, businesspersons, political fixers, “godfathers,” former military officers, and elite bureaucrats who share a common interest in sustaining oligarchic power. Even though the oligarchy claims to represent democratically based regional, professional, and ethnic constituencies, their record falls far short of their claims. (USAID, 2006:2).

Electoral democracy will be of little use if it is not accompanied by reforms which improve people’s lives (EISA, 2010:8). It is said that the nature and character of the state and of its operators, actors and agencies determine the trajectory and quality of governance. Where and when there are negative turning points in the sequences of the use of power and authority, the nation experiences alienation and instability, and sometimes it experiences extreme trouble and grave danger (Oyovbaire, 2007). Thus, as observed by Natufe (2006) “Nigeria is experiencing a fundamental crisis in governance”. This perversion of governance flows from Nigeria’s corrupt society, culture, and pre-colonial history. It also inflames growing ethnic nationalism across the country (CSAT, 2011:22). Despite regularly carrying out their voting obligations, citizens’ concerns are often not reflected or their rights protected by elected officials in policy-making and

governance decisions. The states' failure to respond to citizens' needs despite economic growth has created disillusionment with democracy.

It is in this context that corruption has become widespread. Over the past few decades, poverty has increased, and key public institutions have crumbled. Several hundred billion dollars of public funds have been lost due to corruption and mismanagement. Despite the federal government's "war on corruption," graft and corruption remain endemic at all levels of government (HRW, 2012:24). Forest (2012:31) opines that the most common and salient grievances of many Nigerians include corruption among political and economic elites, economic disparity, barriers to social and educational opportunity, energy poverty, environmental destruction, human insecurity, and injustice.

Given these current scenarios- that actually depict a predatory society³ - scholars and researchers have raised questions as to the feasibility of democracy to meet the people's expectations of better improvement in their living standards as well as guarantee them justice, equity, fairness, economic and political rights (Egharevba and Chiazor, 2012:9). One is not, however, oblivious of the fact that *democratization frequently stimulates a surge of demands on the part of previously quiescent and perhaps even actively repressed groups. These might be lower classes, excluded ethnic or racial groups.* But applying the necessary conflict-control mechanisms at the appropriate time- to avert lawlessness- is the hallmark of any purposeful government which is obviously absent in this country! This is why the history of the country is that of epic bloodletting arising civil wars, coups, counter-coups, civil uprisings, religious insurgencies, invasions, massacres, pogroms, tribal feuds, state executions and economic genocide (Alamu, 2013:3).

³ The *predatory society*, as explained by Larry Diamond, cannot sustain democracy, for sustainable democracy requires constitutionalism and respect for law. Neither can it generate sustainable economic growth, for that requires actors with financial capital to invest it in productive activity. In the predatory society, people do not get rich through productive activity and honest risk-taking. They get rich by manipulating power and privilege, by stealing from the state, exploiting the weak, and shirking the law... the powerful prey on the weak... and deprive them of public goods... Government is not a public enterprise but a criminal conspiracy, and organized crime heavily penetrates politics and government... the line between the police and the criminals is a thin one, and may not exist at all.

Emanating from this precarious situation is the fear being entertained in some quarters as captured by Larry Diamond (2008): “If Nigeria reverts to military rule, descends into political chaos, or collapses, it will deal a harsh blow to democratic hopes across Africa. Indeed, the many African countries that remain blatantly authoritarian will never liberalize if the continent's new and partial democracies cannot make democracy work”. Nnoli's (2007:40) analysis in this regard is very illuminating:

What is important to the politicians and political parties is how they can get close to, and obtain official endorsement from, whoever controls the state (military or civilian) and not any abstractions such as democracy and multi partyism. Therefore, they will not be willing to defend the present democratic dispensation in the event of a determined military effort to return to power; and because the people have been seriously marginalised in the political process, they will not defend the politicians. Herein lies the potent danger for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria.

The perceived failure of democratically elected governments to deliver a better standard of living and greater human security is probably one of the greatest threats to democracy in Nigeria. The leadership question has been a recurring decimal in the political firmament of the country with its corresponding consequence on the polity. Suberu (1988: 118) opines that a fundamental feature of the contemporary Nigerian psyche is the deep and profound distrust for government. The dream of responsive and popular government in Nigeria has collapsed in the face of repeated abortion and frustration of popular aspirations by consecutive Nigerian governments, very few Nigerians believe that government can act for the public good. Osaghae (2001:18) contends that:

Whereas, the ethical responsibility of leadership and the moral code embedded in the constitution they swore to uphold should imply that their mandate responsibility is the mandate they have to deliver on development, welfare and the provision of basic needs. The mandate stands to be subverted as long as the primary concern of the elected representatives is justification for looting public treasury and for searching for political enemies, both real and imagined.

In consequence, most Nigerians have come to feel that the promised “democracy dividend” has eluded them. The economy remains stagnant, a victim contention among the president and the National Assembly, inadequate government policies, weak institutions, and pervasive corruption that undermines investment and production. Personal security and national stability are threatened by rampant social conflict among ethnic, religious, partisan and criminal groups in various parts of the country. The rising tide of violence reflects the stubborn problems of identity

and national unity, as Nigerians seek a common ground for governance and social accord (USAID, 2006). While examining the crisis of governance in Nigeria, Oyovbaire (2007:3) submits that: the is crisis of governance in Nigeria is real and tangible. It is obvious and clear, even to the deaf and blind as it is to the common and uncommon Nigerians. Governance is about the proper use of legitimate power and authority in the affairs of a nation or the people. The state is the primary structure of governance. The nature and character of the state and of its operators, actors and agencies determine the trajectory and quality of governance. Where and when there are negative turning points in the sequences of the use of power and authority, the nation experiences alienation and instability, and sometimes it experiences extreme trouble and grave danger.

Political actors who circulate within the political parties and sponsored by the oligarchy do claim to represent regional, ethnic, and religious groups. In practice, members of the political oligarchy switch political parties, form new ones, or change party affiliations according to shifting opportunities to gain access to petro-rents and political privileges regardless of professed political principles, or regional or ethnic affiliations. The outcome is a patrimonial, patronage system that tends toward unstable authoritarianism without accountability, transparency, or democratically organized political parties.

From Civil Rule to Militarized Democracy: The Gradual Metamorphosis

It has been observed that the militarisation of politics is not limited to situations of overt military intrusion into politics. For instance, while the South African Government remained formally civilian, both the politics and economy of South Africa became heavily militarised, with the military and security and intelligence agencies exercising more institutionalised influence than in most so-called 'military' regimes. As is well known, some of the most durable civilian regimes, such as Kenya or Cameroon, have been (and continue to be) particularly notorious for repressive and illegal use of military and special security units (Hutchful, 1997). It has also been observed that democratic transitions are problematic. Although democracy is an indispensable goal, the process of introducing democratic practices is inherently troubled. Such processes rearrange political competition, alter structures and power relations, and often exacerbate social problems

rather than ameliorating them. The actual process of political reform is destabilizing, and in the short term there may be real and direct threats to peace in democratizing societies as a result of the uncertainty and competition that democracy introduces into unsettled social environments, in particular at times of economic stress. Rapid or ill-considered democratization can also be conflict-inducing (IDEA, 2006:63).

In many societies today where ethnic, religious, racial or class divisions run deep, democratic competition does indeed inspire and inflame political violence. Violence is often a tool to wage political struggles—to exert power, rally supporters, destabilize opponents, or derail the prospect of elections altogether in an effort to gain total control of the machinery of government. This is a reality in Nigeria today where incidences of violence in ethno-religious and communal conflicts in some parts of the country have become a major national problem. This is in addition to violent conflicts arising from electoral contests by the political class.

With regards to electioneering, the country's democracy has grossly been bedeviled with flawed elections at all levels of government, having more of imposed leaders than elected. Elections are conducted as a means of alternating power among the competing political gladiators, mostly in a violent manner that reflects desperation and barbarism. According to Crisis Group (2011:5), politicians' use of armed militias or youth gangs as protection and to harass opponents, intimidate voters and snatch ballot boxes is an ingrained campaign pattern in parts of the country. Many states have organised suppliers of violence for hire, fed by high youth unemployment and easy availability of weapons: from cults, areas boys and local chapters of the National Union of Road Transport Workers in the south to radical and other armed groups in the far north. Many of Nigeria's ostensibly elected leaders, according to the Human Rights Watch, (2007:2) obtained their positions by demonstrating an ability to use corruption and political violence to prevail in sham elections.

The militarisation of the electoral process in the country has been subjected to public scrutiny. For instance, the 2014 governorship elections conducted in Ekiti and Osun states witnessed heavy presence of military men and women. Security operatives were present in strategic locations across the states. In Ekiti State, 30,790 policemen, soldiers, DSS officers, and members of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps were deployed to the state a few days before

the election while over 70,000 of the same agencies were actively involved in the August 9, 2014 Osun election. Like a war zone, the troops took their positions. Almost every 100 meters from the entry point of the states, police officers and soldiers mounted various check points, with blood-hound dogs sniffing for any likely breach of peace by supporters of the various political parties. Such massive deployment of security agencies has been variously described as militarisation of the state by the federal government. As noted by Frank (2014):

The militarization of the Nigerian polity by the Presidency portends dire consequences for our democracy. It is being done to give the PDP undue advantage so as perpetuate Jonathan in power. This is totally antithetical to our collective aspiration as a nation and directly negates the humongous sacrifices made by pro-democracy activists to restore democratic rule in 1999.



Source: <http://dailyindependentnig.com/2014/06/militarising-elections-nigeria/>

Like electioneering, the North east-zone of the country has been under the siege of the *Boko Haram* Islamic fundamentalists. In May 2013, the President, however, declared a state of emergency in three states- Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. More troops were deployed in these states with the mandate to take “all necessary action” to “put an end to the impunity of insurgents and terrorists”. For over One and a half years, the frequency, magnitude and potency of the Sect’s activities have drastically increased; yet the states are still militarized with frequent abuse of people’s rights by the soldiers. For instance, Human Rights Watch report (*ThisDay*, 2012), catalogues atrocities for which Boko Haram has claimed responsibility. It also explores the role

of the Joint Task Force (JTF), whose alleged abuses, it said, contravened international human rights law and might also constitute crimes against humanity. According to the organization, government security forces have also engaged in numerous abuses, including extra-judicial killings. The unlawful killing by both Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces only grows worse.

Concerned by these developments, especially by the frequent presence of soldiers in states where elections are conducted, Civil Society Network Against Corruption (CSNAC), Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (NOPRIN) and Journalist for Democratic Rights (JODER) jointly organized a ‘Save Nigeria’s Democracy Roundtable,’ to provide a platform for civil society and other key stakeholders of the Nigerian democracy project to come together and discuss critical issues bordering on the survival of democracy in Nigeria. According to Olanrewaju Suraju of CSNAC:

The frequent use of the police and other security agencies to suppress dissent and intimidate opposition, in particular, the abridgment of groups’ fundamental rights to exercise their freedom of expressions, particularly, through peaceful assembly, protest and dissent, all portend coming disaster with regards to the security, integrity and credibility of the electoral process and the survival of democracy in Nigeria (Available at: <http://julianafrancis.blogspot.com/2014/08/osun-polls-militarising-elections-in.html>).



Source: <http://royaltimes.net/more/discuss/suffocating-electoral-process-in-nigeria-with-militarisation-matters-arising>

Even protests by the citizens against government's obnoxious policies have attracted military deployment resulting in brutalization, maiming and killing. For instance, on January 1, 2012, the Federal Government announced the withdrawal of fuel subsidy. The Government declared the decision to deregulate the downstream sector as part of its economic reform programme. This action caused fuel prices to jump more than 100%, from N65 per liter to N141 per liter. Tens of thousands of Nigerians protested the removal of the subsidy and Nigeria's major labour unions, under the auspices of the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress, organized strikes shutting down businesses, schools and air travel for 8 days. For many Nigerians, the fuel subsidy removal is merely a symptom of deeper-rooted problems that exist within the system. With a stagnant economy, high levels of corruption, very low minimum wage, little or no investment in health, education or other social amenities, and weak infrastructure, the reaction of the population did not come as a surprise.

Government responded harshly in its quest to clamp down the protest. Military and police officers were deployed all around protest cities and some states imposed curfew. Security officers used tear gas and batons and in some instances, lethal weapons against protesters. *Time Nigeria* reported that at least 20 people were wounded and 3 killed in Lagos when police opened fire on protesters. In Kano, about 300 people were reportedly injured and 19 arrested during the protest. Other protesters were killed in Oyo, Kaduna and Niger states, amounting to over 25 persons. Several pictures and videos show police assaulting protesters. Media houses, notably CNN offices in Lagos were raided and journalists and human rights activists like Femi Falana were arrested and detained. Other detainees were arraigned before the Magistrate Court for alleged breach of peace and robbery (Hassan, 2012).

The Nigerian military which has come under severe criticisms locally and international for failing to contain the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, for almost two weeks in June 2014, embarked on what seemed like a general clampdown on independent media. Commencing from Friday, June 6, 2014, the Nigerian military and agents of the government oppressed, harassed, impounded, detained and restrained the distribution vehicles of some media houses in the country. Without any provocation, soldiers invaded newspapers distribution centers in Abuja and other major Nigerian cities confiscating and destroying thousands of copies of different

newspapers. The new measures were said to be based on intelligence report that some newspaper distribution vehicles were being used to convey arms, ammunition and other explosive devices to terrorists.

The media clampdown came days after the government, through the then information minister, Labaran Maku, warned the media not to give “free publicity,” saying they must “define the lines between the urge to report and the need to protect the interest of our nation.” Some of the most targeted newspapers had published critical articles about the army. For instance, Daily Trust published a story in which it detailed how some military chiefs shared a land originally intended for building a barracks among themselves and their families. Also, Leadership reported that 10 generals and five other senior army officers had been court-martialed and found guilty of supplying arms to Boko Haram. The military later denied the story (See TNV, June 7, 2014).

Journalists and news outlets have been targeted by both sides in Nigeria's protracted war against extremist sect Boko Haram, which seeks to establish Islamic rule in northern Nigeria. Security agents have used the pretext of the insurgency to threaten, harass, detain, and seize the equipment of journalists. Boko Haram has also threatened and carried out attacks on journalists and media outlets over reporting deemed unfavorable to their cause (CPJ, June 6 2014). Section 22 of the constitution imposes an obligation on the mass media. That Section states that the press, which includes newspapers, magazines, radio, televisions and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in chapter two of the constitution and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people. The clampdown is therefore, seen as a breach of the Nigerian constitution and a stark reminder of dark days of military despotism in the country.

The vast majority of Nigerian citizens still do not enjoy civil liberties. This is because the government lacks a general monopoly on the use of force as well as the political will or judicial control. This means that security forces, militias, vigilantes, religious fundamentalists and criminal gangs regularly violate civil liberties. In addition, torture and ill-treatment in police custody and extrajudicial killings are still part and parcel of law enforcement operations. The state lacks the ability to protect women and girls, particularly those of lower status, from

violence: rape, spousal abuse, female circumcision and abuses perpetrated through customary law (BTI 2012:9).

The legislative arm of government has failed in its obligation to checkmate the authoritarian tendencies of the executive. As noted by Frank and Ukpere, (2012:289), in the wake of the attack which was unleashed on ‘Odi’ community in ‘Bayelsa State’ by a detachment of the Nigerian troops in November 1999, the National Assembly failed to call the President to order, but kept mute in cold complicity. The invasion of ‘Zaki Biam’ in Benue state took place shortly afterwards, both houses of the national assembly also kept mute on the issue. This was one of the outcomes of militarized psyche which cherished obedience without complaint. While assessing the Obasanjo administration in relation to his style of governance and militarisation of the polity, Tinubu (2009) opines that:

The grandest irony of Gen. Obasanjo’s much vilified administration was that whereas he succeeded in the formal de-politicization of the Nigerian military, he came spectacularly unstuck in the demilitarisation of the democratic polity. To ensure his self survival, the ruthless purge of the political elements in the military, which the media hailed as the purge of the “IBB boys”, was perhaps the most lethal tactical move to rid the military of political careerists clothed in military fatigue. Since the forced exit of officers who had had more-than-decent exposure to politics and all its plums during the military era, all appear to have been calm on the military front. The Army itself appears to have taken fresh pride in re-professionalising itself and taken political power as sweet poison. But in the more strategic turf of implanting democracy ethos and effectively purging the polity of ruinous militarisation, Gen. Obasanjo as civilian president fell flat. He not only had an anti-democratic temper, with a penchant for viewing dissenting views as enemies to be crushed, his authoritarian streak vaporised his putative authority.

Consequently, there has been a marked increase in reports of human rights violations by the security forces in the country particularly under this dispensation. In a report by the Amnesty International titled: “Welcome to Hell Fire: Torture and other ill-treatment in Nigeria”, the organization describes the brutality in Nigeria as “medieval witch-hunt”. Torture and other ill-treatment by Nigeria’s police and military are pervasive: routine and common throughout the country, in particular in the north. Hundreds of women, men and children in police and military custody across the country are being subjected to a range of physical and psychological torture or other ill-treatment. A large number have already died in detention (<http://www.amnesty.org>).

The organization depicts the military and especially the police force as having institutionalized torture through designated informal torture officers in police stations and military detention camps across the country.

Intimidation is a weapon of warfare deployed by the military to psyche the enemy. It is a psychological approach to warfare. This has been extrapolated into the democratic milieu. The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) has been used as a mechanism to intimidate political opponents to toe the same part with the executive. Impeachment had been used as an instrument of intimidation. This had been successfully employed in the impeachments (Frank, and Ukpere, 2012:289). In December 2005, seven out of the State Assembly's 24 members in Bayelsa State voted in favour of the impeachment of Governor Diepreye Alamiyeseigha; In November 2006, a five-man House impeached Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State under a tight security; in January 2006, 18 out of the 32 members of the House impeached Governor Rasheed Ladoja of Oyo State; and in Ekiti, under controversial circumstances, Governor Ayo Fayose was impeached by 25 out of the 26 lawmakers on October 16, 2006. On November 20, 2014, seven members of the Ekiti State House of Assembly, who were provided with full compliments of security stormed the House and impeached the principal officers. In all these instances, the security agencies were massively deployed to state Houses of Assembly premises to ensure thorough implementation of these acts.

The National Parliament has also suffered similar fate. On November 20, 2014, armed mobile policemen and hooded men of the Department of State Security (DSS) barricaded the entrance to the hallowed chambers of the assembly to prevent its members and leaders from gaining entrance into the chambers to perform their lawful duty. Despite the courteous behaviour of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, who identified himself, the armed security personnel did not balk. They went ahead to violate the rights of the members of the lower house who were harassed and tear-gassed. Out of sheer desperation, some of them jumped the fence to gain access and prevent what was perceived by them as an attempt to impeach the Speaker who had a few weeks earlier defected from the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC) (The Guardian, December 4, 2014).

This is considered a dreadful and dangerous road which the country has travelled before with grave consequences. In 1962, during the constitutional crisis in the old Western Region, the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, in an evidently partisan and unconstitutional manner, ordered the police to invade the Western Region House of Assembly, in which there was a fracas, and ordered the closure of the Assembly. Subsequently, he declared a state of emergency in the region, and handed it over to a sole administrator. It was a script written and acted upon to destroy the Action Group (AG) government of the region. This wanton assault on democracy in the West eventually led to the first military intervention of January 15, 1966, in Nigeria, an event that eventually led to our bloody three-year civil war in which millions of Nigerians died. The country has not yet fully recovered from the consequences of that single action by Prime Minister Balewa of taking over the government of the Western Region in circumstances that were plainly absurd and unconstitutional (Fafowora, 2014).

A Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Emeka Ngige (*The Punch*, 2014) expresses concern over this development: “It is part of the danger of our militarised democracy. This will not do this country any good. A situation where a Chief Judge is surrounded by soldiers with a view to setting up a panel leaves much to be desired. I don’t think that is what the drafters of our constitution had in mind when they created various arms of government to handle impeachment. When you bring in the soldiers to now meddle in the process, then you are polluting the entire exercise”.

Conclusion

One of the major legacies of military rule in Nigeria is the erosion and destruction of the institutional capacity and autonomy of public institutions, which in the main constitute the institutional infrastructure for a stable democratic order. These include the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the police force, the electoral institution, and public parastatals and agencies (Adejumobi, 1999:10). Even with this dispensation, a complete overhaul of politics from its military roots, especially in a body politic that has become so atomized and, in which the symbols, values, and ethos of the military are replicated in large sections of the civil-society, still appears a long way to come. Yet for the country to attain stable civil-military relations, a critical task in consolidating Nigeria’s fragile democracy and rebuilding stable civil-military relations is

reclaiming the militarized mind, which has been fed by a deep-seated feeling of social exclusion under military rule. Given the prevailing political culture - bred by three decades of militarism and authoritarian control in Nigeria, the current political transition only represents a reconfiguration of the political, economic and military elite, rather than an opening up of the political system and broadening of participation (Fayemi, 2012).

Military disengagement from politics represents an important first step towards democratic control, even if it does not equate with or immediately translate to civilian, democratic control. Broken free of years of repression and control under military rule, many communities are adopting military strategy in responding to any form of domination in their lives. The greatest challenge to addressing the scourge of political militarism therefore is addressing the psychology of militarism that has become reified in the context of this exclusionary politics. Herein lies the paradox of democratization and demilitarization not just in Nigeria, but the rest of post-cold war Africa (ibid). The process of military disengagement from the political arena, according to Adejumobi, (1999:12), has been concluded in Nigeria; however, the process of demilitarization, conceived in a broader sense, is yet to be fully accomplished. Demilitarization from this perspective involves more than the formal notion of military withdrawal from politics, to include the deconstruction of authoritarian and militaristic rules, norms, and practices in the state and civil society.

Suffice it to say that the citizens and other stakeholders should also imbibe the culture of democratic values. For democratic values to be passed on to the members of a given society, formally or informally, the political culture within a given country should be conducive to democratic ideals. For example, it is difficult to expect democracy to take root in a dictatorship. Even where the climate is conducive to the success of democracy, it has to become part and parcel of the people's culture. Understanding democracy as a value also means that it will be practised at all levels and in all spheres of life. It is not just limited to areas of formal political leadership but instead forms a guiding principle, even in everyday life. Thus, if democracy as a value is being understood, supported and internalised by the citizens it should be practised, for example, in families, communities, schools, at workplaces and within CSOs. That way, every citizen in a democratic society is socialised into the society's democratic norms and practices (Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011:11).

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