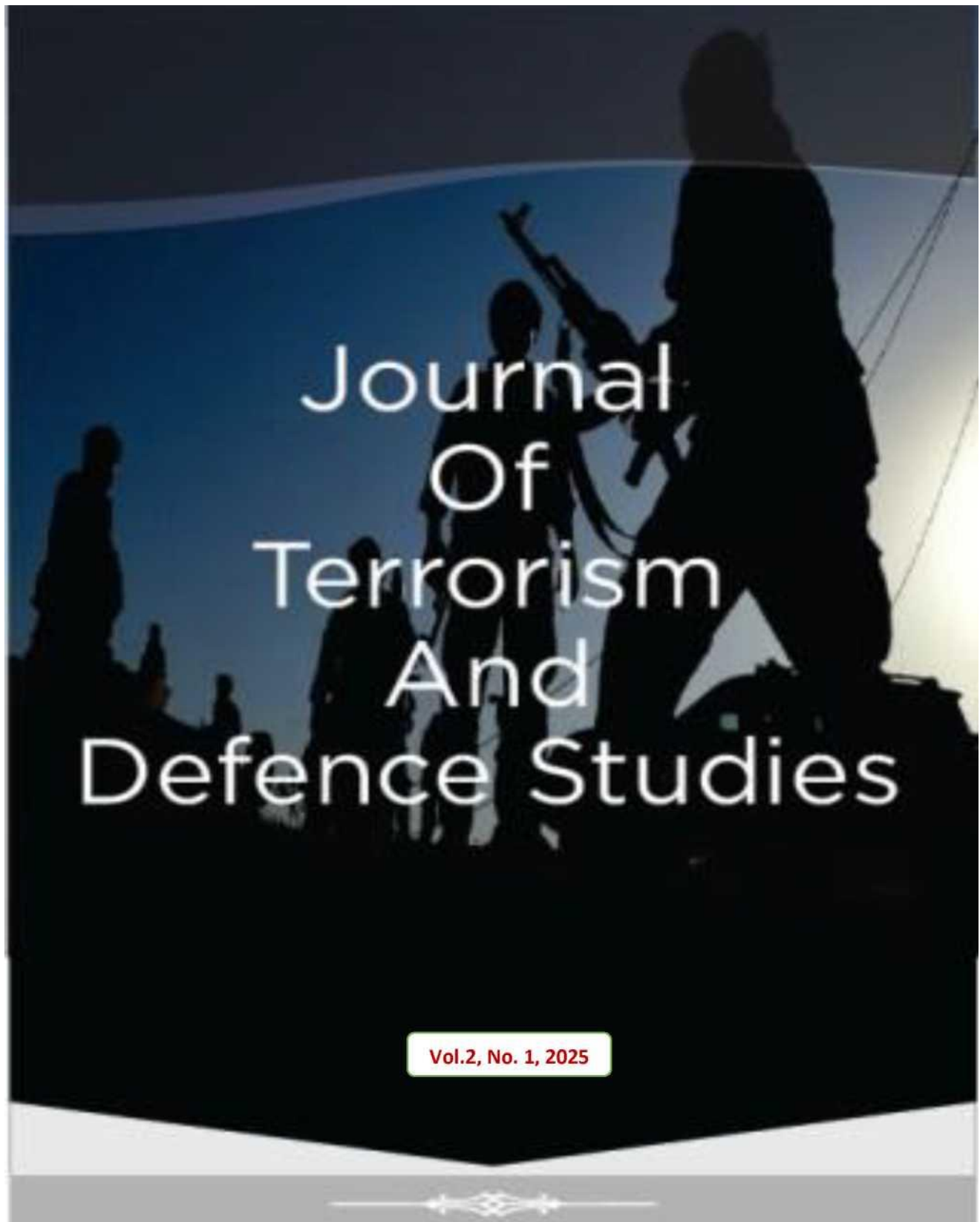




DOI: <https://doi.Org/10.69778/3007-7176/2025/2.1/EN>

EDITORIAL NOTE

This special issue started with a wholistic review of the different dynamics of insecurity and defence threats within the African states.

The first article presented the challenges of kidnapping, terrorism and police brutality in Nigeria. It reveals that the Nigerian state has been weighed down by the multiple threats of progressive terrorism often carried out through mass abduction of villagers, groups and targeted travelers. Unfortunately, the hope of the victims for rescue is often worsened by the increasing culture of police brutality, which turns the expected saviors into part of the popular source of terror.

The second article presents military coups as a major threat in West Africa. In contemporary times, West African states have become a centerpiece of continuous coups and failed coups. This wind of coups in West Africa is largely driven by the culture of corruption, nepotism and bad governance which creates ungoverned spaces for insecurity and a beautiful environment for coup plotters to launch their attacks and win public opinion. The article that followed unraveled the negative wind of human trafficking and the negative psychology as well as false hope that drives victims into the untold hardship. The situation is worsened by the crisis of untold hardship that goes with reintegration.

Furthermore, the next article presented the crisis faced in the Contemporary Zimbabwean state. These crisis were driven by a combination of neocolonialism, bad governance, land crisis and poor fiscal policy which weakened national spirit of development and undermined nation building process in Zimbabwe. The last article evaluated the culture of military rule. It unveils the multiple corruption, nepotism, ethnicity and human rights violations within the Nigerian state under military rule. The implications became that the Nigerian state was high jacked and pushed away from the part of democratization towards the part of militarism in the post-independence years of the state.

Finally, I wish to invite you to take your time and read through the wonderful contents of the articles. They are highly scholarly and have sound promise of satisfying your intellectual appetite.

Kelechi Johnmary Ani
General Studies Unit,
Ebonyi State University of ICT, Science and Technology,
Oferekpe, Nigeria.
kani4christ@gmail.com

TABLE OF CONTENT:

Understanding Insecurity Issues in Nigeria: A Qualitative Study on Kidnapping, Terrorism, and Police Brutality <i>Akinwale, Gbenusola. A. & Edun, Olabamiji S.</i>	4
Military Coups and Governance Crises in West African States <i>Kelechi Johnmary Ani & Olawale Yemisi</i>	20
Understanding Human Trafficking As a Global Crisis and Its Devastating Impact on Victims' Identity, Psychological Well-Being, and Socioeconomic Reintegration <i>Chukwuma, Uchechi Friday & Akinwale, Gbenusola Abike & Idoko, Roseline Ihotu</i>	31
Political Volatility, Financial and Development Issues in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe, 1980-2008 <i>Kelechi Collins Okoro & Oluchukwu Nnenna Orizu</i>	44
The Legacy of Military Rule in Nigeria: Militarized Governance, Democratic Deficits, and Implications For National Security <i>Vincent Okwudiba Anyika & Kelechi Johnmary Ani</i>	55
Corruption And The Nigerian State, 1960-2007: A Theoretical Overview <i>Meshach Ofuafor</i>	71

DOI: <https://doi.Org/10.69778/3007-7176/2025/2.1/a5>

THE LEGACY OF MILITARY RULE IN NIGERIA: MILITARIZED GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRATIC DEFICITS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Vincent Okwudiba Anyika

Department of History and Strategic Studies
Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike Ikwo,
Nigeria

Email: anyika.okwudiba@funai.edu.ng

&

Kelechi Johnmary Ani

International Relations and Diplomacy
University of The Gambia
kjani@utg.edu.gm

Abstract

Military rule has remained a fundamental challenge to the rise of sustainable democracy in Africa. This study explores the legacy of military rule in Nigeria and its implications for national security. The aim of the study is to identify the impact of military rule on Nigeria's democratic process and its implication for national security. The study is anchored on Huntington's objective civilian control theory. The theoretical model offers explanation for the various military incursions into Nigeria's politics. The theory also suggests best approaches for optimal civilian-military relations that would make the military remain apolitical. The study employs a qualitative secondary data analysis approach. Data were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, media reports, books, government reports and historical documentaries. The study from its analyses of the various military regime in Nigeria posits that military involvement in leadership of developing democracies like Nigeria alters political equilibrium and hampers the development democratic processes. The study surmises that military intervention in politics has serious national security implication as it undermined national security by fostering institutional fragility, resource diversion, and persistent instability. It recommends the professionalism of the Nigeria military through training and doctrine reforms, institutional barriers to politics, welfare and accountability to enhance its focus on violence management, counterterrorism, border crisis and other threats that undermine the domestic and geo-political space of Nigeria.

Keywords: Military, coup, democracy, national security, Nigeria

Introduction

The political history of most developing countries is fraught with incessant or intermittent incursion of the military into governance. Military involvement in leadership of developing democracies alters political equilibrium and hampers the development democratic processes. In advanced democracies, the military is

traditionally insulated from politics and are expected to remain under civilian administration. In most developing countries, especially African states, the military has repeatedly waded into national politics and has often constituted itself into a dynamic force in the political process. Despite the fact that the involvement of the military in politics is considered an aberration, the military has

had very prolonged stay in the governance of some states in the developing countries.

In most instances, the military invade national politics and capture state power on the ground of salvaging the state from civilian ineptitude or forestalling total breakdown of law and order but eventually turn out to perpetuate itself in power. Nigeria is a typical scenario where the military has repeatedly intervened in the political processes and have played major roles in the reshaping of Nigeria's political culture. From the 1960 when Nigeria got her independence up to the onset of the fourth republic in 1999, Nigeria has had six military juntas totalling to about thirty years of military rule. Altogether, Nigeria witnessed five successful coup d'états that led to change of government; these include the coups of January 15, 1966; July 29, 1966; July 29, 1975; December 31, 1983; and that of August 27, 1985 including the swift take over governance from the Interim National Government in 1993 by the military. There were also unsuccessful coups which include that of February 1979 and that of April 1990. Among the six successful coup d'états that were experienced in Nigeria, only two targeted and sacked civilian administration; that of January 1966 and that of December 1983; others brought about regime changes. The common factors cited for by the military for their intervention in Nigerian politics include pervasive corruption, economic mismanagement, indiscipline, ineptitude of political officers, breakdown of law and order, and ethnic politics (Nwosu & Ofoegbu, 1986). Hence, the military see their wading into governance as salvific missions. A critical appraisal of the military involvement in Nigerian politics does not effectively place the military in good light.

Although some positive developmental strides were ascribed to the military, their conducts seem not to have qualified them for the saviour attributes that they always claim, for instance, the Nigerian Civil War could have been

averted if the military were not in governance. Also, the unwholesome dictatorship of past military heads of state such as Buhari, Babangida and Abacha leaves much to be desired. This study appraises the activities of the military in the course of their governance missions in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts Huntington's objective civilian control theory as espoused in his work, *The Soldier and the State* (1957). Huntington's objective civilian control theory asserts that civilians achieve optimal control over the military by maximizing its professionalism, thereby isolating soldiers from politics and ensuring their subordination as apolitical experts. The theory posits that military professionalism - defined by expertise, cohesion, and apolitical loyalty - ensures civilian supremacy without direct interference. Huntington's model serves as a benchmark for evaluating praetorian tendencies in post-colonial African states. Huntington (1957), defines professional military as experts in violence management, corporately cohesive, and responsible to the state (Huntington, 1957). It achieves objective civilian control by remaining apolitical, focusing solely on operational duties while deferring to elected leaders on policy (Huntington, 1957). This separation ensures military effectiveness without coups, as seen in stable democracies like the post WWII U.S. (Huntington, 1957). According to Huntington (1957) praetorian societies feature fragmented civilian politics unable to monopolize power, inviting military intervention. Militaries here lack professionalism, intervening repeatedly due to low political institutionalization, as in Latin America or post-colonial Africa. Huntington view this as unstable, with soldiers acting as political arbiters rather than neutral experts.

Huntington's model underscores that optimal civilian control emerges from

professionalizing the military, isolating it from politics to maximize effectiveness and subordination. This objective approach contrasts with subjective control's politicization risks, providing analytical lenses for dissecting military interventions where institutional weakness invites praetorianism, as hypothesized in Nigeria's recurrent coups.

The Coup 1966, Civil War and Gowon's Regime

The coup of January 15, 1966 was masterminded by some junior officers of the Nigerian army led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna. Other junior officers that were involved in the coup include Timothy Onwuatuwegwu, Chris Anuforo, Don Okafor, Humphrey Chikwuka, Adewale Ademoyega, and others. The coup terminated Nigeria's first republic. Some key politicians of the first republic were killed in the course of the coup; these included the Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Premier of the Northern Region, Ahmadu Bello, Premier of the Western Region, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Finance Minister, Festus Okotie- Eboh, among others. Following the coup, Major General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi was installed as the military head of state.

Before the coup executioners struck, the Nigerian political space was rift with crises which included the Tiv riot in the Middle Belt, the 1963 election crises, political turmoil in the Western region caused by rivalry between Akintola and Awolowo; and a host of other political crises that created tension in the political space (Dudley, 1973). The involvement of the military in the supervision of the 1964 elections and the use of the military in the quelling of some turbulence that marred the first republic brought military men so close to the political process and no doubt made them think that the military is better positioned for governance.

The masterminds of the January 1966 coup

were naive and inexperienced. The coup plotters and executioners were in no way involved in the government that emerged from the coup as they were mainly junior officers. Also, the way the coup was executed made it appear lopsided. The fact that the victims of the coup were mostly from the northern and western regions lends some justifications to the claim that the coup was an Igbo agenda. Hence, some military elements mostly from the north perceived the coup as a conspiracy of Igbo officers against northern political domination of the country. Also, the facts that the outcome of the coup was the installation of an Igbo commander-in-chief of the army and that the regime of Aguiyi Ironsi failed to proceed upon inception with the trial of the coup plotters strengthened the feeling that the January coup was aimed at furthering Igbo political agenda.

Ironsi upon assumption of power promulgated Decree Number 34 of 1966 which abrogated the Federal system of government and substituted it with a unitary system. His regime was barely seven months when a counter coup occurred which claimed the lives of top ranking Igbo army officers including the that of the head of state, Aguiyi Ironsi. The northern military elements who had felt that the January coup was intended at eliminating northern domination of Nigerian politics used the July coup to restore northern domination. The July 1966 coup brought in Lieutenant Colonel (later General) Yakubu Gowon, a northerner from the Middle Belt, as the head of state. Upon assumption of power, Gowon re-established the Federal system; with the re-allocation of powers to the regional government structure. The emergence of Gowon was not welcome by the military governor of the eastern region, Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. Ojukwu failed to recognise Gowon on the ground that the most senior officer in the army should have been installed as head of state instead of Gowon. Also, the killing of many military

officers from the Eastern region during the July coup and the continued killing of many Igbo residents in the north after the July coup made the Igbo resent the northern controlled Federal Government; relations between the Federal Government and Eastern Region was greatly strained. Many Igbo people returning to places of their origin in the heat of the crises were targeted and eliminated (Okwatteng, 1993). The pogrom against the Igbo created huge tension in the federation and the Igbo became convinced that the only place they could remain safe was in the Eastern region. In September 1966, Gowon convened an ad-hoc constitutional conference aimed at deliberating on the political future of the country. The delegates with exception of those from the Mid-West region recommended a confederal system of government to replace the federal system. Delegates from the Eastern region insisted that any region wishing to secede should be allowed to do so (Dudley, 1973). The conference ended suddenly as the tension between the Federal government and Eastern Region heightened due to continued killing of the Igbo in the north. In an attempt to resolve the disagreement between the Eastern regional and Federal Government, a summit of military leaders was convened in Aburi, Ghana in January 1967. At the summit, it was agreed upon that a base confederal region be established (Dudley, 1973). Other agreements reached at the summit are still being contended.

To pre-empt the secession of the Eastern region from the federation, Gowon make frantic moves to weaken the support base of the Eastern region creating 12 states to replace the four existing regions. This would enable him balkanize the Eastern region through the granting of separate states to the minority ethnic groups in the Eastern region. It would be recalled that these minority groups had since 1950 demanded for statehood within the Nigerian federation but government played down their demands through the

recommendations of the Willink's Commission. By 1967, Gowon in his political permutation considered that carving out the minority areas from the Eastern region and granting them statehood is way of weakening the Igbo controlled Eastern region. Thus, he went on to create the 12 states thereby bring the four regional structure to an end.

Although the Eastern region was nurturing the intention of seceding from Nigeria, the creation of states by Gowon on May 27, 1967 made the Military Governor or the region announce the secession of the Eastern region, declaring the region as the Independent State of Biafra. In an attempt to crush the rebellion, the Federal Government launched an offensive against the region seven days after the declaration of the State of Biafra. The attack resulted to the Nigerian Civil War which lasted for thirty (30) months (June 1966-January 1970). The war ended with the declaration of an unconditional ceasefire by Biafra. In the spirit of reconciliation, Gowon accepted the ceasefire announcement by the rebel and declared "no victor, no vanquished".

In the aftermath of the war, Gowon announced a policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation to be pursued by his government aimed at reintegration the People of the former Eastern Region into the country, and reconstructing infrastructural facilities affected by the civil war. The increasing oil revenue at the time gave the Federal government the financial muscle to implement the 3Rs policy.

Ten months after the civil war, General Gowon announced that his administration would hand over to a civilian government in 1976. Gowon was later to shatter the hopes of Nigerians on the proposed transition to a civilian administration when he announced in October 1974 that after careful deliberation and consultation that the target of 1976 was in the circumstances unrealistic and that it would indeed amount to betrayal to adhere rigidly to

the target date (Anyika, 2012). Nigerians were saddened by the truncation of the transition programme by Gowon. One of reasons for the eventual toppling of Gowon's regime in 1975 was the squashed transition programme.

Apart from his failed transition process, Gowon initiated some nation building policies. One of the notable nation-building policies of his regime was the establishment of the national Youth Service Corps (NYSC), a community service scheme that required one compulsory year of national service from every Nigerian graduate under the age of 30 upon graduation from the university of other institutions of higher learning. Every participant in the scheme is expected to serve in a state other than his or her home state. The scheme has helped in promoting inter-ethnic relations. Millions of Nigerian youth have participated in the scheme.

Another unique feature of Gowon's administration was that he operated a command system of federalism with an over concentration of power at the centre. At the apex of his government was the all-military Supreme Military Council (SMC) which was the sole law-making body for the nation. The decrees of the SMC could not be challenged in any court of law. Members of the SMC were mostly military state governors. Besides the SMC, there was also the Federal Executive Council made up of military and civilian commissioners. At the state level, the military governor appointed commissioners. The states under Gowon's administration were reduced to mere administrative units. Federal Government in several domains made uniform laws for the entire country (Adams. 1993).

Following his scuttling of the proposed transition programme, a wave of protest by the Nigerian students raged across the nation resulting in the closing of several universities in February 1975 (New York Times, July 30, 1975). Also, labour unions seeking higher pay staged numerous protests and strikes in various parts of the country. At the time of the

labour protests, Nigeria's oil revenue stood at \$11 billion a year making the country one of the wealthiest nations in Africa (New York Times, July 30, 1975). Furthermore, the Gowon's administration was greatly troubled by the demands for the creation of more states out of the 12 states created in 1967.

The Mohammed/Obasanjo Regime

The government of General Gowon was ousted in a bloodless coup that took place on July 29, 1975. The end of his nine-year rule was announced while he was abroad attending OAU meeting in Kampala, Uganda (New York Times, July 30, 1975). The announcement was made by a man regarded as his closest friend, Col. Namwan Garba, commander of the Elite Guards Brigade which had usually protected chief of state in his Lagos headquarters (New York Times, July 30, 1975). Colonel Garba stated that he and his fellow officers had decided to remove General Gowon as chief of state and commander-in-chief of Nigeria's armed forces following what has been happening in the country in the past few months. Later on, it was announced in the Lagos radio that the military had given the post of head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces to Brigadier Muritala Rufai Mohammed, a former inspector of communications for the armed forces (New York Times, July 30, 1975). It was also announced that Brigadier Olusegun Obasanjo has been named the chief of staff of Supreme headquarters; Brig. T.Y. Danjuma, chief of army staff; Commodore Michael Adewale, chief of naval staff; John Issa Duku, chief of air staff; and Alhaji M.D. Yusufu, inspector General of police.

Muritala Mohammed, a Hausa from the present Kano State in northern Nigeria, ruled for only seven months before his assassination in an unsuccessful coup that took place on February 13, 1976. The unsuccessful coup that resulted to the killing of Mohammed was led by Colonel Bukar Dimka, an army officer

from the Middle Belt. The coup was possibly an attempt by the Middle Belt officers to bring back Gowon who was also of the Middle Belt from his self imposed exile and reinstate him as head of state. Following the failure of the coup, Muritala's second in command, Olusegun Obasanjo took over as head of state. Obasanjo continued with the plans and policies of Muritala Mohammed. During his short stay as head of state, Mohammed made radical reforms in the domestic and foreign policy domain which endeared him to the heart of many Nigerians. He purged the public service, parastatals, universities and other government agencies of individuals accused of being corrupt, inefficient and indolent (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994).

In his efforts to address the lingering demand for the creation of new states, Mohammed set up a panel headed by Justice Ayo Irikefe, to look into the demands for state creation and advise the government on the creation of more states. It was based on the report of the panel that additional seven (7) states were created in 1976. Mohammed also set up a panel headed by Justice Akintola Aguda to deliberate on whether a new federal capital should be created following the congestion of Lagos. The panel recommended for the establishment of a new federal capital at Abuja in the southern part of the defunct northern region (Amuwo, 1993). To counteract the ostentatious life style that characterized the Gowon's administration, Muritala Mohammed introduced "the low profile" policy for government officials.

Muritala Mohammed modified the structure of the Nigeria's military federalism. He removed military governors from the Supreme Military Council and created a new body called the National Council of States for including the military governors at the centre. This modification was intended at emphasizing the subordinate position of state governors to enable the head of state exert greater control of the state governors (Reno, 1993). In the

realm of foreign policy, the regime of Mohammed armed by increasing oil revenue pursued a robust and vigorous foreign policy that placed Africa at the centre of Nigeria's foreign policy. Mohammed provided active support to liberation movement in the African continent, especially in southern African region.

Before his death, Muritala Mohammed initiated a transition programme that will culminate in the transfer of power to a civilian administration by October 1, 1979. The stages of the programmes included the creation of more states, reform of the Nigerian local government system, making of a new constitution, formation of new political parties and election of a new government. The transition programme was implemented to the letter by Obasanjo who took over governance after the death of Muritala Mohammed in 1976.

Obasanjo initiated other reforms in public service. He established the Public Complaints Commission in all states of the Federation and in the capital. The commission however could not stem the tide of corruption in public service and in the economy. Obasanjo's administration further expanded the economic indigenization policy started by the Gowon's administration. It promulgated the Land Use Decree of 1978 which it used to rationalize Nigeria's inconsistent land tenure systems to reduce the crippling land speculation and curb frequent litigations over individual and community property rights as well as facilitate the acquisition of land for modern agricultural purposes (Agbese & Kieh, 1992).

Obasanjo's administration also launched the famous Operation Feed the Nation, a policy programme that was intended at countering the rapid rise in food export. The Operation Feed the Nation was considered a failure by many critics (Reno, 1993). In the final year of his administration, Obasanjo introduced some austerity measures and insisted on low profile policy for all government officials. He was

aware that despite Nigeria's huge oil fortunes, the country was still largely underdeveloped and that most Nigerian businesses were intermediaries or agents of foreign businesses. Such circumspective attitude exhibited by Obasanjo was rarely seen in the successive squandermania regimes that rode on the crest of increasing oil revenue and depleted the national revenue faster than they could be realised leaving the country knee deep in debt with a shambolic national economy.

The Buhari Regime

On December 31, 1983, the government of President Shehu Shagari was ousted by a military coup. The military cited economic mismanagement, political corruption, inept leadership, breakdown of law and order as the reasons for its intervention. Major General Muhammadu Buhari, a northerner from present Katsina and former member of the SMC assumed the office the head of state. Major General Tunde Idiagbon became the chief of staff at Supreme Headquarters and by implication second in command in the military government. The Buhari regime maintained the military government structure of the Muritala/Obasanjo regime.

The Buhari regime from its inception was faced with challenge of salvaging Nigeria's economy from imminent collapse. The economy which had greatly plummeted in the Second Republic owing to reckless spending and rapid drop in the price of crude oil had become heavily indebted to several foreign financial institutions and continued slide in the price of crude oil has occasioned serious budgetary deficit. Thus, the military government needed proactive economic policies to remedy the situation. Buhari blamed the country's economic misfortune on the excesses of the Second Republic politicians. His administration detained and investigated some top politicians of the Second Republic.

Buhari's administration was notable for its

repressive decrees and labour policies. Activities of labour union and other interest groups were stifled. The Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) were outlawed. Many labour unions were constrained. The Decree Number 4 of the Buhari regime forbade journalists from reporting information considered embarrassing to any government official (Adamolekun, 1985). Two journalists, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor were convicted under the Decree. Decree Number 2 which was promulgated by the Buhari regime gave the chief of staff at the Supreme Headquarters the power to detain for up to six months without trial anyone considered a security threat. The law court became increasingly replaced by special military tribunals. The National Security Organization which was the state security agency was given great powers. The Buhari regime in its efforts to address the problem of indiscipline in the public domain especially with respect to decorum, environmental sanitation, corruption, smuggling and disloyalty to national symbols such as flag and anthem, launched the War Against Indiscipline (WAI). Accepted forms of behaviour and conduct in the public were specified and defaulters were severely dealt with. Public floggings became common sights during the Buhari regime. Offences such as jumping of queue or non-use of bus stop could attract immediate flogging by the soldiers.

In an attempt to tackle the main challenge of the regime which was economic recovery, the regime introduced some austerity measures. It closed Nigeria's borders for a period, expelled illegal alien workers and placed several restrictions on import as well as place heavy penalties on smuggling and foreign exchange offences. The government also retrenched many of its workers in order to increase cost effectiveness. Despite the imposed austerity measures, high inflation rate continued to

prevail in the economy (Reno, 1993). Life became so difficult for both the rich and the poor. The price of basic food items skyrocketed, causing serious discontentment among many citizens.

The inflexibility of the regime and worsening economic situation caused wide resentment of the regime's policies by the citizens, hence, providing justification for the toppling of the Buhari regime by General Ibrahim Babangida in a palace coup on August 27, 1985.

The Babangida Regime

Babangida was the sixth military ruler that Nigeria had. He was a northerner of Gwari origin from the present Niger State. Babangida was said to have been involved in all successful coups that occurred in Nigeria before he came to power (Adams, 1993). His confidence in handling national affairs stems from his long involvement in military governance of Nigeria. He was also said to be the most unpredictable of Nigeria military rulers (Adams, 1993). Unlike Buhari who was sterner and more resolute, Babangida was more tactical and defter (Luckham, 1994).

Babangida took advantage of the repressive Buhari regime and came with a promise of championing human rights. He released all politicians of the Second Republic that were incarcerated by the Buhari regime. He, however, retained the infamous Decree Number 2 of the Buhari regime. He also clamped down on opposition interest groups especially labour and student unions. Radical political activists and critics were detained by his administration.

One of the major reasons given by Babangida for the overthrow of the Buhari regime was to implement economic policies that will take the Nigerian economy out of crisis. One year after his seizing of power, Babangida declared a National Economic Emergency. To take the economy out of lingering budgetary deficits, his regime was faced with the option of accepting the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) loan with the conditions attached or implementing more drastic austerity measures that would require great sacrifices from the citizens. Most Nigerian favoured the later as the former was considered an embarrassment to national sovereignty. However, Nigerians later realized that the suffering anticipated from the IMF conditionality was not different from the ones brought about by the austerity measures. Hence, the economic recovery programme by the World Bank was implemented as a self-imposed Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). SAP involved a drastic restructuring of the country's economy.

Under the structural the Structural Adjustment Programme, human sufferings in Nigeria towered unmitigated, unemployment rate soared, education and health services' fees rose significantly as well. The regime remained resilient in its implementation of SAP. The programme was considered by the regime to have long term positive impact and as the only means of overcoming budgetary deficits through foreign loan acquisition. Also, as part of the structural reforms recommended by the World Bank, Babangida initiated economic reforms that would lead to a market system and political reforms that would lead to a democratic system. Significant changes were made in the structure of the military federalism. The title of president was adopted for the military head of state to emphasize the executive powers that he wielded. The name of the supreme law-making body of the regime was changed from Supreme Military Council to Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). In 1989, he formed a new body called the Armed Forces Consultative Assembly which functioned as an intermediate legislative chamber between the AFRC and the rest of the military. Babangida through his methodical manipulations became a very powerful military president. He changed his ministers and state governors at will. Any member of his cabinet constituting any perceived threat was

dropped. For instance, in 1986 he dropped his second in command, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe and appointed Rear Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, a former chief of naval staff to take his position. His administration witnessed dramatic changes in the last quarter of 1989 as several ministers were re-assigned including General Donkat Bali, the Minister of Defence and chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. Babangida's pattern of making changes were said to reflect his pro-Muslim and northern agenda (Reno, 1993). Most of his key appointees were Muslims and from the north. Among the three service chiefs, only one was from the south, the rest were Muslims from the north. Also, the police chief was a northern Muslim. Key ministerial positions such as the ministers of petroleum resources, internal affairs, external affairs and defence were held by northern Muslims. Babangida's pattern of appointment generated heated controversies and religious tension in the polity resulting in anti-government demonstrations by Christians (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1994). To some critics, Babangida from his actions came with a hidden mandate of fulfilling some Islamic agenda. In 1985, when he was still new on the seat, he adopted some measures that favoured the Muslims and threatened the secular nature of the Nigerian state. In 1986, he made Nigeria become a full member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), an international association of Islamic states to which Nigeria has long held observer status. Babangida's religion sensitive actions triggered serious religious sentiments and tensions. He however, reiterated in his several speeches that Nigeria remained a secular state. An unsuccessful coup attempt led by Major Gideon Orkar aimed at toppling the Babangida's regime was made on April 22, 1990. The presidential residence in Dodan Barracks was greatly damaged by the rebellious soldiers but the head of state was able to escape. One unique feature of the coup attempt was that its operation was facilitated

by some civilian financiers. During the hours that the rebellious soldiers were on rampage, they seized the Lagos radio station from which they announced that widespread corruption and excessive dictatorship of the Babangida regime were the major reasons why they struck. The rebellious soldiers also threatened to expel far northern states from the Nigerian federation (Ihonvbere, 1991).

The survival of President Babangida and other senior members of his regime from the coup enabled his government to thrive. The policies of his government continued to be implemented and the transition programme that was initiated for the transfer of power a civilian administration remained on course. Several critiques of Babangida's government were detained including journalists. Some newspapers were banned by the regime. Most Nigerians endured his administration as they looked forward to a transition to civil rule in 1993.

Babangida's transition programme: A review

When General Babangida assumed power in August 1985, he made known his intention to preside over the installation of a democratic and responsive government as well as to do everything possible to make future military intervention in government unattractive (Amuwo, 1993). In one of his speeches in 1985 he stated thus: "It is our determination to break the vicious cycle of hope and despair, faith and doubt, affluence and poverty, stability and chaos which had characterized the past quarter century of our national life" (Amuwo, 1993, p. 110).

Early in 1986, Babangida set up a seventeen-member political bureau with a mandate to prepare the groundwork for the transition programme. At the end of its sittings, the bureau came up with a recommendation for the adoption of a two-party system that will facilitate nation building by forestalling party affiliations along ethnic, regional or religions

lines. The bureau in its report, vehemently passed a vote of confidence on the presidential system of government and recommended it for the Third Republic and proposed the year 1990 as the target year for total disengagement of military in governance (Ihonvbere, 1991).

After the Bureau had submitted its report, the military president handed down the report to the Constitution Review Committee to study and make further recommendations to government. The Community after its deliberation came up with some recommendation which included the extension of the transition programme till 1995. However, after the deliberations of the Armed Forces Ruling Council, 1992 was adopted as the target date for the disengagement of the military from governance and the installation of a democratically elected civilian government.

On October 7, 1989, Babangida banned all political association and established two political parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP). The two parties were imposed on Nigerians as no other political party was allowed to exist. He increased the number of local governments to five hundred and eighty-nine (589) and number of states to thirty (30). In 1990 elections into local government council were conducted. Governorship elections and that of state legislature were conducted in December 1991 with NRC winning 16 states while SDP won 14.

On January 24, 1992 the National Electoral Commission (NEC) announced that elections to the bicameral national assembly and presidential election would be held in 1992. The legislative elections went ahead as planned with the SDP winning majority seats in both houses. In August 1992, NEC annulled the presidential primaries alleging that the process was marred by irregularities and electoral malpractices. Following the cancellation of the party primaries, the Federal Government decided to postpone the

presidential election to June 12, 1993 and extended its transition programme to August 27, 1993. In April 1993, the SDP nominated Moshood Kashimawo Abiola as its presidential candidate while the NRC chose Bashir Tofa as its candidate.

On June 12, 1993, presidential election was held but its results were held back although it had been announced in some states that Abiola won 19 out of 30 states. Rather than allow the announcement of the results to proceed, Babangida decided to annul the election. He went further to issue a decree banning the presidential candidates of both parties from running in new presidential election that he planned to hold (Adams, 1993). Following the annulment of the election which many Nigerians judged peaceful, orderly, free and fair, widespread acts of civil disobedience began to occur across the country especially in the southwest.

On July 6, 1993, the National Defence and Security Council of which Babangida was the president issued an ultimatum to the SDP and NRC ordering them to join an interim national government which would be inaugurated on August 27, 1993. On August 26, following rounds of protests and strikes that rocked the country, Babangida declared that he was stepping down as head of the military regime and that he would be handing over the reins of power to the President of the Interim National Government, an unelected interim administration that he created. Shonekan, a business mogul had been Babangida's close ally.

Having seen the course of the Babangida's transition programme, it could be understood that the programme was not vigorously pursued. There was no utmost determination and sincerity of purpose on the part of the military president. The conduct of Babangida and the Federal Military Government after the articulation and announcement of the transition programme showed that the transition was a mere subterfuge. The

elasticity of the transition programme and annulment of the presidential election demonstrated that Babangida had ulterior motives.

The regime of General Sanni Abacha

On November 18, 1993, the Interim National President, Chief Ernest Shonekan was forced out of office by Babangida's Defence Minister, General Sanni Abacha, a northerner of Kanuri origin. Abacha before his emergence had played very active part in most military coups that occurred in Nigeria (New York Times, November 18, 1993). He was a mean dictator that seemed unmoved by local or international opinion. He was an authoritarian figure that tolerated no opposition. Beginning from 1995, he imprisoned hundreds of his critics including a former military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo and Moshood Abiola who was accused of treasonable felony after he declared himself president, following the annulment of the result of June 12 presidential election.

In October 1995, the looming pressure for political reforms made Abacha announce a three years transition programme to civilian rule. He established the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) which published guidelines for political party formation and registration. The commission registered five political parties in September but failed to recognise some opposition groups as political parties. The five political parties recognized by NECON were the ones that played to the gallery of the regime. They were more or less stooges of the regime. These parties include the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), Congress for National Consensus (CNC), Grassroots Democratic Movement (GDM), and National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN).

By April 1998, the five political parties had nominated and adopted Sanni Abacha as their

sole presidential candidate. Abacha was on course to manipulate the political process to enable him return as a civilian president. His domination of the political process was condemned by the international community and the critics of his government on exile. There were calls for the parliamentary and presidential elections to be boycotted. In the state assembly election that held in December 1997 and National Assembly elections that held in April 1998 the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) which was considered by many members of the opposition groups to be the military's proxy had widespread victories. UNCP won 61 out of 80 senatorial seats and 229 out of 282 seats in the House of Representatives.

Abacha's plan was to return the country to civil rule on October 1, 1998. On that day he would take off his uniform and put on *babanriga* and emerge as a civilian president and thus the first Nigerian military ruler to succeed himself. He was about doing what other military rulers in the country had contemplated but could not achieve. His transition programme was ultimately geared towards self-succession. He never cared about the integrity of the process; all he cared for was to emerge as a civilian president. Despite his grandiose stratagem for self-succession, fate was against him. The best laid plan by man does often go awry. This was the case of Abacha. Death destroyed his well laid plans as he died on June 8, 1998.

The emergence of Major General Abdusalami Abubakar and the transition to civilian administration

Abacha died reportedly of heart attack. Following his sudden demise, the Provisional Ruling Council appointed Abacha's Chief of Staff, Major General Abdusalami Abubakar to replace Abacha as head of state. Abdusalami was of Hausa origin from northern Nigeria. He was described as military intellectual who had served as chief of Military Intelligence under

Babangida. He headed the team that investigated the alleged coup attempts by former military head of state, Olusegun Obasanjo and Lt. General Oladipo Diya, allegations that many Nigerians thought were fabricated. Upon assumption of power, Abubakar addressed the nation and addressed that his government will remain committed to actualizing the October 1998 handover date to civilian administration. He released several prominent prisoners of the Abacha regime including General Obasanjo. He dissolved the five political parties sanctioned by the Abacha's regime. He also replaced members of Abacha's cabinet and security staff. He abrogated the decrees that banned union activities which were used by Abacha to curb political protests. He also lifted the treason charges against Wole Soyinka, a Nobel-prize winning writer and fourteen others. He made candid efforts to persuade many Nigerians on exile to return home and join the transition process. On September 7, 1998 he released a draft constitution for the proposed civilian government and announced later on October 1, that we would set up a committee to collate and organize views from sections of the country in preparation with a view to making changes to the draft constitution and preparing the final version of the constitution. Abubakar earmarked a specific timeline for the transition programme. He nullified previous legislative and gubernatorial elections that were held in Abacha's administration. In August 1998, he terminated the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON) set up by Abacha and replaced it Independent National Election Commission (INEC). According to the new transition outline, local government polls were slated for December 5, 1998; state house of assembly and gubernatorial were fixed for January 9, 1999, National Assembly polls were to hold on February 20 while presidential election was fixed for February 27, 1999. The official handover date the

incoming civilian government was set for May 29, 1999. By October 13, 1998, INEC had finalized political party registration. The names of the nine registered political parties were released by the agency on October 19. Three major political parties that emerged include the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All-People's Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD).

The international community was impressed with Abubakar's efforts to return the country to civilian rule. Donor agencies and some European countries expressed their support to the transition programme and urged the government to make the process transparent. In late July 1998 some European nations such as France, Britain and Germany sent delegations to Abuja to meet with the military leadership of Nigeria on the subject of the transition. Abubakar made several international trips aimed at improving Nigeria's relations with the outside world which was severely tainted by previous military administrations. In late October 1998, the European Union announced that it would lift some sanctions placed on Nigeria including visa ban with effect from November 1. By May, 1999 following the handover to a civilian administration, the European Union restored full economic relations with Nigeria after three years of suspension.

From these conducts, Abubakar demonstrated his determination to return the country to civilian rule. He was very pragmatic about his transition programme with he followed with mechanistic precision. He kept his promise of midwifing the country to a civilian rule. He had no plans to succeed himself as Babangida and Abacha did. Following the intrigues that surrounded Babangida's and Abacha's transition programmed, Abubakar's transition

programme was attracted public suspicion. He however demonstrated his commitment to the process by allowing the elections to hold as scheduled and on May 29, 1999 he handed

over to the winner presidential election, Chief Olusegun Obasango, of the PDP, a former military head of state. The 1999 election was however, characterized by malpractices. The military rigged the election in favour of their choice candidate of Southwest origin. This choice was carefully made to placate the Yoruba for the loss the suffered in Abiola.

Implications of military interventions for national security

Military interventions in Nigeria, spanning coups from 1966 to 1993, have profoundly undermined national security by fostering institutional fragility, resource diversion, and persistent instability. Repeated coups eroded civilian institutions, leading to praetorianism where the military became politicized, reducing its focus on external threats like border incursions and enabling internal insurgencies such as the Civil War. The various military regimes diverted defence budgets toward regime protection rather than modernization, exacerbating equipment shortages and poor intelligence, while human rights abuses alienated communities and fuelled radicalization. Military rules in Nigeria left a long-term legacy in the country. The post-1999 democratization inherited a militarized political architecture prone to heavy-handed tactics, perpetuating cycles of malpractices and suppression of political oppositions by the parties in power.

Conclusion

Military incursion into Nigeria's politics was occasioned by weak democratic institutions in post-colonial Nigeria. The post-colonial Nigerian state was fragile, immature and exuded symptoms characteristic of praetorian states. The professionalism of the military had not been entrenched by the civilian political leaders as suggested by the Huntington's model because the democracy was still emerging and the earlier political leaders probably lacked experienced on civil- military

relations. Thus, the military at various points veered off from their core mandate into politics through seizure of state power and machinery of governance. In summary, the military interventions were a mixed blessing. The military prevented the political system from anarchy and chaos. Some regimes were able to conduct credible elections and transited power to the civilian. The military regime of Murtala Mohammed/Obasanjo was very instrumental to the consolidation of the Nigeria state through its domestic and foreign policies. The regime of General Babangida was known for initiating the Structural Adjustment Policies meant to revive the Nigerian economy and preventing it from total collapse. Some military regime made fair attempts at reviving the democratic process through their conduct of elections and transfer of power to elected civilians. The regimes of General Olusegun Obasanjo, and General Abdulsalami Abubakar were able to conduct elections that led to democratic transitions. The regime General Ibrahim Babangida made significant attempt at rebuilding the Nigeria's democratic landscape through its transition programme and lifting of ban on partisan politics. The regime supported the emergence of ideologybased political parties and was known to have conducted the most credible election in Nigeria's history, however, Babangida did not allow the result of the presidential election to stand due some ulterior political motives. Despite some of its positive contributions, military interference in Nigeria's governance has left some bad footprints on the Nigerian political culture as it bequeaths it an indelible culture of militarism. The presidents and governors that emerged from Nigeria's elections since the militarily contamination of the system, rule like emperors and conduct most of their affairs in secrecy. The tolerance of opposition in the Nigerian system is minimal, all as a result of the military factor. The level of corruption and economic mismanagement that came with the

military was unprecedented. Although, some military leaders such as Obasanjo and Buhari tried to be prudent, others such as Babangida and Abacha were notorious for corruption and embezzlement of public fund. These corrupt military leaders laid groundwork for the institutionalization of corruption in Nigeria. Consequences of their bad examples are still haunting our national life.

Recommendations

The study proffers the following recommendations and measures to keep make the military remain apolitical and focused on its core responsibilities.

- i. Training and doctrine reforms: Concerned stakeholders should implement mandatory apolitical training curricula emphasizing expertise in security operations, corporate cohesion, and loyalty to the constitution over partisan allegiance, drawing from recent COAS directives on mission-oriented programs.
- ii. Establishment independent oversight boards to audit promotions and postings, excluding political appointees, to foster meritocracy and reduce praetorian temptations.
- iii. Institutional barriers to politics: Legislations should be enacted to bar active-duty officers from partisan roles, with swift retirement for violators, and strengthen civilian-led defence ministries to handle policy while granting tactical autonomy.
- iv. Welfare and accountability: The Federal Government should make sincere effort to boost troop welfare through transparent budgets for equipment modernization and salaries, addressing grievances that fuel interventions, as highlighted in 2025 Army conferences.
- v. Introduction of ethics training and whistleblower protections to deter corruption, ensuring the military remains a professional force subordinate to elected civilians.

References

- Adamolekun, L. (1985). *The fall of the Second Republic*. Ibadan: Spectrum.
- Adams, P. (1993). Legacy of the Generals. *African Report*, Vol. 51, No. 12, pp. 57-81.
- African Concord*, April 13, 1992
- Agbese, P.O. & Kieh, G.O. (1992). Nigeria's transition to democracy and the pathological elite thesis. *ZAST*, Vol. 15, No. 16, pp. 102-127
- Amuwo, K. (1993). Transition planning in Nigeria: A critique of the military civil transiting variant. *African Development*, Vol. 18, No. 5, pp. 105-122.
- Anyika, V. O. (2012). "The transition to civilian administration in Nigeria, 1990-1999." B.A. Thesis submitted to the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, University of Port Harcourt.
- Bratton, M. & Van de Walle, N. (1994). Neo-patrimonial regimes and political transitions in Africa. *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 276-305
- Dudley, B.J. (1973). *Instability and political order: Politics and crises in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University Press.
- Huntington, S. P. (1957). *The soldier and the state: The theory and politics of civil-military relations*. Harvard University Press.
- Ihonvbere, J.O. (1991). A critical evaluation of the failed 1990 coup in Nigeria. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 7, pp. 201-226.
- Ijomah, B.I.C. (2000). *Nigeria's transition from military to civilian rule: An overview*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Johnson, J. (1970). *The role of the military in the underdevelopment of countries*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Luckham, R. (1994). The military and militarization of democracy in Africa: A survey of literature and issues. *African Studies Review*, Vol. 37, No.2, pp. 322-341.
- New York Time*, July 30, 1975
- New York Times*, November 18, 1993
- Nwosu, H. & Ofoegbu, R. (1986). *Introduction to politics*. Fourth Dimension Publishers
- Okwatteng, C. (1993). Nigeria's elusive search for nationhood. *Africa Insight*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 87-111.
- Oyediran, O. & Agbaje, A. (1991). Two-partism and democratic transition in Nigeria. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 260-281.
- Reno, W. (1993). Old brigades, money bags, new breeds and the ironies of reform in Nigeria. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 180-113.
- Rotimi, A.O. & Ihonvbere, J.O. (1994). Democratic impasse: Remilitarisation in Nigeria. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 290-314.
- Wiseman, J.A. (1990). *Democracy in black Africa: survival and revival*. New York: Paragon House Publishers.