


## **Nigeria's Trend of Military Administration and Economic Decay: An Analytical Review**

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**Abstract:** In contrast to military control, several countries have adopted democracy in recent years. While some research sees the military as a force for modernisation, other studies see democracy as a stepping stone rather than a result of growth. Tribal divides and inequality grew after Nigeria gained independence in 1960 as a result of the British occupiers' dividing of the country. After then, military involvement changed the political climate in Nigeria. This paper explores Nigeria's military governance and economic deterioration from 1960 to 1999 using historical and descriptive analysis. Along with its accomplishments, the military had to overcome significant obstacles including corruption, economic hardships, and human rights violations. The research places emphasis on how the military has developed into a centre for resource exploitation and corruption. Military commanders accumulated huge private fortunes, dominated industries including banking, agriculture, and real estate, and cemented their power in the economy and politics.

**Keywords:** Military rule, Colonial, administration, economic decay

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## INTRODUCTION

Studies have been conducted on the Nigerian military (Dent 1964; Graf 1988; Luckham 1970; Ukpabi 1972). A body of nation builders, a dictatorship, an all-powerful "national watchdog," ineffective administrators, politicians in uniform, change agents, and guardians or arbitrators of Third World nations have all been used to describe the Nigerian military. African scholars have described the Nigerian military over the past 30 years as corrupt, haughty, ethnically motivated, and to blame for the nation's political decay and underdevelopment. These scholars include Mazrui (1986), Oyediran (1979), Diamond (1983), Ihonvbere (1994), and Theen and Wilson (1996). The inability of the military regime to contribute to political and economic development was also noted by Henry Bienen and Dent in 1978. They claim that the military's involvement in government has seriously harmed its professionalism. According to them, military officers can only engage in politics at the expense of their fighting prowess (Bienen, 1983). Jackman (1976) argues that regardless of the level of economic development or geographical location, military intervention in Third World politics has no particular impact on social change. Other academics contend that military takeovers result from a new country's slow modernization and political development, but that these interventions will eventually have positive effects on the nation. They think that because the military can impose political order in a chaotic environment, it can better manage a Third World country's modernization efforts. When civilians try to govern and transform their societies, they frequently find it

difficult to maintain discipline, organization, and hierarchical control (Maniruzzaman, 1987; Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

The organizational logic of the armed forces differs from that of political formation and development, according to critics of the military's modernization efforts (Janowitz, 1977). Huntington (1968) also expressed skepticism regarding the military's capacity to create effective political institutions, particularly institutions like political parties that facilitate increased citizen participation, i.e., the very institutions required for political development. The ability to respond to new challenges, ideological commitment, and the arts of administration, negotiation, representation, and bargaining are just a few of the political skills required to create a functional and self-sustaining political system. The Nigerian military has not demonstrated the requisite political and economic skills needed in a developing country. The objectives of this study are to (a) examine how the Nigerian military evolved during the colonial era. (b) examined the Nigerian military's role in public administration and nation-building, as well as the justifications for its frequent interventions in Nigerian politics. This study investigates the characteristics of the national and state military governments as well as the effects of military rule on Nigerian society. The military has been able to legitimize its political impact despite lacking the political art of governorship by employing a political strategy that involves sharing administrative duties with civilian employees while maintaining ultimate control.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### The Colonial Legacy

The Nigerian army is one of the most

notable effects of British colonial rule in West Africa. Before 1850, a large number of British businesses were active in the River Niger valley. The British, however, colonized Lagos in 1861 and the following year formed the Lagos constabulary. In 1862, all the British companies in the Niger Delta merged to form the Royal Niger Company, while this was happening in Lagos. The merger was initiated in order to gain complete control over and to promote the trade of palm oil along the Niger valley. During this time, raw materials for the soap and margarine industries including palm oil were exported to Britain. In order to take complete control of their trade along the Niger River valley, the Royal Niger Company asked the King of England to grant it the authority to administer the area. Ukpabi (1972) contends that after the Royal Niger Company was granted a charter in 1886, it assumed administration of the Niger delta. The charter authorized the company to raise the Royal Niger Constabulary. This quasi-military power was used to enforce the authority of the British colonial administration. When the British colonial government expanded its influence into the hinterland and consequently came into conflict with the inhabitants, the government found it necessary to increase the size and improve the training of these forces. Urama, Ugwuoke, Mba, Eze and Arazu (2019) asserts that in 1892, the Niger Coast Protectorate Force numbered about 40 ordinary ranks, but by 1900 this force had risen to a strong battalion of nearly 1,000 men. This British colonial force was divided into the police and the regiment forces. While the police force was then delegated to handle civil matters and the maintenance of law and

order, the regiments were deployed to deal with military matters such as the protection of the territorial boundaries of the protectorates. In 1901, the various regiments and dependencies of Great Britain along the West African coast (Nigeria, and Gold Coast - now Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Gambia) were merged to form the West African Frontier Forces (WAFF). In Nigeria the WAFF had two regiments - one in the north and the other in the south.

The two WAFF regiments were merged on January 1, 1914, as a result of the amalgamation of the north and south of Nigeria. WAFF was changed to Royal West African Frontier Forces (RWAFF) in 1928. RWAFF became the Nigerian Army in 1960. According to Ukpabi (1972) the RWAFF was administered as a truly colonial force. British officers and non-commission officers (NCOs) were deployed to serve in all units. The Nigerians in the colonial military were mostly ordinary ranks, and conditions were required for the granting of a commission (i.e., high school diploma and the age of twenty-two years). Ukpabi also contend that before 1949, there were no officers of Nigerian origin in the army. By January 1949, however, some Nigerian soldiers were selected for training as officers (Jemibewon, 1978). Duke Bassey was the first Nigerian to be commissioned into the Officer Corp of the Nigerian Army in April 1949, followed by Aguiyi Ironsi and Sam Ademulegun in June 1949. Other Nigerian officers later commissioned included Ralph Sodeinde (April, 1950), Babafemi Ogundipe (August, 1953), Adeyinka Adebayo (December, 1953), Nwawo (May 1954), and Francis Fajuyi in November 1954 (Achike, 1978). David

Jemibewon (1978) asserts that out of the 250 officers in the Nigerian army in 1956, only 15 were Nigerians. The General Certificate of Education (ordinary level) with an age limit of twenty-two years made it difficult to raise enough qualified Nigerians to send for training to the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst in England, where the earlier group of officers was trained. While the officer corps had few Nigerians, the other ranks were overwhelmingly staffed with Nigerians by 1958.

During the 1940s and 1950s service in the army was unattractive for a variety of reasons. The people of Nigeria did not see the role of the military during the colonial period as promoting civilization and humanitarianism. On the contrary, they regarded the military as an instrument fashioned by an alien authority for the purpose of destroying the political independence of the various tribes and their cherished way of life (Alimadu, 1962). Under the prevailing situation it was not surprising that the colonial military had a negative rather than a positive influence on the society. In many situations the army uniform was depicted as only suitable for dubious children of tribal chiefs and traditional rulers (Omojukun, 1979). The legal control of the RWAFF was firmly vested in the British government, which was represented in each of the four member states by a governor. While the governor exercised the power to deploy the local units in the state, the British Army Council reserved to itself the powers of deploying the army for international or foreign assignments (Achike, 1978). Thus, the general officer commanding in each region was

responsible to the governor (title Commander-in-Chief of the RWAFF unit in the state) and also to the general officer commanding-in-chief of the West African Command, who was directly responsible to the War Office in London. The RWAFF structure was transferred to the Nigerian army in 1960, and this has become the structure of the Nigerian army to the present day (Urama et al., 2019).

The transfer of the RWAFF military tradition was another matter, however. First, a high standard of discipline and training was maintained and was inherited mostly through the numerous administrative regulations and provisions of the British Army Act (Jemibewon, 1978). The system of documentation and monitoring of accountability in the Nigerian army's administration continues to remain fashioned on the British model. It is also interesting to note that after thirty years of political independence, Nigeria still uses official British military acts like the Manual of Military Law and Queens Regulation as authority in dispensing justice in the military. Secondly, the British tradition had the characteristics of inspiring its troops with a sense of belonging to a united or monolithic force. It had been deployed in action under a national army and had won battle honors that became a source of pride in the history of the nation's force. Thirdly, the RWAFF has been a platform of interaction among the four member countries of Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone for over ninety years. Such a long association must have contributed to the identification of similar national objectives and to military cooperation in the region

(Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

The RWAFF units, however, were not insulated from the internal politics of their respective states. Ukpabi (1972) contends that British officers in the Nigerian Regiment played an important role in the political development of Nigeria. Long before independence, a number of army officers were appointed district commissioners, and after the consolidation of British rule many officers remained in administrative or political posts. A few examples of such officers may be relevant. Major J. H. Burdon, who was the commandant of the Royal Niger Company Constabulary in 1898 - 99, was appointed the Resident of Sokoto in 1903 - 1910. In 1926, Major F. Jeffries was the Divisional Officer of Onitsha Division, while in 1943 Captain Glover, the first administrator of Lagos, and Frederick Lugard, the first commissioner and commandant of Northern Nigeria, were military men (Ukpabi, 1972; Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). The attainment of independence by Ghana in 1957 led to the disintegration of RWAFF, and on April 1, 1958, Nigeria assumed full budgetary responsibility for its military. Okay Achike (1978) asserts that between 1958 and 1960 the process of handing over control to the Nigerian army was gradual, and the British still made grants to augment the financial provisions of the military. Further, about 82 percent of the officer's corps was still British. However, with the assumption of ministerial control by the Prime Minister in February 1960, the transfer of the military to Nigerian administration was completed. The new Nigerian administration of 1960 began to introduce policies aimed at correcting

certain defects of the military. For example, before 1958, when the Nigerian government took over the primary financial responsibility for the upkeep of the Nigerian military, the British government recruited most of the infantry from northern Nigeria while the technical units were staffed by men from southern Nigeria (Ukpabi, 1972). This British colonial practice did not make for the development of a fully representative Nigerian army.

As soon as the Nigerian administration took over the control of the military in 1958, efforts were made to ensure that ordinary ranks were recruited from all parts of Nigeria. The prevailing regional recruitment quotas of 50 percent from the northern Nigeria and 25 percent from the western and eastern Nigeria were agreed upon when Nigeria took over the control of the military in 1958. Northern Nigeria was given a quota of 50 percent because it was larger in size and population than the southern regions. Policies were also enacted to ensure that each military unit was mixed that is, each unit should contain men from several ethnic groups (Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). In addition, military units were not allowed to stay too long in one place lest they become engulfed in local politics. The uniform of the colonial army that featured British emblems was changed to a new green and is composed of a long-sleeve jacket, long pants, and a peaked cap. The old RWAFF emblem of a palm tree was replaced with an eagle and a star. Efforts were also made to recruit university graduates into the military in order to raise the quality of the Nigerian officer corps and the image of the military (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018). Ukpabi (1972) contends that this

attempt to improve the image of the military and to secure its loyalty to the government in power led to large increases in army pay. It was hoped that these increases in pay would attract many people to the army, thereby giving the military the opportunity to select only the best candidates to fill the various quotas allotted to the regions, in order to further change the trends of imperial training and power and to assert the independence of the Nigerian military. Nigerian troops were sent for training to the United States, Canada, India, and Australia, thereby changing the practice during the colonial period of having such soldiers trained only in Britain.

The strength of the Nigerian army in 1958 was only 7,600. The general officer commanding of the army announced the plan to increase the size in May 1964 by about 2,900. Of the 10,500 in April 1965, only a little over 500 belonged to the officer corps - 330 of who was combatant status (Oyediran, 1979). William Gutteridge (1964) has contended that three to five hundred officers in a country of forty million based mainly on five military stations, the majority of which were far from the capital, could not be regarded as a political factor of the greatest importance. The fact that this numerically small army was able to take control of the political power without much difficulty less than two years later shows Nigerian political leaders underestimated the military custodian role. The process of building a national army for Nigeria began in 1958. The Nigerianization of the officer corps was stepped up at the same time as British officers were redeployed to the United Kingdom in anticipation of Nigeria's

independence. According to Ukpabi (1972), by 1960 only 60 British noncommissioned officers remained where four years previously there had been more than 300. After 1963, all the battalions were commanded by Nigerians, and in 1965 the last British commander of the Nigerian army left the country, to be followed a month later by the last British serving officers in the Nigerian army (Miners, 1971; Peters, 1995). The composition of the military after that time reflected an agreed-upon regional quota system. Nigerian soldiers were recruited on the basis of 50 percent from the Northern Region, and 25 percent from the Western and Eastern regions, respectively. The same quota system prevailed in the recruitment of officers (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018)

Luckhan (1971) contends that Nigerian soldiers saw themselves as citizens of the nation, and as such were affected by the political circumstances challenging the nation (201). Because of the quota system, however, officers and ranks had cause to represent their individual regions, not the more abstract national state. This crisis of identity led some soldiers to develop parochial attitudes that inclined them more to regional governments and their political leaders, and less to national issues. A review of the structure of the Nigerian military between 1958 and 1965 shows that it was divided along ethnic lines: a majority of the officers of the rank of major or above were Igbo, but most junior officers and ordinary ranks were from the middle-belt minority tribes of the Northern Region (Ostheimer, 1972). The younger officers, lieutenants and captains, made attempts to redress the tribal imbalance, but those

predominantly northern and western officers preferred a far slower rate of advancement. The building of a new Nigerian military after the departure of the British colonial army opened vacancies for young officers at the higher levels, which made some of them superior colonels at young ages. Once these vacancies were filled, however, the rank structure became frozen, stifling the junior ranks by the mid 1960s. The frustration and anger of the junior officers was seen in the killing of the superior Igbo officers in 1966 (Luckham, 1974).

The government of Nigeria at independence in 1960 still regarded the Queen of England as the head of state; therefore, the army was named the Royal Nigerian Army. On attainment of a republic in October 1963, the army changed its name to the Nigerian Army. Many Nigerians were trained and commissioned as officers to replace the outgoing British officers. During the transition period the British government mixed political activities with those of the military. For reasons that the British did not explain, most of the military facilities and training grounds were located in the northern part of Nigeria, especially around Zaria and Kaduna. Ukpabi (1972) contends that the location of military facilities in the north might be due to political rather than strategic reasons, in 1914, with the amalgamation of the south and north, Nigeria had four battalions. Two military battalions were stationed in the north, one in the west and the other in the east. The Nigerian administration seems to have followed this British pattern in locating military institutions after independence. The Nigerian Defense

Academy was established in Kaduna in 1964, followed by the Military School in Zaria in 1960, the Nigerian Defense Academy in Kaduna in 1964, the Command and Staff College in Jaji in Kaduna in 1973, the Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies in Bukuru in Jos in 1976, and the Nigerian War College in Lagos in 1992. The only military college in the country's southern region is the Nigerian War College. The recruitment, promotion, and discipline patterns of the Nigerian army are also indicative of its politicization (Luckham, 1974). The higher ranks of the army have been dominated by the north for the past 25 years due to this preferred location of facilities.

#### **Post-Independence Intervention in Nigeria Politics**

In an effort to explain Nigeria's post-independence military intervention in politics, three main schools of thought have been developed. According to the "internal characteristics model" (Janowitz, 1964), the internal organizational structure of the military is the primary factor that can be used to explain political military intervention. Direct military intervention can be explained in part by the social backgrounds of the officers, their expertise, centralized command, hierarchy, and career paths, as well as the degree of professionalization and political ideologies within the military. According to Janowitz (1964), the military's organizational decay will also lead to intervention. The military is the nation's custodian of the constitution, according to Huntington's (1965, 1969) custodian theory, and as such, it feels compelled to intervene when constitutional propriety is violated. He

said that after a dispute was resolved, the military would typically be willing to go back to the barracks. Therefore, the military only serves as a watchdog to restrain the actions of dishonest civilian administrators and to guarantee political stability. Huntington (1969) emphasized that when civilian government lacks legitimacy due to weak electoral support and an ineffective executive, the military will step in.

Thus, the praetorian army will tend to replace weak and unstable political regimes. Samuel Finer (1969) argued that the most important cause for military intervention is the low or minimal political culture of the society concerned. According to Huntington and Finer, the interpretation of military coups relates to the characteristics of the Nigerian army. Finer, more than Huntington (1969) stressed the role that corruption plays in intervention. Finer (1969) noted that in Nigeria some members of the ineffective military leadership have been found to be corrupt and inept and to pursue self-seeking ambitions. The most vehement repudiation of the "custodian thesis" is the argument made by Wole Soyinka (1972) and Julius Ihonvbere (1997) that the Nigerian military is more corrupt than other institutions. They denounced the military regime, proclaiming it to be a regime of humiliation and tyranny and a dictatorship whose tyranny imposed a travesty of justice far beyond any ills that have been witnessed in the civilian regime. Henry Bienen (1976) found similar opposition to the military among civilian politicians, though they still were willing to work under a military regime. There are two main theses that have been used to explain the failure of the

military regime to relinquish power to elected civilian government as it had promised. The first is the "hidden agenda thesis. This thesis asserts that General Babangida in 1993 and General Sani Abacha in 1998 failed to relinquish power because they never genuinely intended to transfer power to politicians (Kieh & Abgese, 1996; Ihonvbere, 1997; Washington Post, 1998). According to this thesis, while both generals were in public posture and pretended to be earnestly preparing the nation for civil rule, secretly they had a hidden agenda, namely, that they were secretly preparing themselves for perpetual self-rule. For example, while Babangida professed a commitment to military withdrawal from politics, he later turned around to abort the relinquishment of power. Babangida used the transition program that he introduced to cause confusion and public clamor for the military to remain in power, in order to restore public order and stability. He tactically allowed civilian politicians to discredit the return to civil rule (Obasanjo, 1993). In the case of General Abacha, he set up a three-year transition program in 1995 from a military to a democratically elected civilian government. In his address at the inauguration of the National Conference on Monday, June 27, 1994, General Abacha stated that "we in the present government in Nigeria are committed to ensuring that there is speedy and unimpeded transition to a civil democratic rule in which we shall not be participants. But contrary to his promise, transition program mandate, and the constitution approved by the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), in April 1998, he ordered the five political parties that he created to



nominate him as the only presidential candidate. This gesture violated the provision of the constitution that stipulates that “current members of the armed forces of the federation cannot be lawfully registered as a member of a political party (Ojo, 2014).

Thus, General Abacha, being a military officer could not be a candidate, since according to the law made by him as head of state, a candidate must be a member of a political party, and the same law forbids officers from being members of a political party. Decree No. 9 of 1997, also signed into law by General Sani Abacha on July 15, 1997 provides that it shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government and of all authorities and persons to conform with, observe and ensure the provisions of the political programs as set out in Schedule 1 to 4 of the Decree. The deepening cynicism and apathy with which the general public now views the transition program has led to a state of unprecedented program gloom and despondency in Nigeria. The electorate in the recent national elections in 1998 manifested this gloom in the abysmal participation (Ojo, 2014).

General Babangida (1991) advanced the second thesis, the “corrigible politicians” thesis. According to the corrigible politician’s thesis, the military is eager to relinquish power. However, civilian politicians who continue to sabotage military disengagement have so far frustrated the military’s sincere efforts by their nefarious political conduct. While the military is eager to withdraw from politics, it would not do so under unfavorable circumstances. It would not transfer power to civilian politicians who have not demonstrated their capacity to

engage in political conduct devoid of maladministration, corruption, violence and human right abuse. This thesis asserts that the military will relinquish power only when political contests among civilians are free of fraud, violence, and chicanery. So long as Nigerian politicians insist on practicing unwholesome politics, the military will delay the transition program. Continued military rule will, among other things, serve as an object lesson on correct political behavior. Once that lesson is learned, the military will promptly transfer power to civilians (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018). Therefore, the onus for military withdrawal rests not on the military, which is eager to see return of democracy in Nigeria, but on civilian politicians. Thus, the obstacle to military withdrawal is the inability of civilian politicians to rise above sordid political behaviors such as electoral rigging, inept, and so on.

The late Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu led the first military intervention in Nigeria on January 15, 1966. The military's main argument for intervention at the time was that the civilian government's loss of legitimacy reduced its ability to deal effectively with the conditions that were destroying the country. The statements of the majors who earned out the coup demonstrated beyond doubt their deep concern with reforming Nigerian life. Because politicians were perceived by the officers to be at the center of corruption, the military decided that the politicians must go. Major Nzeogwu, the coordinator of the January 1966 coup, stated: Our purpose was to change our country (Schwarz, 1968). The coup resulted in the death of the federal Prime Minister, the finance minister, and the

northern and western premiers. Other reasons given for this intervention by the military included the succession of intense political crises, the deepening polarization, the incessant political instability, and civil strife (Ojo, 2014). Further reasons given included the style and tone of political behavior and conflict, the violence, the repression, and the failure to play by the rules of the game. Nigeria by the time of the intervention had passed through six years of civilian incompetence, inefficient executive leadership, gross abuse of office, corruption, and a resulting lack of economic development. The precipitating factor that galvanized the military to intervene was the violence that erupted from the two political parties headed by Awolowo and Akintola in the Western Region of Nigeria. The attempt by Major Nzeogwu and other middle - ranking officers in Lagos, Kaduna, and Ibadan to take power was unsuccessful, but it forced the civilian cabinet to hand over the administration of the country to Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

In the course of the first military intervention, four out of five of the northern senior officers, two out of six Yoruba senior officers, and one out of ten of the eastern senior officers also were murdered. Among civilians, the deaths were equally one-sided. Abubakar, the prime minister from the Northern Region, and Okotie-Ebor, the federal finance minister from the Mid-Western Region, were murdered in Lagos. The Sardauna of Sokoto was killed in Kaduna, and Akintola was killed in Ibadan. There was no violent coup and there were no deaths in Enugu and Benin, and the

premiers of the Eastern and Mid-Western regions, who were both Igbo, survived unscathed (Dudley, 1982; Peters, 1995). This one-sidedness may have been partly due to operational considerations, since any group from one tribe tends to associate more with its fellow tribesmen and to not regard them as potential enemies, but the effects were catastrophic to the northerners. Major-General Ironsi escaped the coup in Lagos and put himself at the head of the northern NCOs who had rallied with northern officers to put down the coup. General Ironsi later emerged as the new leader of Nigeria after the federal cabinet handed power to him in an effort to restore order (Ojo, 2014).

The demise of the First Republic was a severe blow to Nigeria's political system. Reactions to events differed profoundly between the eastern and Northern Regions. The distrust arising among northerners and some westerners, and the failure of General Ironsi, himself an Igbo, to try the Igbo conspirators who had murdered fellow officers and political leaders made it almost impossible to reform the federal system. William Graf (1988) contends that the ease with which the military was able to assume political power is astounding. A relatively small army (10,500 men in 1965), lacking in experience (80 percent had no more than four years in service), poorly educated (66 percent of combat and non-combat officers had no more than secondary education before being commissioned), and extremely young (62 percent were between twenty and twenty-four years old), had destroyed the First Republic, eliminated many of its most prominent leaders, and assumed the power to lead the nation (Dudley,

1976; Mayer et al., 1996). Suberu and Agbaje (1999) contend that military regimes in Nigeria had two phases. The first phase was between 1966 and 1979. In this phase military rulers, especially state governors were allowed to exercise most of the powers assigned to the regions under the suspended democratic constitution. Military governors were allowed to incorporate several credible and notable civilian professionals and ethno-regional elites into the structure of their administration. They also redesigned the structure of Nigerian federalism and initiated as well as implemented a fairly successful program of redemocratization which culminated in the inauguration of the Second Republic in October 1979 (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

The second phase of military role was between 1984 and 1999. This period was characterized by excessive personalization and concentration of state authority in the military head of state. The military leaders became more repressive in managing state affairs, ethnic conflict and religious bigotry, as well as societies inter-relationship. During this period, the military also foster the willful frustration and abortion of the nation's democratic aspiration. Suberu and Agbaje (1999) pointed out that the over centralization of the military during the second phase includes: the complete subordination of constituent state governments to the unified military command system through the center's appointment and frequent redeployment of relatively junior military officers as state administrators. The military head of state was also involved in the organization and reorganization of local

government council in a federal political system in which state and local governments were expected to be autonomous. The military conducted a systematic and unchallengeable manipulation of statutory intergovernmental revenue sharing arrangement in manner that reinforced the financial hegemony of the national government and the fiscal emasculation of state and local governments (Ojo, 2014).

In spite of the carnage, the army was a popular institution, and it initially won over the Nigerian public. With its rigid discipline, austere nature, ability to get things done, devotion to duty, and seemingly more selfless attitude, the army was regarded as the savior of the country. After the coup, many things were said and done to discredit the former politicians and some Nigerians prayed for many years of military rule. According to Adamolekun (1985), the federal military government under General Ironsi as head of state and supreme commander of the armed forces moved from the federal model to an extreme centralization of power. All legislation was by decree, and noncompliance to an order was subject to strict penalties. Decree Number One proclaimed the doctrine of unitary government, which was strongly supported by radicals and by most Igbos who stood to gain from what was perceived to be an open job market. General Ironsi declared the military government was only a "custodian regime" (Finer, 1969), but that extreme measures were needed to correct problems in the Nigerian political system. One such problem, he noted, was the regionalism that threatened national

unity. He therefore appointed military governors in each of the four regions. All regional governors were expected to be men under authority obedient to their superior officers in Lagos. In order to fulfill its task of creating greater unity in Nigeria, the military government needed a common purpose and a climate of trust among Nigerians. Neither purposes nor trust existed among the people neither as a whole nor in the army where the bulk of the combatant soldiers, the NCOs, and the ordinary ranks were northerners (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

The initial impetus of the military regime to rule decisively was soon dissipated, and the Federal Supreme Military Council did not use its powers under Decree Number One to legislate for the regions. Every issue was to be interpreted in regional and tribal terms, thereby creating a continuing struggle for power. General Ironsi proved less perceptive by appointing an Igbo to investigate the prospects for rapid unification of the four regions and federal civil services. Since control over the regional civil service was cherished by northerners as a safeguard against Igbo infiltration and domination, northerners disliked his plan. Popular support for some of the government's moves, such as investigations into the corruption of politicians, was undermined by the sudden accumulation of wealth by elements of the military officer corps (Ohonbamu, 1970). The most important factor in General Ironsi's loss of popular support, however, was his haste in proclaiming a new Unitary Constitution (Decree No. 34 of May 24, 1966) even before the commission directed to study a new constitutional arrangement could turn

in their report. This decree galvanized people to riot in the northern Region, and the riot quickly became an attack against Igbo sectors of northern cities, where an estimated three thousand people were killed. Whatever the Ironsi regime had done to legitimate military intervention could not overcome the suspicion that tarnished it. As a result, the distrust, riots, and bloodshed that took place in various parts of the country led to a counter-coup organized by northern officers in July 1966 (Ojo, 2014).

General Ironsi's regime was short-lived. He and the then western Region military governor, Colonel Francis Fajuyi, were kidnapped and killed by mutinous troops in late July 1966. After several days of anarchy, Colonel (later General) Yakubu Gowon, an officer from the middle belt of northern Nigeria, emerged as the new head of state. He promptly prepared a decree that restored the federal structure and promised an early return to civilian rule as soon as a constitutional conference could meet and agree upon a design for a new system of government. Gowon rebuked the murderous soldiers of the May 1966 riots and slowly reestablished discipline and control, but the basis of trust for his military regime had been fatally undennined.

During riots in September and October 1966, 30,000 Igbos were killed in the North, in a slaughter far beyond the scale of previous riots in May of the same year. The Hausa-Fulani were still incensed at the earlier assassinations of their leadership, and the presence of thousands of Igbo traders, businessmen, and civil servants living in the northern Region presented a constant reminder of

this communal bitterness. The mass killings forced easterners from all over the federation to migrate in search of refuge (Oyediran, 1979). With close to a million Igbo refugees fleeing south, it became clear that the Igbo-dominated Eastern region was considering secession under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu. A constitutional conference was called to discuss the political predicaments facing the nation, but no consensus was reached because the various regions and ethnic groups demanded too much political power for themselves (Urama et al., 2019). On October 3, 1966, the constitutional conference was adjourned. Economic sanctions were placed on the Eastern Region when its leaders refused to participate in further dialogue concerning the political impasse. Non-easterners, other than Mid-western Igbos, were expelled from the Eastern Region. Colonel Ojukwu announced that the constitutional arrangements of the national government of Nigeria no longer represented a guarantee to the military government of the Eastern Region. Igbo lives and property could not be protected. The Igbos had lost confidence in a federated Nigeria and had no illusions about the chances of welding Nigerians into a single nation. Therefore, secession of the Eastern Region became inevitable (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

In May 1967, Gowon tried to prevent the secession of the Igbos by appointing a National Reconciliation Committee that allowed Colonel Ojukwu to express his concerns. Gowon therefore accepted the committee's recommendation to end economic sanctions against the Eastern Region. His government divided Nigeria

into twelve states, which included breaking up the North into six different states. The changes however came too late. The Igbos had seceded, and the consequence was a bloody and costly civil war that lasted thirty months, from July 1967 to January 15, 1970, and resulted in the defeat of the Igbo secessionists. The war was called the Biafra civil war. The word Biafra was derived from the region's location on that section of the Atlantic Ocean called the Bight of Biafra. Between 1967 and 1970 General Gowon directed the attention of the federal military government toward winning the Biafra civil war. In this process the size of the Nigerian military increased from its prewar level of about 8,000 to more than 250,000 men by 1970 (Ukpabi 1972). Such an increase was bound to affect not only the influence of the military in the country but also its performance and general standing.

Ever since independence, strenuous efforts were made by successive governments to weld the various ethnic groups together. These effects included definite steps to shift the main power base from the regions, and later from the states, to the center by increasing the number of regions or states so that each would become more similar in size and area to the others, in 1963, the First Republic increased the number of regions by one, making them four; in 1967, these four regions were broken into twelve states; in 1975, the number of states was again increased, this time to nineteen. The total number of states in 1996 was thirty-six. Given this multiplicity of states, the power base has definitely tilted in favor of the central government. No state now can hold the

entire country to ransom, as the Eastern Region was able to do during the thirty-month civil war (1967 - 1970) (Ojo, 2014). Other steps taken to hold Nigeria together as a nation have included the deliberate whittling down of the powers of the states. The 1979 constitution, for instance, made the states dependent on the federal government for their revenue, and with the local government reform of the early 1990s, state government powers have been further circumscribed. Thus, Gowon's regime was instrumental in breaking down the pre-independence ethnic and regional powers and in widening the platform for integration among the various groups in Nigeria (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

General Gowon was a capable and generally well regarded leader, who did much to patch up the wounds caused by the Biafra war and who in 1970 set out to oversee a return to civilian government (Oyediran, 1979). In the eyes of his critics, he moved too slowly, however, and did too little to curb corruption, inflation, and economic mismanagement. Much of the profit from Nigeria's oil boom of the early 1970s was squandered or stolen, and the return to civilian government was delayed. The concerned with these mismanagement and with the damage being done to the reputation of the military, reform-minded senior officers seized power in a coup on July 29, 1975, the ninth anniversary of the original coup that brought it to power. The government of General Gowon was overthrown without bloodshed while he was attending an Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Kampala, Uganda. This coup was met with widespread manifestations of relief and elation. Only

one military commander took steps to support Gowon, but his efforts came too late. Brigadier Murtala Mohammed, with Brigadier Olusegun Obasanjo as chief of staff, supreme headquarters and Brigadier Theophilus Danjuma as army chief of staff headed the new regime.

The coup makers of failing to fulfill his promise to hand over the government to a democratically elected civilian regime accused Gowon. General Murtala Mohammed, a Hausa-Fulani officer and head of the new military regime, began drafting a new constitution for a civilian government. He removed all state governors from power, purged the army, and announced a four-year timetable for the return to civilian rule. Within two months of assuming office, he dismissed 150 military officers and 10,000 civil servants that were found guilty of corruption and abuse of office. Mohammed increased the number of states from twelve to nineteen (see map in Appendix A), and decided to move the federal capital from Lagos to Abuja. The fast-moving programs of General Mohammed caught the imagination of the public at large, but it they stirred foreboding and resentment among those whose positions had been disturbed. As a result, a group of army officers who feared for their own position attempted a coup on February 13, 1976. The attempt was unsuccessful, but General Mohammed was killed. His chief of staff, General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba, assumed power. This was the first time that Nigeria had a Yoruba head of state. As head of state, Obasanjo continued in the spirit of his predecessor (Ojo, 2014).

The reasons for organizing a coup given by Major Nzeogwu, and those given by General Gowon, Mohammed, and

Obasanjo, reflect the schools of thought described earlier. For instance, the 1966 coup was motivated by ethnic rivalries and civil disorder, while other coups either were the result of rivalries within the military or were a measure to correct the corrupt practices of government. The Nigerian military, in order to justify its ascension to power through coups, sought legitimacy by virtue of its avowed allegiance to the nation and its commitment to nationalistic objectives (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018). This is the notion of Samuel Huntington's custodian and praetorian theories, which postulate that the military might serve as the guardian of the constitution of a country. The major speeches and decrees issued by key military officers after they assumed control also used this rationale that reflects Huntington's thinking. The periodic incursions of the Nigerian military into the political leadership not only was a lust for power but also was a product of the conflict, riddled with intrigue and conspiracy, between the two major elite groups that emerged in the Nigerian military (Ojo, 2014). At the close of the civil war in 1970, the military leadership was divided into two groups, the northern faction, led by the "Kuduna Mafia," and the middle belt wing, led by the "Langtang faction" (Ihonvbere, 1994). The major military coups in Nigeria have emanated from one or the other of these two factions. For instance, while the Gowon-led counter-coup of July 1966 was meant to reassert northern control of the nation, Gowon, a middle belt Christian was never accepted by the mainstream Hausa-Fulani oligarchy of northern Nigeria. Hence, the Murtala Mohammed coup of August 1975 was intended to remove any lingering ambivalence about northern

control (Urama et al., 2019).

The failed Dimka-Bisalla coup of February 1976, which led to the death of Mohammed, may be seen as a desperate attempt by the military wing of the Langtang faction to reassert lost control of the military and of the country as a whole. Gowon, who was implicated in the coup, was exiled to Britain, and Lieutenant Colonel Dimka, Major-General Bisalla, Police Commissioner David Gomwalk, and other military leaders from the middle-belt Langtang faction did not recovered from this decimation of the langtang leadership. The Buhari-Idiagbon regime that came to power in December 1983 seemed to be an exception to the usual military escapade into national politics in that it made some attempt to address the rampant corruption and ineptitude of the Shagari regime that it overthrew. The northern-abased Kaduna faction feared, however, that the Buhari regime threatened northern control of the nation and engineered the Babangida coup that overthrew Buhari in August 1985 (Ojo, 2014).

During the Babangida regime, a new "progressive faction" emerged within the Nigerian military made up of fringe elements from Kaduna faction, non-commissioned (NCOs) officers from the middle belt (Plateau & Benue states), and an ideological group from the Midwest (the Edo clan). This faction twice attempted to overthrow the Babangida regime, first in December 1985, under General Mamman Vatsa, and the second in April 1990, under Major Gideon Orkar. Both coup attempts failed and resulted in the execution of their leaders. Thus, history will show that the Nigerian military has been one of its own worst

enemies with a high propensity for self-destruction. Ethnic loyalty and numerous coups in Nigeria, more than any other factors, have depleted the nation of its finest military talents. In October 1979, the military regime of General Obasanjo stepped down and ushered in a new democratically elected civilian government, called the Second Republic. Shehu Shagari was elected president of Nigeria. His government, however, collapsed within a few years due to corruption, persistent strikes, and rampant tribalism. New elections were held in August - September 1983. Whereas the 1979 elections had been generally accepted as fair, the 1983 ballot met with numerous accusations of vote rigging and violence. This weakened the legitimacy of the government (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018). Ihonvbere (1994) contends that corruption reached its height during Shagari's administration. Millions of Naira (the Nigerian currency) was misappropriated by government officials and high levels party members who were responsible for the Abuja (the new federal capital) projects. This drained the country's wealth, causing many ambitious development projects to suffer.

On December 31, 1983, still another coup was staged by senior army officers, which brought the Second Nigerian Republic to an end. Major-General Mohammed Buhari became head of state and ruled through a Supreme Military Council (SMC). General Buhari's reasons for the military intervention included rigged elections, the inability of the Second Nigerian Republic to cultivate financial discipline and, to manage economic development, and the ever-

present corrupt leadership (African Press 1984). Table 5.1 shows the trend of military intervention in Nigeria's politics between 1960 -1997. General Buhari's regime instituted a "War Against Indiscipline Policy" and emphasized prudent housekeeping in its economic management. Buhari set an objective to save the country from economic and political collapse (Ojo, 2014). Buhari's regime also promised to put into place measures to eliminate massive waste in economy caused by corruption within and outside the government, reduce the need for the state to borrow money from external sources, and ameliorate degrading domestic conditions. From such a vantage point, Buhari's intervention could be perceived as a guardian factor that could have been used to correct the situation. His fellow senior officers, however, overthrew General Buhari. Generals' Babangida, Abacha, Diya, Kontagora, and Dogoyaro declared that Buhari's rule was too harsh and too slow in moving to restore democratic civilian rule. General Ibrahim Babangida replaced Buhari in August 1985 (Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). Taking the title of President, which is unusual for a military ruler, Babangida retained almost all of the members of the Supreme Military Council, but he renamed it the AJFRC. He also added officers of lieutenant-colonel rank. Babangida set up a Political Bureau composed of academics and professionals, who was asked to prepare a timetable for the restoration of democratic rule (Urama et al., 2019).

The regime of General Babangida ruled Nigeria from 1985 to 1993, despite a failed coup attempt by Major Gideon Orkar in April 1990. Having experienced



so many coup attempts in their short history, ordinary people greeted Major Orkar's assault on the Dodan Barracks with remarkable indifference, going about their personal business in the city much as if nothing unusual was happening. In the wake of the failed coup, Orkar and over seventy of his fellow conspirators were executed in the summer of 1990. Major Orkar's coup was another example of the resurgent tribalism from which Nigerian apparently cannot escape. Orkar claimed his coup was on behalf of the middle belt and southern Nigeria (Keih & Agbese, 1996; Mayer et al., 1996). Orkar, who came from the middle belt, had proposed to expel the five northern states from the federation, illustrating that his operation was another manifestation of middle belt (Tiv, Igala, Idoma people), southeastern (Igbo, Efilc, Ijaw people), and/or southwestern (Yoruba, Edo, Uhrobo, Isoko people) resentment of the perennial northern domination. Ironically, the mostly Christian middle belt had sided with the northern Nigeria in the civil war; however, more recently these regions have been increasingly siding with the southeastern and western Nigeria. Muslim northern Nigeria, fearful of being dominated by the more- educated and more-modern Igbo and Yoruba to the south, has continually insisted upon being guaranteed a dominating position in the government of the federation that they 'initially opposed because of that same fear. The Yoruba and the Igbo populations look down upon the military that was domination by less educated and less-modern northerners. Thus, the problem of changing loyalty from one's tribal, ethnic, and linguistic group to a broader sense of Nigerian community

and back to the ethnic group also prevailed in the Nigeria military as well as during Babangida's administration (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

When General Ibrahim Babangida came to power in 1985, he promised to relinquish power as soon as necessary political arrangements had been made for a qualitative and visionary political leadership to emerge in Nigeria. Like the Murtala/Obasanjo regime 1975 - 1979, the Babangida regime enumerated a number of tasks that had to be accomplished as a prelude to military disengagement from politics. Many of these tasks involved several forms of political engineering in the body politics of Nigeria. A Political Bureau was appointed to canvass the country and ascertain the views of Nigerians on the optimum political system for Nigeria. After the bureau submitted its report, a Constitution Review Committee (CRC) was appointed to draw up a new constitution from the framework of the 1979 Constitution. The new constitution was promulgated into law in 1989. With the promulgation of the new constitution, the ban imposed on political activities after the 1983 military coup was lifted. Under the 1989 constitution, no more than two political parties could operate in Nigeria (Ojo, 2014).

The hand over power to a democratically elected civilian government was later postponed to 1993 on the grounds that the initial deadline would not have given the authorities enough time to lay the foundation for the transition. Several measures were taken by the Babangida regime to prevent "bad" Nigerians from participating in politics or holding any position of public responsibility. These

measures included (1) a decree that bans politicians of the First and Second Republics and any other person found guilty of corruption or abuse of office from contesting elections or participating in political party activity. The establishment of a Code of Conduct Bureau and a Code of Conduct Tribunal to try public officers accused of corruption or abuse of office, (2) the unilateral declaration of a state of emergency in order to maintain national cohesion and stability, and (3) the unilateral The National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were to be established by the target date of 1990, along with the public financing of political parties, privatization of government-owned businesses, and reduction in the scope of state economic activity.

the grounds that it had been rigged. In actuality, Moshood Abiola, the president-elect, was not trusted by the military leaders. Moshood Abiola was the SDP's presidential candidate and was Yoruba and Muslim. In northern Nigeria, where Basher Toffee (a Hausa-Fulani), the NRC's presidential candidate, received a lot of support, ABIOS did poorly. Abiola also faced opposition in south Nigeria from Christians and Igbos who did not want to be ruled by a Yoruba (Oluwabiye & Duruji, 2021). The fundamental problem of electing a president through the democratic process is the fear shared by Nigeria's 250 different ethnic groups of domination by one ethnic group. Unfortunately, these fears were exploited by the AFRC. In the face of mounting opposition, however, General Babangida resigned his office and turned power over to a civilian interim government headed by Ernest Shonekan. Chief Shonekan's government, however, was unable to stabilize the political scene, and the protests and demonstrations continued. This social unrest set the stage for General Sani Abacha to intervene. General Sani Abacha's coup took place in November 1993 when civil disturbances, rising ethnic and religious tensions, economic collapse, and widespread riots plunged the country into near chaos. Moreover, the situation worsened between 1993 and 1997 (Onewale & Osadola, 2018). When Abacha became head of state, internal purges were launched to weed out Babangida loyalists, purges that hit the Langtang faction from the middle belt. Officers either retired under pressure or were reassigned abroad or to low-responsibility posts. The frequent coups and counter-coups have only

**Table 1: Nigeria's Trend of Military Intervention in Government 1960 - 2007**

President/Head of Government	Period	Type of Government
Azikiwe/Tafawa Balewa	Oct. 1960-Jan. 1966	Civilian government
General Ironsi	Jan. 1966-Jul. 1966	Military
General Gowon	Jul. 1966-Jul. 1975	Military
General	Jul. 1975-Feb. 1976	Military
General Obasanjo	Feb. 1976 -Oct. 1979	Military
Sheliu Shagari	Oct. 1979-Dec. 1983	Civilian
General Buhari	Dec. 1983 -Aug. 1985	Military
General Babangida	Aug. 1985 - Aug. 1993	Military
Ernest Shonekan	Aug. 1993 - Nov. 1993	Interim/mixed
General Abacha	Nov. 1993 - Jun. 1998	Military
General Abubakar	Jun. 1998-Mav 1999	Military
President	May 1999- 2007	Civilian
General Buhari	May 2015 - May	Civilian

Although there were national and state elections, Babangida declared the June 12, 1993 presidential election invalid on

widened the ethnic and tribal differences in Nigeria. Human rights violations have increased, including the killing, torture, and imprisonment of citizens who protest against the military government (Urama et al., 2019). Furthermore, General Abacha's regime strained its relationship with the Western countries when it hanged nine Ogoni minority rights activists in November 1995, despite an almost worldwide appeal for clemency. The Ogoni activists had been arrested for protesting against the social and environmental effects of drilling by the Royal Dutch, and Shell Oil companies. The activists demanded a share of the country's oil revenues when the drilling destroyed their land and fishing rivers. Nigeria was suspended from the commonwealth nations (Britain and its formal colonies) and threatened with expulsion if the government failed to restore democracy within a period of two years (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018). Later in October 1995, the European Community reaffirmed its commitment to existing sanctions that had been imposed in 1993 (notably an embargo on the export of armaments and military equipment to Nigeria) and extended visa restrictions to civilian members of the administration; the European Commission also announced the suspension of development cooperation with Nigeria. The governments of the United States, Canada, South Africa, and the European Community member nations recalled their diplomatic representatives from Nigeria in protest against the executions (Ojo, 2014).

General Sani Abacha ordered the arrest of more than 150 top military officers in 1995, apparently in response to

widespread disaffection within the armed forces. His administration subsequently confirmed reports of a conspiracy to overthrow the government. However, opponents of Abacha's regime claimed that the government had fabricated a coup attempt. The arrest of the former head of state, General Olusegun Obasanjo, and Major General (retired) Shehu Yar Adua, together with other prominent Abacha's critics of his regime, prompted international protest. Those arrested were accused of planning the fabricated coup. Unfortunately, Shehu Yar Adua died in prison in 1997. General Abacha also used this strategy of fabricated coup attempt to arrest his second in command, General Diya, in 1997. Several military officers from the Yoruba ethnic group were associated with this coup and were condemned to death along with General Diya in early 1998. The three-year transition program that Abacha announced in October of 1995 is scheduled to end on October 1, 1998, when a new president is to be inaugurated, after elections at the local, state and national level. New constitutional provisions, which were largely in accordance with recommendations of the National Constitution Conference, were adopted. Abacha installed five political parties and divided the nation into six regions to facilitate the allocation and rotation of the presidency and other principal executive and legislative offices for thirty years (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

Abacha's transition to civil rule was anchored on the assumption that the only way to assure a stable future civilian government is to sanitize the political system by precluding

pathologically corrupt and fraudulent Nigerians from capturing state power. No sooner had Abacha announced the good intentions of his transition program than his regime's ambivalence to corruption was demonstrated by the fact that, while it attempted to exclude some corrupt Nigerians from political participation, it gave pride of place to some public officers found guilty of corruption. The regime not only appointed to public offices former military governors found guilty of corruption, but it also allowed some of those appointees to serve in the National Constitution Conference, an institution that created new laws for the nation. If nothing else, this practice sends a double message about the stance of the Abacha regime on corruption and the establishment of political legitimacy (Urama et al., 2019). In April 1998, Abacha and his close aide were said to have ordered the five political parties to nominate him as the sole presidential candidate, despite laws and decrees that prohibited members of the armed forces from becoming members of any political party (Washington Post, 1998). This new move by General Abacha supports the hidden agenda thesis, namely, that all along his regime had a plan to continue to stay in power either as a military or civilian leader. The way in which he has tampered with the transition process has rendered the whole program a sham (Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). On June 8, 1998 General Abacha died of heart attack, and he was replaced by General Abdulsalam Abubakar a Muslim from the north. Abubakar immediately canceled all the elections held during Abacha's tenure, and dissolved the five political parties that were handpicked by the formal regime.

General Abubakar, further, introduced his own transition program that would end on May 29, 1999. Before that date, he promised to have new political parties registered, conduct new elections and formally hand-over power to a democratically elected president and national legislature (Ojo, 2014).

The democratic upsurge in Africa reinvigorated popular communities and constituencies. While many of the new democratic tendencies remain fragile, even uncertain, the African political landscape has witnessed the emergence of hundreds of new political parties, civil liberties associations, prodemocracy movements, and new activists. In fact, many die-hard despots, even military leaders, have been forced to accommodate democratic demands. In West Africa, the civilization of military juntas is becoming the norm. If nothing else, this is open acknowledgment of the irreversibility of the democratic enterprise in the continent. Even in military-ruled Nigeria, there was speculation as to General Abubakar plans for another northerner to take over from him on May 29, 1999. Of course, such a development, which seems the more possible by the day, will introduce novel developments and calculations into Nigeria's political equation and the contest for dominance within and between power blocs and constituencies. Finally, while Abacha's regime is said to be the most corrupt of any on record, General Abubakar's regime has attempted to revive the nation from a politically delay system to a pragmatic and legitimate political system that respect human rights. The undulating political turmoil of the past makes it very difficult for us to envisage

the basis for a stable democratic political system in Nigeria even in the twenty-first century (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

When General Abdulsalam Abubakar assumed power in June 1998, he systematically took measures to defuse tension that Abacha left behind after his death. Of the many political associations that sprouted and sought registration as political parties under Abubakar's transition plan, only three were eventually registered based on their performance in the local government election of December 1998: The People's Democratic party (PDP), the All People's Party (APP), and the Alliance for Democracy, (AD). General Obasanjo was a relatively late entrant into the PDP, and the party performed woefully in his home state, not even winning at his own polling station. In addition, the mainstream pan-Yoruba organization rebuffed the general, solidly supporting Falae (the presidential candidate for APP and AD alliance) instead. Why, then did the PDP nominate Obasanjo, and how can his victory in the party nomination and the presidential poll be explained? Three explanations stand out. First, the single most important factor in Obasanjo's triumph was the support of his fellow retired generals, including Babangida. Obasanjo's retired generals' friends and supporter were the source of the donation that he gave to the party and were well represented at the occasion at which 400 million naira was raised for his campaign. The general's camp was also alleged to have funded the candidacy of Chief Jim Nwobodo, an Igbo, in order to discomfit Dr. Alex Ekwueme and divide his support base among the Igbos. All candidates used money to win delegates votes. Therefore,

it was not hard to imagine that the candidates with the most resources enjoyed an advantage (Ojo, 2014).

Second, unlike its rival, the PDP remained united after the party nominated Obasanjo. The defeated Ekwueme not only remained a loyal party member but also was active in Obasanjo's campaign. He chaired the general's fund-raising dinner and was always in Obasanjo's entourage during his campaign in the East. Third, the feared Igbo protest vote did not materialize. The call by the Ohaneze for Igbos to vote APP was largely ignored. General Obasanjo, for instance, won 76 percent of the votes in Ekwueme's home state of Anambra. Igbo political leaders in the PDP may have felt reluctant to risk their investment in the PDP for an uncertain welcome in the AD/APP alliance. General Olusegun Obasanjo emerged victorious even though he was rebuffed and resisted by Afenifere, the mainstream umbrella organization of his Yoruba ethnic group. In fact, his entire home zone is made up of the four states of Lagos, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo in which he did not achieve the required 25 percent. Obasanjo's victory was made possible by the unity and support he received from Nigeria's military elites in reserve. His election heralds the military's emergence as Nigeria's most powerful political force in retirement as a result of the enormous wealth it has amassed and the social networks it has built during its protracted period of power. There is no question that these retired military generals will work to influence President Obasanjo's new administration in accordance with their own agendas (Urama et al., 2019).

### **Military and Economic Decay in Nigeria**

The military's involvement in Nigerian politics between 1966 and 1999 cost the country some progress in terms of economic development and professional readiness. There has been evidence of discord within the armed forces in recent years, including three successful military coups, according to Lewis et al (1998). The overthrows of Buhari, Babangida, and Abacha are among them. In addition to these three successful coups, there were two other coup attempts in 1985 and 1990, as well as two additional plots that the Abacha regime claimed to have been in the works in 1995 and 1997 (66). In Nigeria, rumors of failed coup attempts have also been circulating for some time. The Nigerian army was subjected to frequent purges, reorganizations, trials, and executions under the Babangida, Abacha, and Abubakar regimes. These drastic actions have shaken the officer corps. Lewis et al. contend that the most notorious episodes after the abortive Vasta coup of 1985 were the failed revolt in 1990, and the alleged conspiracy of 1995. These purported episodes galvanized the execution of more than ninety officers and jail terms for several officers. Some Nigerian scholars have noted that the Nigeria army has dismissed more than 350 officers since 1995. These officers also include those who were forced into retirement. 64 Air Force officers dismissed in the middle of 1997 are among the dismissed officers (Urama et al., 2019). 1995 saw the removal of the chiefs of army and navy staff, and 1996 saw the reinstatement of military administrators in the 36 states. Each of the country's senior army

officers must have received training costing more than \$2 million before retiring at the ripe old age of between 40 and 45. Most often, any ruling regime sees these skilled military officers as a threat. The phenomenon of retiring professional trained military officers has led to decay in the military readiness as well as lost of funds to the Nigeria economy. These monies could have used in the sustainable development of the economy. If you know that you are going to retire an officer after some expensive training in the United States, Britain, and Indian and so on, why should the government bother to send them at all? (Ojo, 2014)

According to Lewis et al. (1992) several senior military officers had taken early retirement, some reportedly under duress, and others were sidelined to obscure postings (67). The environment in the Nigerian army seems to be characterized with distrust among officers. Some officers are also hungry to be posted to political positions so that they could accumulate wealth to satisfy their personal desire. The personal interest syndrome that has now engulfed the army officers cadre has consequences eroded their professionalism. As a matter of fact, it is common knowledge now that all retired army generals are self proclaimed millionaires and owners of big private businesses around the nation. During General Abacha's regime some Nigerian scholars contend that he did not trust any other army unit. The only unit he trusted was his presidential guard. The highest level of distrust was proclaimed when Abacha ordered the arrest of Lieutenant General Oladipo Diya, his deputy head of state on December 21,

1997 (Lewis et al., 1998); also, the arrest of Diya and several other Yoruba senior officers (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

Military administration was viewed by many as a conspiracy by Abacha to get rid of Yoruba officers that he did not trust. Another school of thought contends that Abacha's arrest of Diya and other Yoruba senior officers was a plan for Diya not to succeed him. At that time Abacha was suffering from chronic heart disease and he knew that his end was getting nearer. One cannot tell the reasons he had for arresting Diya but distrust the thesis help to explain why certain actions were taken. An interesting phenomenon that occurred however is that the due process of law was never followed when army officers or civilians were arrested. As a matter of fact, senior military officers were known to be above the law during the military rule. When Diya was arrested the Abacha regime was very slow in producing evidence in support of its allegations that Diya and others were planning to topple his regime. It was reported that groups of northern traditional rulers and foreign diplomats were privately presented with some videotape confessions of Diya and others under detention but the public had several reasons to doubt Abacha (Lewis et al., 1998). General Abacha was reported to have personally selected the members of the military tribunal who tried Diya and his cohort in prison. The closed military tribunal handed its judgment on April 28, 1998. As in all cases of military coup in Nigeria, the tribunal sentenced Diya and five other senior officers to death. Ten other defendants were sentenced to long prison terms. The tribunal also acquitted thirteen defendants

(Oluwabiyi & Duruji, 2021). Lewis et al. (1992) contend that whether or not these charges were valid, they indicate deep divisions within the Nigerian Army and the chronic insecurity of the leaders of the military.

The Nigerian army has now become an institution where officers raise money to seek political positions. The military has become a recruitment ground for federal ministers and state military administrators or governors. Several young men have joined the army as a means to become rich. In another development, if a senior officer becomes to surf and professional he could be viewed as somebody who might plan a coup. As a result, such officers were identified as target for retirement. That was simply the nature of the Nigerian army during Abacha's regime. After the military handed power to a democratically elected government head by President Obasanjo in 1999, Obasanjo started to unfold his plan for the army. Just barely few weeks in office, Obasanjo retired more than 100 senior military and police officers that had held political positions in previous regimes. The new president's actions suggested that he, too, lacked faith in the armed forces that were supposed to serve as his guardians. The erratic and unsure path that Nigerian army officers have been traveling at the expense of their professionalism is also made clear by President Obasanjo's actions. The military regime regimes have not been effective public managers, as can be seen from a critical analysis of the development process during those regimes. In Table 2, some performance indicators by regimes are presented by Oyejide and Soyibo (1993) and Soyibo

(1999).

**Table 2: Performance Indicators by Regimes 1960-1998**

Regime/ Period	Growth Rate of Real GDP %	Inflation Rate %	Money Supply Growth Rate %	Fiscal Deficit/ GDP Ratio %	Steadily Rate of 26.0 percent The official exchange rate of the naira (Nigerian currency) to the United State dollar dropped from 10.56 percent in 1993 to 41.3 in 1995 (Oluwabi & Duruji, 2021).
Balewa 1960-1965	5.2	3.2	9.8	-0.9	0.64
Ironsi/ Gowon	9.4	7.5	20.9	-0.9	0.64
Mohammed/ Obasanjo 1976-1979	2.2	18.3	36.9	2.1	0.64
Shagari 1980-1983	-2.2	13.4	19.4	5.1	0.64
Buhari 1984-1985	2.2	26.6	10.9	3.8	2.81
Babangida *1986- 1992	5.3	26.0	29.5	8.9	3.38

**Sources:** Oyejide and Soyibo (1993) and Soyibo (1999)

In the period from January to March of 1992, the Nigerian premiums increased by more than 8 per dollar. When General Babangida was appointed Head of State, a deficit that was essentially unheard of in Nigeria between 1960 and 1980 grew. From 5.3 percent of GDP in 1987 to 12.4 percent of GDP in 1991, the fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP increased. In 1986, the growth rate of the money supply was 2.3 percent; in 1992, it was 57.0 percent. The money supply averaged around 29.5 percent during this time period (Soyibo, 1999). The rate

of inflation also accelerated under military governments. From 5.4 percent in 1986 to 49.5 percent in 1992, the inflation rate increased. The inflation rate maintained an average rate of 26.0 percent during the military regimes. The official exchange rate of the naira (Nigerian currency) to the United State dollar dropped from 10.56 percent in 1993 to 41.3 in 1995 (Oluwabi & Duruji, 2021). Table 2 shows that the military regime demonstrated the worse way of managing the finance of the Nigerian government. During the military regimes, the fiscal deficit of the nation increased uncontrollably, causing inflation. Poverty, unemployment, poor health and diseases increased in Nigeria than ever before. With the introduction of the structural adjustment came reduction of funding to hospitals, schools as well as the decline of municipal services like provision of water (Ojo, 2014).

The military management style was such that they would use the nation's money to buy off members of the armed forces who were potential rivals as well as the civil elites who would otherwise be clamoring for early return to civil rule (Soyibo, 1999). Nusakhare Isekhure (1998) nicely describes the Babangida and Abacha regimes as those that used the most brilliant scholars to write speech using philosophical prose which the head of state themselves did not understand. In fact the Babangida and Abacha regimes could both be classified as periods of intellectual fraud, with characteristics of intellectual criminality. Their public management style was such that their respective government told the people of Nigeria, the opposite of what the government has in mind. Doing



this actually killed the essence of good public management and pragmatic governance (Urama et al., 2019).

According to Suberu and Agbaje (1999) most attempts to restructure and restructure Nigerian federalism have been initiated by the various military authoritarian regimes. These regimes act extract constitutionally without guidelines or constitution to breach. Examples of such initiatives are the annulment of the 1993 election results and General Abacha's marked out repressive leadership style. Thus, the increasing investment in personal rule in the Abacha's regime has generally further advanced the project of de-institutionalization and capture of the state by private centers of power already noticeable in the preceding Babangida's administration. The consequences of personal role of both Babangida and Abacha have equally been reflected at almost all levels of government institutions and structures (Urama et al., 2019). These personal leadership styles were characterized by hegemonic repression and continued investment in and the strengthening of institutions of coercion. The aftermath was however, the weakening of public institutions and the structure for effective and efficient governance in Nigeria (Seberu & Agbaje, 1999). A deal was recently signed by representatives of President Obasanjo's administration with the US military to assist in transforming the Nigerian military into a more professional force that would respect the country's ongoing democratic process. Following the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the United States government tasked the United States Military Professional Resource Initiative (MPRI),

a private consultancy group run by retired senior U.S. military officers, with reorienting and restructuring the Nigerian military (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018).

## **CONCLUSION**

Connption, bribery, nepotism, tribalism, inefficiency, and a lack of accountability are just a few of the issues that make military intervention in Nigerian politics problematic. Military rule in Nigeria has produced contradictions that make it difficult for soldiers to improve upon the political system that they inherited from civil servants. The corrupt political system that the Nigerian military claims to be fighting against appears to be a part of it. When the military took over in Nigeria, it referred to itself as a corrective regime. According to interviews with government representatives conducted in 1995 and 1997, the military's idea of development consists merely of upholding law and order, increasing the production of goods, and accumulating personal wealth. The military's strength has not aided in economic development, despite occasionally announcing plans. It hasn't also given people the tools they need to participate in democracy. Perhaps even more so than the British colonial government, the military imposes its will. The majority of the military's advice comes from civil officials. These are the same public officials who, as you may remember, are embroiled in an almost constant struggle for power. In addition, interviews with important military officers, federal employees, representatives of foreign missions, and coordinators of development programs in Nigeria reveal that resources have not been distributed equally among the

various groups in the nation.

In conclusion, the military as an institution has become a haven for corruption, graft, and other methods of looting societal resources in Nigeria. Since access to state wealth constitutes one of the most lucrative avenues for private capital accumulation and the military has monopolized political power for more than three decades merely to achieve personal wealth. Nigerian military officers have over the years amassed huge private fortunes. Retired and active military officers now dominate many of the most lucrative sectors of the Nigerian economy, such as banking, agriculture and real estate. Many military officers now have the desire to hold their desired political positions in order to increase capital accumulation. So, what exactly did Nigeria's military government between 1966 and 1999 correct? The country's uneven development, the decline of towns and villages, the rising rate of robbery, the unchecked corruption, the low standard of living, the high rate of inflation, the skyrocketing unemployment, the breakdown of law and order, and the flagrant violations of human rights. All of these unethical issues the country is currently facing are a glaring indication of the failure of Nigeria's successive military governments. In its quest for political shrewdness, the Nigerian military has lagged behind in terms of troop readiness, dependability, discipline, modern weapons, the presence of Special Forces, reliable intelligence, force structure and leadership, domestic weapon production, and adequate troop training.

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