

## MILITARY IN POLITICS AND RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*At the grant of independence Nigerians were hopeful for socio-economic development. The hope was dashed due to corruption, mismanagement of the nation's resources by civilian-led administration. The military intervened in the nation's politics to rescue the poor socio-economic condition of Nigerians.. Consequently, the paper focused on military in politics and rural development by examining the development administration efforts of the military in the development of Nigerian rural areas. The military in politics and its development administration was a rural development strategy to alleviate the suffering of the people living in the rural areas in Nigeria. The paper adopted a historical research method which relied on secondary data and it also adopted direct military participation theory. The paper revealed that the Nigerian military in politics was corrective in nature. The military seized power in Nigeria to change the poor socio-economic and political system. Therefore, the military embarked on several developmental programmes such as the creation of local government, rural banking programmes, the Directorate For Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFPRI ), National Directorate for Employment. The paper revealed that undue political interference, unstable cash-flow to finance programme and inadequate qualified personnel to handle some of the programmes/projects constrained the impact of the military development administration efforts in the rural areas. The paper recommended among others that Nigeria government should designed no-stop financing plan for every rural development programme and train adequate rural dwellers to manage some of the needed programmes/projects*

**Keywords:** Military in politics, politics, development, development administration, rural development

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## Introduction

The security of citizens and their properties in a state is very imperative to every constituted governmental authority. It is imperative to every government because it is the essence of creation of state considering the tenet of social contract theory. Thus, the military and the police are established mainly to secure the state and her citizens from external and internal attacks respectively. However, the Nigerian military abandon its primary function for politics in 1966, 6years after Nigeria's independence and 14years after the Africa first military in politics, in which Col .Nagiub coup removed king Farouls of Egypt in 1952 and of the first coup in West Africa in which General Eyedema overthrew President Olypio in bloody military coup in Togo in 1963( Akpekpe and Aghahowa 1996; Eregha,, 2008; Ogbe, 2021).

Since independence in October, 1960, Nigeria has experienced series of military administration as chronologically asserted by Sapele (2013) and Ogbe (2021) as follow: AguyiIronsia - January-July 1966, Yakubu Gowon - July 1966 to July 1975, MurtalaMuhammed - July 1975 to February 1976, after his assassination on Februry 13, 1976 OlusegunObasanjo was appointed as military head of state by Supreme military council on February 14, 1976 to-October 1979, MuhammaduBuhari - December 1984 to August 1985, Ibrahim Babangida - August 1985 to August 1993, SaniAbacha - November

1993 to June 1998 and AbdulsalamiAbubakar - June 1998 to May 1999.

Most often the military heads first make national broadcast when they take over power from an incumbent head of state. Prior to the inauguration of the elected president OlusegunObasanjo government in 1999, all the past military heads of state in Nigeria mentioned similar reasons that spurred their intervention in politics, which include corruption/mismanagement of public money, abuse of political power, conduct of fraudulent elections by Civilian-led administration and have affected development in Nigeria. The mismanagement of nation's resources by Civilian-led administrations has caused poor socio-economic development in Nigeria. Many rural localities in Nigeria lack rural development due to corruption and mismanagement of the nation's resources. There are lack of socio-economic infrastructural amenities such as roads, water supply, electricity, which are the arteries and channels of rural development (Iyoha and Aiya, 2016). One of the reasons the military intervened in politics as they claimed was mismanagement of resources that has caused poor socio-economic development in Nigeria. Consequently, the paper sets out to look at the Nigerian military efforts on development administration as a rural development strategy to alleviate the sufferings of Nigerians living in the rural areas.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Nigeria has witnessed military in politics just like some other African states. During the decolonization of African Continent, Africans expected an economic boom and prosperities of the new states( decolonized states) led by the new leadership but these new states which Nigeria inclusive suffered poor socio-economic development due to mismanagement and corruption. Independence was expected to usher a big economic boom for the new states and much improvement in the lives of the people but the reverse is the case as the new states suffered setback because of mismanagement of resources and poorly implementation of economic model ( Obikeze, Obi &Iwuoha, 2016).

In Nigeria, Civilian-led administrations have been accused by the military of inability to cultivate financial discipline and prudence, tribalism and nepotism, organization of fraudulent and controversial elections, abuse of power/office and political instability. The aforementioned accusations led to the intervention of the military in politics to improve on the poor socio-economic development consequence of mismanagement and corruption of civilian-led administration. The military lost faith in the Civilian-led administration to initiate socio-economic development to alleviate the sufferings of the people. The paper set out to identify the nature of the Nigerian military in politics and examines the efforts of the military in

the development of rural areas in order to alleviate the sufferings of Nigerians.

## **Conceptual Clarification**

### **Military in Politics**

Military in politics describes the deviation of the military from its constitutional role of defense. Therefore, military in politics is the deviation of the military from its traditional role of defending a country against external enemies to political participation, which is an aberration and negation of their profession (Ogbe, 2021). Military in politics is either called military rule or military administration which Sapele (2013) noted as forceful seizure of political power by the Armed forces by the use of cabal and it involves the active process of administration in a state with the suspension of the constitution. The military government leadership is gotten by the barrel of guns and such government is characterized by the suspension of constitution, the military also rule with degrees, highly dictatorial, centralized power and forceful, and citizens' rights violation among others (Igbe, 2002 &Agidi and Ugbeyawighren 2013 cited in Ogbe, 2021)

### **Development**

Development has been variously explained/defined by scholars as something concern; increase in skill or capability, creativity, self-confidence material-welling, presence of modern amenities, the level of productive forces and as something that involves all aspects of human life (Rodney,

1986, Okeke 1994, Ibeanu, 1988; Obodoechi, 2006). Development is an expansion and enhancement of the performance capability of man to have control of himself, less dependent and more proficient in oneself doing (Ogbe, 2016). This study sees development purely from the questions Dudley Seers raised about a country development as follow; what has been happening to poverty, unemployment and inequality? (Ubani, Alum, Eke, Isigwe and Obasi, 2012). If the above questions raised by Dudley Seers satisfactorily answered then development has taken place.

### **Rural Development**

Rural development is that development directed to enhance the living standard of people in rural area. It is an act of improving and transforming the socio-economic stagnating conditions of rural localities to a supportive condition for development. Thus, Ogidefa (2010) sees rural development as efforts to increase rural output and create employment opportunities, and to remove the fundamental causes of poverty, diseases and ignorance.

### **Development Administration**

Administration is a purposive activity of human endeavor towards achieving targeted aims/goals while development is efforts geared toward socio-economic and political upliftment. The concept of development administration is an administrative strategy geared toward socio-economic development. In other

words, as noted by Obikeze and Obi (2004) the idea of development administration is the most suitable ways of passing from an administration which is essentially traditional in its function to administration capable and geared to development.

Development administration has gained an immense importance in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America since 1960 (Tonwe, 2008). The countries often referred to as developing countries were motivated to adopt development administration because they have basic characteristics in common as noted by Sapru (1997, p. 181 -182) as follows;

- The developing countries are similarly faced with developmental problems in socio-economic and political/administrative areas.
- The developing countries have conceived the essentiality of development administration as a platform to implement socio-economic and political change targeted at attaining the goals of nation building and socio-economic progress.

Fainsod cited in Tonwe (2008, p. 367) noted that;

“Development administration embraces the collection of new functions assumed by developing countries that embarked on the path of modernization and

functionalist. He further said that development administration ordinarily involves the establishment of machinery for planning economic growth and mobilizing and allocating resources to expand national income”.

Thus, it is seen as the way a country’s government acts to fulfill its role in achieving such a country’s development (Saul M. Katz cited in Tonwe, 2008).

Obikeze and Obi (2004) articulates development administration as public administration which can be instrumental to initiation and execution of projects such as schools, roads, electricity, health centres/hospital and improve the general welfare and people’s well-being. They further asserted that the development administration makes administration to become development-oriented instead of being strict to rules and obedience to status quo.

Development administration is a deliberate administrative plan well designed and articulated to elevate the poor condition of the citizens as well as enhancing their standard of living. Thus, development administration targeted at embarking on development goals and policies formulation, reorganizing administrative structures, supporting people’s engagement in development effort and promoting

socio-political structure of growth of developing countries.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Direct Military participation theory is adopted to explain the purpose of military intervention and eventually its administration in Nigeria. This theory asserted that the failure of the political elites/class to tackle and solves societal bothering issues which cover socio-economic problems, corruption, inefficiency, nepotism, tribalism among others. The words of Feit cited in Obikeze, Obi and Iwuoha (2016, p.174),

When soldiers find their countries beset by seemingly Insoluble problems and they lack faith in the skills or will of politicians to solve them, they may offer themselves as the men of iron to perform the drastic surgery needed to amputate the cancerous elements of the existing system.

The corruption and mismanagement of resources by the Civilian-led government and its poor development consequence caused Nigerians worry. Thus, the military perceived the Civilian-led government to have displayed incapability to lead and develop the country. For example, in the fourth national development plan education was also given priority by the government by allocating huge fund for its execution but the plan beautiful intentions failed to benefit

Nigerians because of corruption and lack of foresight of the administration (Otoghagua, 2004). The military lost faith in the Civilian-led government capability to initiate development, therefore they took the responsibility to ensure development in Nigeria. In this regard, the tenet of the direct military participation theory is tantamount to argumentative assertion that military intervention in politics is more likely to be high in countries with low socio-economic development status (Edeh and Ugwueze, 2014), a situation Nigeria found herself in. The Nigeria military has then repeatedly given reasons for their intervention in politics as a corrective measure to solve socio-economic and political problems then facing the country which Nigeria political class has failed to resolve.

### **The Types of Military Rule and Exposition of the Nature of Nigerian Military in Politics**

Un-democratic and totalitarian characters are usually associated and experienced in military rules. The military rule by Decrees and Edicts because they disband the existence of the legislative assembly (Sapele, 2013) and rule of law principle often tampered with because of the suspension of constitution in military regime. The military disengagement of democratic regime is an assumed attempt to improve upon by the military what they perceived to be the major challenges associated with the political system/country (Achebe, 1983). Thus, military often claimed right of being in politics with the

following reasons; political instability, corruption, violent crises associated with elections and partisan politics (Osariyekemwan and Osariyekemwan, 2021).

Consequently, three forms of military intervention in politics are identified, which are; trusteeship or caretaker government, corrective government and military revolution (Sapele, 2013, p.48-49). As the names imply, trusteeship or caretaker military rule is for very a brief period which meant to maintain peace and to organize election for emergence of democratic government. A situation in which the military is engaged in politics to alter a country's basic socio-political and economic order is referred to as corrective military government/rules. Military in politics is a revolutionary form if the military aimed to alter the basic socio-economic and political culture and engaged new groups into permanent power using coercion to attain its aims.

Pointedly, from the forms of military rule aforementioned, Nigeria military rule was a corrective regime because they intervened to change the basic socio-political and economic order. For example, Sapele (2013) asserted that lack of national unity and dynamism, corruption, foreign dependency and excessive elitism were problems of Nigeria during Gowon's military administration and the government was removed by another coup on basis of corrective measures. He also noted that ShehuShagari administration was

removed from office by MuhammaduBuhari's military rule on the basis of mismanagement of public fund, corruption and election malpractice (Bamgbose, 2002; Igbe, 2002). Unfortunately, the nation's resources and the people were frustrated because the military did not display a group that was actually prepared to change the society for the better ( Obikeze, Obi &Iwuoha, 2016).

In conclusion, the intervention of the armed forces in the country's politics by Major C.K. Nzeogwu in January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966 military coup halted the Nigeria first republic as a corrective measure because it intend to stopped tribalism, regionalism, etc. Major C.K Nzeogwu asserted that power was taken by the armed forces from the civilian-led government to get rid of tribalism-cum-nepotism and regionalism for the good of the country (Ogbe, 2021). Hence, the Nigerian military heads of state in the past had seized governmental power at different times to correct what they considered as anti-good government. Thus, the administration of the military in Nigeria at different times assumed corrective regimes to transform the poor socio-economic and political development situation for better.

### **Research Methodology**

The method of data collection in study is a historical research method which relied on secondary data in carry out investigation. So, the historical research method relied on records of past events which informed

us how things came to be and what they are, which is an effort to understands a phenomenon or determine its process of growth (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2011).

### **A Brief Review of Military Rule in Nigeria**

Military engagement in politics is an aberrant because in section 217(2a, b,c) of the amended 1999 constitution of Nigeria cited in (Ogbe,2021) stated among others that the military function is to defend the nation from external attacks. Also, it is an aberration considering politics as decision-making and execution of decisions and policies on behalf of the people of a country by a group of persons, particularly civilians. Therefore, military in politics in Nigeria was an affront to democracy that is platform for politics. Politics has been differently defined by different people. Politics is seen as activities handling by officials of state institutions such as policy-makers, directors, boards members. Also, authoritative allocation of scarce resources of a society is considered as politics by Easton (1957), while Lasswell (1930) views politics as who get what, when and how. Easton and Lasswell definitions of politics emphatically demonstrated a meeting point, which is authorized person to allocate scarce resources and who gets what has been allocated in a society. Thus, both definitions jointly revealed that there is an authorized person to allocate scarce resources of a society who might have influenced directly or

indirectly by the receiver of what has been allocated.

However, this paper sees politics as decision-making and its execution on behalf of people of a country by a group of persons particularly civilians. Hence, military in politics is an aberration and affront to democracy that is a platform for politics. Thus, Akpekpe and Aghahowa (1996) asserted that Major- General Ironsi and other military heads of Nigerian state had no business in direct politics. They further noted that Nigerian constitution unambiguously spelt out the key principles on which the governance of Nigeria should be based. The reasons for Nigerian military in politics were given by the military such as corruption, tribalism and nepotism in Nigeria. Consequently, Nigeria had a series of military regime/rule. Since independence in October 1960, Nigeria has experienced military intervention in politics as chronologically asserted by Sapele (2013) and Ogbe (2021) as follows: Aguyi Ironsi - January-July 1966, Yakubu Gowon - July 1966 to July 1975, Murtala Muhammed - July 1975 to February 1976, Olusegun Obasanjo - July 1976 to October 1979, Muhammadu Buhari - December 1984 to August 1985, Ibrahim Babangida - August 1985 to August 1993, Sani Abacha - November 1993 to June 1998 and Abdulsalami Abubakar - June 1998 to May 1999.

Scholars such as Osaiyekemwen and Osaiyekemwen (2021), Fidelis and Epoweide (2021), Ahmatie (2018),

Sapele (2013), Akpekpe and Aghahowa (1996), and Achike (1990) have written on Nigerian military activities ranging from intervention in politics to its developmental contributions. The military has accused of the civilian-led administration of the cause of their intervention in Nigeria politics due to corruption, inability to cultivate financial discipline and prudent management, tribalism-cum-nepotism, organized fraudulent and controversial elections, abuse of power/office, political instability due to among others federal election crisis of 1964, Western region election crisis of 1965, Census Crisis of 1961. (Akpekpe and Aghahowa, 1996 ; Igiebor and Iyase, 2021 ; Ochoga and Shakira, 2021 ; Ahmatie, 2018 ; Eyinla, 2000 ; Obikeze and Obi, 2017 ; Ogbe, 2021 ; Obikeze , Obi and Iwuoha, 2016). The paper attempts to expand the frontier of knowledge on military in politics/ rule in Nigeria. Thus, the paper would expose the development administration efforts of the military rule towards rural development as strategy to elevate the rural people from suffering caused by bad governance in Nigeria.

### **The Military Developmental Efforts for the Contributions of the Military on Rural Development in Nigeria**

The military embarked on the following programmes/ projects as efforts toward rural development in Nigeria.



(a) **The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DIFFRI).** The DIFFRI was created by General Ibrahim Babangida administration in 1987 and the national was chairman Air Vic Marshall Larry Koninya (Rtd) while at the state level were State Governors (Obi and Nwanegbo, 2006; Ubani, Alum, Eke, Isigwe&Obasi, 2013) aimed at bridging the infrastructural development gap existing between the rural and urban areas to reduce drastically rural-urban migration. Hence, this programme was targeted to improve the quality of life of the rural dwellers and to promote, increase and sustain rural productivity.

In order to achieve the target of the DIFFRI programme such provision of the following were made: a national feeder-road building scheme, national rural water supply scheme, national rural market scheme, national small farmer's credit scheme, primary health care scheme and national programme for cooperatives and credit for roadsides mechanic and artisans etc. The programme succeeded in constructed some feeder roads and supplied improved seed varieties worth #23.6 million to farmers while it was constrained with insufficient support of the local people for the programme to make a greater impact (Obi and Nwanegbo, 2006).

(b) **Agricultural Development Programmes (ADP).** It was an agricultural programme created by General Murtala Mohammed in 1975. It was created as noted by Oluyemi (1980) cited in Ubani Alum, Eke, Isigwe&Obasi (2012) to improve the traditional system of production of small scale farmers who provide over 90% of the gross domestic food supplies thereby raises their productivity, incomes and standard of living. Objectively, the programme was to supply water for irrigation, human drinkable water, construction of dams and boreholes for livestock, construction of rural feeder roads and intensive and extensive training programmes. Nigerians were trained locally and overseas by the ADP. Farmers and local artisans benefited extensively in the training programme of ADP, according to Oyaide (1992) cited in Ubani, Alum, Eke, Isigwe&Obasi (2013) by 1988 over 4,750 Nigerians had been trained and supervised. However, the impact of the programme on the rural economy was limited by undue political interference, unstable cash-flow, among others.

(c) **The Family Support Programme (FSP).** The FSP was a modification of a better

life programme for the rural women launched by General Ibrahim Babangida's wife but FSP was initiated by Mrs Maryam Abacha, the former Nigeria military head of state. FSP was programme of action created to monitor and give fresh impetus to existing family related programming efforts in various ministries and Non-governmental organization (NGOs) (Iyoha and Aiya, 2016,). They further noted that studies have shown that FSP has encouraged women to be more involved and participate actively in community development.

- (d) **Establishment of Rural Banking Programme Called People's Bank in Nigeria.** General Ibrahim Babangida established the people's and ensured its operation in 1989, and Dr. T. Solari and Mrs M. Shokenu were appointed as the chairman and managing Director respectively (Agence France presse (AFR) cited in Research Directorate Immigration and Refugee Board (DIRB), Canada, 1996 ; Teniola, 2019). The bank was established to ensure extending credit to non-privileged people in Nigeria who could not ordinarily secured such loans from the usual banking system. In a similar manner AFR cited in DIRB (1996)

noted that the people's bank of Nigeria was to provide for the poor professional people and traders who might not have opportune to access loans in the orthodox commercial banks due to the stringent conditions. It further asserted that in 1992 the people's bank of Nigeria has 200 branches situated across the country and gave loans to some 245,000 clients since it started its operation.

- (e) **National Directorate of Employment (NDE).** This scheme/programme was established by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1987 to provide Nigerian youths who were unemployed at then with practical skills that will empower them to be gainfully engaged as well as to provide employment opportunities to others in their communities (Otoghagua, 2004 ;Iyoha and Aiya, 2016 ). The scheme ran four programmes, which were;
- **National Youth Employment and Vocational skills:** This made up of open apprenticeship scheme in which youths who were unemployed because they lacked relevant skills were encouraged to acquire skill/Vocations from craftsmen, artisans, ministries and industries. NDE financially sponsored the training and some allowances

were given to the apprentices. Based on request, some of the beneficiaries were assisted with loans to establish themselves

- **Small-scale Industries and Graduate Employment Scheme:** This programme was created to assist Nigerian unemployed to own and manage their business. Bank loans ranging from between #5,000.00 and #35,000.00 for unemployed graduates with an interest rate of 13% repayable over a period of five years (Otoghua, 2004).
- **The Agricultural Sector Employment Programme:** Here, those with degree and diploma in the field of agriculture and young school leavers interested in farming were trained. Land & scale were given to successful trainees. The loans were disbursed either through state owned banks or agricultural credit corporations with 9% interest repayable in a five years period.
- **Special Public Work Programme:** This was to provide immediate temporary employment to the unemployed in Nigeria. Therefore, some public work projects such as construction and maintenance of roads, building and provision of other infrastructures, environmental sanitation were

provided (Iyoha and Aiya, 2016)

- (f) **Creation of Local Government status:** The leadership of General Obasanjo military government transformed local administration system to local government council with a status of third tier of government (Ogbe, 2021) He further noted that in 1991 doctrine of separation of powers was introduced by General Ibrahim Babangida which led to presidential system in local government administration. Therefore, Councilors (Legislators), executive and the Judiciary are both personnel and functionally separated. In order to achieve rural development by local government council, the elected executive were constitutionally empowered to exercise executive authority in local government, appoint and assign responsibilities to supervisors and set performance targets for Local Government employees.

Thus, the need to attract development, effective participation by the local people and to increase government responsiveness necessitated the creation of local government, and through the elected local representatives it will be able to perform its services adequately (Ogbe, 2016). The importance of Local

government to the rural people effective participation in governance caused the assertion of Orewa (1983) that it has been generally agreed that no central government can satisfactorily conduct administration wholly from its capital (headquarters) through civil servants that stay at the capital without Local government.

#### **(G) Development of River Basin Authority:**

In order to defeat pitiable condition of water supply sector in Nigeria, federal government established ten River Basins and Rural development Authorities (RBRDA) by Decree No 25 of 1976, which by 1984 all the then 19 states had one each, except Lagos and Ogun states that jointly had one (Ubani, Alum, Eke, Isigwe and Obasi, 2013). They noted that RBRDA became a veritable strategy positioned to develop small irrigation schemes which benefited small farmers directly and improved supply of portable water to the rural areas. Functionally, RBRDA among others to assist the states and local governments in the construction of small dams, wells, boreholes and rural roads for evacuation of farm produce. However, they further noted that the scheme was faced with political instability, inadequate funds, corruption and mismanagement of funds, ethnicity coloration, inadequate of qualified and experienced personnel, and inadequate and high cost of machinery (Abani, Alum, Eke, Isigwe and Obasi, 2013).

#### **Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The paper asserted that the Nigerian military in politics was a corrective measure in nature. Consequently, The Nigerian military seized power at different times to change poor socio-economic and political development caused by bad government. Hence, the military embarked on several developmental programmes/projects such as rural banking programme, The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure, Agricultural Development Programme, National Directorate For Employment, The Family Support Programme, National Youth Employment and Vocational Skills, Creation of Local Government as third tiers of government and Development of River Basin Authority to achieved purpose of intervention in politics in Nigeria. Undue political interference, unstable cash-flow finance programmes and among others inadequate qualified personnel to handle some of the projects/programmes limited the impacts of the military development administration in the rural areas. In conclusion, poor socio-economic and political development of the Nigeria rural areas caused by bad government due to inability to imbibe financial discipline and prudence, nepotism, conduct of fraudulent and controversial elections abuse of office spurred the military intervention in politics in Nigeria. Thus, development administration efforts of the Nigeria military towards rural development

were a strategy to alleviate the suffering of the people living in Nigeria rural areas. Although, some of the initiated programmes did not achieve their objectives due to both human and financial problems as mentioned above. No-stop financing plan for every rural development programme should be designed by government and training and retraining of adequate rural dwellers to manage programmes/projects in their localities.

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