

THE HISTORY OF THE NIGERIAN ARMY AND THE
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE HISTORY OF THE NIGERIAN ARMY AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA, by MAJ Fredrick C. Dummar, 109 pages.

Ethnic and religious clashes have continued in Africa's most densely populated nation. Nigeria is a nation of vast human and natural resource potential that has experienced extreme strife during forty years of transition from colonial rule to democratic governance. The central research questions are: How has the historical development of Nigeria's Army effected the development of the nation-state? And how has political engagement changed the army? The first step examined the ethnic, religious factors and the history of military coups d'état. The second step examined the effect of military governance on education, the economy, and foreign policy. The final step determined the future path of Nigeria and its Army after the birth of Nigeria's third republic. The conclusion recommended an increase in military-to-military contact with Nigeria to increase professionalism and respect for the subordination of the military to civilian authority, along with increased diplomatic efforts to help Nigerians heal the wounds of internal discord that have created the belief that military governance is the answer.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Prospects for a transition to civilian rule and democratizations are slim. . . . The repressive apparatus of state security . . . will be difficult for any future civilian government to control. . . . The country is becoming increasingly ungovernable. . . . Ethnic and regional splits are deepening. . . . [R]eligious cleavages are more serious; Muslim fundamentalism and evangelical Christian militancy are on the rise; and northern Muslim anxiety over southern control of the economy is intense. . . . [T]he will to keep Nigeria together is now very weak.¹

State Department Bureau of
Intelligence and Research

Many nations in West Africa suffer from economic strife and war. United States strategic goals for the region, like most of the world, include the assistance to fledgling democracies, economic assistance, and military partnerships. Many nations of this region have deep-seated problems that because of pride, arrogance, or inability they fail to deal with. Worse yet, they often deal with the problems in a shortsighted expedient manner that has disastrous long-term effects.

Nigeria is a major player in West Africa, and the United States must make a concerted effort to understand the true nature of her problems (figure 1). The United States must understand not only Nigeria's root problems, but also how Nigeria deals with these problems internally and externally. Nigeria is a nation that suffers from tremendous internal strife that reverberates throughout West Africa. Ethnic and religious differences, combined with a lack of economic diversity, have created a fractured and disenfranchised populace. A staggering national debt, estimated at \$29 billion in 1999, combined with an incomplete infrastructure and scientific base, indicates that the economy will need

considerable assistance to recover.² These internal problems added to the world's perception that Nigeria is the most corrupt nation on the planet. Add West Africa's perception of Nigerian hegemony in Sub-Saharan affairs and one can begin to understand the scope of the problem. Nigeria will be the cornerstone of U.S. regional engagement strategy in West Africa in conjunction with some of its more stable neighbors. President Clinton stressed Nigeria's importance in 1999. "It is very much in America's interest that Nigeria succeeds, and therefore we should assist them in their success. We intend to increase our assistance to Nigeria to expand law-enforcement and to work toward an agreement to stimulate trade and investment between us."³ His statement quickly found its way into U.S. policy when the Secretary of State named Nigeria one of four "critical democracies."⁴

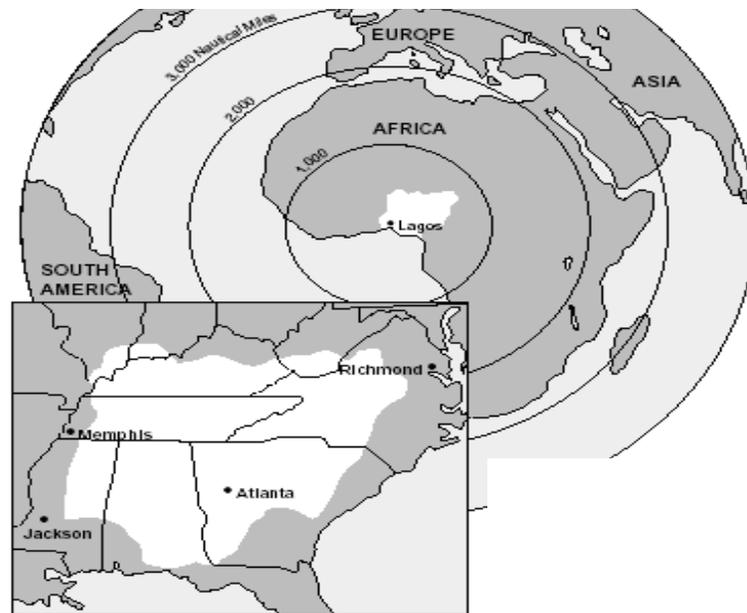


Figure 1. Nigeria's Global Position and Relative Size Compared to the United States. *Source:* The Library of Congress, map available at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/nigeria/ng00_05a.pdf, 10 October 2001.

The development of the Nigerian Army since national independence in 1960 is of critical concern in the development, future stability and progress of Nigeria. U.S. national interests are involved, and the U.S. Army is at the forefront of the national policy. Moreover, while it is easy for the casual observer to note that the Nigerian Army is not a Western army, a more thorough analysis of Nigeria is required to understand her army. Cultural, professional and ethnic biases are not helpful in this analysis, and are detrimental to making real progress in Nigerian relations. This thesis will examine the historical development of Nigeria's army, an army inescapably linked to the development of the nation-state. It is a history of an army created by a colonial power, which engaged in the political governance of a nation and forever changed itself from what the western world regards as an army. It became instead a quasi-political party with a built-in security apparatus, a metamorphosis not lost on Nigerians. Jonathan Agwunobi lists a few visible impacts of the politicization of the Nigerian Army:

1. Reduced its professional military aspirations
2. Induced it to perform political duties for which it was not drilled.
3. Resulted in distrust, execution, early retirement or dismissal and fear within the military.
4. Resulted in military officers dedicating far more time, energy and imagination to political leadership and administration than to the essential tasks relevant to military professionals.⁵

Nigeria is indeed a very proud nation, with a proud army, and fine traditions, but its institutions are very different from those in the United States. Therefore, to begin the discussion it is necessary to give a brief introduction into the nation's complexities. It is

not within the thesis scope to examine the totalities of Nigeria's ethnicities and the incredible diversity, but it is helpful to get a grand overview. The vast differences within Nigeria create problems for the nation and the army that has ruled it.

Physical and Ethnic Geography

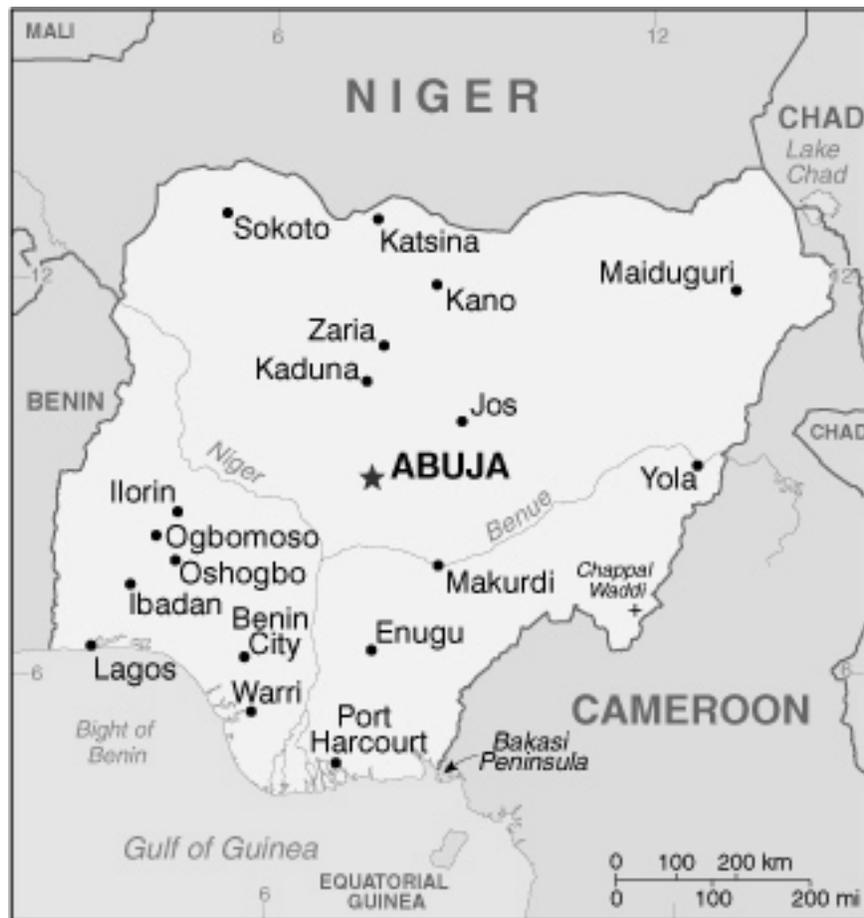


Figure 2. Map of Nigeria. *Source:* Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, map available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ni.html>; Internet, 10 October 2001.

A glimpse into the vast diversity of the land and people is the first step in understanding Nigeria. Nigeria bordered by Cameroon to the east, Chad to the northeast,

Niger to the north, Benin to the west, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south is the most populous nation in West Africa (figure 2). Over 123 million people live an area of 356,669 square miles.⁶ At its widest, it measures about 750 miles from east to west and about 650 miles from north to south.⁷ The country's topography ranges from lowlands along the coast and in the lower Niger Valley to high plateaus in the north and mountains along the eastern border. Tropical forests in the south become dry savannas in the far north. Human population densities, and erratic, uncontrolled development, pose serious threats to the environment.

The Niger and Benue rivers form Nigeria's largest physical region. The Niger enters the country from the northwest, the Benue from the northeast; they join at the city of Lokoja in the south central region and continue south, where they empty into the Atlantic at the Niger Delta (figure 3). This Y formed by the Benue and Niger provides a geographical barrier that had a profound effect on the development of Tribal boundaries. These tribal boundaries still influence Nigerian politics. The Hausa-Fulani fill the top of the Y, the Yoruba the western base, and the Igbos the eastern base.⁸

Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, represent 68 percent of the population. Of the remaining 32 percent, about one-third consists of groups numbering more than 1 million members each.⁹ The remaining 300-plus ethnic groups account for the final one-fifth of the population.

North of the Niger Valley are the high plains of Hausaland, a level topographic area averaging about 2,500 feet above sea level. The Jos Plateau, located close to Nigeria's geographic center, rises above the plains to an average elevation of 4,200 feet. To the northeast, the plains of Hausaland fade into the basin of Lake Chad; the area is

lower in elevation with somewhat level terrain and sandy soils. To the northwest, the high plains descend into the Sokoto lowland. The Hausa, concentrated in the far north and in the Republic of Niger, are the largest of Nigeria's ethnic nations. Most Hausa are Muslims engaged in agriculture, commerce, and small-scale industry. The Hausa have also traditionally dominated the military.¹⁰ Many people of non-Hausa origin, including the city-based Fulani, have become assimilated into the Hausa nation through intermarriage and acculturation. Other Fulani continue to depend on their livestock and have retained their own language, Fulfulde, and cultural autonomy.¹¹



Location of major ethnic groups

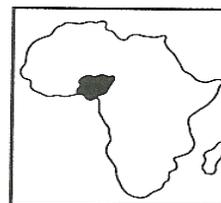


Figure 3. Source. Eghosa E. Osaghae, *“Crippled Giant” Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), Map.

Southwest of the Niger Valley (figure 3 on the left side of the Y) lies the comparatively rugged terrain of the Yoruba highlands. The delta, which lies at the base of the Y and separates the southwestern coast from the southeastern coast, is low-lying, swampy terrain with multiple channels through which the waters of the river empty into the ocean. The nation's most populous city, Lagos, is located in this western quadrant. There is a strong sense of Yoruba identity but also a history of distrust and rivalry dividing the various groups. The majority of Yoruba are farmers or traders who live in large cities of that predate colonial involvement in Nigeria.¹²

Southeastern coastal Nigeria (figure 3 to the right of the Y) consists of low sedimentary plains that are an extension of the southwestern coastal plains. In all, the Atlantic coastline is a series of sandbars, and lagoons of brackish water that support the growth of mangroves, and little else. Because of the Guinea Current, which transports and deposits large amounts of sand, the coastline is quite straight and has few good natural harbors. The harbors that do exist require constant dredging to remove deposited sand.¹³ Farther east, along the border with Cameroon, are the eastern highlands. Vogel Peak, which at 6,699 feet is Nigeria's highest point, is located in this region. The Igbo of southeastern Nigeria traditionally live in small, independent villages, each with an elected council rather than a chief. Do not let the democratic institutions completely fool you. Igbo society is still highly stratified along lines of wealth, achievement, and social rank. However, the Igbo people had a proud tradition of consensus building and governance long before colonial powers set foot on the African continent. Nevertheless, overcrowding and degraded soil have forced many Igbo to give up the agricultural

lifestyle and migrate to nearby cities and other parts of Nigeria disturbing their traditional hierarchy in the process.

Other large ethnic groups in the north are the Kanuri, centered in Borno State; the Tiv, from the Benue Valley near Makurdi; the Igala, Jukun and Ilorin-Kabba Yoruba inhabit various portions of Northern states. In the east the Ibibio and Efik inhabit the Calabar area, while the Ijaw wedge into other Igbo dominated areas. The Edo from the Benin region; and the Nupe, centered in the Bida area in addition to the Urhobo and Itsekiri inhabit western portions of Nigeria.¹⁴ These ethnic groups may be small by Nigerian standards, but each of these lesser groups has more members than almost any of Africa's other ethnicities. While trans-ethnic activity is on the rise, social pressures for ethnic endogamy is still high, even within the military. Some estimates put the figure at over 90 percent of marriages being within the ethnic groups.¹⁵ Ethnic rivalry extends to the job market, where ethnic competition is fierce for plum government posts.

Within these complex series of ethnic groups and resource scarcity, it is easy to see the resulting tensions. These tensions fueled the intense civil war from 1967 to 1970 when the first postcoup government announced the death of the regional governments established in 1914 by the British. Britain had ruled Nigeria as two protectorates from 1900 to 1914, and after 1914 although united under one colonial government the three regional governments retained authority over their respective regions.¹⁶ The change in regional power, and the continued ascendancy of northerners in the Army ignited the first powder keg under military rule.

Nigerians still believe that ethnic conflicts are the most destructive force threatening survivability of the nation.¹⁷ The federal government (army) has always

suppressed ethnic conflicts quickly, and the control of information has been held as a matter of national security.

Climate, Agriculture, and Fossil Fuels

Nigeria has a tropical climate with sharp regional differences based on rainfall. Nigerian seasons vary based on the north-south position of a mixing line of air. From the Atlantic comes warm humid air that hits hot, dry, and often dust-laden air from the Sahara known locally as the harmattan. Temperatures are high throughout the year, averaging from 77 degrees to 90-plus degrees Fahrenheit. In the higher elevations of the Jos Plateau, temperatures average 72 degrees Fahrenheit. Northern Nigeria typically experiences greater temperature extremes than the south. Rainfall varies widely over short distances and from year to year. Parts of the coast along the Niger Delta, where the rainy season is year round, receive more than 160 inches of rain each year. Most of the country's middle belt, where the rainy season starts in April or May and runs through September or October, receives from 40 to 60 inches. The region along Nigeria's northeastern border receives less than 20 inches of rain per year, and the rainy season lasts barely three months.

Only in reserves protected from the chainsaw and the farmer do tropical hardwoods, including mahogany still exist. Most forests are largely secondary growth, primarily of species like the oil palm that the Igbos preserved for their economic value. Forests now cover only about 12 percent of the country's total land area.¹⁸ Immediately north of the forest is a region of tall grasses and trees. Repeated and continuous burning of the forest created the southern margins of the Guinea savanna and grassland. The burnings decimated important fire-sensitive plant species and contributed to erosion by

removing ground cover. Tropical forest is giving way to the Guinea savanna at such a rate that the only forests expected to survive the next generation are in reserves. Beyond the Guinea savanna lies the drier Sudan savanna, a region of shorter grasses and more scattered, drought-resistant trees. In Nigeria's very dry northeastern corner, the semi-desert Sahel savanna persists. Throughout these drier savannas, drought and overgrazing have led to the continuation of the desertification process.

Desertification is a major problem in Nigeria, made worse by massive water impoundment and irrigation plans. Uncontrolled grazing and livestock migration put tremendous pressure on the environment. Other environmental threats include poaching and settlement within protected areas, brushfires, increasing demand for fuel wood and timber, road expansion, and oil extraction activities. In some other parts of the country, farmers have practiced environmental protection for centuries. Their techniques include planting several different crops in a single field at once to cover the ground more evenly and thereby reduce erosion and increase fertility, planting, and maintaining farmland trees and hedgerows to reduce erosion, applying manure to farmland to maintain soil fertility; and, in certain areas such as the Jos Plateau, terracing steep slopes. The tremendous growth in the population and the limited development in agro-business put increasing pressure on the subsistence farmer to increase production.

Nigeria has an organized system of nature preserves, game reserves, and national parks in addition to a forest management system, but most management is at the state level. Law enforcement and protected system infrastructure are lacking, and abuses of protected land are common. The widespread hunting of wildlife for food has threatened the animal population in Nigeria. Consequently, Nigeria's few remaining elephants,

buffalo, lions, leopards, and other large game are in very remote areas or inside major reserves. Smaller animals such as antelope, monkeys, jackals, and hyenas are more widespread, but not as plentiful as one would expect given over hunting practices.

The rural economy that supports most Nigerians is based on the productivity of the land, 33 percent of which is arable.¹⁹ Soil fertility varies considerably but is generally poor. The most fertile of the soils are the result of alluvial deposition in river valleys. Many, however, are overused and eroded. The landscape is becoming increasingly barren of trees, especially in densely populated areas and near larger cities due to ever-increasing demand for trees as fuel, lumber, material for tools, fodder for animals, and herbal medicines.

Petroleum and natural gas, the source of most of Nigeria's export earnings, are concentrated in large amounts in the Niger Delta and just offshore. Smaller deposits are scattered elsewhere in the coastal region. The petroleum and natural gas industries have brought oil spills, natural gas burn offs, and clearance of vegetation away from drilling sites, and have seriously damaged the land and waterways in the Niger Delta. Apart from the environmental impact of oil on Nigeria, it has drastically shifted the balance of wealth, created economic turbulence, massive corruption, and furthered the ethnic subjugation of some tribes in the river states.

Several Nigerian groups have campaigned actively, but with little success, to compel the government and major oil companies to introduce environmental safeguards.²⁰ In 1988, the government created the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) to address problems of desertification, oil pollution, and land degradation. The majority of government revenue comes from government-controlled oil

and mineral profits and the FEPA has had only a minor impact.²¹ In 1995 the weak and fragmented environmental movement was dealt a sharp blow when the government executed Ken Saro-Wiwa, a well-known writer who struggled to stop environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.²²

Saro-Wiwa campaigned for his minority Ogoni people by manipulating international public opinion in favor of their plight. His platform of minority rights and environmental protection of Ogoniland were mere thorns in Nigeria's sides until he demanded more control of the oil by Ogonis. The control issue, and Saro-Wiwa's high profile and loud voice, led to a crackdown by General Sani Abacha's government. Ultimately, Saro-Wiwa was convicted of the trumped up charge of murdering four Ogoni chiefs and sentenced to death.²³

The oil companies, who Saro-Wiwa charged owed millions to local villagers, sought to distance themselves from the ugly aftermath of his death and to spin themselves as the victims of the situation in the Delta. Saro-Wiwa had charged that Shell, TotalFina Elf, Texaco, Chevron, Mobil, and Eni cooperated with successive military governments, which took billions of dollars in oil revenues while doing nothing to develop the region of the exploited Niger Delta.²⁴ Recently Shell put \$150 million into local development in an attempt to clean its Nigerian reputation and build a measure of rapport with the local tribes.²⁵ The tactics of kidnapping oil workers, smashing oil installations, and cutting production by sabotage were routinely reported in the international media. Lost in the din was the voice of the farmer whose air and water were polluted with oil and smoke.²⁶ The poorest Nigerians in the delta are angry. They want to be included in the economic

prosperity of the nation, and they will result to violence in order to receive their fair share.

In a one-sided economy earning an estimated \$14 billion from oil in 2001, control of the oil is more important than economic diversification to most Nigerians. As early as 1990, oil accounted for 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange receipts, oil exports being 97 percent of all exports.²⁷ Chapter 4 will further discuss the linkage of oil, the economic elite that control it, and the corruption it has caused in the senior ranks of the army.

Agriculture versus Industrialization

The above facts all point to the incredible cultural diversity and conflict within Nigeria's agricultural economy that is locked in what Alvin Toffler has called the first wave.²⁸ It is characterized by land being the basis for economy, life, family structure, culture, and politics. The strict authoritarian nature of government in this phase keeps most people locked into a caste system while only a few benefit. The socioeconomic elite need control of the oil, and will use any methods available to retain control. Unfortunately for Nigeria, she never enjoyed a victory of Second Wave industrialism over agriculture as occurred during the U.S. civil war when a mostly industrial North defeated a mostly agricultural South and set the stage for further industrialization of North America.²⁹ Nigeria's ethnic clashes, symptomatic of people attempting to include themselves in the economic prosperity of a preindustrialized nation, always led to stricter control by the army. They did not lead to a massive social upheaval that could have propelled them into the industrial age. The societal changes of the world passed Nigeria

by, not because her people were backward or unwilling to change, but because those in power were clinging to a past that supported their agenda.

In his book, *The Military Franchise*, Akin Akindele makes the assertion that his fellow Nigerians were “slaphappy” from years of suffering “abject poverty in the midst of selective opulence.”³⁰ In addition, he asserts that most now believe that “political thievery is a legitimate activity.”³¹ After watching the patterns of fledgling democracy interspersed with coups, he gave the following description of the 1983 election season:

An educated electorate awaited arrogant office seekers at the port of reelection in 1983. . . . More citizens began to demand to know more about the people behind the carefully crafted personalities. . . . This increasing awareness was going to interfere with the prearranged 1983 elections “moonslide” victory. We were to be well on our way to a one party state. Some of the less tolerant population took exception. The corrupt leadership stood its ground. As always, it was going to impose its will on the people. The affray that ensued in the politically conscious western section of the country was almost inevitable. It was an overdue war that had to be fought. There was a decision to subjugate the national will. . . .

Economic and social violence had been visited on a naïve people. Its will subjugated. Its desires ignored. In time, out of frustration rather than hate, citizens rose almost in unison against the growing anarchy. They were going to wash the ledger clean with the blue blood of their tormentors. It was going to be a free for all. . . . The entire nation could smell the sweet scent of change. It waited nervously for the final catalyst. “God, don’t let it be another palliative palace coup”, was the generally expressed sentiment about a military coup everyone knew was destined to happen. . . .

The collective fantasy was aborted by a self-serving preemptive coup. The wind was effectively taken out of the revolutionary sail of the nation. The ruling class had just tendered its last card. The joke was on us. They had merely acted pragmatically, tactically conceding defeat in order to preserve their position. He who fights and runs away, lives to fight in another political dawn. In the excitement of the moment, the ingenious ploy for time by the ousted politicians was lost on the gleeful population.³²

This linkage of the army to a tumultuous political process in a nation of multiple ethnicities and resource scarcity creates numerous problems for the Nigerian soldier. The army is some, or all, of the following in the eyes of the average Nigerian: a tool for

internal population control, a self-serving “watch dog” of the political process, a group of on-call lackeys for the socioeconomic elite, a vehicle for upward social mobility for the officer corps, and a legitimate tool for certain ethnic groups to subjugate other groups. None of these mission profiles leads to a professional force capable of acting in the best interests of the nation state. In the following chapters, I will explore the legacy of military rule on Nigeria and the changes in the institution itself as the result of its role in governance.

¹Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 14.

²Theodros Dagne, *Nigeria in Political Transition* (Washington, D.C. : Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2001), 5.

³Ibid., 12.

⁴Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2001; available from http://www.state.gov/www/budget/fy2001/fn150/forops_full/150fy01_fo_africa.html; Internet; accessed on 22 February 2002.

⁵Jonathan C. Agwunobu, *The Nigerian Military in a Democratic Society* (Kaduna: Olabola Graphic Press, 1992), 90.

⁶Dagne, 3.

⁷Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ni.html>; Internet; accessed on 10 October 2001.

⁸Rotimi T. Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1996), 12.

⁹Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, available from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ni.html>; Internet; accessed on 17 August 2001.

¹⁰Theodros Dagne, *Nigeria in Political Transition* (Washington D.C. : The Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2001), 4.

¹¹Suberu, 48.

¹²Ellen Thorp, *Ladder of Bones: The Birth of Modern Nigeria from 1853 to Independence* (London: Jonathan Cape Limited, 1956), 218.

¹³*Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁴Suberu, 17.

¹⁵The Library of Congress Web, *Nigeria: a country study*, available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>; Internet; accessed on 26 November 2001.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, available from <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ni.html>; Internet; accessed on 17 August 2001.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰Suberu, 32.

²¹*Ibid.*, 30.

²²*Ibid.*, 80.

²³“Delta Rights,” *Economist* 358, no. 8205 (20 January 2001): 42.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵“Helping, but Not Developing: A Report on Projects Supposed to Help Local People.” *Economist* 359, no. 8221 (12 May 2001): 52.

²⁶“Boiling Oil,” *Economist* 359, no. 8217 (14 April 2001): 44.

²⁷Sarah Ahmad Khan, *Nigeria: The Political Economy of Oil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 183.

²⁸Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), 13.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 23.

³⁰Akin O. Akindele, *The Military Franchise* (Chapel Hill: Professional Press, 1993), 68.

³¹*Ibid.*, 68.

³²*Ibid.*, 65.

CHAPTER 2

MILITARY GOVERNANCE (COUPS D'ETAT AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY)

In the absence of autonomizing mechanisms in the post-colonial state, the resources of physical coercion become the tools of particular groups, especially the hegemonic factions of the ruling class. . . . So we have essentially relations of raw power in which right tends to be coextensive with power and security depends on the control of power. The struggle for power, then, is everything and is pursued by every means.¹

C. Ake

The Nigerians inherited a complex bureaucracy from the British colonialists in 1960, along with national borders that fostered rather than subdued internal tension. Before the fledgling democracy could gain control of the situation, it accepted assistance from the only organization believed to be capable of governing in Nigeria. How could these patriotic officers sit idly by and watch politicians vie for control and ethnic domination while tearing their nation apart? The army could have been a savior, but its involvement in politics changed the institution and the ethnic undertones and political aspirations of the officers turned the army into the tormentor of the nation.

This condensed coup history demonstrates the important shaping factor played by military coups, not only on the Nigerian Army's structure and capabilities but also the country's psyche. The omnipresent threat of military coups has hung like a cloud of paranoia in the halls of government and the army. While coups d'état are certainly not a phenomena known only to Nigerians, coups have come to be seen as routine events in the lifespan of the average Nigeria citizen. They have decimated the ranks of their military, with Nigeria losing many of her brilliant officers to coups and countercoups.² The losses

came in many forms, from casualties during the initial fighting, execution by firing squad, imprisonment, or the less severe mandatory retirement.

The lists of officers involved in coups d'état, killed or jailed in the aftermath of military tribunals is interesting reading. It is informative to trace the involvement of some of Nigeria's current political leaders and their adversaries. A list compiled from Richard Akinnola's book of coup d'état in Nigeria is included in appendix 1.³

An examination of the list may lead you to a keen insight into the Nigerian Army. The successful coups have contained the same core of officers (1966 counter coup / 1975 / 1983 / 1985). The unsuccessful and aborted coups did not include the key power brokers among the armed forces. They were launched by individuals attempting to break the northern stranglehold on the country, and they failed to unseat the existing military government (1976 / 1986 / 1990). The major significance of those involved in successful coups becomes evident when they are shown within the northern clique that actually wields power in the army, and those that served without a real opportunity to influence the situation.

Preindependence

Nigeria's armed forces can trace their lineage to three colonial military units. The first Nigerian military unit, Glover's Hausas, was established in 1862 by Captain John Glover to defend Lagos. The demographic recruitment of northerners perpetuated the use of Hausa as the command language of the Nigerian army until the 1950s. This is the historic origin of the ethnic imbalance of the Nigerian Army to this day.⁴ In addition to Glover's Hausas, the Royal Niger Company Constabulary was raised in 1888 to protect British interests in Northern Nigeria. Where Glover's Hausas were recruited from the

north to protect the south, the Company Constabulary was recruited to serve an internal security role in Northern Nigeria. This constabulary formed the core of the Northern Nigeria Regiment of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF).⁵ The third unit, the Oil Rivers Irregulars, was created predominantly of Igbo's in 1891. This unit was later designated the Niger Coast Constabulary, and formed the Southern Regiment of the WAFF.⁶ The two regiments became the Nigeria Regiment of the WAFF on January 1, 1914 along with the consolidation of the Nigerian Protectorates.⁷

In 1928 the WAFF was renamed the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) and during the 1930s expanded from four battalions to six battalions which served in two theaters. The Northern and Southern commands had major installations at Sokoto, Kano, Zaira, Kadubna, Maiduguri, Yola, Enugu and Calabar.⁸ In World War II, the Nigerian Army expanded to 28 battalions that served outside Nigeria as part of the Allied war effort. In the 1950s, following World War II, the RWAFF resumed its primary mission of internal security, police actions, and punitive expeditions to break strikes, control local disturbances, and enforcing tax collection. The World War II experience led to expansion to a two-brigade system with associated Combat Support and Combat Service Support units.⁹ The first officer of Nigerian heritage was appointed in 1948. The Africanization of the officer corps continued through the 1950s until independence. In 1956, the Nigeria Regiment was renamed the Nigerian Military Forces, and in 1958 the colonial government assumed control.¹⁰ In 1960, when Nigeria gained her independence, there were 82 Nigerian officers, mostly Igbo, while the soldiers were still predominantly Hausas.¹¹

Post-Independence (Ethnic Politics)

On 1 October 1960, Britain granted Nigeria her independence. The first prime minister was Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a northern Fulani.¹² The political landscape was dominated at the time of the 1959 elections by three major ethnic based parties, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (Igbo), the Northern People's Conference (NPC), and the Action Group (AG).¹³ The elections resulted in a northern power base that despite its overwhelming size compared to the other ethnic groups was unable to capture the seats required to form the government alone.¹⁴ The NPC was given the dominant role in government because it still had more seats than the rival parties did, and some feared that the northern leaders would not agree to independence if they were not in control of the federal government.¹⁵ The Hausa-Fulani dominated NPC entered into a strained and tenuous relationship with the Igbo dominated NCNC, which allowed it to form the government as a coalition, and had the additional effect that Dr. Namdi Azikiwe (Igbo) became the governor general and later president of Nigeria.¹⁶

As the 1964 elections approached, the NPC was no longer content to share power with the NCNC. Their plan included breaking off relations with the NCNC and fracturing the Yoruba AG party so a Yoruba-Igbo alliance would not ruin the plan.¹⁷ The NCNC boycotted the election and President Azikiwe would not call on the victorious NPC and its leader Balewa to form the government.¹⁸ The immediate crisis was resolved but Azikiwe's power base eroded. Following the failed 1964 elections, a large portion of the population believed the government to be corrupt, or at least unacceptably dominated by the North.

The fallout from the splintering of the Yoruba's by the NPC was also causing unrest. The New Nigerian Democratic Party (NNDP), a Yoruba party that had formed an alliance with the north, claimed victory in the 1965 elections for the Western House of Assembly.¹⁹ AG on NNDP violence erupted, resulting in Lagos being dubbed the "Wild, Wild West," but Balewa refused to step in and stop the violence.²⁰ This decision would ultimately cost him and other northern leaders their lives in Nigeria's first d'état coup. This was the first in a series of coups that have plagued Nigeria for three decades.

Military Government

The core planners of the first coups were Igbo officers, and in 1965, Igbos commanded three out of five battalions.²¹ Just prior to Nigeria's first coup on January 15, 1966, a fourth battalion came under Igbo control when its Yoruba commander, Lieutenant Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi, was ordered to Abeokuta (a city in western Nigeria) for a military course.²² The main centers of action in the January 1966 coup were the northern towns of Kaduna and Kano with minor actions in the south around Ibadan and Lagos. Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, the coups main protagonist, claimed to have purity of purpose, as he wanted to stop the cycle of ethnic violence and corruption in the country.²³ His Igbo heritage and the ongoing political crisis that had led up to this point made his motivations suspect. The northern officers felt that this action was primarily an effort to purge them from the ranks, and allow the Igbos to run Nigeria. General Johnson Thomas Umunakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi (Igbo), who ultimately came to power in the coup, refuted these allegations with a story of his own. His version of events was broadcast across Nigeria in the wake of the military takeover:

The military government of the republic of Nigeria wishes to state that it has taken over the interim administration of the republic of Nigeria following the invitation of the council of ministers of the last government for the army to do so.

. . .

In the early hours of the morning of January 1966, officers kidnapped the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and took them to an unknown destination. The revolt was widespread throughout the country and some high-ranking officers were killed. . . .

The vast majority of the Nigerian Army remain[ed] completely loyal to the national government and immediately took steps to control the situation.²⁴

General Ironsi (Igbo) had been in a position to negotiate with the government to step in, and get the army under control. The northern political leaders, including the Prime Minister Balewa, had been killed in the coup and President Azikiwe (Igbo) was conveniently out of the country. Another senior Igbo officer, Lieutenant Colonel Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, was in northern Nigeria at Kano during the coup and refuted the northern allegation that the coup was an eastern plot to control the government. Ojukwu (Igbo), who became the military governor of eastern Nigeria after the coup, completely denied the allegation that the Igbos were attempting to purge the army of northern officers. In his book, *Biafra: Random Thoughts of Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, General of the People's Army*, he states that he was not aware of the coup until after it had begun, and he only stepped in to get control of the situation and get Nzeogwu (Igbo) back in line.²⁵ It is held as truth by some Nigerians that General Ironsi (Igbo) merely capitalized on the timing of a disjointed coup to come to power, and that a wide spread anti-northern sentiment was not present in the army. The northerners who suffered the most in putsch were not going to sit idly by and watch the easterners take over Nigeria. Racial tension in Nigeria was about to reach an all time high. The major reaction by the northern officers occurred in July 1966, less than seven months from Nigeria's first coup, when a group of

eastern officer met in western Nigeria. Gen Ironsi (Igbo), also in western Nigeria at the time, was captured by Major T. Y. Danjuma (Jukun from the middle belt). General Ironsi (Igbo) the supreme commander and his host Lieutenant Colonel Fajuyi (Yoruba), the western region military governor, were executed after Major Danjuma pronounced the following sentence:

[General Ironsi] you are under arrest. You organized the killing of our brother officers in January and you have done nothing to bring the so-called dissident elements to justice because you were part and parcel of the whole thing. . . .

I ran around risking my neck trying to calm the ranks, and in February, you told us they would be tried. This is July and nothing has been done. You will answer for your actions.²⁶

With the death of General Ironsi (Igbo) and his western state governor, the northern officers were now in control of two thirds of Nigeria. Lieutenant Colonel Gowon (middle belt), a young thirty-two-year-old middle belt Christian with a northern power base, assumed control of the country. Gowon was the most senior officer the north had at the time, and his rise to power marked a new height for northern hegemony over both the army and the government.²⁷ The Eastern Governor, Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu (Igbo), was cut off from the government as Gowon created new states and allowed the slaughter of Igbos to continue in northern Nigeria. It was this set of circumstances that led to the creation of Biafra in 1967 and civil war.²⁸

General Gowon would rule Nigeria for ten years. Through civil war and massive corruption he held his post. In 1975, while visiting Uganda, his brother-in-law Joe Garba ousted him. Nigeria was awash in corruption, and many felt that Gowon's comments alluding to a postponement of the planned 1976 elections were the final blow. Others backed the coup as they felt the federal government was still punishing the Igbos in the

aftermath of the civil war and felt that a policy of reintegration was necessary. Whatever the reasons, the officers that spearheaded the coup had decided on a ruling triumvirate before the action. After the coup, Colonel Muhammed Wushishi was dispatched by plane to gather up the officers selected by the plotters.²⁹ Murtala Muhammed (Hausa), Olusegun Obasanjo (Yoruba), and T. Y. Danjuma (Jukun from the middle belt) were brought in and informed of their new jobs, as Head of State, Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters, and Chief of Army Staff respectively. Obasanjo, a non-northerner, was sandwiched into the ruling trio in an obvious move to maintain the allegiance of the more moderate southwestern Nigerians.

The next tremor in government would come six months after Mohammed reluctantly accepted his position as the head of state under conditions established by Garba and his fellow coup plotters. His reluctance was well founded, as his predecessor Gowon was still alive with plenty of support remaining within the ranks of the army. The Gowon supporters plotted to assassinate the top three to settle the score, and reestablish the Gowon government.³⁰ The officers sent to kill Muhammed were successful, but the coup ultimately failed, and General Obasanjo ascended to power as the general that sat as Muhammed's second in command. Obasanjo (Yoruba) attempted to pass the post to Danjuma (middle belt), but Danjuma declined.³¹ Obasanjo would lay the groundwork to hand over power to an elected government.

This oddity among coups had originally named General Murtala Mohammed, General Olusegun Obasanjo and General Theophilus Danjuma to the top three positions in the military government. At last Nigeria had seen a viable use of the army to stabilize a volatile situation while allowing a transition to a democratic government. Even after

the death of Muhammed in the 1976 coup, Obasanjo and Danjuma transitioned the government to democracy and faded from the coup scene. However, Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha had learned different lessons while they were coming up through the ranks of the Nigerian Army and they were biding their time until another opportunity presented itself.

After four major coups, the Nigerians would get another chance at democracy. Thirteen years of military rule (1966-1979) ended when the second republic was introduced on 1 October 1979. Alhajo Shelu Shagari, a candidate of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), won the presidency by a slim margin. The NPN was essentially a retagging of the old NPC. It was still dominated by Hausa-Fulani interests, and had many of the old NPC members pushing for Sharia law in Nigeria.³² The slim victory led to speculation that the departing military regime had favored the party and of course the criticism that the NPN backed the powerful northerner's agricultural agenda.³³ The life of the second republic would be short. The combination of corruption within the Alhajo Shehu Shagari government, the attempted coup by middle belt officers in 1981, and the wide spread accusations of ballot stuffing in the 1983 election led to another successful northern officer coup in 1983. The election had become a zero-sum gain and some of the losers, as always, would be advocates for military intervention.³⁴ This seems odd in light of a prominent member of the NPN party stating before the 1983 election that there were only two political parties in Nigeria: "the NPN and the military."³⁵

General Buhari (Hausa) explained the purpose of this coup, "The army came to power this time around, with the primary objective of saving our great nation from total

collapse.”³⁶ Buhari (Hausa) identified the contributing factors to the total collapse of Nigeria:

- 1) A grave and economic predicament and uncertainty, which the inept and corrupt civilian leadership had imposed on the nation for the past four years.
- 2) Brazen acts of indiscipline in all its ramifications were the order of the day. Misappropriations of public funds amounting to billions of Naira from the nation’s treasury went unchallenged.
- 3) Oil merchants and agents emerged overnight owing their massive wealth to illegal oil deals.
- 4) Contracts were over inflated in order to raise the amount of kickbacks for unscrupulous officials.
- 5) Staggering millions of Naira were paid out in mobilization fees to contractors both local and foreign who obtained their mobilization fees and just disappeared. Many did not even know the site of the project for which mobilization fees had been collected.³⁷

Whatever the government arrangement in 1983 and correct as these assertions may be, the army’s cloak of nobility was wearing thin with most Nigerians. Everyone knew there was money to be made in oil and banking in Nigeria if the nation’s population could be kept under control. The average Nigerian was not going to benefit from the situation prior to the 1983 elections, nor was he going to benefit from the strict measures of the Buhari regime in the short term. The fact that Buhari was a Muslim from the north who attempted to implement Sharia law at the federal level convinced most of his countrymen that this was another northern regime, and a more stern one that.³⁸

Buhari’s regime that brought the end of the second republic would find its end in another round of military in fighting. General Babangida (Hausa) would benefit from major coup number six to become the next head of state. To highlight the volatile and incestuous nature of army politics in Nigeria, General Sani Abacha (Hausa) would serve as Babangida’s spokesperson to the press for postcoup propaganda as he had for Buhari. The military-on-military violence was personality based, and not motivated by the quality

of governance by Buhari, as bad as it may have been judged. Buhari had been a strict Muslim that believed that recovery of the economy and stern discipline were the answers to Nigeria's problems, however draconian the means needed to be. His main problems were that he was a strict Muslim and he was a strict military man; both of these characteristics made him too strict for his country and his army. He lost his political control of his own party, the army. The significance of the following political ascendancy through infighting is enormous. It demonstrates the development of the Nigerian military mind. It strengthens the assertions of Agwunobi from chapter 1 that speak to the erosion in professionalism and the loss of military focus. Not only were Nigerian officers being raised on political duties rather than tactical duties their ultimate goal was political power and greed, not strategic operations and selfless service. Officers that operated along the traditional military ethos were no longer welcome in the halls of power. Babangida and Abacha who had been raised on coups throughout their careers knew that professional officers were still in the army, but they had personally learned their lessons in the political arena. Neither was about to back away before their shot at the Nigerian bankroll.

Two aborted coups during the Babangida regime require mention as the suspected plotters came from outside the northern clique, and they demonstrate the dynamics at work in the Nigerian military. These coups, though ineffective in removing the standing government, showed the growing rift in the army. This fault line had both ethnic and professional undertones. Motivations are a hard thing to judge, but it appears that not all of the plots to bring Babangida down were motivated by individuals desiring to exploit the nation. The 1985 coup against Babangida, had at its core a group of intellectuals

funded by the poet General Mamman Vasta.³⁹ While it never got off the ground, the intentions of the accused resulted in the death of Vasta and a number of his coconspirators. A group of southern and middle belt Nigerians launched the next coup in 1990, called the nation's bloodiest, in an attempt to remove the northern officers and the middle belt that had aligned with the north. It can be inferred that both coups had targeted the life-long president General Babangida. The following excerpt from Major Orkari's 1990 coup broadcast illuminate the rift between those in power in the army, and the rest of the army.

We wish to emphasize that this was not just another coup, but a well conceived planned and executed revolution of the marginalized and enslaved people of the middle belt and the south with a view to freeing ourselves and children yet unborn from eternal slavery and colonization by a clique of this country.⁴⁰

Major Orkar continued on to point out that General Babangida (Hausa) had pitted groups against each other to destroy his opponents, as in the 1986 coup conspiracy execution of General Vasta. He charged that Babangida had bought off and terrorized the media, purged intellectual capital in the university system, and campaigned to destroy the military by withholding funds.⁴¹ Major Orkar also noted that a few northern ethnic groups had benefited disproportionately from Nigeria's riches while the southerners and middle beltters continued to struggle.⁴² Orkar's final point in his platform was the need to plan for a handover to democratic government.⁴³ Certainly, Orkar's comments demonstrate that a core of professional officers were still interested in Army business, while Babangida clearly was not. Babangida had ridden the army to the top, and without the fear of an external threat to Nigeria he no longer needed their services as a professional army.

History will record that these counter coups would set the pattern for the remainder of Babangida and Abacha's regimes. This duo would continue to announce the uncovering of coup plots, with resulting executions and forced retirements, and the corresponding need to maintain them in power. Their need to rid themselves of political opponents and officers that favored transition of government to democracy gutted the Nigerian Army.⁴⁴ Even the interim government of Chief Ernest Shonekan which bridged the gap between Bangida and Abacha is seen by many to have been a ruse to transfer power to another general and keep federal power out of southern hands without the resulting public outcry.⁴⁵

Interesting to note from these phantom coups is the jailing of General Olusegun Obasanjo along with forty other officers and journalists for hinting that Abacha should hand over power.⁴⁶ It could be argued that this act, more than any other, launched the now legitimate political career of Nigeria's elected president Obasanjo. This act separated him from the army ruling class in the mind of some Nigerians. Obasanjo still benefited from his moderate stance in Nigeria. He was a Yoruba who had served among the Hausas in a military government and yet had handed over power and argued that the army should stay out of government.

The past motivations of the army's officer corps hang over the first president of the third republic. In order to have a measure of lasting success the democracy must find a legitimate base in Nigeria. What sort of base has been established by thirty years of mostly military rule? Chapters 3, 4, and 5 will address the army's past success and failures in developing education, economic, and diplomatic programs to foster democracy

while acting as a governing body and what legacy this leaves as Nigeria travels the current road to democracy.

¹Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 23.

²Richard Akinnola, *Fellow Countrymen...: The Story of Coup D'etats in Nigeria* (Ikeja: Rich Consult, 2000), v.

³*Ibid.*, 2.

⁴The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, November 26, 2001.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *Beyond Execution: Understanding the Ethnic and Military Politics in Nigeria* (Lincoln: Writer's Showcase, 2000), 4.

¹³*Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴Osaghae, 32.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁹Mbeke-Ekanem, 6.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 7.

- ²¹Akinnola, 34.
- ²²Ibid., 35.
- ²³Mbeke-Ekanem, 8.
- ²⁴ Akinnola, 17.
- ²⁵Ibid., 23.
- ²⁶Ibid., 32.
- ²⁷Mbeke-Ekanem, 10.
- ²⁸Ibid., 11.
- ²⁹Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum books Limited, 1991), xvii.
- ³⁰Jonathan C. Agwunobi, *The Nigerian Military in a Democratic Society* (Kaduna: Olabola Graphics, 1992), 6.
- ³¹Akinnola, 16.
- ³² Osaghae, 120.
- ³³Ibid., 128.
- ³⁴Ibid., 153.
- ³⁵Ibid., 111.
- ³⁶Agwunobi, 3.
- ³⁷Ibid.
- ³⁸Osaghae, 168.
- ³⁹Akinnola, 81.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., 97.
- ⁴¹Ibid., 98.
- ⁴²Ibid., 99.
- ⁴³Ibid., 101.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., 116.

⁴⁵Ibid., 108.

⁴⁶Ibid., 11.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION (A MILITARY FAILURE IN A SOCIAL PROGRAM)

There is a complete split between power and moral right, and unless you have access to the power, you have nothing. Everyone is seeking instant gratification. No one is prepared to think of the future. . . . Nigeria is the land of no tomorrow.¹

Bobo Brown

As democracies have taken hold across the globe in the last century, certain trends have emerged in these governments regardless of nation. Among the trends or indicators is the requirement for an educated population. This critical component has been called a fundamental indicator for democratic governance.² Although no direct correlation between quality of education and the quality of the government has been established, the linkage has been identified. The fact that effective civic education is indispensable to the establishment and maintenance of a democracy and its required institutions is undeniable.³ The military governments of Nigeria have ignored this fact, and successive regimes have retained a self-serving approach intent on not building the base of support for democratic governance. Money that could have been spent on education was funneled into private accounts of military officers and political leaders.

Some of Nigeria's best and brightest manage to slip out of the country in search of educational opportunities, but most Nigerians are victims, trapped in a world they are undereducated to cope with, and with few prospects for employment. The situation has taught the average citizen that he has two means of escape from a nation of malnourishment and random violence. They can join the army or leave the country. A population in excess of 60 million people under the age of 18 is victimized by a lack of

opportunity.⁴ To understand how the nation got where they are, one must understand the history and the motivations of those in power.

Precolonial and Colonial Education

Prior to the coming of the Europeans, Nigerian people had their own educational systems based on tribal beliefs. Young Nigerians were taught by their elders to conform to social customs and traditions of the community in order to be good citizens and to learn a trade or vocation required in the agricultural economy. This communal education was aimed at maintaining continuity in the vocations required by the tribe and in the continuity of culture by transmitting to successive generations not only accumulated knowledge but also the acquired standards of values.⁵ This is in keeping with the requirements for first wave educations. As Toffler suggests, Nigerians would need “mass education” to participate in an industrialized second wave, but for the time being their education system fit their subsistence agricultural lifestyles.⁶ With the growth of British commercial and colonial interests in the nineteenth century, British missionaries established schools for formal education of Nigerians.⁷ This system would later place the emphasis on the individual states within Nigeria to maintain the various British schools established within their borders. As after independence, the federal government had no constitutional responsibility for education in the states.⁸ The resulting system handed to the first Nigerian republic had differing policies and procedures and no established standards for education.

Postindependence education

A formal education policy took effect during the second republic in September 1982. The 6-3-3-4 system, as it was dubbed, was to provide six years of primary education, a secondary 2-tier (3-year junior and 3-year senior) education of core curriculum subjects, followed by four years at the university level. As in most systems, the technically minded or vocationally inclined would be advised to follow courses in those fields.⁹

The democratically elected government of Shuhari had taken the first step toward building an informed democratic citizenry. Formulation of a national policy on education was now the sole responsibility of the federal government. State governments were however still responsible for specific needs in accordance with the national policy.¹⁰ The 6-3-3-4 policy was never fully resourced before the coup of General Buhari. The subsequent military regimes of Babangida and Abacha would reverse this policy, and throw the educational system into a state of chaos that has only recently begun to lift.

In Nigeria today the government is struggling to gain control of the situation and to educate their young people not only for their role in a democratic nation but also for the requirements of the information age. The government's education philosophy as spelled out by the external publicity department:

The Nigerian education philosophy is based on the development of the individual into a sound and useful citizen and the provision of equal education opportunities for all citizens at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school systems. The content and quality of instruction at all levels is oriented towards inculcating respect for the worth and dignity of the individual; faith in man's ability to make rational decisions; moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations, shared responsibility for the common good of society; respect for the dignity of labor and promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children and the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence.¹¹

A bold vision statement for the future, but the legacy of Generals Buhari, Babangida, and Abacha will take a tremendous amount of resources not currently programmed by Nigeria for education expenditures. Current numbers are high for school age children receiving primary education at 89 percent, but the numbers quickly drop to 30 percent for secondary education and to a pitiful 4 percent in postsecondary education.¹²

Educational Assessment

A Nigerian newspaper ran a story in 2000 that pointed to the beginning of the next revolution in education, and the sad state of the current system. Chuks Akunna reported on the World Bank's belated apology in 2000 for the failure of its past educational projects in Nigeria and their pledge to improve and assist Nigeria in reforming its education system. The bank put the blame on the Federal Ministry of Education and their associates at the bank for the failure of plans implemented between 1988 and 1990. The development, the bank disclosed, taught it some lessons, assuring that "some fundamental changes have taken place, in the way we operate."¹³

The bank had been accused of dumping obsolete equipment in Nigeria and charging incredible interest rates.¹⁴ The World Bank countered that the military government in power at the time had not consulted the educators and had shrouded the agreements in secrecy.¹⁵ The World Bank had been duped by General Babangida (Hausa) but corruption would not ruin its future dealing with a democratically elected government. In an effort to improve the effectiveness of their programs, under the Obasanjo government, the bank launched an assessment program in 1999. The objectives of the consultations were to:

1. Assess expectations and levels of satisfaction with primary education on the part of service users and providers (parents, teachers, educational administrators, etc.).
2. Investigate perceived constraints to the improvement of service provision and assess suggestions of the various stakeholders for improving services, together with the potential and willingness to realize them.
3. Identify and describe existing innovative approaches to improve performance in the delivery of social services through community participation, targeting, client involvement, fiscal decentralization or other mechanisms.
4. Develop recommendations for the development of pilot initiatives to test or replicate these approaches to be implemented within the framework of the on-going Primary Education Project.¹⁶

The World Bank toured fifty-four primary schools and communities across Nigeria. This time the World Bank went straight to those effected by the educational woes in Nigeria, they interviewed parents, pupils, teachers and head teachers, community leaders, parent-teacher association (PTA) members and officers, educational administrators, and supervisors.¹⁷

The consultants found the school environment to be far from conducive to learning, and deficient in pupil safety, security, and health.¹⁸ Classroom space was inadequate and in a poor state of repair. There was no funding to meet maintenance costs or to obtain supplies of instructional materials. Schools lacked offices, desks and other furniture, and recreational facilities and had few or no toilet facilities. The inadequate supply of materials and textbooks limited both teacher effectiveness and student learning.¹⁹

The assessment team also found that while most teachers and head teachers were committed to their vocation, low pay, poor working conditions, and inadequate facilities had eroded motivation and satisfaction.²⁰ This lack of satisfaction over conditions led to nation wide teachers strike in 1999. About 250,000 of Nigeria's teachers demanded payment of the new minimum wage of 3,000 naira per month, which raised their pay from 1,000 naira.²¹ (One US dollar is roughly equal to 100 naira) The pay raise would be the equivalent of US\$20.00. The teachers also demanded the establishment of structures for the implementation of a National Commission for Secondary Education and National Teachers Registration Council as well as the creation of a pension system for teachers.²² The pay problem stemmed from a 1992 decision by the military government of General Babangida (Hausa) to transfer payment of the teachers back to the local governments. The local councils had no money to pay the teachers.²³ This pay decision coupled with the wholesale movement and removal of teachers within Nigeria are more indicators of Babangida's antieducation policy.

Babangida, like the generals that had passed before him, could benefit more from the continued instability in Nigeria. His bank account was growing daily, and a fine retirement could be had as an elder statesman who talked out of both sides of his mouth. An educated population would have jeopardized his presence at the public trough. He made the obligatory prodemocracy statements to the international media, such as:

It is not enough to just believe in democracy. You must also learn it and understand how to make it work. So we have put the learning process in motion. . . People are now learning what democracy is all about.²⁴

The words amounted to little more than a thinly disguised deception campaign as the millionaire general continued to benefit from the corrupt policies of his regime into his retirement.

Military Education

The military education system for the Nigerian officer corps is based around three key institutions. These institutions cover the range from initial training to mid level professional education, to senior level development. The entry-level institution was created during the first republic in 1964. The Nigerian Defence Academy, now known as the Nigerian Military University, trains new officers for service in the army with a thirty-month curriculum.²⁵ The keystone institution for military learning was formed under the military regime of General Obasanjo (Yoruba). The Command and Staff College, created in 1976 featured a five-month course for senior officers, presumably based on Obasanjo's and other officers' observations of the officer corps' failures in the nation's civil war.²⁶ An eleven-month course for field grade officers was added in 1977, and a ten-week course for lieutenants and captains was added in 1978.²⁷ The progressive minded Obasanjo was truly looking to the future, a future that included a professional officer corps that understood civilian control of the military and the military's role in a nation like Nigeria. The curriculum expanded to increase attention on internal security and aid to civil authority.²⁸ The officer education system eventually expanded to include a senior service college named the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies.

The military was neglecting the basic education of their citizens, and the government was failing by example to educate the officer corps and soldiers that served Nigeria. The military governments never adopted significant education reforms for the

civilian sector. And as discussed in chapter 2 most officers understood that the true nature of service in the military was increasingly less about military topics. Retired military members were not used as teachers, as advocated by many prominent Nigerians. Instead they were educated in a traditional western military fashion.²⁹ This did nothing to prepare soldiers for useful postmilitary careers, nor did it prepare them for the civil government role they were filling. Military assistance to government is one topic, military government is quite another. Instead of building an army of educated soldiers prepared to reenter civilian society as engineers, educators, lawyers, and scientists. They continued to dump new generations of baby power brokers on the country. The politically connected officers knew the institutional bias was for loyalty to the regime and functionality in the management of political corruption and money laundering. It should come as no surprise the number of millionaire general officers in overgrown government ministries and the banking sector.

This may seem odd for me to criticize a military education system that appears to resemble that of the American Army, but the criticism is based more on the schizophrenic approach and misplaced priorities of military leaders. Only General Obasanjo (Yoruba), the man who turned over power to a democratically elected government, placed any real emphasis on the professional education of his officers while he served as the military head of state. At a time when the economic, education, and health care sectors were in a shambles, successive military regimes responded by continuing to train soldiers haphazardly without an overarching strategy, and often with inadequate budgets. Many of the more professional officers began to wonder for what type of service were they training, and grew cynical of the politically connected officers. The ethnic minority

coups of the 1980s and 1990s, along with massive early retirements illuminate this growing rift in the army. With increasing ethnic violence fueled by a lack of opportunity, would the Nigerian Army have a nation to protect, even if they did manage not to tear themselves apart?

The Future of Education

The current government will probably be unable to raise education to the level it deserves. In 1999 President Obasanjo launched a new initiative to extend national primary education to nine years, but he failed to announce new funding for schools.³⁰ Most of the state schools still lacked desks, chairs, books, and even chalk; and the teachers' pay was in arrears. The transfer of management of the federal allocation for teachers' salaries and operational cost to the State Primary Education Boards has succeeded in ensuring that teachers' salaries are paid.³¹ These boards have also taken over a number of roles originally the responsibility of local government under the new administration. Education has a long way to recover, and years of corruption and mismanagement of funds by both the federal government and local authorities cannot be fixed overnight.

The 1999 World Bank assessment team did uncover a bright spot for democracy in the education system. A high level of involvement in local primary schools by groups such as PTAs, school committees, community-based organizations, and individual community members speaks to the high regard most Nigerians have for education. The community involvement made substantial contributions to their schools through the construction of school buildings, repairs and maintenance, and the provision of furniture and instructional materials.³² Many communities also participated in promoting the

enrollment and attendance of pupils.³³ In the absence of army intervention, the grass roots educators had uncovered the principles and practices of democratic governance and citizenship. They were teaching civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic virtues that were required for democracy but rarely demonstrated by the Supreme Commanders of Nigeria.

As lamentable as the primary schools are, the universities are also in horrible shape. Nigerian universities have not been able to contribute to the information and telecommunications revolution because of their emphasis on “solving contemporary problems with traditional methods.”³⁴ Education experts have challenged Nigerian universities to evolve, and build university autonomy.³⁵ This void of intellectual capital, at the post secondary level, hurts Nigeria the most. It is a sad fact that many of the brightest Nigerians do not stay in the country. Access to a college education in Europe or North America is often the start of a one-way trip. Distance learning, once hailed as the savior of education, has yet to make a major contribution. The amazing potential still underutilized due to a lack of infrastructure.³⁶ So the constant funneling off of the best and brightest continues.

After decades of isolation fostered by military rule, the education system is in ruins. The World Banks assessment team and assistance will start progress, but it is incumbent upon the government of Nigeria to pay more than lip service to the required changes. If they intend on building the foundations for a democratic society and the economic development that will sustain it, they have to start from the bottom. Military governments clearly failed to institute educational reform in Nigeria. While several military leaders claimed that Nigerians were unready for democracy as a means to postpone or even suspend elections, they did little to rectify the situation. Perhaps they

believed that cultural evolution would proceed unaided by civic education; or more likely, they simply did not care.

¹Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2000), xviii.

²Global Information Networks in Education. Available from <http://www.ginie.org/ginie-crises-links/edemo/>, January 3, 2002.

³John J. Patrick, *Global Trends in Civic Education*, The Educational Resources Information Center. Available from http://www.ed.gov/databases/ERIC_Digests/ed410176.html, 3 January 2002

⁴Maier, xxiii.

⁵New Africa homepage, available from <http://www.newafrica.com/education/systems/nigeria.htm>, 30 December 2001.

⁶Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), 29.

⁷New Africa homepage.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Illinois State University, College of Education homepage, available from <http://www.coe.ilstu.edu/portfolios/students/vdnwoha/page02.htm>, 30 December 2001.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹New Africa homepage.

¹²World Desk Reference, Nigerian education available from http://travel.dk.com/wdr/NG/mNG_Educ.htm, 2 March 2001.

¹³Chuks Akunna, "Nigeria: World Bank apologies for failure of education projects," *This Day* (Nigeria) October 16, 2001, available from <http://lists.essential.org/pipermail/stop-imf/2000q4/000297.html>, 30 December 2001.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶The World Bank group homepage.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹World news homepage, available from http://www.oneworld.org/ips2/june99/16_25_061.html, December 30, 2001.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Jonathan C. Agwunobi, *The Nigerian Military in a Democratic Society* (Kaduna: Olabola Graphics, 1992), 12.

²⁵The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 2 Mar 2002.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Agwunobi68.

³⁰BBC World Service homepage, available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_462000/462224.stm, December 29, 2001.

³¹The World Bank group homepage.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Akunna.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Janet Jenkins, "Some trends in distance education in Africa: An examination of the past and future role of distance education as a tool for national development," *Distance Education--An International Journal*, available from, <http://www.usq.edu.au/dec/DECJourn/v10n189/jenkins.htm>; Internet.

CHAPTER 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (MILITARY FORCE TO CONTROL RESOURCES)

We must now reject for all time the conception of the state as a foreign institution standing outside the community and whose money, property and goals are not the direct responsibility and concern of the community. The community is the government, and the government is the community. It is no longer *olu oyibo* [white man's business]. Government business is truly and properly *olu obodo* [community business].¹

Ukpabi Asika

The economic situation in Nigeria is dire. By 1997 as the nation struggled in the final death throws of General Sani-Abacha's military regime the per capita annual income had dropped to the equivalent of US\$240.² In 2000 this figure rose to about US\$260, but in real terms it was still below the income level of the population at independence nearly four decades in the past.³ Certainly, a trend that grows more disturbing when you consider the fact that Nigeria had become the seventh largest oil exporter on the planet.⁴ The question that must be answered by the military is in fact very difficult to answer. With the tremendous oil wealth of Nigeria, the average Nigerian has not prospered. Why have they not benefited? Since independence, the army has ruled Nigeria 75 percent of the time. A few crooked politicians have not caused all of Nigeria's economic troubles. Mismanagement of resources has been a common occurrence among all forms of Nigerian government. The existence of Nigeria as a nation state speaks to the military's success in stabilizing threats to national survival. However, they have failed in every facet of development that could be counted as a support base for democratic governance. In the last chapter, the failure was in education,

now the failure is even more tragic. The Army's failing in the economic realm not only failed to provide a basis for good governance; it deepened racial animosity with erratic income distribution and created a disastrous climate in the army based on political power and monetary gain.

While colonial rule was teaching Nigerians the lesson that might makes right, it was teaching unintended economic lessons as well. Although some may argue the altruistic intent of the British Empire, most would agree with the simplicity of their Nigerian strategy. The maintenance of security in the colony to facilitate the extraction of resources was the strategy. This reinforced a fundamental lesson to the Nigerian Army. Get control of the resources by force if necessary and you hold the key to power.

The Nigerian officers, like the colonial rulers, would prefer stability to ensure the efficient exploitation of resources.⁵ A law and order nation relies on coercion and authoritarian leadership to retain power and control of resources, and the situation is now ripe for military rule.⁶ In order to benefit from the natural resources the Nigerian government centralized distribution at the government level.⁷ As Nigerian citizens began to see the accumulation of wealth at the federal level, the patron-client bond became the political relationship of choice.⁸

Social programs were not a priority of the colonial government, as missionaries and volunteer groups were allowed to handle any involvement on that level. The copying of this tactic by Nigerian military leaders would have disastrous long-term economic effects. This low regard for the citizenry caused Nigerians to develop a negative attitude toward colonial government and subsequently a similar detachment from Nigerian military government.⁹ Without a personal stake in their government's survival, Nigerians

could feel free to advance private and tribal interests over the national government's interests.¹⁰ Rampant corruption, disregard for rule of law, and political instability are suddenly understandable in this framework. Nigerians viewed any government treasury as a "national cake," a surplus amount of money to be targeted.¹¹ This common view also helps explain the reluctance of Nigerians to call for government accountability, and the willingness to forgive corrupt government officials caught dining on the "national cake."

Economic development, the cornerstone of healthy economies, was also not prioritized over rapid exploitation of natural resources by colonial Britain.¹² Once again, the Nigerian military retained an erroneous lesson. This living off the land phenomena has been a painful lesson for Nigeria to outgrow. With a shortfall in civic duty related to coercive regimes and the accompanying restrictions on entrepreneurship the nation remains in a perpetual loop of resource exploitation.¹³ They can never make the leap to productive capitalism as long as they depend solely on resource exploitation at the expense of development. The hand to mouth syndrome instead breeds petty capitalists in the form of street vendors and black marketers. If nearly everyone has gotten the economy wrong, then we can at least point out the largest offenders and illuminate the cycle of abuse for what it is.

The First Republic and Gowon's Regime (1960-1975)

The first ten years of independence included a slow economic start for Nigeria. The colonial government handed the Nigerians a plan in name only, and the petroleum kick start would come fast and prove too uncontrollable for the fledgling democracy. The colonial government had a series of planned projects with no overarching economic

strategy.¹⁴ The first national development plan for 1962-1968 was created by foreign economists and included questionable projects that were in turn made more dubious when modified by well-connected politicians.¹⁵ The First National Development Plan did attempt to chart Nigeria's transition from an essentially agricultural economy to a mixed economy based on agricultural expansion and limited industrial growth. The economists and politicians had a vision for Nigeria, but limited means to get them to their goal, as private investment was unable to generate sufficient capital for development.¹⁶ The plan that would move Nigeria from a first wave economy to a second wave economy was experiencing the friction predicted by Toffler.¹⁷ A power struggle erupted between agricultural and industrialization in Nigeria as in other nations undergoing a clash between first and second wave economies. The power struggle took on ethno-religious overtones and began to spin the nation out of control, and towards the brink of national survival.

Nigeria's first plan stressed production and profitability, not distribution. The authors of the first plan had argued that a “premature preoccupation with equity problems will backfire and prevent any development from taking place.”¹⁸ However people who already owned property, held influential positions, and had good educations were poised to profit from the economic growth of Nigeria. In a land of already stressed ethnic fault lines, the growing inequality was raising the level of animosity towards the government of the first republic. The population, over hyped by independence and democracy, wanted their democracy dividend immediately.

The income distribution problem would prove to be one of the most volatile issues in Nigerian politics. Before 1959 the regional governments retained all revenues

from mineral and agricultural products. After 1959 the region retained only a fraction of the revenue from natural resource production (oil/minerals) while the revenue from agricultural exports remained under regional control.¹⁹ This policy clearly benefited the agricultural interests of northern Nigeria. The Hausa-Fulani of the north would benefit from their agricultural production while also reaping the benefits of the nation's oil reserves that were outside their region. The policy created severe unrest in the Eastern Region of the Igbos, as they had few agricultural exports and the preponderance of the oil wealth was coming from their region. By the late 1960s oil had become the country's biggest foreign exchange earner. The linkage between oil, the Igbos, and government dissatisfaction holds up if you note that the first coup plotters (January 1966) were spearheaded by the actions of an idealistic young major of eastern descent named Kaduna Nzeogwu. In addition, the first military head of state was an Igbo general, Thomas Ironsi, who stepped in to accept control of the government in the wake of the disjoined coup effort. Unfortunately for the Igbos the northern officers struck back (July 1966) as detailed in chapter 2. The struggle for control of the oil revenues, and the accompanying ethnic cleansing, among numerous other factors, plunged the nation into civil war. With northern officers in control of government and pursuing the interests of their supporters in the north, the subjugation of Nigeria's minority tribes could be undertaken.

After the civil war, General Gowon's military government struggled to regain control of the national economy. Postwar reconstruction, the restoration of productive capacity, and achieving national self-reliance were major goals of Gowon's National Development Plan (1970-74).²⁰ The replacement cost of physical assets damaged and

destroyed in the civil war with the southeast, was estimated to exceed N600 million (then about US\$900 million).

Gowon received unexpected support for his plan when Nigeria's real growth in GDP between 1970 and 1974 nearly doubled the projected amount due to oil industry growth and sharply increasing oil prices that propelled the economy forward at an alarming rate.²¹ By 1971 Nigeria was already the world's seventh-largest petroleum producer, and much of the revenue intended for investment to diversify the economy, spurred inflation and widened the gap in income distribution.²² The Ministry of Economic Development, unprepared for the windfall in revenue, approved and added numerous questionable projects that brought government corruption to new heights.²³ The economy slowed suddenly in 1975 because of the sudden decrease in world demand. Prices moved downward and the Gowon military government that had ridden the oil boom was shaken on the economic front.

The economy had also failed to diversify in part due to the first of the indigenization decrees, passed in 1972, which barred non-Nigerians from investing in specified enterprises and reserved participation in certain trades to Nigerians (70 percent of commercial firms operating in Nigeria were foreign owned).²⁴ Unemployment was becoming a serious problem as the “large numbers of [rural] farm workers, who had gone to urban areas in search of higher wages, remained in the cities even if they failed to find jobs.”²⁵ The clash of agriculture and industrialization was happening, and the proponents of industrialization were not winning. Unemployment was epidemic in the east, where the economy was still recovering from the civil war, and skilled Igbo workers were reluctant to leave the east in search of work for fear of ethnic persecution.²⁶ Large

numbers of mostly northern soldiers without job prospects made demobilization of the military establishment impossible, especially when the north was dealing with the worst drought in six decades between 1972 and 1974. Gowon was under increasing pressure from all sides. He had to reintegrate the Igbos without hurting northern financial interests.

The end of the Gowon regime was not far off. Amid the grumblings of inefficiency and corruption, hunger, and inflation, Gowon chose the 1974 independence celebration to announce that the 1976 date to hand over to civilians was unrealistic.²⁷ A group of coup plotters, including Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Garba, Gowon's brother-in-law, began work to end Gowon's rule. Gowon's desperation to gain popular support and diversify the economy was evident in the Third National Development Plan (1975-80) of March 1975. With an increase of public expenditures twelve times that of the previous plan Gen Gowon was using all the tools at his disposal to stay in power.²⁸ The document outlined ambitious plans to expand agriculture, industry, transport, housing, water supplies, health facilities, education, rural electrification, community development, and state programs.²⁹ These were designed in part to maintain the patron-client relationships Gowon depended on for his power base by supplying them with fat new contracts. At the same time, a government commission doubled civil administrators' wages further draining the national reserve.³⁰

Gowon's program of "Nigerianization" recommended by the business insiders, coupled with the spike in oil prices, had made a few civil servants, military leaders, and insiders wealthy but had discouraged foreign investment.³¹ Farm exports were down, foreign investment was down, the price of oil was falling, and the people were angry.

The inflation of minimum wage and administrative salaries combined with the slowing of the oil-based economy culminated with a failure of the federal government to pay monthly subsidies to state and local governments in June of 1975.³² The plot that had started in 1974 removed Gowon in time to stop massive strikes and keep vital service from stopping countrywide.³³ Could anyone govern Nigeria, and get the economy back on track?

Muhammed, Obasanjo and the Second Republic (1975-1983)

The end of the second military government and the beginning of the next was seen by many as a shuffling of the deck among the army's elite. However, General Muhammed (Hausa), brought into power by the bloodless coup organized by Joseph Garba in July 1975, wanted to get the army out of government.³⁴ General Muhammed would strengthen the tradition of Northern dominance of both the military and government, but Muhammed was committed to civilian rule. Muhammed tried to reduce government waste and corruption by eliminating or replacing thousands of civil servants, and announcing a timetable for return to civilian rule.³⁵ This was the type of leadership a military government should provide, stability, and rapid civilian transition; the prevention of what Robert Kaplan calls "the anarchic implosion of criminal violence," while transitioning to civilian rule.³⁶ Unfortunately, supporters of Gowon were still waiting in the wings, desiring the return to their patron-client relationship facilitated by his government. General Muhammed, assassinated in February of 1976 by Lieutenant Colonel Dimka's boys, would never see the Army's good name cleared. His second in command avoided the squad sent for him. General Obasanjo, a Yoruba Christian, stepped in to lead Nigeria and execute Muhammed's timetable for transition to civilian

rule. He also set about to purge the system of a number of the remaining Gowon supporters.³⁷

“In response to an economy overheated by demands for new programs and higher wages,” General Obasanjo pointed out “that petroleum revenue was not a cure-all.”³⁸ He postponed, scaled down, or canceled projects when falling oil revenue could no longer sustain the spending. Corruption was still stalking the Nigerians, as many projects were retained for political reasons, not because they were socially or economically useful.³⁹

One social casualty of the cuts already discussed in chapter 3 occurred in 1978 when the federal government returned much of the financial responsibility for housing and primary education to state and local governments who were cash poor, with the resulting lowering of quality of life and education for Nigerians.⁴⁰ General Obasanjo’s short term in office, 1976-1979, following the even shorter stint of his assassinated boss, General Muhammed from 1975-1976, did little to reverse the economic situation he inherited from General Gowon. The Second Republic would step into a grave economic situation.

President Shehu Shagari took office on October 1, 1979 amid “falling oil revenues and an increased need for imported food that had resulted from delays in agricultural modernization.”⁴¹ Infrastructure upgrades and maintenance suffered as the ability to import construction materials fell with Nigeria’s buying power. Growth in the construction, transport, communications, utilities, and housing sectors plummeted.⁴²

Federal government finances were in a free fall between 1981 and 1983, with the federal government deficit reaching N5.3 billion (9.5 percent of GDP).⁴³ This economic crisis was built on a belief that oil prices would climb eventually, and was spurred on by the corruption of government officials accustomed to a lifestyle of excess funded by the

“national cake.” The administration had even heaped some of the excess spending on the military. In an attempt to placate the military, the civilian administration was generous with the defense budget and lucrative government contracts to well-connected military officers.⁴⁴

One obvious sign of corruption in the government was easy for everyone to see. President Shagari was reluctant to devalue the Naira. When inflation topped 20 percent per year, foreign investment dwindled.⁴⁵ Devaluing the Naira would have helped the economy but hurt the Swiss bank accounts of the ruling party. The politicians were bleeding Nigeria dry, and the public knew it. Nigeria owed US\$6 billion on trade credit by the end of 1983.⁴⁶ The economic crisis combined with the rigged 1983 elections had the public to the boiling point, and as discussed in the introduction, the public nearly invited the Army back. The oil boom of the late General Gowon regime, the leadership of General Muhammed and the transition of General Obasanjo had led some Nigerians to believe that the army was still better equipped than the politicians to govern the nation. In reality, many in the army elite had become politicians and their interrelations with influential executives were rotting the army from the inside, as subsequent military regimes would prove. Nevertheless, the army had done better with the economy than the civilians had in the past, and some Nigerians may even have believed they were supporting the lesser of two evils. With the economic progress of the previous two decades erased, the question of governance had changed once again. Some Nigerians may have believed that General Gowon had been correct in the mid 1970s when he asserted that the civilians were not ready to govern Nigeria. They were about to reconsider their support to military run governments and military economies.

Buhari, Babangida, and Abacha (1983-1999)

The second republic ended on New Years Eve 1983, and Major General Muhammadu Buhari came to power riding a crest of public resentment of the corruption in government and economic mismanagement to say nothing of the anger over the rigged 1983 elections.⁴⁷ To his credit, General Buhari (Hausa) attempted to get spending under control and took a tough stand to end financial corruption. Early in his administration, he closed down Nigeria by sealing the land borders, closed the international airports for several days, replaced all old naira notes with new currency bills, and introduced tough exchange-control regulations designed to control the black market exchange of Nigerian currency.⁴⁸ His government cut spending for capital imports, civil service and armed forces salaries, and consumer subsidies.⁴⁹ The federal deficit was decreasing, but Buhari had placed himself in a politically weak position by severing many of the old patron-client ties with the powerful business leaders, by alienating his own party (the army) and by alienating the populace with his black market reforms. Coincidentally the planned spending cuts that were part of the fifth national budget plan unveiled by General Buhari coincided with his removal in a palace coup.⁵⁰ General Buhari, replaced by his third in command, saw his national budget plan postponed amid the rhetoric of the opportunistic General Babangida (Hausa).

The Fifth National Development Plan, originally drafted by General Buhari's administration, was postponed until 1988-92. The fifth plan's objectives were to "devalue the Naira, remove import licenses, reduce tariffs, open the economy to foreign trade, promote nonoil exports through incentives, and achieve national self-sufficiency in food production through improvements in labor productivity, privatization of public

enterprises, and government measures to create employment opportunities.”⁵¹ However, after a year in place the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida abandoned the five-year national plan in 1989 and initiated a three-year rolling plan. Upon closer inspection, the three-year rolling plan bears a striking resemblance to the Planning Programming Budgeting System (PPBS) in use by the Department of Defense in the United States. The Nigerian Army had adopted the plan in 1986, and Babangida was bringing the government budget process in line with the process recently adopted by the army.⁵² Still plagued by corruption and self-interest, Nigeria needed not only a unifying strategy and another budget model they needed selfless execution. What they got was a revised plan with loftier objectives: “to reduce inflation and exchange rate instability, maintain infrastructure, achieve agricultural self-sufficiency, and reduce the burden of structural adjustment on the most vulnerable social groups.”⁵³

General Babangida’s government came to power at a time of depressed oil prices, and undertook a structural adjustment program (SAP) between 1986 and 1988.⁵⁴ This action opened the way for an international monetary fund (IMF) agreement and debt rescheduling, but the military government declined the offer. Instead, Babangida skillfully played the World Bank against the IMF for public relations gains.⁵⁵ General Babangida needed to build a power base at home, and by thumbing his nose at the IMF he played upon the themes of Nigeria pride and prestige in the face of adversity with great domestic impact. After a rejection of IMF terms for borrowing, the military government agreed to impose similar terms and was approved by the World Bank. A domestic victory for General Babangida as Nigerians initially rallied to the patriotic feel of Nigerian dictating terms to the IMF and World Bank. In October 1986 Nigeria

received US\$1,020 million in quickly disbursed loans and \$4,280 million in three-year project loans.⁵⁶ Stability in the domestic and international economy was achieved at the expense of internal security as wages and government social spending continued to drop during General Babangida's term in office. On social spending, it was more of General Buhari's hard line, but with a fresh dose of propaganda and national zeal.

The decrease in spending on social programs contributed to often violent domestic unrest, such as Muslim-Christian riots in Kaduna State in March 1987, urban rioting in April 1988 in response to reduced gasoline subsidies, student-led violence in opposition to government economic policies in May and June 1989, and the second coup attempt against General Babangida in April 1990. Babangida was wedded to his SAP, and his regime raised the stakes declaring there was no alternative and used force to put down student demonstrations that demanded a more humane approach to the economic problems.⁵⁷ The SAP required more fiscal discipline than the Babangida regime could muster, as the increased revenue generated from depreciating the Naira was used to fund dubious projects and create extra government agencies. While the connected got richer the standard of living and quality of life for the average Nigerian deteriorated as the per capita income of \$778 in 1985 shrank to \$105 in 1989 and resulted in Nigeria being named the thirteenth poorest nation in the world in a 1991 World Bank report.⁵⁸ The UN Development Program report in 1990 was harsher, stating that Nigeria had "the worst human deprivation of any country in the third world".⁵⁹

Perhaps Babangida was using the SAP to hold on to power. The Bretton Woods Institute stated that a "democracy was not possible without the entrenchment of market force."⁶⁰ This theory had created the feeling in Nigeria that a democratic transition was

less likely to succeed if undertaken at the same time as an SAP, and this corollary was being used to prolong the life of the regime.⁶¹ The transition date moved from October 1990 to October 1992 than to January 1993 and finally to June 1993. The 1993 elections were annulled when it became apparent that Abiola (Yoruba) would win. The patron-client ties to Babangida were too strong, and his clients would not have their interests jeopardized by a southerner. General Babangida was in a tough spot, directly between the pressure of the citizens over the annulled elections and his wealthy and powerful allies behind the scenes. Finally, General Babangida stepped aside appointing an interim government that amounted to little more than a cooling off period. The interim government of Ernest Shonekun had little power and little direction, as General Sani-Abacha retained control of the military as the Defence Minister.⁶²

General Sani-Abacha (Hausa) was waiting in the wings to assist in the destruction of the interim government. General Abacha cleverly orchestrated a voluntary relinquishment of power by Ernest Shonekun, and began ousting Babangida's associates to deal with the national economic crisis on a purely opportunistic propaganda level.⁶³ General Abacha's program that gathered popular support among common Nigerians became known as the "war on the rich."⁶⁴ The heart of his program, a no sacred cows approach, goes far in explaining Abacha's information campaign to legitimize the actions he would later take to protect his regime. Many of Abacha's actions were explained away by his overarching campaign: the trials of the heads of failed banks, the trial, jail terms of retired officers like Olesgun Obasanjo, the jailing of political leaders, like the elected president Abiola, the harassment and jailing of journalists, and at the height of his perceived powers, the invasion of Ogoniland, and the killing of Saro-Wiwa and the

Ogoni chiefs.⁶⁵ Was there any real proof that Abacha's trials and the war on the rich, were not just charades to eliminate his political enemies? Unfortunately, most of the evidence points to his personal agenda rather than a national focus.⁶⁶ The failed bank decree, circulated as a plan to recoup huge sums deposited in the banks by retired and serving officers, only resulted in the arraignment of two officers.⁶⁷ While Abacha waged his private war to recover Nigeria's squandered wealth, the most serious problems of the economy were getting worse: Rising unemployment, skyrocketing inflation and insecurity of life and property were crushing Nigeria's economy.⁶⁸

General Abacha's fragile economic situation was also rocked by acts of civil disobedience and sluggish economic performance. Persistent riots and strikes resulted in anarchy in many parts of the nation and paralyzed the economy. His regime reacted by creating a state-controlled economy with a fixed Naira exchange rate of N22 to US\$1.00, a fixed interest rate of 21 percent, local sourcing of raw materials, and duties on selected imports.⁶⁹ These actions only served to create a huge black market in foreign exchange while filling the pockets of government officials nullifying the perception that Abacha was truly interested in dealing with corruption in Nigeria. In addition, Nigeria began to feel the effects of an oil industry slowdown. The Nigerian National Power Company alone owed the oil companies US\$800 million. Indebtedness and low prices forced oil exploration down from 1.5 million barrels in 1991 to 500 million in 1994.⁷⁰ Abacha's response was pure insanity; he sacked the experienced oilmen and replaced many with retired military officers.⁷¹ All the while, Abacha's government was destroying the SAP of Babangida by circumventing western creditors like the IMF and the World Bank by

refusing to service their debt and paying for imports either in cash or by commodity exchange; arrears on debt servicing climbed to US\$2.5 billion in 1994.⁷²

The pressure of Abacha's economic decisions continued to add pressure to his regime, and in 1995 he deregulated the economy. The removal of economic subsidies on internal petroleum sales and the floating of the Naira sent inflation soaring by 150 percent increasing the misery on Nigerians and increasing the domestic pressure on Abacha to transition the government to democracy.⁷³ Abacha began talk of a transition program with the creation of the new five-party state with himself the candidate of all five parties.⁷⁴ The rigged program had little effect, and Nigeria's status as a pariah state with a failing economy continued through Abacha's death in 1998.

General Abdusalam Abubakar stepped in and reinstated a transition program with a more democratic flavor as he released Abacha's political prisoners and scrapped the five political parties established by Abacha.⁷⁵ General Abubakar, who later gained acceptance to the US Army Command and General Staff College international officer hall of fame, instituted a transition program that ended with the successful elections of 1999.

President Olesgun Obsanjo, now an elected official, inherited an economy weaker than the one he passed to the second republic some twenty years earlier. The economy had not flourished since his retirement and subsequent jailing by General Abacha. However, by stopping the outright looting of the government funds, his administration could point to a US \$7 billion increase in foreign exchange reserves and a near tripling of the Lagos stock exchange in the first two years in office.⁷⁶ Detractors can point to a 25 percent inflation rate and a 43 percent increase in money supply over the same period.

This coupled with a continuation in wasteful spending (US\$350 million for a sports stadium in Abuja, and US\$93 Million for a space program) lead some to say that this is the Nigerian status quo.⁷⁷ Obasanjo still has the IMF on his side, as he convinced them in 2000 to reschedule 23.5 billion of Nigeria's 33.5 billion in foreign debt.⁷⁸ Nigeria could not meet repayment on debt that amounted to more than 75 percent of GDP while trying to build roads, schools, and health clinics, as Obasanjo claimed that Nigerians needed to see a "democracy dividend."⁷⁹

Obasanjo will continue to champion the Nigerian economy while he tries to hold the republic together. The economy is his first enemy, and he knows it. Harsh economic conditions and resource scarcity will enflame ethnic clashes and lead to an ungovernable Nigeria. Obasanjo summed up his problem in dealing with the legacy resulting from years of economic corruption and mismanagement at a meeting of Commonwealth heads of government in 1999:

Nigerians want to see a democracy dividend in terms of improvement in their quality of life. . . . If we cannot show that they're getting something they will be frustrated and frustration is dangerous.⁸⁰

A stable Nigeria free of military coups is dependent on economic stability, reliable food production, payment for civil servants, and opportunities for its citizens outside of corruption and organized crime. It is no coincidence that the first goal of U.S. policy in Africa is economic prosperity. Without it, all governments are inherently unstable.⁸¹ Stability by armed force or coercion is a temporary but often necessary step to end a cycle of violence. The Nigerian Army's experiment has proved that prolonged military rule with its inevitable personality based instability is disastrous to long-term economic growth. Militarism has rarely been conducive to capitalism over a prolonged

period. In the process of crushing true capitalism with indigenization decrees, corruption, and greed, the military destroyed its professional ethos while reinforcing the selfish “me first” mentality of the colonial economy they inherited.

¹Eghosa E. Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 22.

²Nigeria Economic Development and Indicators, available from <http://www.newafrica.com>; Internet; accessed on 22 January 2002.

³World Bank Group: Nigeria; available from <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/AFR/afr.nsf/fd9617f4da37892b852567cf004d9080/dc8738a1d6ca9623852567d1004b91c4?OpenDocument>; Internet; available on 13 April 2002.

⁴Nigeria Economic Development and Indicators.

⁵Osaghae, 12.

⁶*Ibid.*, 19.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*, 20.

⁹*Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*, 22.

¹²*Ibid.*, 12.

¹³*Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: A Country Study*; available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>; Internet; accessed on 19 January 2002.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980), 13.

¹⁸The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: A Country Study*.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Nigeria: Chronology of the Struggle for Stability and Democracy; available from <http://allafrica.com/stories>; Internet; accessed on 24 January 2001.

²⁸The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: A Country Study*; available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>; Internet; accessed on 19 January 2002.

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³³Nigeria: Chronology of the Struggle for Stability and Democracy.

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³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Robert Kaplan, *"The Coming Anarchy" Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000), 12.

³⁷Richard Akinnola, *"Fellow Countrymen..." The Story of Coup D'etats in Nigeria* (Ikeja: Rich Consult, 2000), 45.

³⁸The Library of Congress, Webpage, *Nigeria: A Country Study*.

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- ⁴⁰Ibid.
- ⁴¹Ibid.
- ⁴²Ibid.
- ⁴³Ibid.
- ⁴⁴Akin O. Akindele, *The Military Franchise* (Chapel Hill: Professional Press, 1993), 57.
- ⁴⁵The Library of Congress, Webpage, *Nigeria: A Country Study*.
- ⁴⁶Ibid.
- ⁴⁷U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, web site available from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/2836.htm>; Internet; accessed on 25 January 02.
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- ⁵¹Ibid.
- ⁵²Jonathan C. Agwunobu, *The Nigerian Military in a Democratic Society* (Kaduna: Olabola Graphic Press, 1992), 90.
- ⁵³The Library of Congress, Webpage, *Nigeria: A Country*.
- ⁵⁴Ibid.
- ⁵⁵Ibid.
- ⁵⁶Ibid.
- ⁵⁷Osaghae.
- ⁵⁸Ibid., 204.
- ⁵⁹Ibid.
- ⁶⁰Ibid.
- ⁶¹Ibid., 208.
- ⁶²Ibid., 262.

⁶³Ibid., 273.

⁶⁴Ibid., 280.

⁶⁵Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *“Beyond Execution” Understanding the Ethnic and Military Politics in Nigeria* (Lincoln: Writer’s Showcase, 2000), 167.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Osaghae, 280.

⁶⁸Ibid., 280.

⁶⁹Ibid., 282.

⁷⁰Ibid., 281.

⁷¹Ibid., 282.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., 285.

⁷⁴Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, *“Beyond Execution” Understanding the Ethnic and Military Politics in Nigeria* (Lincoln: Writer’s Showcase, 2000), 254.

⁷⁵Ibid., 280.

⁷⁶“More Pain, Little Gain: The World Wants President Obasanjo to Succeed, but He is Failing to Make the Economy work,” *Economist* 360, no. 8232 (28 July 2001): 45.

⁷⁷Ibid., 45.

⁷⁸“Nigeria’s Democracy Divided,” *Economist* 357, no. 8201 (16 December 2000): 54.

⁷⁹Ibid., 54.

⁸⁰African National Congress Daily News Briefing, Webpage, available from <http://www.anc.org.za/anc/newsbrief/1999/news1113>; Internet; 17 March 2002.

⁸¹Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Fiscal Year 2001; available from http://www.state.gov/www/budget/fy2001/fn150/forops_full/150fy01_fo_africa.html; Internet, accessed on 22 February 2002

CHAPTER 5

FOREIGN POLICY

Nigeria, which claims African leadership, must turn concertedly and even aggressively to a new focus on foreign policy. For most countries, there are times when foreign policy is a mere extension of domestic politics. Africa's situation in general, and Nigeria's in particular, are too critical for that now. It seems to me that for too long, foreign policy has been the least of our concerns.¹

General Joseph Garba, Minister of External Affairs

To continue from the point expounded upon by General Garba in 1990, it is necessary to look at both the thirty-year record of Nigerian foreign policy critiqued by Garba and the following nine years of military status quo before the birth of the third republic in 1999. A peek into the Nigerian collective spirit as displayed by their military leaders in the prosecution of foreign policy is helpful in predicting the reactions of Nigerians to Western policies affecting Africa.

Ethnic rivalries and military infighting to control power in Nigeria over a period of 40 years would seem to reinforce the importance of internal security issues to military leaders. However, the Nigeria of independence was beyond such trivial concerns, African leadership was her birthright. Nigeria, much like a genetically gifted and underachieving athlete, has never quite lived up to the African leadership role for which she was destined. By failing to fix her own internal problems, Nigeria saw her chances at leadership continually slip away. Foreign policy has continued its evolution in Nigeria, and sometimes the overextension of her resources has been evident. At times it appeared that Nigeria saw development of the African continent as Nigeria's cross to bear as she attempted to start an African renaissance that could bring the economic prosperity,

stability and leadership birthright home to Nigeria. Nigerian pride certainly runs deep, but her foreign policy motives are not always completely rational or even altruistic.

Factors conditioning Nigeria's foreign policy positions are summarized in the 1991 Library of Congress country study:

- 1) The ethnic and religious mix of the country required cautious positions on some issues, such as policy toward Israel . . . because of Muslim opposition and sympathy with the rest of the Arab Muslim world.
- 2) Nigeria's legacy as an ex-British colony, combined with its energy-producing role in the global economy, predisposed Nigeria to be pro-Western on most issues despite the desire to maintain a nonaligned status to avoid neocolonialism. . . .
- 3) The country's membership in and commitment to several international organizations . . . affected foreign policy positions.
- 4) As the most populous country in Africa and the entire black world, Nigeria perceived itself as the “giant” of Africa and the potential leader of the black race. Thus, Nigerian external relations have emphasized African issues, which have become the avowed cornerstone of foreign policy.²

These Nigerian factors have resulted in a dominant position for some recurring issues, but as discussed in earlier chapters successive military governments lost some of Nigeria's core issues as they became increasingly preoccupied with their own patron client relations and the maintenance of power at the expense of rational foreign policy. Lest anyone think the military was not always in control of all facets of Nigerian policy, you need only consider the comments of one of Nigeria's most moderate but effective military rulers. General Obasanjo stated that, “Foreign policy making . . . resided in Dodan barracks,” and the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministers were “instrument of input and instrument of execution.”³ Perception management towards the international community would vary greatly as Nigeria continued her march from hopeful independence to global pariah.

Colonial-Independence-First Republic (1960-1966)

During the 1950s and early 1960s, Nigerian foreign policy “aimed at proper behavior in the international system,” as the British government continued to have major influence on Nigeria’s foreign relations.⁴ Predictably, Nigeria’s First Republic had a western democratic feel that stressed “world peace, equal respect for sovereignty, and nonalignment based on friendship with any country that took a reciprocal position.”⁵ Nigeria’s most serious foreign policy contributions during the First Republic occurred through UN participation. Admission occurred within a week of independence in 1960, and Nigeria assumed a position as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council.⁶ Nigeria contributed personnel to many UN peacekeeping missions, including operations in Tanzania, and the UN India/Pakistan Observer Mission in the 1960s. Nigeria’s earliest major contribution to peacekeeping operations came in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), and by 1964 the Nigerian contingent, under General Ironsi (Igbo) was the predominant member of UN force.⁷ However, the birth of an organization that reflected the increasingly hard-line stances of many new African states would cast doubts in the minds of many Nigerians. In the era of Nigeria’s First Republic Africa saw the Organization of African Unity (OAU) established on May 25, 1963 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with an established purpose to “promote the unity and solidarity of the African states; defend the sovereignty of members; eradicate all forms of colonialism; promote international cooperation . . . , coordinate and harmonize member states economic, diplomatic, educational, health, welfare, scientific and defense policies.”⁸ Nigeria’s foreign policy suddenly seemed timid by comparison.

Generals Ironsi, Gowon and the Biafran Civil War (1960-1975)

Nigerian critics of the First Republic believed “that the government had been too pro-Western and not strong enough on decolonization or integration, and that the low profile had been embarrassing.”⁹ The idealistic young Major Nzeogwu (Igbo) had initiated Nigeria’s first coup which placed General Ironsi’s (Igbo) in office for six months in 1966 partially under the auspice of correcting the rampant corruption, but the foreign prestige and international political thread was also apparent in his post coup rhetoric.¹⁰ General Ironsi’s short stint is a little more than a blip on the screen for Nigerian foreign policy. General Gowon (Northern-aligned middle-belt Christian), that came to power in mid 1966 in the reprisal coup that toppled Ironsi, would make the first attempts at foreign policy by a Nigerian military government.

The domestic attacks on Gowon’s foreign policy were based on his inclination to base foreign policy decision on personal relationships.¹¹ His personal assurance that a future West African economic organization would be headquartered in Togo where his friend, General Eyadema, was in power and his threat to send troops to Niger to prevent a coup against another friend undermined his credibility at home.¹² He also signed away Nigeria’s oil rich Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon as a repayment for President Ahidjo’s support during the Biafran civil war.¹³ These moves violated the Nigerian principle of prestige while demonstrating little regard for economic development at home. Nigerians would never offer such prestige to other West African countries at her expense. Gowon’s talk of military intervention under questionable circumstances began the alienation of the military professionals that were keeping him in power. Even more damning domestically

was the criticism that Gowon was using Nigeria's oil wealth as a handout program throughout Africa to increase his personal prestige.¹⁴

Whatever his motivation or technique, Gowon was making tentative steps toward engaging his African neighbors. In addition to the foreign policy priorities of the First Republic, General Gowon placed renewed emphasis on "pan-African solidarity through the Organization of African Unity (OAU), regional cooperation, support for anti-colonial and liberation movements--particularly those in southern Africa--and nonalignment in the East-West conflict."¹⁵ But Gowon's domestic problem with the breakaway Igbos in Biafra was going to affect his Africa-centric foreign policy. African criticism of General Gowon's government increased as the civil war dragged on. While the OAU initially issued a statement in 1967 backing the federal position on national unity, they continued efforts to bring about a cease-fire as the death toll and ethnic overtones increased.¹⁶

Post-civil war policy was distinctly different from previous Nigerian foreign policy. White-dominated African countries had supported the Igbo's in Biafra, and the OAU had sided with Gowon's military government by voting for unity.¹⁷ On the global stage, the break was even more apparent. While the African schism was to be expected and only served to reinforce and validate Nigeria's anti-South Africa sentiment, the repercussions globally affected Nigeria's world alignment. General Gowon turned to the Soviet Union for support after the West refused to provide arms to defeat Biafra.¹⁸ The postwar cooling to the west and some of Gowon's reluctance to make Western-style democratic reform found their origins in the civil war.

To reinforce African ties and reward his supporters, General Gowon decided to sell crude oil at reduced prices to African countries.¹⁹ Subsidizing African countries

“enhanced Nigeria's influence in Africa while building African solidarity,” and led directly to Nigeria’s power position in the creation of the Economic Community of Western States (ECOWAS).²⁰ ECOWAS was formed in 1975 with a mission to promote economic development in “all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial matters, social and cultural issues.”²¹ In other words, Nigeria was fashioning a power base and a stage from which to make her bid for African leadership. But Gowon’s decision-making style and lack of coherent plan were troubling to many in the military, and they sought a change.

Generals Muhammed, Obasanjo, and the Second Republic (1975-1984)

The military leaders that toppled General Gowon from within his organization selected army leaders that would launch the most aggressive foreign policy in Nigerian history. A foreign policy and nationalism push that coincides with the establishment of the officer professional education institutions discussed in chapter 3. Muhammed and Obasanjo set about to educate Nigeria’s officers for the strategic environment they saw the country headed towards. Nigeria had the economic muscle on the crest of the oil price wave and coupled with a global community that was suddenly exposed and vulnerable to fossil fuel shortages, she was poised to advance her national interests.²²

In 1975, following closely behind the coup, Nigeria expressed her “urgent goals” for foreign policy that included “blocking South African aggression and long range domination in the sub-region, and to secure stability in post-independence Angola.”²³ This strengthened Africa focus meant Nigeria voiced her strong objections to Portuguese colonization not only in Angola but also in Mozambique and condemned minority rule in

Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) almost as vehemently as they had in South Africa.²⁴ However, it was Nigeria's policy to eradicate apartheid in South Africa and the subsequent "invasion" of Angola by South Africa that forced Nigeria to adopt a policy that had it on collision course with the United States when they backed the socialist party in Angola.²⁵ The commitment of General Murtala Muhammad to back the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola's (MPLA) ascent to power in Angola provided the critical swing vote in the OAU decision to recognize the MPLA.²⁶ This move furthered the rift in U.S. Nigerian relations. A U.S. that was antisocialist, Africa-ignorant and pro-South African "insulted" the Nigerians on their own continent, resulting in a tersely worded response from General Muhammed essentially telling the U.S. "to go to hell."²⁷ The rift had already widened earlier in 1975 when General Obasanjo had forced the withdrawal of the U.S. embassy with military force to allow Nigerians to use the building, but now the Nigerians were being more than just forceful in their sovereignty.²⁸ The perception of a danger to U.S. interests in Africa was becoming more focused on Nigeria as an antagonist.

During this time Nigeria described her foreign policy as nonideological, an attempt at explanation to the world's cold war superpowers. Nigeria's attempts to mediate in the South African-Angolan crisis followed by the Angola-Zaire Crisis and her support to the OAU in the Ethiopian-Somali dispute caused controversy at home as well as causing confusion in the East-West ideological war.²⁹ While Nixon and Ford favored South Africa, despite white minority rule, because it was more stable and would keep chaos and thereby communism out of Africa, Nigeria's anticolonial policies had no such anticommunist flavor.³⁰ Nigeria's Army that had fought on the continent to keep the

peace and had fought to unite its country found it odd that a heterogeneous nation like the U.S., with the second largest black population on the planet, could not understand Nigeria's fight to end colonization and oppression regardless of the ideology chosen by indigenous peoples.³¹

The next dramatic change in Nigerian foreign policy came with the election of Jimmy Carter as president of the United States. A month after inauguration in 1977 Carter sent his ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, to Nigeria.³² Although the issues of South Africa and Zimbabwe were hanging over their heads, dialogue was open. A visit by General Obasanjo to Washington in October 1977 was followed six months later with the first visit of an American president to Africa since Roosevelt had made a stopover in Liberia during a World War II trip to Casablanca.³³ The growing closeness created new enthusiasm as Nigeria's military leaders prepared for elections and the country drafted a new constitution. The 1979 constitution contained familiar cornerstones of Nigerian foreign policy that the military would handover to the Second Republic: promotion of African unity; political, economic, social, and cultural liberation of Africa; international cooperation; and elimination of racial discrimination.³⁴

The government of Shehu Shagari, elected in 1979, maintained the status quo of the previous military government concerning foreign policy. A typical assessment of Shagari's foreign policy:

Nigeria's foreign policy remained at the level of routine observance of existing relations and obligations. . . . The four years of the regime were, therefore, a period of recess for Nigeria's foreign policy.³⁵

Democracy supporters argued that assessments like this "underplayed the difference in foreign policy between military government . . . and a democratic one."³⁶ The legislative

controls of the democracy constrained the unilateral decisions that could be made and in fact were made by military governments in Nigeria. President Shagari, a political pupil of Balewa (First Republic), adopted a “conservative, cautious, pro-Western, and sometimes unpopular” foreign policy stance.³⁷ His cautious stance and desire to find peaceful means to end a dispute were as unpopular at home as his lack of boisterous rhetoric to the west. The border disputes with Chad and Cameroon provided the Shagari government an opportunity to consider military action, which it did not take.³⁸ The lack of a response was timid to many senior officers that saw this as another decline in Nigerian status.³⁹ Once again, the drop in prestige, and the reduction in anticolonial rhetoric through relations with the west were contributing factors to the end of a republic.

Generals Buhari, Babangida, Abacha, and the Birth of the Third Republic (1984-1999)

General Buhari stepped in after the fall of the second republic in 1984 to reestablish the foreign policy of the Muhammed/Obasanjo era, even going so far as to bring back their external affairs minister Joe Garba and selecting him as the country’s permanent representative to the United Nations.⁴⁰ General Buhari also moved immediately to correct the lack of action with regard to Chad and Cameroon by sending troops to the borders.⁴¹ Buhari’s downfall was truly economically related (covered in chapter 4) as the price of oil continued to fall and as Nigeria saw her external power base erode in conjunction with domestic unrest. The end of Buhari was at hand.

General Babangida, who forced Buhari out of office, maintained the same initial foreign policy apparatus and focused on placating some domestic issues to solidify his power base. His foreign policy machine, while maintaining the tenets of

Muhammed/Obasanjo, would play for bigger public relations gain and prestige on the continent regardless of the capital investment required by Nigeria. Nigeria attempted to mediate crises in Chad, between Burkina Faso and Mali, between Togo and Ghana, and most decisively, they acted in the Liberian crises that threatened to engulf all of West Africa.⁴² Reports that Gadaffi's Libya was supporting Charles Taylor's bid to control Liberia, Sierra Leone and ultimately more of West Africa made Nigeria's leadership welcome not only among ECOWAS but in the United States as well.⁴³

The US supported the actions of the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia, but not General Babangida, who was viewed as being supportive of the drug trade with antidemocratic ideas.⁴⁴ Buying the bulk of Nigeria's crude oil, the United States was still Nigeria's most important trading partner.⁴⁵ To relieve its conscience about the incongruities of its love-hate relationship with Nigeria, the United States funded prodemocracy groups and other nongovernmental organizations to get a democratic election process moving in Nigeria.⁴⁶ The United States continued to support the actions of Babangida's military policy in West Africa, and was dependent and appreciative of Nigeria's oil, but still wanted General Babangida out of office.

General Babangida enjoyed some domestic support early in his regime as Nigerian prestige jumped on the world stage. In addition to actions in West Africa, Nigeria played active roles in international organizations: "Joseph Garba, Nigeria's former permanent representative to the UN, was elected in 1989 to a one-year term as president of the UN General Assembly; Adebayo Adedji became executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Emeka Anyaoku became secretary general of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1989, and former military head of state General Obasanjo

was internationally recognized as a world statesman and spokesman on African issues.”⁴⁷ Nigeria gave military and financial aid to the African National Congress in support of its antiapartheid policy in South Africa and provided military equipments to Mozambique to fight South African backed rebels.⁴⁸ In addition, General Babangida created a Technical Aid Corps, similar to the United States Peace Corps, which put young Nigerian professionals to work throughout Africa, the Caribbean, and in some Pacific countries.⁴⁹ Babangida even suggested that Nigeria might again offer reduced prices to African countries as the Middle East crises of the 1990s pushed up oil prices.⁵⁰ General Babangida’s domestic critics claimed that the external operations were personality driven and wasteful of Nigeria’s resources. Babangida was extremely close to Liberia’s President Samuel Doe, and some reports have Nigeria’s expenditures on Liberia at N2.8 billion.⁵¹ Additionally, his establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, for the first time in Nigerian history, alienated many in the powerful northern Muslim community.⁵² When the 1993 elections proved to be another big disaster for northern interests the continuation of military rule was set. The north certainly did not want President-elect Abiola (Yoruba) running the country, and now the country no longer wanted Babangida.

The regime of General Abacha, which in 1993 ousted the interim government put in place by a departing General Babangida, was embattled from the beginning. General Abacha’s self-absorbed and paranoid approach to domestic concerns addressed in chapters 3 and 4, resulted in a foreign policy that was “reactive and incoherent.”⁵³ The end of apartheid in 1994 removed Nigeria’s main enemy on the continent, but South Africa continued to back the same prodemocracy movements that had hounded General Babangida.⁵⁴ The crises in Liberia and Sierra Leone were disturbing West African

cohesion and bleeding Nigeria heavily, but Abacha leaned on these operations as his only positive actions on the international stage.⁵⁵ While Nigeria struggled to maintain focus in ECOWAS and the OAU, General Abacha fought an ongoing series of cross border skirmishes with Cameroon over the Bakassi peninsula. This operation and his killing of the Ogoni chiefs resulted in Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth, and ended with Abacha seeking support from the international "pariahs" Libya, Iran, and Iraq.⁵⁶ Abacha's regime had reached the pinnacle of despotism in Nigeria. Abacha's death in 1998 signaled the end of "lawless autocracy" in Nigeria and an interim return to the military oligarchy of Gen Abdulsalam Abubakar. Abubakar had little time for foreign policy decisions, as he initiated a plan to turn over to a democratically elected government in under one year.

The Past and the Future

Throughout the Cold War, which spanned most of Nigeria's days as an independent country, the United States and the Soviet Union were interested in Nigeria because of its "size, population, economic and military potential, and its oil."⁵⁷ The global power shift of the 1990s would have less effect on Nigeria than the presidential election of Olesgun Obasanjo in 1999. Nigeria's economic tie to the west returned to normalcy as its "pariah state" status vanished. Nigeria could again assert importance on international organizations and issues, rather than purely domestic opponents. Nigeria could strive for "economic development, African peace, and international cooperation."⁵⁸ However, Nigeria's old organizations of influence have changed as well. While the OAU and ECOWAS at times increase African unity, the OAU is still seeking relevancy in a post apartheid world, and ECOWAS has been undermined by francophone Africa's effort

at economic union. Libya's M' ammar Al-Gaddafi, who is making a play to be the leader of the African continent, is even championing a replacement organization for the OAU in the African Union (AU).⁵⁹ A weakened Nigeria must clearly develop its incredible potential before it can lead in its old Sub-Saharan paradigm against South Africa, or continent wide against its new rival Libya. President Obasanjo is still tied down with the cumbersome foreign affairs bureaucracy that limited Nigeria's first two republics, and an increasingly fractured population has enormous opportunity to influence foreign affairs in the information age. As fractured ethnic groups align with global transnational players the effect on Nigerian foreign policy will be enormous.

¹Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991), xiv.

²The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

³Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991), xii.

⁴The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸The Organization of African Unity Homepage, available from <http://www.oau-oua.org/>, 19 March 2002.

⁹The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

¹⁰Richard Akinnola, *Fellow Countrymen...: The Story of Coup D'etats in Nigeria* (Ikeja: Rich Consult, 2000), 21.

¹¹Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991), 4.

¹²Ibid.,4.

¹³Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative on the Nigerian Crisis* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1996), 22.

¹⁴Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991), 11.

¹⁵The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹The Economic Community of Western States homepage, available from <http://ecowas.int/>, 19 March 2002.

²²Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1991), x.

²³*Ibid.*, xi.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*, 28.

²⁶The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

²⁷Joe Garba, *Diplomatic Soldiering* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1991), 29.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 159.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 164.

³¹*Ibid.*, 163.

³²*Ibid.*, 167.

³³*Ibid.*, 171.

³⁴The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

³⁵F. Otubanjo, "Introduction: Phases and Changes in Nigeria's Foreign Policy," in A.B. Akinyemi, *Nigeria Since Independence: the First 25 Years*, vol. X: *International Relations* (Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989), 6.

³⁶Eghosa E. Osaghae, "*Crippled Giant*" *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 161.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

³⁹Eghosa E. Osaghae, "*Crippled Giant*" *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 162.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 187.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 187.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 268.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 269.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 272.

⁴⁵The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

⁴⁶Eghosa E. Osaghae, "*Crippled Giant*" *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 272.

⁴⁷The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹African Guardian 28 September, 1992

⁵²Eghosa E. Osaghae, "*Crippled Giant*" *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 271.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 306.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 309.

⁵⁵Ibid., 307.

⁵⁶Ibid., 310.

⁵⁷The Library of Congress Webpage, *Nigeria: a country study*, page available from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>, 19 January 2002.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹All Africa homepage, "OAU summit hears warnings of 'oblivion' if conflict continues," 9 July 2001, available from <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200107090390.html>, 19 March 2002.

CHAPTER 6

THE FUTURE OF NIGERIA AND ITS ARMY

If we want to climb out of the hole we are in, it is a job for all the people.¹

Chinua Achebe

National unity fits in our American lexicon right next to patriotism, but is the concept exportable? Alternatively, can we export the U.S. concept of a democratic nation state to a people with a separate and distinct political tradition? These questions must be answered in order to assist Nigeria out of her predicament. Nigeria is a nation-state that lives in a continuous cycle of violence. This cycle of violence has historically been semicontrolled by Nigeria's army. In order to disengage the army from governance you must have stability. Unfortunately for Nigeria her diverse population and ethnic religious fault lines have been provoked to maintain insecurity on a national scale. Provoked because ethnic groups easily maintain traditions of hate, and Nigeria's resource scarcities and burgeoning population discussed in chapter 1 raise the internal competition to incredible heights. These insecurities established a tradition of political schizophrenia in the army's officer corps resulting in the coups discussed in chapter 2, and allowed the economic abuses discussed in chapter 4. By modifying our frame of reference to meet the Nigerian reality we can begin to render assistance that is truly beneficial to Nigeria in fulfilling her destiny.

National Unity and Governance

In the case of national unity in Nigeria, many have asked what will be the final price paid for unity and democracy, and to what end? Critics, such as Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, have charged that the military has used the rhetoric of unity to “declare its iron resolve to keep the nation together.”² Moreover, once in power the same national unity propaganda supports the right of the military government to do absolutely anything and everything to crush protests.³ The army and its beneficiaries in the patron client apparatus can then use soldiers to harass and control any possible opposition to prevent national disintegration.⁴ The cycle is predictable and perpetual; with scheduled elections resulting in a measure of chaos that justifies continued military intervention to maintain the status quo.⁵ Social equity and respect for the individual are not well-established Nigerian traditions, and without them, a heterogeneous multiethnic population cannot survive. However, the rift between the north and the south is not so severe as to be unrecoverable. Moderate Nigerians have stated that they have more in common with each other than they do with the military rulers and their powerful clients that maintain the ethnic rift to prevent the development of a national consciousness that will unseat them.⁶ This codependency reached its culmination in the regimes of Generals Babangida and Abacha. These regimes destroyed any remaining public good will towards the army, but also provided the impetus for a display of national unity unheard of in Nigeria.⁷

In the 1993 aborted elections in which Nigerians elected the “wrong candidate” in Abiola (Yoruba), they had ultimately cast a vote for a national unity mandate that would have to wait for General Abacha’s death in 1998 to materialize. Despite all the apparent

obstacles to national unity, Wole Soyinka states how Nigeria's history and the events of the 1993 elections led to this mandate:

A political entity that, for an appreciable period, has saluted a common flag, adopted a common anthem, a motto, or a common pledge for ceremonial or instructional occasions, a polity that uniformly loses its collective sense of proportion when its football team goes to battle, fights a war or two as an entity, flaunts a common passport. . . . I repeat, one that has, for an appreciable length of time, managed its affairs within the context of these unifying virtues or irrationalities—such an entity may indeed be deemed a nation by obvious status quo.⁸

. . . [T]he achievement of the electoral event [of 1993] itself despite all obstacles placed in the way of the Nigerian electorate by the dictatorship, may enable one to understand why. . . . A candidate was defeating his opponent in that opponent's own base, defeating him among his own clan, his own state and region.⁹

On Nigeria's own terms, they have proclaimed their nationhood. To say they are not a nation or should not be in the interest of stability is to accept the continuation of ethnic violence as an absolute truth. Ethnic chaos allowed General Abacha to deny the 1993 national mandate until his death in 1998. Ethnic chaos plays on Nigerians fears and feeds the need for instant stability that only the army and their ruling class clients can bring. By taking sides with any particular ethnic group or political organization the U.S. would foster an unnatural state in Nigeria. Despite western definitions, Nigeria must seek her own internal stasis and model for governance.

What Type of Governance?

The key to unlocking the mystery of Nigerian governance is to define the nature of the previous status quo and to determine a path of evolution towards stability and prosperity that will allow the army to return to the traditional role outlined by Samuel Huntington in his seminal work *The Soldier and the State*. Huntington's military found its cornerstone in an officer corps that possessed expertise, responsibility, and corporate

character.¹⁰ In Nigeria, instead of an officer corps capable of managing violence against the national enemies, with social obligation to the nation, in which professional achievement is based on experience, seniority, education, and ability they got a politicized officer corps awash in corruption. Their army learned to manage violence against the political enemies of the ruling class, without social obligation to the state, within a system that often valued ethnic origin and political affiliation over merit. Nigeria's "party of power" developed within the officer corps. The Nigerian Army was led into the trap described by Huntington: "A political officer corps, rent with faction, subordinated to ulterior ends, lacking prestige but sensitive to the appeals of popularity, would endanger the security of the state."¹¹ While Huntington was obviously more concerned with the ability of the army to defend the nation's sovereignty, his condemnation applies to the destruction wrought by a military governance trend that evolves unchecked. This trend allows increasingly flagrant abuses of power eventually evolving into crisis epitomized by the national economic rape of General Babangida and the complete despotism of General Abacha.

The preceding chapters have discussed the Nigerian issues that led to this problem, some of their own making and some a result of their colonial legacy. Now the issue must be the availability of a solution. The British left Nigeria with a democratic tradition that was incompatible with their traditions. In their political evolution, they have struggled from one constitutional crisis to another. For future U.S. involvement, it is helpful to know where they are in the evolution process, and if we can be helpful or destructive in our efforts to assist Nigeria. While on the surface the military oligarchy

has been replaced by a quasi-regime with the elections of 1999, the government has not yet made the leap to a democracy that is completely representative of Nigeria's needs.

The Structure of the Federation

Nigerians must cut bureaucracy. The system of thirty-six states evolved as a band-aid approach to remedy ethnic sovereignty concerns under governments that could not or would not address the real concerns of representative government. Thirty-six separate governments mean 36 separate bureaucracies that require 90 percent of the state's income.¹² Nigeria must return to a leaner state federation if for no other reason than a purely economic one. The maps in figures 4 to 8 demonstrate the proliferation of states from the four regions at independence through the twelve-state 1976 nation, the nineteen-state 1976 nation, the thirty-state 1991 nation, to the final thirty-six state 1996 nation.



Figure 4. Four Regions, 1963. *Source.* Eghosa E. Osaghae, “*Crippled Giant*” *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), Map.

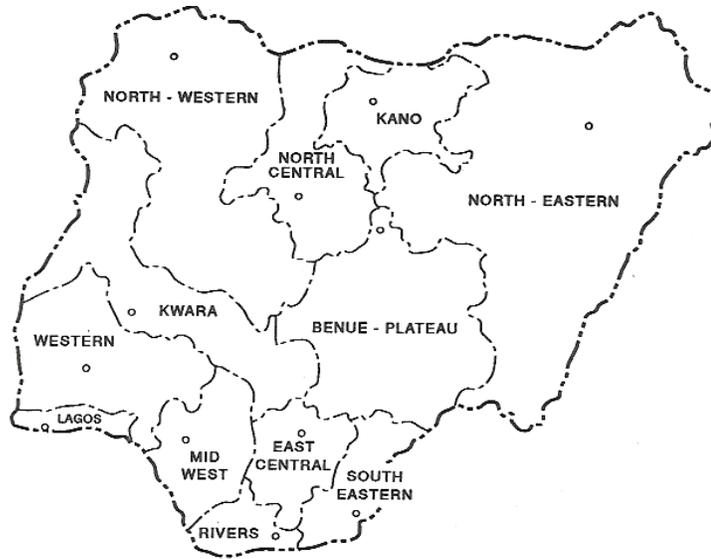


Figure 5. Twelve States, 1976. *Source.* Eghosa E. Osaghae, “*Crippled Giant*” *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), Map.



Figure 6. Nineteen States, 1976. *Source.* Eghosa E. Osaghae, “*Crippled Giant*” *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), Map.

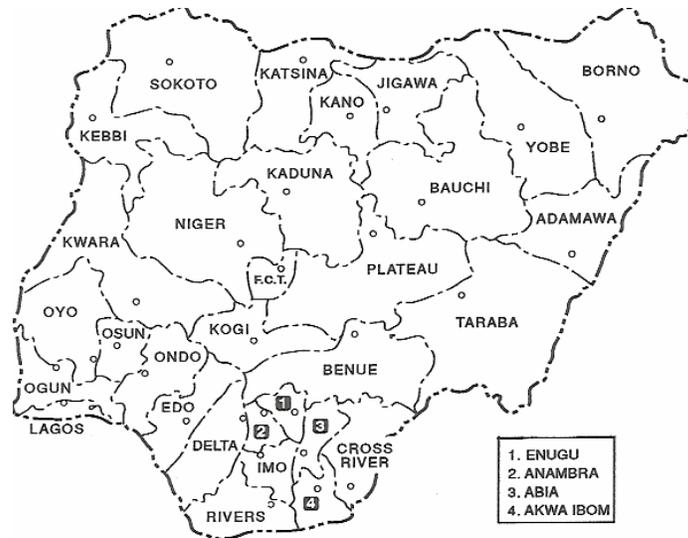


Figure 7. Thirty State, 1991. *Source.* Eghosa E. Osaghae, “Crippled Giant” Nigeria since Independence (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), Map.



Figure 8. Thirty-six State, 1996. *Source.* Eghosa E. Osaghae, “Crippled Giant” Nigeria since Independence (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), Map.

National Leadership

President Obasanjo was a member of the most dynamic and purposeful of the military governments in Nigeria, and initially took some powerful steps to right the course of the nation. He retired one hundred officers, committed the military to professionalization with U.S. assistance and established a human rights panel to open a national dialogue about the abuses of military rule.¹³ However, his economic initiatives have been slow to follow his procedural moves, and continued ethnic violence has often resulted in draconian military responses. The real test for President Obasanjo is the opening of peaceful dialogue while fostering an anticorruption, selfless service personal image. Ethno-religious tensions and instability will be the tools of choice for his detractors to topple him, and they will instigate it with personal attacks against his character and personal motives.

Strengthen the Institutions

The government has to get the Nigerians to accept the government institutions. They will only do this if they feel that they are truly represented and therefore have something to gain from the process. One suggestion is for a “constitutional conference to allow a wide range of representatives from ethnic, religious, labor, women’s, political, and business groups to decide how they want to live.”¹⁴ When Nigerians have a stake in their government, the institutions of government will have real power, not coercive power. Until Nigeria finds a system of true representative government that voices the concerns of its various minorities, it will forever teeter in a cycle of quasi-regimes. The only discernable difference will be in who controls the mechanisms of state repression, a general or a civilian backed by generals.

Change the Political Culture

A free press is the first step in the right direction towards correcting this deficit. Only “transparency, accountability, and national sentiment” which start with unfiltered, uncontrolled reporting can change the public conduct of Nigeria’s elected officials.¹⁵ A responsible free press and the readers that support it are the products of a healthy education system. As discussed in chapter 3 the army has failed to make education a priority. The very existence of Nigerian democracy depends on elected officials not repeating this mistake. Free speech can be painful but it is the only way to minimize the “winner take all” mentality of elections in Nigeria. Transparency in public life, fostered by a free press and an educated electorate, has a fighting chance to reduce Nigeria’s rampant corruption that continues to be a flash point for violence.

Military Reform

The current U.S. initiatives with the Nigerian military have opened the door for professionalization, but Nigerians have a healthy distrust of U.S. motives. We must understand their culture and history without arrogance in order to build the necessary rapport. U.S. servicemembers training with Nigerians without cultural knowledge are only half armed and liable to be much less effective. Joint military training with the Nigerians has as a key component the civil-military relationship we foster while helping them reestablish their professional pride.

Nigerian soldiers are, like the rest of the world, tuned into Western propaganda. They know about the growing economic rift between nations. In addition, while it is not the U.S. Army’s job to create educational and economic opportunity, it is its job to understand the rage associated with not having them. Their army must understand the

concepts that make our army great. Equal opportunity, promotion by merit, and selfless service are concepts we must convey. Even when we struggle with these concepts, we are more successful than the Nigerians are. Independent review panels should be established to investigate accession and promotion statistics among Nigeria's various ethnic groups. The army must lead the way in the social experiment of racial integration and equality. The legitimacy of the army depends on it, it cannot provide effective internal security until this is accomplished.

The breaking down of information barriers within the military must also be undertaken. The various cliques, security agencies, and intelligence agencies must be disbanded. The distrust and inefficiency they cause prevent the army from functioning at all but the lowest tactical level. The future effectiveness of the Nigerian Army at the operational and strategic levels requires an information revolution. In a military government, information is power, but that old habit must be destroyed for the future effectiveness of the army in the field where it was originally designed to function.

Taking care of the army's veterans and easing their transition to civilian life is another area for increased effort. The Nigerian Armed Forces Resettlement Center (NARFC) was given a US\$1 million initial investment to revamp its curriculum.¹⁶ Soldiers must have viable options for continued employment outside the military not only to lower unemployment but also to keep this potential leadership cadre from turning to criminal violence out of economic desperation.

Finally, the army must be permanently disengaged from economic control in Nigeria. The patterns of economic mismanagement and abuse outlined in chapter 4 demonstrate the army's complete inability to develop Nigeria's economy. As long as

self-serving generals and retired generals from Nigeria's past control the economy Nigerians will suffer.

The Army and Nigeria's Future

If these initiatives fail or are not undertaken, Nigeria will follow one of two rocky paths away from her destiny. The more likely path will be caused by slow or incomplete reform. In this scenario, the elected governments will be hampered by continuing corruption and economic stagnation, the state's legitimacy and national unity will continue to be questioned, while the government bounces from crisis to crisis.¹⁷ A likely outcome would be a criminal organization so imbedded in the corruption of government and generating so much nonoil revenue from drug trafficking and other criminal activities that it cannot be killed without killing Nigeria. Nigeria's army will become the security lackey to a non-state criminal organization in order to survive as an institution.

Failure to take any action on Nigeria's core issue also leaves the door open for a return to military rule.¹⁸ The resulting ethno-religious violence will fracture Nigeria permanently, creating a powder keg for West Africa as minipower brokers emerge to fill the void. This coup will closely resemble the early Gowon years, but the information systems and media available to all sides will spiral this civil war out of central government control. The resulting flow of refugees and completely unchecked criminal activity will engulf West Africa.

The ultimate path Nigeria will follow is up to the Nigerians, not the United States. We can assist them in education and economic reform and with the professionalization of their military. Some people outside the military will clamor that only military rule can hold Nigeria together. Watch out for these individuals, as they are dangerous, misguided,

and probably have a vested economic interest. All Nigerians must decide if they have more to gain from unity and the compromise involved in ensuring that minority interests are represented. Nigerians could learn from the American experiment with a heterogeneous population. Our civil rights struggles pale in comparison to the violence of Nigeria's ethnic struggles. They must develop their own unique brand of representative democracy, and educate a population to understand community interest and rule of law with an army as tool of communal interest. As long as authority is based in violence, Nigerians will continue to kill each other in large numbers and fight for control of the army to subjugate other ethnic groups to their will.

¹Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2000), 289.

²Wole Soyinka, *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative on the Nigerian Crisis* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1996), 33.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 34.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 7.

⁷Ibid., 9.

⁸Ibid., 23.

⁹Ibid., 39.

¹⁰Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1957,2001) 11-18.

¹¹Ibid., 464.

¹²Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2000), 299.

¹³Karl Maier, *This house has fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2000), 294.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 295.

¹⁵Eghosa E. Osaghae, "*Crippled Giant*" *Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 318.

¹⁶Jim Fisher-Thompson, US Department of State International Information Programs, *Nigerian Army Minister Wants U.S. Aid to Nigerian Veterans Expanded*, available from, <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/af/security/a1121002.htm>, April 13, 2002.

¹⁷Karl Maier, *This house has fallen: Midnight in Nigeria* (New York: Public Affairs Press, 2000), 300.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 301.

APPENDIX

NIGERIAN SOLDIERS INVOLVEMENT IN COUPS D'ÉTAT, 1960-1990 (LEADERS, JAILED, KILLED, EXECUTED)

1966 (January) coup d'état leaders

Major Kaduna Nzeogwu
Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna
Major C. I. Anuforo
Major T. Onwatuegu
Major Adewale Ademoyega
Major D. Okafor
Major I. H. Chukwuka
Captain E. N. Nwobosi
Captain G. Ude
Captain Gbuhe
Captain G. O. Oji
Lieutenant Ogunchi
2nd Lieutenant N. S. Wokocha

Killed during the 1966 (January) coup d'état

Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (Prime Minister)
Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh (Minister of Finance)
Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola (Premier Western Region)
Sir Ahmadu Bello (Premier, Northern Region)
Brigadier Sam Ademulegun
Brigadier Zakarriya Maimalari
Colonel R. A. Shodeinde
Lieutenant Colonel Chinyelu Umegbe
Colonel Kur Mohammed
Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Paur
Major Samuel Adegoke

1966 (July) Counter coup d'état leaders

Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon
Major T. Y. Danjuma
Captain Ibrahim Babangida

Killed during the 1996 (July) Counter coup d'état

Major General J. T. Aguiyi-Ironsi
Lietenant Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi
Lietenant Colonel I. C. Okoro
Lieutenant Colonel Gabriel Okonwye
Major Theophilus Nzegwu
Major Bernard Nnamani
Major O. U. Isong
Major Victor Ogunro
Major Peter Obi
Major Alister Drummond
Major Ibanga Ekanem
Major John Obienu
Major Chukwueike Emelifionwu

1975 coup d'état leaders

Colonel Joseph Garba
Colonel Ibrahim Babangida (*1966 Counter Coup)
Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo
Colonel Abdulahi Mohammed
Lietenant Colonel Shehu Yar'adua

(*1975 dubbed the bloodless coup d'état. No casualties)

1976 abortive coup d'état leaders

Major General I. D. Bisalla
Lietenant Colonel Buka Dimka

Killed during the 1976 abortive coup d'état

General Murtala Mohammed (Head of State)
Lietenant Akintunde Akinsehinwa (Aide to the Head of State)
Colonel Ibrahim Taiwo (Governor of Kwara State)

Publicly executed for involvement in the 1976 abortive coup d'état:

Major General I. D. Bisalla
Colonel Isa Bakar
Colonel A. D. S. Way
Lietenant Colonel Buka Dimka
Lietenant Colonel A. R. Aliyu
Lietenant Colonel Ayuba Tense

Lieutenant Colonel K. Adamu
Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Umaru
Major K. Gagara
Major Kola Afolabi
Major C. B. Dabang
Major J. W. Kasai
Major M. M. Mshellia
Major Ola Ogunmekan
Captain G. Parrwang
Captain J. Idi Fadah
Captain S. Walias
Captain A. A. Aliyu
Captain A. Dawurang
Captain M. R. Gotip
Lieutenant Mohammed
Lieutenant L. K. Seleng
Lieutenant Wiliam Seri
Lieutenant Peter Cigari
Lieutenant O. Zagni
Lieutenant S. Wayah
Lieutenant Sabo Kwale
Warrant Officer Monday Manchony
Warrant Officer Sambo Pankshin
Warrant Officer Dakup Seri
Warrant Officer Bawa
Sergeant Richard Dungdang
Sergeant Sale Pankshin
Sergeant Bala Javan
Sergeant Ahmadu Reye
Police Commissioner Joseph Gomwalk
Police Sergeant Shaiyen
Mr. Abdul Karim Zakari

Jailed for involvement in the 1976 abortive coup d'état

Lieutenant Colonel J. S. Madugu
Major A. K. Abang
Captain C. Wuyep
Captain A. A. Maidobo
Captain Isaiah Gowon
2nd Lieutenant A. Walbe
Warrant Officer E. Izah
Sergeant J. Bupwada
Mr. S. K. Dimka (Former Assistant Police Commissioner)
Mrs. Helen Gomwalk

Mr. J. Tuwe
Mr. S. Anyadofu
Mr. D. Gontu (police officer)
Mr. Gyang Pam (police officer)

1983 coup d'état leaders

Brigadier Mohammed Buhari
Brigadier Sani Abacha
Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon
Brigadier Ibrahim Babangida (*1966 Counter Coup / 1975 Coup)
Brigadier Ibrahim Bako
Major Abubakar Umar
Major Abdulmumuni Aminu
Major Lawan Gwadabe

Killed during the 1983 coup d'état

Brigadier Ibrahim Bako

1985 coup d'état Leaders

General Ibrahim Babangida (*1966 Counter Coup / 1975 Coup / 1983
Coup)
General Sani Abacha
Brigadier Joshua Dongoyaro
Colonel Ahmed Abdulahi
Lieutenant Colonel Tanko Ayuba
Major Abubakar Umar
Major Abdulmumuni Aminu
Major Lawan Gwadabe

(*1985 another bloodless coup d'état. A Removal of General Buhari
by the officers that had assisted in his 1983 coup d'état)

1986 abortive coup d'état leaders

Major General Mamman Vasta
Wing Commander Ben Ekele
Wing Commander Adamu Sakaba
Squadron Leader Martin Luther
Squadron Leader A. Ahura

Publicly executed for involvement in the 1986 abortive coup d'état

Major General Mamman Vasta
Wing Commander Ben Ekele
Wing Commander Adamu Sakaba
Squadron Leader Martin Luther
Squadron Leader A. Ahura
Lieutenant Colonel Mike Iyorche
Lieutenant Colonel Musa Bitiyong
Commander Achukwu Ogwiji
Major David Bamidele

Jailed for involvement in the 1986 abortive coup d'état

Squadron Leader Gabriel Ode
Wing Commander J.B. Uku
Lieutenant Colonel K.G. Dakpa
Major Moses Effiong
Major D. E. West
Major T. Akwashiki
Major J. O. Onyeke
Captain C.I.L.
Lieutenant Peter Odoaba
Brigadier Nassarawa (2 years and forced retirement)

1990 abortive coup d'état Leaders

Lieutenant Colonel Tony Nyam
Major Gideon Orkar
Major S. Mukoro

Killed during the 1990 coup d'état

Colonel U. K. Bello (ADC President Ibrahim Babangida)
Undetermined number of soldiers from the presidential security detail

Publicly executed for involvement in the 1990 abortive coup d'état:

Major Gideon Orkar
Captain N. H. Empere
Captain P. A. Dakolo
Lieutenant A. E. Akogun
Lieutenant Nicholas Odey
Lieutenant C. O. Ozoalor
Second Lieutenant A. B. Umukoro

Second Lieutenant E. J. Ejeku
Second Lieutenat Emmanuel Ade-Alade
Warrant Officer Monday Bayefa
Warrant Officer Godwin Donko
Warrant Officer Afolabi Moses
Warrant Officer Jonathan Ekimi
Fifty-three additional soldiers from staff sergeant to private were also publicly executed for involvement in the 1990 abortive coup d'état.

Jailed for involvement in the 1990 abortive coup d'état

Warrant Officer David Mukoro
Warrant Officer Jomo James
Warrant Officer Samson Elo
Twenty-nine additional soldiers from staff sergeant to private were also jailed for involvement in the 1990 abortive coup d'état.

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