

THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN NIGERIA: INVOLVEMENT OR ALIENATION OF THE MILITARY?

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Introduction

Nigeria is undergoing important changes in its political, economic, social, and constitutional structures, changing from an authoritarian military dictatorship to something else, which is still unclear. Redemocratization, a return to "democracy" as we commonly understand the term to mean, is perhaps a misleading and inappropriate description of the Nigerian experience, since whatever happens in 1992, when the present autocratic regime promises to transfer power to an elected civilian administration, a genuine democracy, such as Nigeria enjoyed in the past, is unlikely to re-emerge.

The most dramatic changes in Nigerian politics since independence in 1960 have occurred under military rule. This should not be totally surprising. Having attained self-rule from Britain under civilian administration, the democratic tradition which lasted just under six years from 1960 to 1966 was followed by a turbulent, anarchic period that led to two coups in 1966 and a bloody three-year civil war from 1967 to 1970. This military interference in the political life of Nigeria, and the inevitable expansion of the size and significance of the armed forces during the civil war, removed any appearance that the Nigerian military was apolitical. The gnawing reality in Nigeria's history has been its multi-ethnic population and politics, which, since independence, has been based on a complicated interrelationship. Given its past, Nigeria could probably have been three countries. There are no direct analogies with the Nigerian experience elsewhere on the African continent, but its democratic experience and the causes of its current dilemmas do perhaps have some relevance in some sub-Saharan African countries such as Ghana.

Except for two brief interludes (1960-66 and 1980-83), Nigerian military rulers have been at the helm of the ship of state. Having gained independence under civilian rule, with a small, apparently non-political army exercising no direct influence in national affairs, the army's sudden ascendance to power in 1966, without previous experience in politics and government, was indeed a difficult experience for the officers of the establishment. Like many other African countries, the rise of the army to power in Nigeria was sudden, with military influence increasingly extending from one *coup d'etat* to another until they lost their capacity to shock, though not to disturb, Nigerian opinion. Since its thirty-two years of independence, Nigeria has witnessed *eight coups*

d'état. Two were against civilian governments while the others, including three unsuccessful attempts, were directed at military governments. So far, there have been five military regimes, headed by General J. T. U. Aguyi-Ironsi (January-July 1966), General Yakubu Gowon (July 1966-July 1975), General Murtala Muhammed/General Olusegun Obasanjo (July 1975-September 1979), Major General Muhammed Buhari (December 1983-August 1985), and General Ibrahim Babangida (August 1985 to the present). Nigeria was at the threshold of the third attempt at the establishment of a democratic government in 1992. The successful implementation of this transition program would mark Nigeria's Third Republic.

This paper explores the origin, dynamics, and success of Nigeria's past and present attempts at establishing a viable democratic system, which has gone through a decolonization process as well as the establishment of new institutions. There are some inherent problems that sort of cut across the issue of civilian versus military politics in the context of Third World nations world wide, but there are some unique characteristics here that actually make this case a lot more complex and more difficult to understand. This paper attempts to examine the form and the process of the transitions within the conceptual framework of "redemocratization." First, though, it is important to put the evolution of the Nigerian military into a historical context.

The Military in Post-Colonial Nigeria

The Nigerian military, like that of Ghana, came into being as an instrument of the British colonial administration. Their domestic function was limited, primarily to aiding the police force whose officers, both commissioned and non-commissioned, were predominantly British. The rank and file soldiers recruited primarily for their martial prowess, dedication, and, above all, their obedience to command, came from different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Describing the Nigerian military prior to independence in 1960, one scholar wrote:

In theory an army should be a passive instrument in the hands of the government, an efficient agent to carry out the ends decreed by its political masters without sentiment or complaint. Few armies achieve this ideal completely, but the Nigerian military forces before 1958 came very near to it.¹

Indeed, the post-colonial military attitude of the average Nigerian soldier actually set the stage for the military incursion in Nigerian politics. Britain's tradition of divorcing martial rights from political privileges

was relevant to the Nigerian soldier only to the extent that this separation of powers was relevant to the continuation of control by the European administrators.

Nonetheless, after independence in 1960, the military expanded largely for purposes of national prestige as it rapidly grew in size with the addition of a small navy and air force. The indigenous Nigerian leaders also kept intact the basic format of military-civilian relation they inherited from their former colonial master. The first Nigerian Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, unlike Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who tried to implant a direct line between his Convention Peoples Party and the military, eschewed any injection of partisan politics into the Nigerian military establishment. As a national institution, efforts were made to address the glaring disparity in the Nigerian officer corps where about two-thirds of the commissioned officers after independence were from the Eastern Region, out of which half were Igbos.² The racial-ethnic disparity reflected both the distribution of post-primary education in Nigeria and the historic dislike of the military by some citizens. In the eastern region of Nigeria, for instance, there are many facilities for secondary level education but very few opportunities for white collar employment. Joining the armed forces became an acceptable alternative for a guaranteed higher paying and respected civil service job. The same was true in the Western region with regard to post secondary education, but unlike the East, the Westerners have some aversion towards the military, hence, only a very limited number of soldiers and commissioned officers were from the Western Region. But because of the limited number of schools in the Northern region, a high proportion of the ordinary soldiers and very few commissioned officers came from that part of the country.

Although ethnic disparities existed among the rank and file, the most obvious change within the Nigerian army itself occurred within the officer corps. For instance, the number of Nigerian officers as a percentage of the total number of 228 officers in January 1960 was only 18 per cent, but by the end of 1965, it had risen to over 87 per cent.³ The relatively minor role the military played in the political affairs of Nigeria under the British hardly changed in the early 1960s. The pattern of civil military relations, where the army helps the police in keeping order, remained unchallenged despite the rapid Nigerianization of the officer corp. Even while other institutions in the society, especially between 1960 and 1966, were being torn apart by growing ethnic cleavage, the military establishment remained a national, coherent, and united force.

The backdrop to military intervention in Nigeria's political life on January 16, 1966 was the increasing ethnic violence and the progressive breakdown of political institutions, especially following the fraudulent

October 1965 election in the troubled Western Region, that brought to power a government that lacked general acceptance. One scholar has aptly described the region as "the cockpit of Nigerian politics."⁴ The small group of young radical junior officers involved in the setting up of this government assassinated the Federal Prime Minister, the premiers of the Western and Northern Regions, and a number of senior military officers. Although the nature of the killing appeared to be ethnically motivated, since no high-ranking Igbo politicians were killed, the core conspirators (Majors C. K. Nzeogwu and E. A. Ifeajuna), had an explicit set of political goals—"to sweep away the old conservative political order which rests on Northern dominance."⁵

After the *coup d'etat*, top-level military officers and political leaders struggled to regain control. Major General J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi, General Officer Commanding of the Nigerian army, an Igbo and one of the intended victims of the *coup*, assumed power in order to ensure the organizational survival of the army whose discipline had been seriously affected by the *coup*. Invoking the norm of military obedience, Ironsi ordered the leaders of the *coup* to turn themselves in, which they did after some negotiations in Lagos. General Ironsi, now heading an interim armed-forces "corrective" government, set out to build an image as a reform-minded regime.⁶ He swiftly struck against corruption and disunity and arrested some former political leaders. He also promised an early return to civilian rule. He, therefore, appointed a special committee to draft a new constitution and to study the problems of the judiciary and the economy. But in the process, Ironsi seemed to confirm the increasing fears and suspicions (especially in the North) that the *coup* had been designed to impose Igbo dominance on the country. One of the first perceived symptoms of such ethnic bias appeared in the commander-in-chief's national broadcast on May 24, 1966. This courageous, but politically inept leader, under the urging of his "kitchen cabinet" which felt the only solution to the country's endemic problem lay in greater centralization, hastily announced to a nation already torn by suspicion and ethnic violence, that the federal system that unified the federal and regional public services had been abrogated.⁷ The political consequences were far reaching.

This act, which was designed to achieve national unity, unfortunately set in motion a chain of events which later resulted in widespread ethnic antagonism and violence. For the inhabitants of the Northern Region, who had long feared that their educational disadvantage could open the way for Southern domination of their civil service and the entire state system, the idea did not go well. As tensions quickly mounted, especially in the Northern Region, so did distrust and ethnic unrest. The Ironsi regime was not prepared, and with little understanding of the issues involved could not contain the domestic

upheaval.⁸ Therein lay the tragedy of the first Nigerian military administration. It was under this confused situation that a bloody counter-coup was conceived and executed exclusively by the Northern army officers on July 28, 1966. Ironsi and many other officers and soldiers of Igbo descent were killed in the process. Nigeria's second military regime emerged, and out of the chaos and uncertainty, the army chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Northern Christian from a minority ethnic group, became a compromise choice to lead the frail nation.

On assumption of office Gowon spoke in terms of an early return of the country to civilian administration. As a professional officer, he abhorred the damage done to the military establishment by its fragmentation along ethnic lines. After reinstating the old regional system, he organized meetings of regional opinion leaders to prepare the ground work for a constitutional conference. But the plunging of the country into a civil war in July 1967 following the secession of the former Eastern Region from the Nigerian federation, cast doubt over any thoughts Gowon and the Supreme Military Council may have entertained earlier about a speedy return to the barracks.

The early period of his administration witnessed the imposition of severe authoritarian measures, including strict control on trade unions, a ban on strikes, restriction on the mass media, to name but a few. Even though the citizenry seemed to have embraced this as part of the necessary measures taken by a government in a period of crisis,⁹ democratic aspirations remained strong. This was evident by the presence of some prominent civilians, like the previously-jailed Chief Obafemi Awolowo, in the policy-making body of the war time government.

The end of the war in January 1970 removed much of the rationale for continued military presence in Nigeria's political life. Therefore, the polity eagerly awaited the announcement of a program for the restoration of democratic governance. Instead, what they heard from the government was that the army was to remain in power for another six years to pursue a nine-point program of restructuring that would ensure, in Gowon's words, "a period of lasting peace and stability."¹⁰ The head of state then set the target date of October 1, 1976 by which time also genuinely national political parties would be organized and elections held. Although the nation was stunned and disappointed by the length of the transition, the setting of a definite date for the return to democratic rule was generally accepted by Nigerians.

But as the target date for the army to relinquish power to civilian rule approached, Gowon became alarmed as he realized that little progress had been made on most of the points of his transition program. Also, he was being pressured by an increasingly narrow ruling circle of

military leaders, together with a handful of civil servant advisors who sought to extend their stay in power, at a time the country was awash with the oil boom of the 1970s. Hence Gowon shocked the people by announcing that the military would no longer be able to return to the barracks by October 1976.¹¹ In his October 1, 1974 independence day message, Gowon said the date was "unrealistic" under the circumstances, and he argued that such a hasty disengagement would certainly plunge the country into total disorder.¹²

Disenchantment set in and sharply intensified, especially among the military officers not involved in politics but many of whom were concerned about the spreading corruption within the military and the implication their overstaying in power would have for their own institution. But unfortunately, the material and political resources enjoyed by a few military officers as a result of their profitable political positions inhibited any consideration to leave office. Gowon, always a consensus builder, this time seemed to have found it more acceptable not to alter things in order to avoid stirring up political trouble.

Therefore, on July 29, 1975 (nine years to the day he assumed power), Gowon, while out of the country for an official engagement, was relieved of his duties in a bloodless *coup d'etat* led by Brigadier Murtala Muhammad. From its early hours, the new leadership confirmed its commitment to reform. Muhammad immediately undertook the most radical "clean up" exercise in Nigerian history to get rid of corrupt officials in the government and bureaucracy.¹³ Most significant was his immediate response to mounting pressure for a return to civilian rule. He announced the specific date of October 1, 1979 to disengage the military from politics. "The present military leadership," Muhammad assured the nation, "does not intend to stay in office a day longer than is necessary, and certainly not beyond this date."¹⁴ Even during the previous decade of military dictatorship, democratic aspirations had remained alive in Nigeria. These were sustained in part by the forceful approach of the Nigerian press, which, in spite of the government's heavy handedness, continued to be as free and irresponsible as ever.¹⁵

But despite the bloody assassination of Muhammad in an unsuccessful *coup* attempt on February 13, 1976, several aspects of the regime's transitional program, including the creation of powerful Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) to certify parties and regulate campaigning for the future of democracy in Nigeria were successfully executed by his successor, General Olusegun Obasanjo.

Indeed the degree of commitment demonstrated by the Obasanjo regime to the redemocratization of Nigeria was particularly impressive and widely favored. As one close observer described it:

The entire process was remarkably smooth when compared with the volatile political history of the country, mainly because the Federal Military Government pursued policies designed to institutionalize new political behavior. . . . In view of the contempt shown for politics and politicians, one can only marvel at the dedication which Obasanjo and his colleagues displayed toward the return of civilian rule.¹⁶

Nigeria's Second Republic

Out of the elections for state and federal offices that took place in mid-1979, military disengagement in the political affairs of Nigeria seemed to have taken off successfully. At least, five new registered parties were authorized to compete in the elections, and these included: the United Party of Nigeria (UPN), strongest in the Yoruba states and led by the maverick politician Chief Obafemi Awolowo; the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), with a strong base in the far North and led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari; the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), primarily Eastern-based and led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe; the People's Redemption Part (PRP), Northern-based as well, but led by Mallam Aminu Kano; and, finally, the Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP), led by Waziri Ibrahim. Out of these parties, the NPN candidate, Shehu Shagari, had won a plurality of the votes, and on October 1, 1979, the transition reached its goal with his election and inauguration as the new President of Nigeria.

Just a few months after having taken office, Nigeria's civilian regime of 1979, like its civilian predecessor in 1966, was confronted with evidence of the personalization and abuse of power by the opposition forces. This fairly tolerant but complacent administration had made the mistake of ignoring mounting public disquiet over nepotism, friction, and favoritism based on "ethnicity" and disturbing levels of corruption. Although not all politicians lost public favor, there was considerable disillusion—even exasperation—when, for instance, the very first meetings in the different legislatures of the new administration was devoted to issues of their remuneration and conditions of service instead of the more vital economic and social issues plaguing the nation.¹⁷ But even more disturbing to independent observers and opinion makers was the increasing violence, corruption, and crime in politics witnessed in the first two years of the Shagari government. Both lowly clerks and members of Parliament were bought and sold with the help of money from private and business groups seeking special privileges. These danger signals were increasingly being expressed and criticized by the nation's print and

electronic media who warned that the continued politics of "deceit and bickerings" could plunge Nigeria into chaos.¹⁸ As a result, cynicism and disillusion reigned and public confidence in the democratic system as well as accountability and modicum of ethical standards among public officials waned. Indeed, there were clear signs that the popularity that "democracy" may have enjoyed had reached its lowest ebb. These considerations, perhaps, may have disposed the military to intervene on December 31, 1983 in a bloodless coup led by Major General Muhammed Buhari. This marked the fourth time in under 18 years that a new group of military officers moved into the State House. The reasons for military intervention in the political affairs of the country were largely apparent in the core conspirators' justification: "to put an end to the serious economic predicaments and the crisis of confidence now afflicting our nation. . . ."¹⁹ This rationale was supported by some scholars who concluded that "what caused the coup was not the ambitions of the soldiers but the decay of the country under four and a quarter years of civilian rule."²⁰

After a few months in power, and with no detailed reference to potential restoration of democratic rule, the new military government's unprecedented harshness and arrogance were already being criticized by the same Nigerians who had welcomed it when it took office. Buhari's government became ruthless, vindictive, and repressive, and in so doing it displayed a sad disregard for the values of human rights. The regime's great brutality wrecked both army morale and national pride in the military. In 1984, for instance, the regime announced several controversial decrees, and it became especially ruthless on the nation's news organizations. Some newspapers and magazines were closed, and censorship became the order of the day. Given the close relationship between the media and politics in Nigeria, this was particularly serious and offensive to most Nigerians, especially interest groups such as students, trade unions, businessmen, and professionals who had been most dissatisfied with the civilian administration.

After coming to power, and being unaccustomed to exercising power, an internal tension developed between various levels of the military hierarchy. These ranged from hard-liners to reformers who believed that the Buhari regime had dangerously cut itself off from popular sentiments and showed no need to be accountable for its conduct. This organizational strain within the upper echelon of the military that was fulfilling the unfamiliar role of government and, therefore, directly exposed to pressures from wider society, finally succumbed to yet another *coup d'etat* on August 27, 1985, under Major General Ibrahim Babangida. This illustrates the crisis of authority and what may also be inherent limits in the ability of Nigerian armed forces to agree on a common national goal. There was thus initial acclaim

when Babangida started with a more moderate tone with regard to domestic policies. In his address to a nation that fears its past, the new head of state explained that the return of the Nigerian military to political leadership was the consequence of an act of provocation.

The lack of economic vision and public accountability which characterized the majority of the leadership of the Second Republic from 1979-1983 plunged the nation into an economic depression. The Chief of State, General Babangida, claimed that Buhari and his junta also failed to properly address these problems, hence his ouster. The new regime's primary concern was to revive the tottering economy and create a political system that would foster leaders dedicated to serving the country and not themselves. Given the unrivalled greed and corruption ascribed to Nigerian politicians, the military went to considerable length to eliminate unsuitable elements which made a mockery of the 1960-66 and 1979-83 civilian administrations. Babangida promised to return the country to democratic rule as soon as the anomalies of the Nigerian political economy were corrected. "Since the purpose of military intervention in politics is to save the nation from anarchy and disintegration," Babangida explained, "once that mission is accomplished, the military would have no reason to remain in power."²¹

Although Babangida's Machiavellian understanding of real politics and his commitment to free-market policies, such as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), has resulted in one of the most far-reaching attempts to date at restructuring the economy, most Nigerians found little in SAP to admire. Indeed, there were growing concerns among the general public of a reassertion of the repressive climate that clouded Babangida's predecessor, Buhari. Under the increasingly authoritarian regime of Babangida, religious violence has worsened. Meanwhile, rural development and alleviating urban poverty have moved from high-priority tasks to matters of crisis. The aborted *coup* attempt of April 1990, for instance, was as much a violent, personal display of anger against Babangida and his associates with no clear vision of where they are taking the country as it was a bold attempt at taking power by junior officers who had more ideological motivation for intervention. The *coup* leaders of April 1990, as distinct from the military officers as a whole, were radically-inclined, as exemplified by their justification for the change: "to stop intrigues, domination, and internal colonization of the Nigerian state by the so-called chosen few" under Babangida and his associates.²²

The Rationale for Military Intervention in Nigeria

Many reasons can be deduced to explain the frequency of military intervention in Nigerian politics. Nigeria and many of the former colonies in Black Africa are today suffering from a political and economic crisis that few could have imagined when the former British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, spoke eloquently in 1960 of the "wind of change" then blowing across the African continent. Political independence has brought little or no liberty at all for millions of blacks in Africa, nor has the rallying cry of "one man, one vote" been transformed into reality. One of the major problems that African countries face is the lack of a mechanism for the orderly transfer of power. And because of the tendency for most of the African leaders to gain and hold on to power indefinitely, the continent has witnessed several of its leaders in over two dozen countries ousted from office by assassinations or sudden and deliberate removal by groups of military officers.²³ Some, like Leopold S. Senghor, the former President of Senegal (1960-80) and one of Africa's most respected elder statesmen, observed that military intervention occurring repeatedly in short intervals in Africa "is the consequence of the backwardness in civilization of a people colonized by alien government."²⁴

Some Observations

The most prevalent and commonly advanced reasons to explain the frequency of military intervention in the political affairs of African nations are: first, that modernization has produced a type of disorientation or conflict of values in traditional societies, thereby producing economic maladjustments and inequality which the ruling elites find difficult to handle. This is said to result in disequilibrium and uneven development, a situation believed to attract the intervention of the military whose elite are now becoming increasingly technocratic and bureaucratic.

Second, the persistent unhealthy inter-party competition and ethnic cleavages which continue to characterize political competition of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria impose severe strains on the stability of the country. Regardless of the institutional and constitutional reforms put in place to neutralize their effect on political life, ethnic and religious identities still play a pervasive role and provide the basis on which political values are defined, articulated, and challenged.²⁵

Third, the intervention of the military in the politics of the newer states underscores the weakness of the administrative system and the lack of confidence in the government's capability to execute its self-

assigned tasks. The logic of *coups d'etat* is that, military opportunity to intervene arises when the masses become disillusioned as the ruling elites fail to live up to their expectations and deliver the goods in terms of progress towards democracy and a better standard of living.

Fourth, the post-independence tendency towards single party presidential governments in Africa increased the frequency of military involvement in political leadership. In the absence of effective opposition to governments the military see themselves as the only alternative voice by which the nation can vent its frustrations after the politicians have suppressed any dissent and established themselves as dictators. As President Shehu Shagari of Nigeria remarked before his overthrow in 1983, "In this country there are, in the end, only two parties, the civilians and the soldiers."²⁶

There are many other curious factors concerning coups in both small and large African countries. In Nigeria, for instance, the pretext for military intervention is often given as corruption, mismanagement, repression, lack of democracy and so on. General Muhammed Buhari, the organizer of the military insurrection that overthrew President Shagari in December 1983, for example, proclaimed to his countrymen that the armed forces had saved the nation from "total collapse." These are often the type of excuses given by a group of military personnel when they seize power for themselves. Many times, the change is mainly one of personalities without any noticeable change in the direction of policy. The Nigerian military interventions provide illuminating examples of these non-ideological *coups*. But the more important reason why we should expect more frequent military intervention, even though the older generation of senior officers may want to defend the established order, is that the new breed of younger officers are a continual threat because they are more politicized and full of the ideas and aspirations of their generation.

Liberalized Military Autocracy

Compared with military administrations in other African countries, Latin America or the Far East, Nigerian military regimes have been more constitutional and benevolent due to democratic pressure exerted on them. This experiment in military centrality and responsibility demonstrates a lot of things, including the fact that government functions and executive decisions are not made by authorities of the ruling political elites, but are carried out following the stipulation enshrined in appropriate legislation inherited by the different administrations in the discharge of their constitutional powers. By paying close attention to the principle of constitutional government, the Nigerian military with no experts in the art of governing but possessing

the prerequisites for effective nation-building have depended to a great extent on a civilian bureaucracy instead of establishing thorough-going military dictatorships.

In fact, more than any other country in Black Africa under military dictatorship, Nigeria, whose citizenry are very impatient and value personal freedom, has the greatest potential for sustaining commitment to democracy. This is because of the expansion of the country's educational system, modernization, the vigorous print and electronic media, and the growth of energetic and self-contained interest groups with broad constituencies. These are further strengthened by pressure from professionals and opinion leaders that defy the intimidations of the military and bravely reject the very substance and ideological assumptions of authoritarianism. Such organized groups include: the National Association of Nigerian Students; the Nigerian Bar Association; the Nigerian Medical Association; the Nigerian Labor Congress; the Nigerian Union of Journalists, and the National Organization of Nigerian Women Societies, to name but a few.

Further more, Nigeria's growing social pluralism, together with its complex ethnic and religious diversity, makes it harder for a dictator or a non-participatory regime to govern the Nigerian people. This social complexity, involving above all the existence of autonomous intermediate groups, can help curtail the power of the state, as Huntington observes, and renders the society less "likely to be dominated by a centralized power apparatus."²⁷ Although the military have made several attempts to move Nigeria toward redemocratization, the political realities in the country have remained unchanged. Nigerians, including the leaders of political establishments and the attentive public, have resisted efforts by the self-proclaimed messiahs in green fatigues to impose their terms and conditions on the process of redemocratization. Although the military did not relinquish power in 1992 as it had promised, it is widely expected to do so soon. If and when it does, it may even be to traditional party leaders under the untested artificially-created National Republic Convention (NRC) and Social Democratic Party (SDP), but they are unlikely to be depoliticized in the process. They reassert power and control in the country whenever they wish, depending only on their ability to form internal coalitions within their ranks. Economic crises, increasing political unrest and violence could pull together such a coalition easily. Continuing economic hardship and decline in the standard of living as a result of Babangida's free market policy of SAP could threaten the viability of any civilian administration, just as it has for the military regime. Each time the pendulum swings between military and civilian government, dictatorship and democracy, the same questions arise: Are the soldiers, through the philosophy and the process of the transition

program, preparing the stage for permanent disengagement from politics, or for its eventual comeback to direct governance?

The military may indeed hand over power to civilians and competitive elections may again be held, but the experience of the past three decades will not be wiped out. Times, however, are changing in Nigeria. For Nigerians as well as for nearly every other Black African country under military dictatorship, the evidence points away from authoritarian and political repression toward a measure of pluralism. The political tensions between the judgements of the government leaders—both civilian and military—cry out to be addressed. So does the deeply rooted democratic tradition imbued in the large, youthful and vocal Nigerian population increasingly asking bold questions and spawned largely by the growing pro-democracy movements in Africa and elsewhere. All these domestic and international pressures for political pluralism will continue to limit and control the options of both groups.

Whatever the success or failure of formal legal processes, elections, constitutions, and change in leadership in Black Africa's most populous nation may be, the process being pursued is uncertain, painful, and contentious. But it is also unavoidable, since the authoritarian system that has governed Nigeria for the most part since independence cannot survive forever, perhaps the only premise on which all participants agree. Just what is to take its place, and how long it will last will remain the central questions and issues.

NOTES

¹N. J. Miners, *The Nigerian Army, 1956-1966* (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 100.

²*Ibid.*, p. 52.

³Robin Luckham, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt, 1960-67* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 233.

⁴J. P. Mackintosh, *Nigerian Government and Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 550.

⁵A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup* (Ibadan: Evans, 1981); See also Claude E. Welch, *No Farewell to Arms? Military Disengagement from Politics in Africa and Latin America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), p. 104.

⁶Luckham, *Op. Cit.*, p. 261.

⁷Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 269.

- ⁸In the North at that time, the ratio of law enforcement officers (both police and army) to the inhabitants was about 1:2, 400 people. Very low ratio indeed. See Luckham, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 273-74.
- ⁹A. M. H. Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria, Vol. 1* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 4.
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 15.
- ¹¹Anthony Kirk-Greene, "The Making of the Second Republic," in Kirk-Greene and Douglas Rimmer (eds.), *Nigeria Since 1970: A Political and Economic Outline* (New York: Holmes and Meier; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1981), pp. 5-7; Crowder, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 278-80.
- ¹²*African Research Bulletin 11*, October 1974, Col. 3392B.
- ¹³"Operation Deadwoods" resulted in the dismissal of about 10,000 presumably ineffective civil servants, along with the retirement of 169 army officers and the sacking of 47 in a little over three months.
- ¹⁴Statement of General Murtala Muhammed, quoted in Kirk-Greene, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 13-14.
- ¹⁵Victor A. Olorunsola, *Soldiers and Power: The Development Performance of the Nigerian Military Regime* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), p. 102.
- ¹⁶Claude S. Phillips, "Nigeria's New Political Institutions, 1975-79," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 18, 1980, pp. 18, 20.
- ¹⁷*West Africa*, July 9, 1984, p. 1394.
- ¹⁸Cited in Larry Diamond et. al., *Democracy in Developing Countries—Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988), p. 52.
- ¹⁹*Africa Research Bulletin*, 21, 1984, Col. 7110B.
- ²⁰Larry Diamond, "Nigeria in Search of Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, 54, 1984, pp. 905-927.
- ²¹Pita O. Agbesi, "The Impending Demise of Nigeria's Forthcoming Third Republic," *Africa Today*, 3rd Quarter, 1990, p. 31.
- ²²*Africa Report*, July-August 1990, p. 50.
- ²³*Time*, January 16, 1984, p. 26.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 37.
- ²⁵Shehu Othman, "The Triumph of Theatre," *West Africa*, 15 June 1987, p. 1142.
- ²⁶"The Light That Failed," *Time*, January 16, 1984, p. 25.
- ²⁷Samuel P. Huntington, "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" *Political Science Quarterly*, 99: 2, 1984, p. 203.