MILITARY INTERVENTIONSAND THE NIGERIA FOURTH REPUBLIC: A REFLECTION DISCOURSE

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Abstract

Since independence, Nigeria's unity has been plagued and threatened by socio-economic, cultural, religious and political dichotomies, which has led to military intervention in the political sphere of the country, even after the return to civilian rule in May 1999, known as the Nigeria Fourth Republic. Military interventions in Nigeria's civil matters have been vehemently kicked against by many scholars due to its negative effects on the society. The main objective of the paper is to assess military interventions in Nigeria fourth republic to identify the loopholes in the interventions. The paper used secondary data from newspapers and the internet. The qualitative method of analysis was used for this study. It discovered that military interventions in the socio-political and civil matters in the Nigeria fourth republic is characterized by violations and infringements of civic rights, disobedience of court orders, total disregard of human dignity and destruction of live and properties. The study recommends that there should be a conscious effort on the part of leaders of the nation to improve the socio-economic development of the country and more funding and training of the agencies/forces responsible for internal security.

Keywords: Fourth Republic, Intervention, Military, Socio-political

Introduction

Military interventions or involvement in socio-economic and political issues is a phenomenon that has been characteristic of many societies especially the Third World countries. For most of human history, attaching "military" to "rule" would have been redundant because almost all political regimes in large societies of the pre-modern period fused military, religious, economic and monarchical powers (Badie, Berg-Schlosser and Morlino, 2011). Indeed, military intervention is not a recent phenomenon because it pre-dated even the praetorians of Roman times and was rampant during the feudal era as well as regular interregnum in the constitutional struggles of many societies, including Africa and other Third World countries especially after their political independence (Igwe, 2005).

Military interventions in issues related to civil unrest are very common both in democratic and totalitarian regimes (Onder, 2010). In developed countries, although the military is restricted to national

defence and obedience to the civil authority, it still exerts significant influence in internal conflicts (Onder, 2010). There are many forms of military intervention; when a state of emergency is declared and troops are deployed to maintain peace, it is a military intervention. When terrorists overrun a society and troops are sent to restore constitutional order, it is a military intervention. It is a military intervention when a country is envisaged to be building nuclear weapons and others send troops to destroy them. In fact, military intervention as a political concept can be very confusing if not properly situated (Edeh and Ugwueze, 2014).

Military intervention in internal security threats have always been a feature of Nigeria's democracy and government. The Nigeria fourth republic, which commenced on 29 May, 1999 when the military handed over power to a civilian government headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo, has also had its share of military interventions in the socio-economic and political space.

Military interventions in Nigeria civilmatters have been vehemently kicked against by many scholars due to its negative effects on the society. The Nigeria military were, up till January 1966, seen in the public only on ceremonial occasions usually on 1 October, the national Independence Day anniversary, when Nigeria got independence from Britain. During this time, they often perform ceremonial parade and the Air Force officers engage in the usual colourful air display (Olusoji, Olusanmi and Nelarine, 2012). The comprehension of military intervention in Nigeria fourth republic depends on how the ruling government want to address the crises at hand. Military suggests pros in the utilization of ammo with the end goal of fighting (Uzodinma, 2015). Military are perceived to be authoritarian and brutal in nature. They are prepared personnel for war and they cannot comprehend the civilian methods for administration and coexistence (Oluwaseun and Oluwaseun, 2018).

A major reason adduced against military intervention or engagement in Nigeria socio-political space is that its strategies and tactics are not suitable for the operations they are usually called upon to undertake as opposed to that of civil authorities, which are specifically trained for law enforcement (Ajala, 2019).

Although extant literature abounds on military in politics, the involvement of the military in Nigeria fourth republic's civil matters is yet to be studied well enough. The first military intervention in Nigeria political space was through a very bloody coup led by Major Nzeogwu in 15 January 1966 (just about five years after independence, independence was on 1 October 1960); this coup was expected to end the misrule, ineptitude and corruption of the preceding five years plus; this coup lasted for just a couple of days

(Olusoji, Seyi and Oluwakemi, 2012). Up till 15 January 1966, the Nigeria military were seen in public only on ceremonial occasions especially during the annual Independence Day anniversary – 1 of October- when they make ceremonial parades and the Air Force engages in the usual colourful air display.

Edeh and Ugwueze (2014), examined the theoretical underpinnings of military incursion in third world politics and raised such pertinent questions as to why military rule occurred more in less developed countries than in developed ones. The work concludes that it would be difficult for any military rule to perform better than civilian-led administrations being a body taught to fight and kill than to govern.

Muhammad (2014), studied the causes of military interventions in politics by focusing on Pakistan and Bangladesh and concluded that weak political institution, vested interest of the military, legacy of the British army, political corruption and superiority are the major causes of military involvement in politics.

Babatunde (2015), investigated democratization and the military in Nigeria and stated that during the days of colonialism, the colonial powers needed to use military force to pacify and capture the conquered territories of Africa in the course of the arbitrary rule perspective by colonialism, military came in as a useful instrument, and all through the period of colonial rule the military related to the people without civility and they were accustomed to the practice of using the language of force and intimidation. The author concluded that the challenge of democratization is therefore to ensure that democracy 'becomes the only game in town. It must involve a shift in political culture, a transition from instrumental to principled commitment to the democratic framework, a growth in trust and cooperation framework, a growth in trust and cooperation among then political competitors and a socialization of the general population. Similarly, Peter and Samue (2018), investigated military regimes and Nigeria's economic development using secondary data. The authors concluded that Nigeria military might not be respected but their contributions to the doctrine of management (political, educational, economic, social and cultural) in Nigeria cannot be ignored.

The United Nations has constantly advocated for non-military interference in democratic/civil matters, while clamouring for civilian governments to improve socioeconomic development of their territories (United Nations, 2022), coupled with the fact that all the literatures studied in the preceding paragraphs above did not reflect the military activities or involvement in Nigeria fourth republic, the dearth of enough literatures on the involvement of the military in Nigeria fourth republic's civil matters is the gap this

study intends to fill.Thus, the main objective of this paper is to assess Nigeria military interventions/engagements in the fourth republic's.

To achieve the above objective, conceptual notes were explored, various military engagements in Nigeria's fourth republic were assessed, and the loopholes in these engagements were highlighted. The study relied exclusively on secondary sources in deriving data, which were government official documents, newspapers, published books, the internet, journals and articles related to the study. Qualitative desk evaluation and observations were utilized to analyse the data collected based on which conclusions were drawn and recommendations made.

Conceptual Clarification

According to The Free Dictionary (2005), military intervention is described as the deliberate act of a nation or a group of nations to introduce its military forces into the course of an existing controversy. Similarly, Pearson and Baumann (1993), defined military intervention as the movement of regular troops (army, air force and navy) of a country in the context of some political issues or dispute.

Military intervention in civil matters is the engagement of the military in addressing issues of civilian unrest in a country (Hauss, 2003). Before the 20th century, the terms "military intervention" and "conflict resolution" would not have been uttered in the same breath. Conflict resolution as a discipline originates from the peace movements that began in the 20th century where the use of force was found to be abhorrent. Military interventions in countries' domestic affairs has occurred time and time again, but recently it has been in attempts to end difficult emergencies or stubborn conflict.

Before the 21st century, military forces were most often utilized to achieve the general geopolitical goals of protecting and/or enhancing states' territories, citizens and other precarious resources. But in the present century military intervention for humanitarian purposes and conflict resolution has tremendously increased. These interventions might the use of troops in traditionally unconventional ways like as disaster relief, control of protesters, lawlessness and other civil unrest. Most military interventions or engagement in civil issues, however, have at least one common goal-ending the short-term crisis.

Defending a country against external threats is the major role of the military as a bureaucratic organization. Formulation of defence policies by legislative and executive branches are part of activities of military bureaucracies. But military in developing countries have

some other functions like contributing to development (Heper, 1973), and protecting the state from internal and external forces, etc. The military bureaucratic characteristics of more hierarchic, authoritative and legitimate source of coercion that is distinct from civilian bureaucracy makes military bureaucracy easily influence political institutions.

When a State of Emergency is declared and troops are deployed to maintain peace, it is a military intervention. When terrorists overrun a society and troops are sent to restore constitutional order, it is a military intervention. It is a military intervention when a country is envisaged to be building nuclear weapons and others send troops to destroy them (Edeh and Ugwueze, 2014). The military in Nigeria politics simply mean the intervention of Nigeria military in the governance of the nation, which in some parlance is referred to as military intervention or military rule. This could be described as the seizure of power by armed forces from a civilian regime. Military intervention is basically an attempt by military officers to get involved in the political process to improve upon what they assumed to be the major problem associated with it.

Constitutional Base for The Military in Politics

The main role of the military as a bureaucratic organization is to defend the country against external threats. The military bureaucracies are expected to carry out defence policies formulated by legislative and executive branches. The distinctive characteristic of military bureaucracy from civilian bureaucracy with more hierarchic, authoritative, and a legitimate source of coercion make it easy for them to influence political institutions. The security challenges witnessed in the present fourth Republic have called for more of military in the form of internal security operations and it has been observed that the military is increasingly involved in internal security operations (Okoli and Orinya, 2013).

The 1999 constitution of Nigeria, which provides for the military in its section 217, makes it clear that the duties of the military, that is, the Army, Navy and Air Force will be to defend Nigeria from external aggression, maintain its territorial integrity and securing its borders from isolation on land, sea or air, suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as maybe prescribed by an Act of National Assembly. The military is also to perform such other functions as maybe prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

In Nigeria, the supreme law of the land which is the Constitution empowers the president to use federal forces to combat domestic

disturbances. These disturbances only serve as threats to the rights of some individuals or groups in some particular areas of the nation; these are not threats to the national security. Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution is to the effect that the military under the directive of the president can act in the aid of civil authorities to restore law and order (The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Pursuant to this section, the military has often been called upon to suppress acts of riots, demonstrations and terrorism in order to restore peace, law and order. Section 305 of the same constitution which empowers the president to issue a proclamation of state of emergency is another basis for military internal security operations.

Table 1: Some situations of military interventions in the Nigerian Fourth Republic.

Date	**President**	**Situation**
May 29, 1999- May 28, 2007	OlusegunObasanjo	- Odi crisis, 1999, Onitsha disturbances, 2006, - Niger Delta crisis 1999-2009, - Ife/Modakeke crisis 1999-2000, - Ikeja Bomb blasts, 2001 and Pleateau state (Jos) crisis 2001.
May 29, 2007- May 5, 2010	Alhaji Umar Yar'Adua	- Quelling of Islamic insurgence in Borno (Maiduguri) 2009. - Jos crisis - Niger Delta militants crisis
May 6, 2010 - May, 28, 2015	Goodluck Jonathan	- Bokk Haram crisis, Jos crisis, Post-election crisis (April 2011). - Fulani-herdsmen/farmers crisis (in Benue, Taraba and Nasarawa) - Unknown gunmen attacks in Kaduna, Katina and Zamfara

		States - Kidnapping of Chibok girls.
May 29, 2015 - May 2023	MuhammaduBuhari	- Operation crocodile smile in Niger delta. - Operation Python dance in Southeastern Nigeria. - Involvement of military in election process. - Involvement of military in tracking oil bunkers. - Engagement of military in enforcing lockdown directives on Covid-19. - Military involvement in the Lekki shootings during the 2020 EndSARS protest. - Tracking and arrest of suspects of Owocatholic church massacre of June 2022. - Tracking and arrest of suspects who attacked Abuja-Kaduna train 28 March, 2022. - Tracking and arrest of suspects who ambushed and killed some of Presidential Guards at Bwari, Abuja on 25 July, 2022. - Fight against bandits, terrorists and kidnappers in the country.

		- Involvement of military in providing security during February 2023 general elections.
May 2023 – Date	Ahmed Bola Tinubu	- Involvement of military in tackling bandits, terrorists and kidnappers in the country.

Source: Authors' research, 2023.

Loopholes in Military Interventions

The Nigeria Fourth Republic has witnessed several military involvement in civilian issues which include: the military invasion and destruction of ZakiBiam in 2001 and Odi in 1999, the killings of Shi'ite members in Zaria and Abuja in 2015 and 2018, killing of Pro-Biafra protesters in 2015 and 2016 (Ajala, 2019), order of shoot at sight of election offenders in 2019 election from President Buhari (Wilmot, 2019), involvement of military in the shooting of 2020 EndSARS Protesters (Abati, 2020). These military activities have been characterised by violations and infringements of civic rights, disobedience of court orders, total disregard of human dignity and destruction of live and properties, which has led to mistrust and increase disunity among the different regions of the country (Essien, 2017; Yagboyaju, 2011; Ogunmade, 2019 and Abati, 2020).

Nigeria's military in the fourth republic has created a messianic complex in its internal response to crises. Moreover, it has done so in ways reminiscent of the foregone years of military rule as it has emerged as an inevitable state response to preserve public safety, security and peace. This reliance has, however come at very grave costs to the nation's democracy, as the militaristic handling of crises has resulted in excessive use of force; and various human rights violations (Ajala, 2019).Nigeria in the fourth republic is in a democratic setting, yet the military still play great roles in the political affairs of the country, because the country has been led either by an Ex-military man or by someone with a link to the military. From 1999- 2007 it was General Obasanjo (Ex-military), 2007-2009 UmaruYar'Adua (the younger brother of a General), 2009-2015 Goodluck Jonathan (as a result of the death of a brother to a General), 2015-2023MuhamaduBuhari (Ex-military) and May 2023- date, Ahmed Bola Tinubu (a civilian). It is believed in some quarters that former president Goodluck Jonathan would not have

easily relinquished power to MohamaduBuhari in 2015 if he were to be a former military man. And Bola Tinubu would not have been a president if he hadn't contributed so much to enhance the victory of MohamaduBuhari (who is an ex-military). Most of these leaders still have the dictatorial and draconian nature of the military due to their military training and are unable to relate to civil matters diplomatically and dialogically without resolving to force.

Sahara Reporters (2019), is of the opinion that, any election which is militarised through the deployment of soldiers where there is no insurrection is anti-democratic and not in consonance with constitutional democracy and civil rule. There were reports of how some overzealous soldiers acted in a manner deemed to have undermined the credibility and sanctity of the 2015 and 2019 general elections. Soldiers in brute force invaded INEC collation centres in different parts of the country and chased away accredited political party agents, election monitors and news men. This claim of forceful interference of soldiers in the electoral process was also corroborated by both national and international election observers who said soldiers were complicit through their excesses in the outbreak of violence that claimed many lives during the elections (Essien, 2017).

A major reason adduced for the military's pattern of response is that its strategies and tactics are not suitable for the operations they are usually called upon to undertake as opposed to that of civil authorities, which are specifically trained for law enforcement (Ogunmade, 2019).

Discussion of Findings

The involvement of the military in the internal crises of the country has dramatically soared since the return to democratic governance in 1999. This could be attributed to the liberalization of the political space, which was birthed as a result of the demystification of the 33-year military rule that repressed popular opposition and agitations from citizens. The era of military rule equally took a grave toll on professionalism, operational effectiveness and accountability in the Nigerian military. This buttressed Muhammad (2014) assertion that weak political institution, vested interest of the military, legacy of the British army, political corruption and superiority are the major causes of military involvement in politics.

Another factor that could be adduced for the deployment of the military in the internal and civilian issues in Nigeria is the fact that the Nigeria police force that is constitutionally charged with the responsibility of tackling internal security challenges is handicapped due to poor funding, inadequate equipment and lack of adequate

training. These inadequacies have often made civilian authorities to heavily rely on the expertise of the military to manage internal security challenges. In effect, the steady engagements of military personnel have made the Nigerian military to assume the position of the first line of internal security defence, which primarily is the role of the police.

Another factor could be the lack of socioeconomic development of the country, which is supported by Onder (2010), who argued that the density of military interventions in politics is more likely to decrease when socio-economic development is increased. Nations with higher urbanization, industrialization and literacy level will have more citizens' participation in social activities, which will invariably reduce military interventions in political spaces.Nigeria's long era of military rule (draconian and dictatorship) has greatly affected the nation's socioeconomic development negatively, the civilian governments are now trying to repair the years of military rule in the country, this corroborates the assertion of Edeh and Ugwueze (2014), that it would be difficult for any military rule to perform better than civilian-led administrations being a body taught to fight and kill than to govern.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Though the military handed over power to a civilian government in 1999, which is the fourth Republic, it did not totally return to the barracks, from time to time the military still delved into the Nigerian political sphere in different ways. One factor among many that led to the involvement of the military in the political sphere of the nation is the fact that the Nigerian Police force which is constitutional charged with the responsibility of tackling internal security challenges is handicapped due to poor funding, inadequate equipment and lack of adequate training to handle the Internal Security Operations (ISOs). These inadequacies have often made civilian authorities to heavily rely on the expertise of the military (Army, Air Force and Navy) to manage internal security challenges.

The study concludes that military interventions in the Nigeria fourth Republic have been characterised by violations and infringements of civic rights, disobedience of court orders, total disregard of human dignity and destruction of live and properties, which has led to mistrust and increase in the gap among the different regions of the country.The study thus recommends the following:

1. The government should urgently embark on internal military reforms for improved military professionalism.
2. The government need to empower the police force and other sister agencies of internal security management through

adequate funding, provision of adequate and top notch security equipment and personnel training in order to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently.

3. Finally, government should embrace good governance based on justice and practice of democracy with its operational principles.

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