# MILITARY POWER AND LEADERSHIP: A DISCOURSE ON THE GENERAL BUHARI'S REGIME (1983-1985)

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## Abstract

The *paper has established the nexus between leadership and national development. It reveals national development is depended on leadership and such as, leadership is essential as an independent variable in every ramification of countries. Thus, the chapter also reveals that regime is not recipe for development as the south-east-Asia country laid the foundation their present subsumable development during authoritative regime. Generally, the critics of the regime are of the view that there is need to examine the fact that in all the battles against indiscipline in the last four decades, the leadership itself has not been disciplined enough to lead by example and therefore, defeated the campaigns even before take-off.It is only a disciplined leadership that can inspire or mobilise a disciplined followership and nurture desirable values in any nation. At this time of economic recession, it may be doubly difficult a task to mobilise a hungry and angry citizenry. Yet this must be done. Therefore, while citizens must be appealed to on what to do to maintain discipline in the country, those in authority should lead by example, render genuine service and think seriously of a credible way of mobilising the citizens. Nigeria needs more than the revival of a slogan or an acronym to mobilise Nigerians for the fight against indiscipline.*

## Introduction

The concept of leadership has generated different notion from scholars but its importance to nation building and development has universal consensus. In other words, the extent of development of any country is premised on the nature and character of the leadership culture that is internalized and institutionalised in the general political culture of that country. Yet, Nigeria is still engulfed with conceptual confusion in attaining sustainable national development and thereby theorising all manners of paradigms without particularly conceptualising 'leadership' as the essential recipe for national development. Leadership is all about leading a group of people, society, nation or country to achieve their common aims and aspirations. Those who lead based on the wishes and preferences of the leaded are often regarded as good leaders, vise-vasa.

Leadership is all about the organization of nation's organisational behaviour (Adamu and Rasheed, 2018). These scholars believe that appointing or/and electing the right people into position of authority would invariably address national development challenges. Adamu and Rasheed's (2018) notion of leadership is intellectually sensational and as such, it practical utilities is premised in the 'maxim'- putting the right pegs in the right square hole. The persons with the requisite technical and professional competence may be giving a responsibility of public trust but his or her personal disposition (character, moral virtues, personality, attitude to public to common wealth) has a long way to determine their disposition to public goods. This is the angle that Adamu and Rasheed (2018) did not look at in their submission.

In this regards, Millet (1954) sees personal character as the recipe for good leadership. In other words, the ideological inclination of an individual will their determine personal disposition which in turn define their leadership quality. Deducing from Millet's (1954) point of view, leadership is personality driven and predicated; those without the inherent virtues of people-oriented leadership most often turn out to be bad leaders. In spite that Millet's (1954) contention is biological and psychological inclined with an exciting human natural trait connotation, his notion focuses on the individual level rather than the building a system of governance with an enduring institutional leadership culture. This is the premise that this paper seems to be different from Millet's (1954) view of leadership. Consequently, leadership is all about governance, and governance may have little or no impact on the governed without exemplifying the virtues of good governance in the political system (Ochoga and Zhema,2018). This notion implies that a sustaining leadership culture is an integral part of good governance and as such a political system with an institutionalized progressive culture of good governance is likely to have good leaders to chat the course of nation development.

To this end, leadership entails the use of the instrumentality of governance to address issues of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, access to education, access to quality health care services, life expectancy (mortality and morbidity), access to portable drinking water, provision of electricity power supply and feeder roads in Nigeria and other challenges that affect humanity. The rationale for choosing these variables is predicated in the thrust of Nigeria's National Development Plan called Vision-20-20-20. It is on this problematic that the thrust of this chapter is to establish the

nexus between leadership and national development in the context of the General Buhari Regime (1983-1985).

**Trajectories on the Notion of Leadership**

The search for national development has prompted scholars to engage on series of studies on leadership. Stogdill (1974) reviewed more than 300 works on leadership. The notion of leadership is elusive and complex in nature and as such, scholars shine their search light on its nature differently. The more works are reviewed; the newer dimensions to leadership are theorized. Hence poverty, unemployment, conflict, illiteracy, access to quality health care services, access to quality education, access to safe water, infant and maternal mortality and other socio-economic indicators remain a threat to humanity, the study of leadership would continue to gain prominence among scholars.

The renewed scholarly interests in leadership have been varied in scope and research methodology and could be classified as follows: (a) studies of leadership approaches of religious characters leaders (Manz, 1998; Piovanelli, 2005; Whittington et al., 2005; Wildavsky, 1984); (b) historical, sociological, and contextual descriptions of leadership (Barnes, 1978; Bekker, 2006; Goetting, 2006; Guenther and Heidebrecht, 1999; Liftin, 1982; Nikkel, 1991; Papademetriou, 2003; Polomo, 1997; Sterk, 1998); (c) studies of historical figures (Bekker, 2008b; Clarke, 1998; Karecki, 2008; Patrick, 2008; St. John, 1998); (d) ethical explorations (Karff, 1994; Kretzschmar, 2007; Wheeler, 1993; Willimon, 2002); (e) cross-faith comparative analysis (Freedman and McClymond, 2001); (f) formational process descriptions (Engstrom, 1976; Faulhaber, 2008; Kretzschmar, 2002; Miller, 2005; Robinson, 2005; Thiessen, 2005); (g) comparisons with leadership and management theories (Gary, 2007; Heuser & Klaus, 1998; Lamkin, 2005; Longbotham and Gutierrez, 2007; Middleton, 2006; Prosser, 2007); (h) exegetical studies (Clarke, 1992; Faulhaber, 2007; Hierberts, 1976; Poon, 2006; Rogers, 2006; Still, 2004); and finally (i) attempts at a proto-theory (Ayers, 2006; Bekker, 2006; Koening, 1993; Niewold, 2007; Sanders, 1967; Stott, 2002). The list of scholars who have written extensively in the area of leadership is not limited. These scholars areas of convergence have been noted by most of the above authors, no attempt to date has been made to synthesize these varied approaches into a cohesive whole. Thus, this chapter will do a chronological interrogation of their views on leadership.

To start with, Engstrom (1976) believes a leader is endowed with ideas to rule effectively. This scholar proposes that human relation skills are a good example of the kind of popular ideas that leadership needs for national development. Engstrom (1976) is in same direction with the thinking's of Tead (1963), Gangel (1974), and Goble (1972), proposed a leadership model that emerged for the leadership trait theory popularized in the 1970s. No wonder, Engstrom (1976) modified Stogdill's (1974) thesis and presented nine "personal traits" of leaders which are recipes for national development. Engstrom's work did not include any in-depth exegetical, historical, sociological, or contextual analyses, but is rather focused on an attempt to integrate a theological view of leadership and its relevance in contemporary leadership disposition. In spite of this criticism, Engstrom's notion of leadership is challenging but it has the ideological ingredients for nation building, as a result it entails that people with or/and who:

(i) desire for achievement for their country with allegiance to the constitution.
(ii) accept their authority and yield it with a degree of competence and moral character.
(iii) must demonstrate high levels of personal self-control over themselves and public goods.
(iv) the ability to do original thinking by taking "imagination and organizing it through self-initiated plans.
(v) have clear priorities and place value of family, community, and social relationships. They have the ability to prioritize and promote balance in what they do.

It is clearly that Engstrom's theory of leadership is ties to nation building particularly, its emphasis on the popular trait theory of leadership by adding a devotional trait that allows leaders to receive discernment and wisdom in their leading their nations.

Clarke's (1992) work on leadership announced the advent of scholarly, exegetical and historical studies of leadership. Clark's (1992, 1998) work traced the influence of secular leadership in the communities. Clark's (1992) model of leadership is *mimetic* and deeply *Christological*. Clarke's (1992) notion of leadership is value based and institutional determined. It is the belief of Clarke (1992) that leadership determines followers and leadership charts the course of development for any society, nation or country. It can be inferred that nation building or/and national development as a whole is a dependent variable and leadership is an independent variable. In

other words, theoretically, search of scholars is more on the independent variable.

Kretzschmar's (2002, 2007) studies of leadership is from the perspective of ethic and philosophy. He proposes a process description of leadership conversion that could produce moral leadership towards nation building. Kretzschmar's theory of leadership is premised on five distinct elements in the moral and ethical formation:

(i) Intellectual conversion: leaders constantly rethink or evaluate their own and others moral framework and this involves the disciplines of self-awareness and critique" in order to develop the virtue of prudence.

(ii) Affective conversion: leaders have high regard for right heartedness towards God. Leaders consider the ultimate location of their affections and adopt ascetic disciplines (such as the traditional Monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience) to guide their hearts back to God.

(iii) Volitional conversion. Leaders seek to have a "redeemed human will" that moves from willfulness (identified as arrogant self-sufficiency) to willingness (described as flexible receptivity).

(iv) Relational conversion. A leader's "moral conscience" is formed and challenged in community. Leaders engage in "moral relational power" that brings personal and communal transformation to perceptions and applications of leadership.

(v) Moral action. The intellectual, affective, volitional, and relational conversions of leaders result in "moral action" that facilitates the wider conversion of the world in which these leaders operate.

There is no doubt, Kretzschmar's (2002, 2007) work provides an erudite base for the inclusion of moral virtues to define leadership. It deepens the discussion from mere concern of leadership effectiveness to the moral dimensions of personal and communal leadership. It is on this notion that we see leadership as a determinant of nation building, of which Wildavsky's (1984) model of "legacy leadership is seen as essential in understanding the nexus between leadership and national development. (1) worthy of imitation, (2) boldness amid opposition, (3) having a pure motive, (4) influence without asserting authority, (5) affectionate and emotional, (6) vulnerable and transparent, (7) authentic and sincere, (8) active and not passive, (9) follower-centered and not self-centered, and finally (10) evident by changed lives of leaders and followers. These Wildavsky's virtues of leadership are self

explanatory and it could regard as quality of good leaders. The extent to which Nigerian political system particularly under the military regime emphasis on the quality of leadership in terms of national development remains a quagmire.

**A Discourse on the General Buhari's Regime (1983-1985)**

On December 31, 1983, the army struck again. This time the brazen corruption, the economic mismanagement, and the inept leadership of civilians provided the grounds for military intervention. Indeed, conditions had deteriorated so much in the Second Republic that when the coup came, it was widely acclaimed. Major General Muhammadu Buhari, a Hausa/Fulani northerner from Katsina State and a former member of the SMC in the Muhammad/Obasanjo governments, became the head of state. Because of the great powers that his second in command, Major General Tunde Idiagbon, chief of staff at Supreme Headquarters, was believed to wield, many commentators refer to this government as the Buhari/Idiagbon regime. In broad outline, the structure of government remained essentially the same as it was under Muhammad and Obasanjo. At the apex was the SMC, and the subordinate bodies were the Federal Executive Council and the National Council of States.




Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari, (1983-1985)

The urgent task before the government was to salvage the country's economy, which had suffered from the mismanagement of the Second Republic and from the rapid drop in the price of crude oil. Nigeria had become heavily indebted to several foreign monetary agencies, and the price of crude oil had begun to slide. Buhari believed that urgent economic problems required equally urgent solutions (Ochoga, 2021). He also thought that it was not a pressing issue to prepare to hand power over to civilians; in fact, all

of Nigeria's military regimes have ruled without the benefit of democratic checks and balances.

The Buhari government investigated and detained the top political leaders of the Second Republic, holding them responsible for economic excesses of the previous regime. Constraints were placed on various groups, including the Nigerian Medical Association, which was outlawed, and the National Association of Nigerian Students, and it promulgated two decrees that restricted freedom of the press and suppressed criticism of the government. Decree Number 4 forbade any journalist from reporting information considered embarrassing to any government official. Two journalists, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, were convicted under the decree. Decree Number 2 gave the chief of staff at Supreme Headquarters the power to detain for up to six months without trial anyone considered a security risk. Special military tribunals increasingly replaced law courts while the state security agency, the National Security Organisation, was given greater powers.

Buhari's controls also extended to his efforts to deal with the problems of "indiscipline" in the areas of environmental sanitation, public decorum, corruption, smuggling, and disloyalty to national symbols such as the flag and the anthem. He declared a War Against Indiscipline and specified acceptable forms of public behavior, such as a requirement to form lines at bus stops (Ochoga,2021). The main concern, however, remained the economy. The government introduced a comprehensive package of austerity measures. It closed the country's land borders for a period to identify and expel illegal alien workers and placed severe restrictions on imports and heavy penalties on smuggling and foreign exchange offenses. The austerity measures made it difficult for local industries to procure essential imported raw materials, leading many of them to close or to operate at greatly reduced capacity. Many workers were laid off, and government itself retrenched many workers to increase its "cost effectiveness." All of these actions were accompanied by high inflation. The price of basic food items rose, and life became increasingly difficult, even for the affluent. Despite the increased efficiency with which Buhari and his associates tackled the multifaceted national crisis, the regime's inflexibility caused discontent. The latter was the main justification given for the overthrow of Buhari by General Babangida in a palace coup on August 27, 1985, although the personal ambition of Babangida was an important contributing factor.

It is essential that you know that in most developing countries, there is a disruption of the civil-military equilibrium usually assumed in liberal democracies. In liberal tradition, the military is insulated from politics and subject to civilian control. In several developing countries, however, the military has not only intervened in the political process and overthrown the constitutional civilian authority, but it also often has established its supremacy over elected politicians. Even in those countries where the military has become almost a permanent feature of politics, military rule is still considered an aberration and symptomatic of a malfunctioning political system. For example, in Nigeria, which typifies the scenario just presented, military rule was usually seen as a "rescue" operation necessary to save the country from civilian ineptitude. Military rule was not expected to last long; once the rescue operation was complete, the military should return to the barracks where they belonged and leave the governing to civilian politicians. Note that the problem, however, was that although military officers accepted this rationale, military rule usually became self-sustaining. This challenge is typical to all the military regimes in Nigeria.

From the onset of independent government in Nigeria in 1960 to the end of 1990, the military had ruled for twenty-one years. Altogether there were five coups d'état involving changes of government: those of January 15, 1966; July 29, 1966; July 29, 1975; December 31, 1983; and August 27, 1985. There was also an unsuccessful coup in which the head of state, General Murtala Muhammad, was killed in February 1976, and another was nipped in the bud in December 1985. An attempt to overthrow General Ibrahim Babangida was made in April 1990. Of these coups, only those of January 1966 and December 1983 were against civilian governments. Several explanations of military intervention have been added to those given by the coup plotters themselves. Whereas the latter have cited economic mismanagement and corruption, other explanations have ranged from the continuation of ethno-regional politics by military means to the personal ambitions of officers. Regionalism relegated national cohesion even in the military. Therefore, the military unlike the south-east Asia, was less bothered about laying sustainable foundation for national development.

Federal Government’s plan to re-launch a national re-orientation campaign, War Against Indiscipline, WAI, which the military regime has expectedly elicited mixed feelings within the polity. In the first instance, it is an admission that Nigeria has not made remarkable progress in the area of social mobilisation and

development of a national culture of discipline in the last three decades. However, a recourse to the military tactic of whipping people into line in a democratic dispensation may lead to some conclusions that leadership creativity is in short supply at the moment. It is, of course, unfortunate that since the Major General Muhammadu Buhari-led military regime launched the then famous campaign to instill discipline more than three decades ago, Nigerians have hardly changed their ways. Before democratisation campaigns and sloganeering in various forms had also been executed to little effect. Immediately after the Buhari regime (1983-1985) that launched the WAI campaign and brigade, General Ibrahim Babangida's regime (1985-1993) also sustained his own variant called Mass Mobilisation for Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER).

The office was later changed in name to the National Orientation Agency (NOA) by a successor administration and till date, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the NOA is a director-general. But it is sad that there has been no remarkable achievement by the orientation agency with offices in all the states of the federation in its core mandate of building a national culture of discipline and decency. It is, therefore, intriguing that the same NOA has come up with the new plan to mobilise Nigerians to imbibe some ethical values, including discipline. What is more, the new deal from the same NOA does not seem to be a derivation from the NEED document of the Olusegun Obasanjo's administration (1999-2007), which recommended that "value re-orientation'" should be a core part of Nigeria's socio-economic development strategy. There has been no reference to the NEED implementation strategy developed by the then office of the Chief Economic Adviser to the President and if this new plan is rooted in it, the contents are shallow (Ochoga,2021).

This is quite curious at a time governments all over the world are mobilising their citizens through technological breakthroughs to compete even in space science and other technologies that drive global competitiveness. All these feats begin with serious attention to and indeed strategic investment in education, a route Nigeria is yet to take and which NOA should crusade for. All told, all Nigerians are aware that there is a culture of indiscipline and impunity at all levels and in all facets. In fact, corruption has become Nigeria's public enemy No. 1. And so, no one would want to repudiate any campaign against indiscipline or enlightened self-interest, veritable aspects of corruption, which is now part of the

insignia of office of the ruling elite. Most citizens indeed, still need to be educated that corruption goes far beyond financial misdeeds and that a certain "moral pestilence" which rages in Nigeria is the essential breeding ground for corruption. So, any plan that can drive home the point must be supported. However, such campaigns in most parts of the world have always been part of the core governance system. They are not ad hoc arrangements that an agency advertises on behalf of government from time to time to score cheap political points.

The Was Against Indiscipline was introduced by Buhari-idiagb on March 20, 1984, the then Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Major-General Babatunde Idiagbon launched a campaign on 'National Consciousness and Enlightenment' at the National Theatre, Igamu, Lagos which lifted the nation into a sphere of national awareness and prepared ground for the then Head of State, Commander-in-Chief, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari's clarion call that we are all Nigerians and we must fight indiscipline. This formed the basis for the nationalism and patriotism campaign, the third phase of National Consciousness and Enlightenment; the WAI crusade which was launched in Jos, Plateau State, on Monday, August 27, 1984 with emphasis on the National Symbols the Flag, the National Anthem, the Pledge and the Coat-of-Arms. The War Against Indiscipline (WAI) Brigade was formed to give practical effect to the campaign against indiscipline. It is a uniformed voluntary association of able-bodied young men and women trained and expected to instill, inculcate and promote discipline in our society at all times at in all areas of human endeavour. The War Against Indiscipline was policy and programme that served as the basis upon which the regime derived mass support or the regime. The attempt to deal with indiscipline in every sphere of Nigerian society was commendable and seen as timely intervention by the Nigerian masses.

The regime was completely committed to fight indiscipline that was why the Federal Ministry of Information & Culture until June 1989 when the Supervision/organization of the outfit was transferred to the then Directorate for Social Mobilisation otherwise known as Mass Mobilisation for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economy Recovery (MAMSER). With the merger of the Department of Public Enlightenment, WAI/NOM Division of the Federal Ministry of Information & Culture with MAMSER to form National Orientation Agency (NOA) in 1993, the management, supervision and operation of the Brigade automatically become part

of the Agency responsibility. The regime empowered the Agency to establish with the approval of the Minister of Information & Culture, National Orientation Camps as social instructions for orientation and indoctrinating Nigerians towards developing socially desirable attitudes, behaviours, values and culture. The Agency was established for the purpose of carrying out its functions under this Act, a 'National Orientation Brigade'. The aims and objectives of the WAI Brigade was to restore discipline to our national life. Finally, the essence to inculcate the spirit of nationalism and patriotism in all Nigerians using the revered traditions and cultures such as respect for elders and constituted authority, being our brothers' keepers, community service, etc to ensure a positive relationship between the citizenry and the nation with particular emphasis on duties and responsibilities.

**Conclusion**

The paper has established the nexus between leadership and national development. It reveals national development is depended on leadership and such as, leadership is essential as an independent variable in every ramification of countries. Thus, the chapter also reveals that regime is not recipe for development as the south-east-Asia country laid the foundation their present subsumable development during authoritative regime. Generally, the critics of the regime are of the view that there is need to examine the fact that in all the battles against indiscipline in the last four decades, the leadership itself has not been disciplined enough to lead by example and therefore, defeated the campaigns even before take-off (Ochoga,2021, Uba,2019).

It is only a disciplined leadership that can inspire or mobilise a disciplined followership and nurture desirable values in any nation. At this time of economic recession, it may be doubly difficult a task to mobilise a hungry and angry citizenry. Yet this must be done. Therefore, while citizens must be appealed to on what to do to maintain discipline in the country, those in authority should lead by example, render genuine service and think seriously of a credible way of mobilising the citizens. Nigeria needs more than the revival of a slogan or an acronym to mobilise Nigerians for the fight against indiscipline.

Despite the challenges of leadership among the military in politics, nation-building process in Nigeria would never be completed without mentioning the contribution of the military

particularly the WAI of the General Buhari's regime. However, the chapter has identified that the Nigeria military generally failed to institutionalized models of development unlike the state-led model that was successfully employed in the "Asian Miracle" of the Tigers. The case of the Nigeria military the faith was more or less in the rationality of individual actors, this model describes a strong central state utilising a range of policy tools to aggressively pursue development even against the wishes of the people. Rather than institutionalizing model of development unlike East Asia, the Nigeria military failed to anchor development on the premise of our particular cultural value.

The reliance on economic development for legitimacy rather than democratic elections or ideological justification allowed the East Asian states to have both stability and flexibility in their planning, effectively enacting long-term plans for reinvestment and development while still adapting to the situation of the international economy and any new challenges that might arise (such as China's development of light industry in competition to Singapore's). Rather the Nigeria military succeeded in using economic development plan gain legitimacy to prolong their stage in office at the detriment of sustainable nation building. Thus, onus now is on the ruling class in the present democratic dispensation to replicate of Miracle Story of the Asian Tigers to have a dramatic rethinking of our approaches to national building and our conception of the relationship between politics and governance.

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