AN ASSESSMENT OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

This paper attempts to trace the background to the sore relationship between the military and the civilian population. As this has continued to undermine the cordial civil-military relations in bordering on Nigeria's national security. This work examines briefly the history and origin of the Nigerian Military (Army) during the British colonial administration in Nigeria, the reasons for its establishment, the constabulary roles and functions the military performed and its modus operandi within the period under review and how it has continued to impact negatively on the civil-military relations in Nigeria. It is imperative to note, as it reflects till date, the lack of cooperation with the military from the general public in carrying out its combat and noncombat military operations in Nigeria has continued to undermine the success of such operations. Despite the numerous attempts by the civil authority and the military institutions to address these situations, there are still cases of noncooperation from majority of citizens, deliberate withholding of intelligent information and in some cases open hostility and confrontation between the military and the civil populace. This has continued to contribute to the present level of national insecurity in Nigeria, further exposing and affecting the security architecture of the Nigerian state.

Introduction

Historically speaking, every national issue that is of concern and poses threat to the well-being of the Nigerian nation be it political, socio-economic, security and otherwise has a historical antecedent to it. The lack of cordial and unfriendly relationships that exist between the Nigerian military and the civilian populace is not an exception. The military in any nation is the bastion of its integrity, and by integrity here, one implies the symbolism of a national defense system, beginning from within to its boundaries. This implies that a nation's sovereignty is strategically rested on its military's integrity. Therefore, where the military or its allied bodies are compromised, the nation is in great peril. Thus, in its outlook, the armed force of any nation should relate well with the members of the society as it symbolizes its unity. Smooth civil-military relations is the base on which the modern state is consolidated. The might wielded by the military is conceived as a tool for protecting members of the society from external aggression and internal insurrection within the territorial integrity of the state. Under this arrangement, the military is viewed as an institution mandated to protect not just the citizens and the community at large. To this effect, the ability of Nigeria's military to defend her from all forms of threat as it relates to the present security challenges in Nigeria is premised on the level of cooperation given by the civil society to the military on intelligence gathering and sharing. The absence of which will continue to mitigate against military operation in the Nigerian nation thereby contributing to national insecurity of unprecedented proportion. It is the absence of such unfriendly relations and lack of cooperation, which can be traced to the colonial military institutions inherited by the Nigeria on the attainment of her independence in 1960 and had continued till date that formed the bases of this seminar paper. The modern state should be able to maintain an effective civil-military relations within the ambit of the rule of law. In Nigeria however, the colonial security architecture and apparatus was established to control and extort the people, used in providing the needed security for the colonial administrators and the commercial activities in Nigeria as well as putting down any form of violent uprising and insurrection within the period under review. That is to say it was a military institution build to serve the interest of the British colonial government. It goes without saying that military culture dominant at the time was laden with coercion and crass disregard for civility towards the civil populace.

In developing countries particularly those with colonial past, the military have long maintained a substantive role in

the domestic politics of the nation. That is, the military have either overthrown the legally constituted government or overtly influenced decision making at the national level.

It is imperative to say that the future of African military institutions depends heavily on an enhanced civil-military relations within, and between states. This is based on the chronic history of militarization and incessant intervention in civilian governance. To exorcise this from the memories of the people, close and sensitive attention has to be paid by all African states if the ambition of the new African states is to be realized. Each African state experience of the military is different and the approach to providing solutions to these problems will be different in each case. Regrettably where there is a lacuna in the study of civil-military relation in Nigeria and Africa at large is that whenever civil-military relation is mentioned, the westernized notion of military intervention into Africa is seen as the main factor for the lack of cordial and stern civil-military relations in Africa. The study is an attempt to assess the place of civil military relations as touching on Nigeria's national security.

Conceptual Clarification

Civil-Military Relation

Civil-military relation is the symbiotic relationship between the military and other parts of the society where they are domiciled. The relationship basically defined by power and the control of one over the other. It also extends to include mutual influence. It therefore consists of a binary of interaction, the first binary being the interaction between the civilian leadership in government and the military, the second, being the association between the civilian populace and the military, which is mandated to serve as its protector. They are governed by a combination of the constitution which is supreme, the people, legal framework, process, procedures, precedents and also international norms.

National Security

A nation can be said to be secured when it can defend its self from all forms of external aggression and internal insurrections. More than defending itself from external aggression, it should also have the ability to defend itself from the internal security crisis the nation might face from time to time. National security can also be said to refer to the ability of a country to ensure the protection of itself, develop itself, pursue and promote its cherished interest and

values.

Theoretical Framework

Concentrating on the way in which the military institution can realize its corporate goals, Samuel Finer distinguishes four types of civil-military relations. In the first category, he puts all cases where the officers exercise their legitimate and constitutional influence on the civilian government, like any other pressure group, to attain goals such as an increase of military budget. In the second, when the officers use the threat of some sanction or blackmail to reach similar ends. In the third, when they displace a civilian regime with another one because the former had failed to perform its duties towards them adequately and in the fourth category, the officers decide to sweep away the civilian regime and take over the government themselves. The problem with this topology is its heavy reliance on the degree of military intervention. This makes it difficult to draw a distinction between the behavioural and structural similarities of the military institution and regimes in different states, whereas intervention has been pushed to different levels but the role of the military in the society and politics is similar.

Morris Janowitz, on the other hand, based his typology of civil-military relations in his work titled the "Professional Soldier", as a political military manager of violence, relates to other parts of government in policy making. He stated that pragmatic civilian control reorganizes that there are innumerable ways that military professionals and civilian political leaders can interact with one another during times of peace (to prepare for crisis) and war (to achieve peace). Relationship between the many actors at play in the national security realm must adapt and practice inclusion to stay effective. The objective control approach to civil-military relations cannot be discounted because it represents credible option to regulate civil-military affairs under certain conditions.

Samuel Huntington in his work titled "The Soldier and the State", based his argument on civil-military relation on the political objectives actions taken by the officers. He argued for the theory of objective civilian control, which stresses on "autonomous military professionalism". Huntington thinks that professional military can best serve the security of American nation instead of democratic force. He first provided a historical and theoretical analysis of officer-ship as a profession and argued that the expertise of the military officer is the management of violence. He further stated that the objective of civilian control theory emphasises on the military's

functional imperative to provide for national security without undermining the powers of the state and democratic process.

The Nigerian Military (Army) and Background to Civil-Military Relation in Nigeria

The establishment of the military institution of Nigeria can be traced to the British colonial expedition in Nigeria. In 1863, Lt Glover of the Royal Navy, the then Administrator of Lagos, formed the Glover's Hausa that was to be later referred to as the Lagos Constabulary. This was in addition to the West Indian Regiment garrisoned in Lagos due to the British economic interest. In 1886, the Royal Niger Company Constabulary was formed and stationed in Northern Nigeria. And in 1892 the Niger Coast Protectorate created another militia force to guard their economic interest in the region. By 1889 these militia forces were later fused into one to form what was to be known as the Nigerian Regiment. On the 1st of April 1960, the prefix 'Royal' was added to the Nigeria Regiment changing its designation to Royal Nigeria Military Forces. In 1963, it became known as the Nigerian Army.

It is however imperative to note, that the main concern of this work is not to masterfully narrate the origin of the Nigerian Army but a brief allusion is needed as can be seen above in order to have a sound understanding of the topic under discussion. The time, reason, responsibilities and duties of the military force created by the British colonial administration which has continued to influence the civil-military Relations in Nigeria thereby undermining the national security of Nigeria is the main focus of this work.

Background to Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria

By the second quarter of 1886 specifically in July, a military force was established with the approval of the British government aimed principally at coercing those under company rule into obeying the laws established over them. This was a complete departure from situation and system prior to the coming of the British when military initiative and superiority rested with the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

However, in order to appreciate the far-reaching changes whic

occurred from 1886 and to place the Royal Niger Company

Army in perspective, it will be necessary to examine the military relationship between the indigenous inhabitants and the British merchants before the royal charter was granted. Since most of the Europeans found in the Niger basin were merchants and these merchants were contented with trading with the inhabitants in the region, any form of conflicts were restricted in scope. The merchants, realising their military weakness took great care to obey the laws of the land. But as they sought and obtained military protection from 1886, in no time they boycotted the middle men who were the indigenous people of the region and moved into the inland which was considered a special preserve of the middlemen.The greatest cause of conflict was the inability of the British merchants to respect the trading rights of the people of Brass and Bony in the lower Niger. This led to the attacks of Brass on the merchant ships and by 1871, factories of the recalcitrant merchants were destroyed. One of such was S.S. Nelson belonging to the West African Company.

At the time the army was formed in 1886, the military problems of the company had increased. It had imposed monopoly of trade and needed a strong force to maintain it. It had dealings far more complex and extensive with the indigenous people than ever before which meant that more causes of conflicts were bound to occur. It now had many factories which required military protection, troops

were also needed to act as escorts on treaty-making expedition. Above all, the company's interest and territories were contiguous to those of some of the powerful rulers in Northern Nigeria as the time was already clashing. A military confrontation already loomed in the horizon of the northern borders of the company's territories and this was inevitable.

Many people are apt to consider the force established by the Royal Niger Company as purely a police force as its official title 'Constabulary' would. This was not the case because it was actually a military force structured to carry out military duties. More interestingly, it possessed artillery and evidence suggests that the officers who commanded it were known to be either regular Officers in the British army or had received a form of regular military training. In addition, part of the regulations governing the force was based on the British Army Acts.The following are selected British wars of expedition and suppression of the indigenous people of Nigeria from about 1879-1914.

Benin 1879, Robbin Tree November 1886, Patani December 1886, Obe October 1887, Warri Creek November 1887, Asaba April 1888, Zhibu 1888, Egbedi August 1888, Iga September 1888, Ejam October 1888, Oko May 1889, Otuwa November 1889, Abutshi February 1890, Oguta September-October 1890, Zhibu April 1891, Opal, Munam and Imburo 1891, Okapanam April 1894, Okuzu July 1894,

Sagbama September 1895.

It is further reported in various historical accounts, materials and works of many uprisings during the colonial era which the British colonial government cracked down heavily on when attempts were made by the indigenous people to question the British economic and political policies within the period under review. This includes the Aba women riot of 1929, the *ekumeku* freedom movement, 1893-1914 which is mostly referred to as a resistance by the British colonial administration in order to paint it a picture of an opposition that is "Resisting Good Governance and Civilization". Even when their activities appeared detrimental to the socio-economic well-being of the people, this paved way for such movement primarily aimed at liberating their society from all forms of oppression. From the above mentioned outright confrontations between the military and the inhabitants, it becomes crystal clear that the civil-military relations of the British colonial administration were in a huge decay and the Nigerian government, military and its citizens inherited same in 1960 when Nigeria gained her independence. Not much has really changed after this as the bitter legacies have continued to plague the civil-military relation in Nigeria thereby undermining the national security of this nation. It is crucial to submit here that

nomilitary performs at its best in the absence of cordial re

the citizens of the state.

S. C. Ukpabi has noted that;

> In recent past, and as result of the new role being played by the military in all aspects of national life in many countries of Africa, many scholars have tried to examine anew the military factor in the development of English-speaking West African states during the colonial period. Efforts appeared to be directed to the study of resistance movements and African response to British military incursions while many other issues receive little or no attention. Such issues include why the colonial government regarded their military ventures as punitive expedition and consequently interpreted hostility in terms of opposition to civilising influence, the influence of the colonial wars on Africa and British tactics.

The punitive aspect of the colonial military and wars was meant to convey the impression that the colonial government was compelled against its human nature to go to war with the indigenous inhabitants after all peaceful attempts on its part had failed to secure the cooperation.

Military Intervention in Nigerian Politics

As corrective regimes, military governments are similar, but in approach, they differ significantly. Specifically, some are compassionate, others autocratic and some fall in-between. Intermittently, and for twenty-eight years, the military called the shots in Nigeria's political history; hence as a result, professionalism was relegated, coups gained currency, careers and lives were wasted. Significantly, they became part of the problem. In 1966, some army majors and other officers killed some civilian politicians and some senior military officers in a coup de tat. In thatcoup, Sir Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria;Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto who also happened to be the Premier of Northern Nigeria; Chief Festus Okotie Eboh, the Federal Minister of Finance, and Chief Samuel Akintola, the Premier of Western Region, were brutally killed. In addition, Brigadier, Zakari Maimalari, Colonels Kur Mohammed and Abogo Lagema lost their lives. Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu led the coup, and in his address to the nation, he stated why they struck. According to him, they intervened to wipe out corruption, nepotism and to elevate Nigeria. Although the first Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and other top officials were killed, the coup failed. In Lagos, General Aguiyi Ironsi,

the then highest-ranking military officer, quelled the revolt with the help of some other military officers. With the loyal officers and Men of the Nigeria Army, Ironsi routed the culprits, and in Kaduna, Nzeogwu was on one limb. With little or no logistics, a fresh supply was blocked, as both Kano and Lagos, where the coup had failed refused his orders.

After several emissaries and assurances, Nzeogwu laid down his arms, went to Lagos and was arrested and detained. Thereafter, Honourable Nwafor Orizu, the Senate president, met with some Ministers and handed power to General Aguiyi Ironsi. Six Months later at around July 1966, there was a countercoup, and in that countercoup, General Ironsi was killed alongside his host Adekunle Fajuyi in Ibadan while Lt-Colonel. Yakubu Gowon, the highest-ranking Northerner, succeeded Ironsi. He ruled for nine years, through the civil war and the oil boom, terminating in1975.Young and inexperienced, Gowon relied on the civil servants, and they became very powerful. Permanent secretaries dictated the tune while ministers and political appointees watched.

Awash with petrodollars, Nigeria went on a spending binge beyond her shores. In 1974, Gowon in a national broadcast rescinded his promise to hand over to the civilians in 1976. This angered some politicians and military officers, and later in July 1975, Gowon was toppled in a bloodless coup. Brigadier Murtala Ramat

Mohammed emerged as the new leader. Laced with revolutionary rhetoric, he flushed out deadwood and bad eggs and in the exercise; all sections of the country were affected. With dispatch, Murtala drew up his transition, itemized his priorities and promised a hand over date of 1st October 1979. However, Murtala was murdered in a bloody coup. The ringleader was Lt. Colonel Bukar Sukar Dimka. The coup was badly motivated and planned; it was, however, an unpopular one. Like Nzeogwu's, Dimka's attempt failed, as Olusegun Obasanjo, Lt. General and Murtala's second in-command assumed control. Generally, he stuck to Murtala's transition and kept his vision drive. On October 1, 1979, power was handed over to an elected president, Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Usman Shagari. For about five years, there was a lull and as the Military retreated to the barracks, politicians had a field day. Tainted by corruption, and political thuggery, politicians provided the excuse and the Military grabbed the chance and bounced back. By December 1983, the second Republic fell, as a coup staged by some senior officers was relatively peaceful, and successful. Heralding the charges, Brigadier Gen Sani Abachareeled off a litany of woes. According to him, unemployment was high, infrastructure had collapsed, hospitals became "mere consulting clinic". In spite of this, he lamented, politicians lavish in squander-Mania and to hold the drift,

they sacked the inept government of Shagari. Afterwards, Muhammadu Buhari, a Major- General, became the new leader. This regime was a two-man affair, Buhari, and Brigadier Gen Tunde Idiagbon, his second in command, ruled alone, to the chagrin of others; others were sidelined and a crack emerged.

Twenty Months later, in 1985 to be precise, they were removed by their colleagues. Again, Abacha brought the bad tidings, citing lack of consultation and insensitivity as reasons why they struck. Brigadier Ibrahim Babangida, who was then the chief of Army Staff, became the Head of State. With his machiavellian tactics. For obvious reason and others, the press descended on him and called him names; human rights, Christian and Muslim groups were unsparing. In addition, the Structural Adjustment Programme (S.A.P.), an austerity measure he introduced made him unpopular. Under S.A.P., Nigerians were generally impoverished; in the political realm, politicians were also frustrated over series of banning and shifting of hand over date, politicians were fed up. On August 28, 1994, due to serious domestic pressures, Babangida reluctantly stepped aside leaving an Interim National Government (ING) led by Ernest Shonekan. Abacha was the Secretary of Defence, he controlled the armed forces and in the event of death or resignation, the I.N.G. Decree said, the most senior

secretary would succeed Shonekan. At that time Abacha fit the bill and from the decree, the I.N.G was vulnerable, and on November 17, 1994, Abacha shoved it aside and assumed power .He held on to power and planned to succeed himself. To give his plan legitimacy, he contrived a transition programme asking politicians topartake. Immediately political associations sprang up, the government tele-guided the chosen parties, thus determining who won what position. Geared towards self-succession, Abacha was undecided, but the signs were there. Over these exercises, most politicians, especially the big guns, saw a hidden agenda and became apathetic to the transition programme. Abacha was on a final climax to succeed himself when hedied on June 8, 1998. Two days later, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the chief of Defence Staff, became the Head of State. And subsequently handed over power to a democratically elected government on the 29th of May 1999 thereby ushering in the 4th Republic.

The above chronology of military intervention in Nigeria's politics goes the long haul to corroborate the afore mentioned position that the military bore in its 'DNA' a fractured character of punitive tendencies which has continued to bedevil her cordial relations with the civil society in Nigeria creating a deeper issue for Nigeria's national securi

Implication for Nigeria's National Security

The primary responsibility of every government as an instrument upon which the will, desires, programmes and policies of the state is realised, is to provide the needed security structure and apparatus for the protection of life and property of its citizens and the military institution is one of the major security agency saddled with the responsibility to achieve that. In most situations, the military have to engage the instrument of force, and intelligence gathering to realise this. However, for the military institution of a state to achieve this, there have to be a level playing ground and cordial civil-military relation between the government and the civil society, the absence of which can compromise the national security of the state in an unprecedented proportion. According to Col. D. J. Caraccilo in his work "Beyond Gun Steel, A War Termination Strategy", the military can and should be engaged in using its capabilities to meet the local population's fundamental needs and the military should also perform a crucial role in creating the security conditions to permit a society to function normally. Principally, security forces should seek to prevent intimidation and coercion by threat elements while setting the conditions for other civil society to surge into capacity-building mood. To this effect, the talk of an integrated civil-military plans and joint campaign plans cannot disguise their lack of reality of well-managed civil efforts. As stated by

Caraccilo, the need for a cordial civil-military relation in a state or in bringing any battle to a terminal end cannot be over emphasised.

The implications of lack of cordial civil-military relation in Nigeria as its affects its national security is overwhelming. The level of distrust between the Nigerian citizens and its military institutions is highly unprecedented. This is predicated on the fact the average Nigerian sees the Nigerian military institutions as an intimidating institution and not an institution established to protect her, thus creating a constant rivalry and frictions. No matter how trained, skilled, dogged and formidable security forces are, they may keep experiencing operational failures will continue without information from the civilian communities. The Military may have specialists, trained in intelligence and information gathering but without the cooperation of the people ,there is a limit to what type and amount of information they can access. Additionally, there is the psychological distance between the military and the people. Though close to each other, yet far from each other, this psychological distance or gap is one of the factors impeding the success of military operations in Nigeria. Information is very key to the success of any military operation. For instance, the insurgents work with information to strike, unleash onslaught and execute their victims. To counte them, the military needs superior information to secure

victories. Such superior information cannot only come from military intelligence and surveillance but from the civil populace too The psychological distance between the people of the Northeast and the Theatre Forces has been mitigating against the efforts of the Military to totally defeat the insurgents in the North-east. To nip such issues in the bud, the psychological gaps must be removed and the instrument of civil-military Relations is a veritable tool.

Furthermore, in ordinary sense, once a soldier is dressed and well kitted , he or she becomes a 'monster' who is scary to the average civilian. This becomes worsened when such a soldier gets in molesting citizens they are supposed to protect. Consequent upon this, the people end up running away when they are most needed in providing useful information to the theatre forces. The tool for addressing this situation is an effective civil-military relation. Additionally, civil-military relations has the nexus to make officers and men of the theatre Forces understand the dynamics of discharging their roles with civility and to conduct themselves in manners that do not portray them as' monsters' before the people .

Another angle to the effects of an unhealthy civil military relations on national security is the moral deficit it has on the soldiers on th frontline. For instance, there are situations in battle

theaters that an average soldier might not want to give his best in the field because there is the feeling of the civilian populace not being supportive and appreciative of the efforts they put in to ensure peace in the nation. Given the evolving dimensions of unconventional warfare that relies heavily in intelligence for victory, the Nigerian military today engages in protracted wars and operations largely due to the lack of information and cooperation from the locals in the conflict regions.

Conclusion

The decades of military intervention in politics and the overwhelming evidence of human right violation during the military era further plummeted the already severed relationship between the military and the civil society. The African nations vis a vis the Nigerian state inherited a military institution that was primarily established and used as an instrument of oppression by the British colonial government. Till date no systematic efforts, deliberations and insightful approach has been instituted to address this issue from a historical perspective by the appropriate authorities.

This paper concludes that until deliberate approach to address these issues from a historical perspective and appropriate authorities is consulted, cordial civil-military relations in Nigerian between the Nigerian populace and the military will remain

a mirage. To this effect, the paper maintained that it is has now become very necessary to take pro-active steps towards enhancing the relations between the military institutions and the civilian populace. The need for the Nigerian military to engage the services of academics that are well grounded historically on the subject matter in order to resolve this situation that has plagued Nigeria's national security cannot be overemphasized. The institutional needs to review the pattern or methods of recruitment and training as this might a factor necessary for an effective civil military relation also holds great value. Thus, the need to constantly engage leaders of institutions such as pressure groups, academia, traditional rulers, ward heads, religious leaders, political leaders, journalists, etc. in order to discuss some issues that could help in strengthening the relationship between the military and the civil society would be useful, as the already existing gap needs to be bridged. Conscious and targeted sensitization by the civil society and the media on the need for the civilian populace to see the military institution as a friend that should be respected and not feared with a view to fostering healthy relations is highly imperative.