

**BAD GOVERNANCE AND POLICY INCONSISTENCY AS THE CORNERSTONE FOR  
NIGERIA UNDERDEVELOPMENT: A CRITIC OF NIGRIAN MILITARY HEADS OF STATE  
AND THEIR COMPARADOR CIVILIAN BOURGEOISIE**

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**Abstract**

*Military government is an abbreviation. It does not come to power through democratic means, but through coup-d-etat. Members rule by decrees. They have no parliament. Their constituency is nothing other than the gun. The army is not trained to govern a country because it neither possesses the discipline nor the training or the political will to govern effectively a country. It is trained to protect life and property of the citizens as well as to protect the territorial integrity of the country and to defend the country internally in time of emergency. Members can also be sent on a peace keeping mission abroad. However, sometimes the military is allowed to rule or govern a country, not by consent or by the people's mandate, but by force of arms through a coup. This was the situation in Nigeria after the 1966 coup-d-etat in the country. At the take-over of the legitimate government of a nation, the assumed military heads usually suspend the constitution, rule by decrees and dish out policies without the parliament and due process. This is why military juntas are said to be dictatorial. The paper x-rayed Nigerian military regimes, their policies and the leaders governance and found that due to inexperience in the act of governance, arrogance, inconsistent policies and poor policy implementation, of the Nigerian military heads of state, the country was further underdeveloped in areas of agriculture, industry, education, and healthcare delivery services.*

**Introduction**

Nigeria is among one of the underdeveloped countries of the world. Most people attribute this underdevelopment status of Nigeria to colonialism. The question some people now ask is, "why Nigeria is still regarded as an undeveloped country long after its independence in 1960?" In the opinion of this paper, the reason is not farfetched. It is due to bad governance and inconsistent policies of the Nigerian military administration and their comparador civilian bourgeoisie since the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970. This bad governance and policy inconsistency of the military and their group is the focus of this paper.

Military government is an abbreviation. It does not come to power through democratic means but through coup-d-etat. Members rule by decrees. They have no parliament. Their constituency is nothing other than the gun (Ekwonwa, 2008). The army is not trained to govern a country because it neither possesses the discipline nor the training or the political will to govern effectively. It is trained to protect life and property of the citizens as well as to protect the territorial integrity of the country and to defend the country internally in time of emergency (Obaraeri, 2000). Member can also be sent on a peace keeping mission. However, sometimes the military is allowed to rule or govern a country, not by consent nor by the people's mandate, but by force of arms through a coup. This was the situation in Nigeria after the 1966 coup.

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In this paper Nigerian military heads of state policies will be critically analyzed to find out their level of inconsistency if any. To be discussed too is how such policies, have impacted on the development or underdevelopment of the country. Finally the paper will show clearly how, real or assumed bad governance and policy in constituency of the military regimes in Nigeria have contributed to the underdevelopment of

Nigeria. A few of the policies to be discussed include: agricultural policies, educational policies, economic policies, political policies, and healthcare delivery service policies.

### **Synthesis of the Policies**

First is the agricultural policies. Among the necessities of is the most essential (Ekwonwa, 2009). Any government on agriculture which does not aim at food sufficiency for people is assumed to be a failure and the government a bad one. On the basis of this claim, the following agricultural policies /-ere embarked upon by the Nigeria military leadership viz. National Accelerated Food Production Program Policy (NAFPP), introduced by General Yakubu Gowon in 1975, the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) Policy introduced by Lt. Col. Obasanjo's military Administration on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1976, the Green and Ethical Revolution introduced by Shugari's civilian administration, which was inherited by General Ibrahim Babangida's military regime, the Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) introduced by General Ibrahim Babagida's military administration by Decree No. 4 of 1986, Family Support Program (FSP) and Family Economic Advancement Program (FEAP ) introduced by Abacha's military regime. Worthy of note are the two programs FSP and FEAP embarked upon by Mrs. Maryam Abacha, which tried to address the nation's food problem. Others were Better Life for Rural Women Program of Mrs. Maryam Babangida. This was rechristened Family Support Program (FSF) and launched on 3<sup>rd</sup>. March, 1994. There was also Agro-Industrial Renovation which was launched by the same Obasanjo when he came to power the second time as a civilian president. This was launched On May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999. There were series of other agricultural policies introduced in the states by the military governors.

One of these is for example the, Back to Land Army Program. There was equally the Land use Decree of 1976 now the Land Use Act, meant to make land available to peasant farmers for increased food production. Among all these mentioned agricultural policies, the paper discusses, Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) program of Lt. Col. Obasanjo's military regime, which was launched on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1976. On the inauguration day Okegbola (1993) quoted Obasanjo as having averred thus:-

*In the last few years, the country has witnessed alarming decline in agricultural production. Government has had to import increasing quantities of food from abroad. Prices of food stuff have galloped. To make matters worse, young men and women have been drifting from rural to cities in unprecedented numbers, leaving behind old men and women who cannot be expected to meet the growing food needs of the country.*

Actually the program was meant to stimulate the growth of food by individuals and institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. The hope was that educational institutions labour have diffusion effect, To actualize this the state is to create the necessary incentives which should include: agricultural imputes such as: improved variety of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, and proper marketing and storage arrangements. The Federal government on its own part has to make available to all the states governments 50,000 metric tones of fertilizers for distribution to farmers (Nzimiro, 1990).

Lofty as the idea sounded, it is evident that Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) failed because it was controlled and directed by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie for their own benefit. Some of the government functionaries that were assigned to the promotion of the scheme retired and became consultants to the very same government. Huge consultancy fees were paid to the groups while all surveys and analysis were based on capitalist methods of organizing agriculture in an industrial society. What is more, some formed companies with overseas<sup>7</sup> firms that manufacture fertilizers and turned the entire scheme into huge export industry. The nation was glutted with fertilizers in type and quantity of no relevance to the institutional arrangement for transmitting these to peasant producers. Thus individuals and multinational firms made huge profits from the venture to the detriment of the very producers of foods. Prices of food stuff: yams, rice, beans, palm oil etc went high. The nations food import continued to soar. Inflation took a great toll on the poor masses. Youths migrated to cities in search of non-existent jobs and to share in the oil boom which was the only option open to the military. Contract mania soaked the appetite of the deluded youths and petty contracting, touting, and "middlemanship" became easy way of making quick money.

Rushing to foreign countries to buy foods for re-sale in the home markets, became the most attractive part-time. The nation lost its baring. Food scarcity mounted and rural labour for work in agriculture sector continued to rise and food production dropped drastically. Neglect of agriculture intensified. Such poor agricultural policy performance of the military undoubtedly underdeveloped the country the more.

Accordingly expropriation of peasant lands continued despite the land use Decree of 1976, now Land Use Act. The Kulaks (Land speculators) and the bourgeois class demanded more lands for establishment of large farms as the "Operation Feed the Nation, demand. Such lands were later converted to "Housing Estates" by those who possessed them by pretending to be the real farm operators or practitioners. Land alienation and speculation increased the already large rural lumpen class to the detriment of agriculture. Shrinkage in the area of cultivation continued as rent demanded by the Kulaks became intolerable to the poor peasants. Consequently peasants in the country lost hope of providing the most needed food security for life sustenance and land holding. Such bad governance arising from mismanagement of the nation's resources in turn intensified the underdevelopment of the country (Ekwonwa, 2007).

### **Education Policy of the Military**

Like in agriculture, the military made a number of policies shortly after the end of the Nigerian civil war. It changed both the school calendar and curriculum. It also rehabilitated some of the dilapidated school buildings and took-over all the primary and secondary schools, whether publically or privately owned. More universities got established especially Universities of Technology and Agriculture. But all these were politicized. State governors struggled to become "Visitors". Although this can be said to have started during Shehu Shagari's civilian government, Babangida's military regime which inherited the policy did nothing to stop the trend. (Okegbola, 1993'), State governors that have Federal Universities located in their territories did not even feel satisfied until they had their own State University. Following the agitations more universities of Technology and Agriculture were established respite the existence of faculties of engineering and agriculture in the already existing universities. To make matters worse, there was decline in the value of Naira coupled with army of competing demands. This made it difficult for the government to meet its obligations to the universities with regards to funding. Nigeria's best brains left their natural habitat (Campuses) either for private sector or checked out to other countries. Nigerian universities as citadel of academic excellence lost its hold on both the students and the lecturers and education degenerated.

### **Economic Policies**

Military administration in Nigeria set up a number of economic programs in addition to development plans. The paper again discusses only one of these: "The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)". The program was introduced by General Ibrahim Babangida's administration. According to him, the scheme came to solve the country's economic problems by tackling them from the root. This stand was taken after his proposed International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan bid was dropped following public rejection of the proposal. The military, however, did not realize that whatever would be the gains of the program will take long to materialized nor did it realize what the activities or reactions of the bourgeois class who benefited from the flaws of Nigeria's post economic structure was going to be; it did not also take into cognizance some pockets of lower and middle classes who have been accustomed to the usual government patronage and subvention. Besides, the period under review coincided with the global resurgence of conservative economic and political philosophy period of the time dominated by Margaret Thatcher and Renald Reagan, when the prevailing slogan was less government in business. What this means is calling for privatization of government economic establishments, which many Nigerians stood against. Ignorantly Babangida's administration did not refuse getting involved in such spurious commercial venture due to its inexperience in the act of governance. Invariably Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) brought to both middle and lower class members of the Nigerian society hard economic strain. As though this was not enough, there was liberalization of foreign exchange which helped to devalue the Naira (Onyemerekeya, 2001). When eventually the "Junta" realized that the weaker segments of the country's populace would perish under the yoke of the emergence of free market exchange, it quickly out of panic put in motion various ameliorative inconsistent policies and programs that eased nothing Then, there came the austerity measure slogan with attendant hunger and starvation strands.

To cushion the effect of "SAP" more inconsistent policies were set in motion. The regime introduced the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the People's Bank, Community Bank, National Directorate of Employment(NDE) and better Life for Women (BLW). The big question therefore is, to what extent were these measures sustained or meet the target for which they were created? Simply put, they did not provide the needed relief, but rather worsened the situation. Workers were either retrenched or forcefully retired without benefit, unemployment ravaged everywhere and food stuff became scarce. Inflation raged high because of the devaluation of the currency and there was food scarcity. There also issued massive depletion of the country's foreign exchange reserve caused by massive importation of rice and other

food items (Okereke 2012). The country was plunged into huge external debt which up till today plagues Nigeria. All these problems were results of inconsistent policies of the military and poor implementation of their programs which further underdeveloped Nigeria, that was already underdeveloped by the colonial administration.

### **Poetical Policies**

Like other areas already discussed, the military introduced a number of political policies so as to ensure a creditable political order. At the early stage of the military era, it introduced unitary government. That was under the military regime of assassinated Major General Aguiyi Ironsi. Later, the army established a political bureau, inaugurated a constituent assembly, created new local government areas, National Assembly and so on, all in the pretence that power derives from the people. But free and fair election the structures were meant to achieve eluded the country. In reaction, they opted for the controversial "Option A4" ballot system but that also failed. Then through decree they opted for two grass-root based political parties dissolving the existing thirteen (13) Political Associations. This again did not work. Today Nigeria has not less than fifty (50) registered political parties and more are registering. In the opinion of this paper, this is quite unhealthy for the (Nigerian) polity.

### **Healthcare Delivery Policies of the Nigeria Military Regime**

Economic hardship created by the Nigeria military junta, did not stop at the decline of agricultural productivity, miss management of public fund, and corruption, low standard of education, policy inconsistency, but extended to poor management of healthcare delivery services and brain drain on the part of highly qualified medical men and women in the country. Teaching hospitals for example, though were designated "centres of excellence", lacked necessary equipments. This forced and still forces not only wealthy Civilian Nigerians to leave the country to seek for healthcare services abroad, but also the military chiefs. Such practice depletes the country's foreign exchange reserve. Primary healthcare centres designed to deal with diseases and ailments that afflict majority of Nigerians who live in the rural areas were poorly funded and mismanaged. Their workers either went into private practice, (some as quacks) or combined their medical job with petty trading and other businesses. This coupled with hunger that was ravaging the whole country, left many Nigerians dead from diseases and ailments that could be treated at home. The result was under development of the health sector.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The above discussion does not imply that the military did nothing good for the country. They actually did something good. What the paper is agitating is that, the military had special privilege and opportunity to have effectively restructured Nigeria while at the helm of affairs for twenty nine (29) years, but they did not do so. They instead paved way for the downturn of the economy. Nigerians are to-day asking about what prevented the military after such a long period of rule from setting example worthy of emulation. To-day, the country is overburdened with external debts and the people are clamoring to resolve the dilemma or the bondage the military led them into.

Military leaders in Nigeria neglected agriculture, the main stay of the country's economy, overlooked the educational and healthcare delivery sectors, toyed with the political system, but pursued oil wealth, the proceed which they miss-used. They failed to mobilized the peasantry. Most of their development policies were formulated abroad or by hired servants of the multinational corporations that directly controlled the economy. They refused to operate mixed economy policies of the political class which they pushed away and formed a ruling oligarchy with the bourgeoisie that served as link between the army and the outside class.

The military in Nigeria was not the people's army, but rather army of occupation. There was a clear ideological cleavage between the army and the masses it was supposed to defend. Its style of development was promotion of the material base of the ruling class to the neglect of the peasants and other oppressed classes. The capitalist part to development which they thought they were pursuing eluded then for more than two decades the army ruled Nigeria. The army also adopted a state of intervention economic policy believing that state capitalism is synonymous with "Socialism". It bought shares in major banks, oil companies, built gigantic refineries and oil pipe lines; invested in iron and steel, industrial projects and in so many other ventures to the neglect of investment on agriculture, the live-wire of the country's economy. It shifted the country's capital to Abuja to expropriate Nigerian oil wealth. All the above policies taken by the military to

develop the country's economy were misdirected due to inexperience of the military in the act of governance and policy implementation.

No matter from whatever angle one sees it, the military in Nigeria was too rigid and uncompromising. The soldiers did not act as the people's army, but as army of occupation. They were unable to manage the country's abundant resources: human and material. The army was dictatorial.

The army chiefs found themselves above the law of the land, even when they left office. They regarded themselves as different species from other Nigerians. Because of their highhandedness, best brains in the educational sector, engineering and healthcare delivery services left the country to countries in Europe and to other African countries. The military left Nigeria with a lot of social vices ranging from armed robbery, cultism in schools, prostitution, kidnapping, corruption in high places and a host of other anti-social behaviours. There was gross neglect of agriculture and fallen standard of education, poor healthcare delivery services, infrastructural decay etc. There was insubordination among the rank and file of the army and the ambition to become one day a military head of State of Nigeria by all and sundry in the army. Such ambition brought their undoing: coups upon coups were experienced.

Unfortunately it is these military chiefs who are to-day criticizing Nigerian's, civilian government that has come to salvage and correct or remedy the wrongs done by the military. What is more, those military chiefs who plunged Nigeria into the country's economic bondage, hunger and starvation are clamoring to come back to rule Nigeria again for reasons best known to them. Some have already ruled.

For Nigeria to survive the onslaught of the military bad governance there has to be recapitalization of the agricultural sector, the industrial sector, the educational sector, and the healthcare delivery sector. Above all corruption must be seriously addressed and stopped. Our leaders must stop paying lip services to the stoppage of corruption, which they indirectly supervise by their so called anti-corruption crusade and commissions.

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