



# A HISTORY OF MILITARY INTERVENTION AND ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA, 1984-1999

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## ABSTRACT

The regimented institution of the military is designed and established to be professionally well trained in the process of national defense and protection of the citizenry against external aggression and invasion. But this institution (the military) had for the past century been involved in political participation through illegal and unconstitutional modus operandi. It is very instructive to state that good governance is the only panacea against military intervention while bad government is an invitation to it and the accompanying anarchy.

The major aim of the study is to examine the history of military intervention and administration in Nigeria between our chosen periods, 1984-1999. The paper will examine the negative implications of military interventions in Nigeria, assess the progress made by the military during their interventions and the level of development and underdevelopment they brought to

Nigeria and determine the factors that have necessitated the intervention of the military in Nigerian administration.

The paper will also examine the level of sincerity attached to all military transition programmes to civilian rule.

The paper has adopted the secondary methodology to arrive at its findings. It has also adopted the descriptive and historical form in the presentation of the facts. It discovered that the military has grossly underdeveloped the continent after the withering of colonialism, as a result of corruption, favoritism, ethnicity and lack of proper bureaucratic principles. The paper concludes that, even though the military is dictatorial in nature but it has maintained law and order better than the so called democratic government. The paper recommends maximum restraint of the military vis a vis political power and stronger military-civilian relations as constitutionally defined among other measures.

## INTRODUCTION

The political cinema of militarism and political disaster in Nigeria has made the country to be backward, plunged into ethnic and tribal divide, raided of its treasury and has atoned the country with human rights abuse<sup>1</sup>. At a particular point in time, Nigeria had suffered from turbulent military violence and upheavals. But one disturbing factor of the whole process is how Nigerians came under internal colonization by their own people, who without sympathy exploited the country without any consideration to the fact that they belong to the place where they were destroying, their families will continue to live there even in their absence. The political artifice and avarice of the military had engendered depopulation of prominent people who were submissive to the course of nationhood and also fought for the emancipation of the black race especially in Nigeria. The bedrock for military coups and leadership in Nigeria and many other African countries slowly corroded as a result of the pressure mounted on political belief that people of different social classes, religions, races, etc should live together in a society like Nigeria, Africa, Asia and Latin America, etc<sup>2</sup>. The strength of the procedures of the development of an increasingly integrated global economy, a multiple-dimensional interesting capitalist system, led to the victory of the forces of capital over the limiting forces of the state. For this reason, the economic consequences for political firmness in such regions of the globe unavoidably led to pressures for political transformation or change. Military era, like the civilianled autocratic regimes, got to an increasing degree on the movement by soldiers away from their enemies either because the enemies are winning, due to agitations from within and the international community<sup>3</sup>.

It became a continuous incident five years after independence, not too long after, military era become an institution. Since 1966, when the military took over power, it has subdued, changing form and time, therefore becoming a standard rather than a place where a rule does not apply. As a system that was meant to correct every problem, military governments are the same, but in method of operation, they differ significantly. Especially, some are gracious, favorable, others are draconic and some fall in-between. On intervals, and for twenty-eight years( ie 1966-1979 – 1984-1999), the military called the shots in Nigeria's political history; and as a result, professionalism was sent into exile, coups gained ground, careers and lives were destroyed. Importantly, they became part of the trouble and challenge. In 1966, some army majors and other officers slaughtered some civilian politicians and senior military officers in a coup. In that coup, Sir Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa, the first Prime Minister; Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardaunan Sokoto and Northern Premier; Chief Festus Okotie Eboh, the Federal Minister of Finance, and Chief Samuel Akintola, the Premier of Western Region, were bitterly and roughly slaughtered. To add to this, Brigadier, Zakari Maimalari, Colonels Kur Mohammed and Abogo Lagema gave up the ghost. Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu led the coup, and in his address to the Nation, he stated why they struck. According to him, they interposed to completely delete out corruption, nepotism, regionalism, unfair practices by powerful people and to lift Nigeria to the next level.<sup>4</sup>

Though, the first Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and other leading officials were slaughtered, the coup was not successful. In Lagos, General Aguiyi Ironsi, the then highest ranking military officer, ended the protest. With some officers and Men that showed constant support, Ironsi uncovered the coupists, and in Kaduna, Nzeogwu was on one limb. With little or no logistics, a fresh supply was stopped, as both Kano and Lagos, where the coup did not survive denied his orders. After several representations and assurances, Nzeogwu surrendered his arms, went to Lagos and was nabbed and detained. After that, Honourable Nwafor Orizu, the Senate president, got in touch with some Ministers and handed power to General Ironsi. Many Months later, there was a opposing -coup, and in that opposing-coup, General Ironsi was slayed together with the military Governor of the western region. Lt-Colonel Yakubu Gowon, the highest ranking Northerner, took over from Ironsi. He ruled for nine years, through the civil war and the oil boom, and was overthrown in 1975.<sup>5</sup>

Gowon who was way young and lacked experience depended on the civil servants, and they became very strong and powerful. With the ousting of Gowon, Murtala Muhammed took over the mantle of governance, listed out his top priorities and assured a civilian hand over date of 1st October 1979. Though Murtala was murdered in a coup in 1976, the leader of the group of the coupist was Lt. Colonel Bukar sukar Dimka. With the assassination of Mohammed, Lt Gen Olusegun Obasanjo of the Engineering corps who hitherto was the chief of staff supreme headquarters took over the reigns of government. On October 1,1979 power was taken to an elected democratically elected president, Alhaji Shehu Aliyu Usman Shagari. By December, 31, 1983, the second Republic was floored, as a coup organized by some senior officers was relatively peaceful, and successful. With this incursion, Nigeria was yet on another road to many years of turbulent military rule.<sup>6</sup>

## **THE LONG YEARS OF MILITARY RULE IN NIGERIA, 1984 -1999.**

### **The 1983 Coup**

#### ***THE MAJOR GENERAL MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT (31 DECEMBER, 1983–27 AUGUST, 1985)***

Major General Muhammadu Buhari emerged the fifth military Head of States and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces through a palace coup in the midst of economic crisis and political uncertainty in the country. The ousted civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari had spent recklessly, milked and looted the country's economy dry.<sup>7</sup> The civilian government mismanaged and looted the economy such that, when the Buhari - led military administration took over governance, it met an almost empty national treasury. The price of oil had dropped in the international market and the economy was in a very bad shape coupled with the political crisis in the country, especially in the Southwest. The military was forced to engage in countertrade (a form of barter transaction) with some European countries. Nigeria was trading its oil in large quantities in exchange for essential materials such as food, clothes, drugs among others. This partly accounted for why the Major General Buhari's military administration did not do well in

the area of economy, not taking away his draconian style of leadership.<sup>8</sup>

Major General Muhammadu Buhari was a round-broad military dictator, one of the strongest military dictators the country ever had as Head of State. He had good intentions but his draconian style of leadership negated the good intentions of his regime. He was too rigid on Nigerians, and even on his Supreme Military Council. The regime did not do much in the international scene outside trade and sustaining existing national foreign policy. The military government involved traditional rulers in the affairs of government. He sought for fatherly counsel and inputs from the traditional institutions in the country. The administration decisively changed the existing monetary mechanism by completely changing all currencies in circulation and immediately replacing them with new currencies in 1984. This was a feat previous administrations in the country could not achieve. The administration also introduced some forms of social objectives in the country. Notable among them was the popular 'War Against Indiscipline' launched in March, 1984. It aimed to instill in the minds of Nigerians the noble ideals of national consciousness and mobilise a sense of nationality.<sup>9</sup> The regime will also be remembered for the harsh provisions of Decrees Number 4 and 13. There were high level and gross abuse of human rights under the Buhari-led military administration.<sup>10</sup> The administration also rejected the IMF loan which the administration said was bad in practice and in principle. One of the most important edifices set up by the administration is the National War Museum sited at Umuahia, Abia state. However, the inflexible style of discipline and high-handedness, coercion and arbitrariness of the administration led to its being ousted in a palace coup code named 'the Coup of the Generals' which saw only the Head of State and his Deputy/Chief of Staff, Major General Tunde Idiagbon removed from office on 27 August, 1985. It is on record that Major General Buhari's emergence as Head of State was the most heralded in the history of military rule in the Nigeria.

Moreso, a report by African History Archive gave a vivid picture of one of the decrees promulgated by the Buhari military junta in 1984. The decree was to curb press freedom and the attendant punishment.<sup>11</sup>

Drafted on March 29, 1984, Decree No. 4 was the most dreaded, most repressive and the last press law enacted in Nigeria. It was promulgated during the military regime of Major General Buhari which did not take kindly to press criticisms.

The law was drafted to punish authors of false statements and reports that exposed the Buhari administration and its officials to ridicule or contempt.

Section 1, sub-sections (i), (ii) and (iii) of the law - the most formidable section - provided that: Any person who publishes in any form, whether written or otherwise, any message, rumour, report or statement, being a message, statement or report which is false in any material particular or which brings or is calculated to bring the Federal Military Government or the Government of a state or public officer to ridicule or disrepute, shall be guilty of an offence under this Decree.

It shall be an offence under this Decree for a newspaper or wireless telegraphy station in Nigeria to publish or transmit any message, rumour, report or statement which is false in any material particular stating that any public officer has in any manner been engaged in corrupt practices or has in any manner enriched himself or any other person.

The law also conferred on the Head of State the power to ban a newspaper and to revoke the license of a wireless telegraph station in any part of the federation.<sup>12</sup> This decree led to the imprisonment of many journalists before the administration was overthrown in 1985. Two of those Journalists were Mr Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor of the Guardian Newspapers.

### ***The War on Narcotics***

The FMG also announced a harsh crackdown on drug dealing. It enacted Decree 20 which prescribed the death penalty for convicted drug dealers. The Decree had retroactive effect. Three convicted drug dealers named Lawal Olujope, Bartholomew Owoh and Bernard

Ogedengbe were sentenced to death and executed by firing squad on April 14, 1985.<sup>13</sup> The executions caused much soul searching and made the FMG seem harsh for approving the execution of drug dealers who committed offences before the death penalty became applicable to their offence. Undeterred, a few weeks later the SMC approved the execution of three more drug dealers, including Mrs. Gladys Iyama, a mother of two paraplegic children. She was to be the first woman in Nigerian history to be executed by a firing squad. Conscious of the brutality of publicly executing a woman, the FMG authorized her execution in private at the Kirikiri

maximum security prison in Lagos. However the sentence was never carried out.<sup>14</sup>

## **The 1985 Coup**

### ***THE GENERAL IBRAHIM BADAMOSI BABANGIDA'S MILITARY PRESIDENCY (27 AUGUST, 1985–17 NOVEMBER, 1993)***

General Ibrahim Babangida's emergence as the sixth Head of State through another palace coup was received with mixed feelings among Nigerians.<sup>15</sup> The emergence of his predecessor was understandably greeted with enthusiasm because of the bad state of the nation's economy occasioned by the ousted civilian government of Alhaji Shagari. Nigerians became worried due to the abrupt nature of military intervention in the governance of the country since independence in 1960. General IBB, as he was fondly called, was a warm, calm and gentle leader who understood the Nigerian populace and knew what they wanted at the time. He was not a dictator par excellence like General Buhari. He made lots of friends home and abroad and was loved by Nigerians because of his policy and disposition to governance. He came into office when the country's economy was picking up. Upon arrival, General Babangida, having sensed the tension in the country, swiftly came up with a populist agenda that directly touched on the basic rights and socio-economic needs of the people. He claimed to have put in place a transition programme. He got the support of the Nigerian elite and the international community.<sup>16</sup>

General Babangida told the world that his led military government would be the last to rule Nigeria. The administration renamed the Supreme Military Council to the Armed Forces Ruling Council and abrogated to himself the title, Military President. The regime put in place several measures and established national agencies to address the various socio-economic challenges confronting the country. Some of these measures and agencies include: the National Directorate of Employment (NDE); the National Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI); Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP); the Directorate of Social

Mobilisation (The popular MAMSER policy); the National Electoral Commission (NEC); the Constitutional Review Committee that produced the 1989 Draft Constitution and other laudable policies and agencies.<sup>17</sup>

It is imperative to note that the General Ibrahim Babangida's regime had a clear vision of governance and the will to implement its programmes. The military government built the famous Third Mainland Bridge in Lagos, created 11 more states which increased the numbers of states in the country to 30. He promulgated his official title from Military Head of State to

Military President (the first and only Nigerian Military President). He created the State Security Service (SSS), the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and established the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC). The regime dualised major roads across the country and built dams. Another notable achievement of the General Babangida's regime was the relocation of the Federal Capital Territory from Lagos to Aso Rock, Abuja. He strengthened Nigerian foreign relations, rejected Apartheid in South Africa, supported and co-sponsored the formation of African Union, made Nigeria join the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and lots more. The regime had its fair share of human rights abuse; notable are the alleged killing of Dele Giwa, the editor in chief of the defunct Newswatch Magazine with a letter bomb and the killing of his friend and colleague, General Mamman Vatsa for alleged coup attempt.<sup>18</sup>

The regime, despite its modest achievements, unfortunately, had the longest transition programme in the history of the country. This led to the collapse of the third republic in 1993. The transition programme began its tortuous journey from the third quarter of 1986 and was terminated the third quarter of 1993. The transition programme and dates were changed four times by the Bababgida military regime. The government established two political parties in the country: the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Party (NRC). Elections for Local Government Councils across the country, the State Houses of Assembly, National Assembly and the Governors were successfully conducted. The Presidential election which was the climax of the transition programme was annulled on 12 June, 1993 by the military government. The elections were adjudged to be free and fair by both local and



international election observers. General Ibrahim Babangida stepped aside (in his words) on 27 August, 1993 in response to pressure and protest arising from the annulment of the Presidential election.<sup>18</sup> He handed over to an Interim Civilian Government headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan, a former chairman of United African Company (UAC).

## **The 1993 Coup**

### ***THE GENERAL SANI ABACHA'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT (17 NOVEMBER, 1993–8 JUNE, 1998)***

General Sani Abacha took over power from the Interim National Government in a palace coup on 17 November, 1993. He renamed the General Ibrahim Babangida's Armed Forces Ruling Council to Provisional Ruling Council. It was an open secret that General Abacha had been involved in the previous successive coup d'état in the country. He made the national broadcast of the change of government from civil rule to military in 1983 and also announced the counter coup of August 1985 that ousted the General Buhari's Military Government. He was the only senior military officer and member of the General Babangida's Military Council not retired when the military President stepped down from government in 1993. His Provisional Ruling Council consisted of six senior military officers, the Inspector General of Police and four civilians. The Council of Ministers under the General Abacha Military Government had 32 members out of which 30 were civilians. The political environment home and abroad was tensed when he assumed the leadership of the country. This was occasioned by the annulment of the 12 June, 1993 Presidential election.<sup>19</sup>

The new military government began by the reintroduction of War Against Indiscipline and Corruption. It was not surprising the same government turned out to be one of the most corrupt military government with the Abacha loots discovery years after his demise. General Sani Abacha had a different style of leadership. He was mean and not known for ideas or philosophy. He was a blunt dictator. In 1994, he issued a decree that placed his military government above the jurisdiction of any court in the country.<sup>20</sup> He abrogated absolute power to himself as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. He could detain anyone without trial for up to three months. Chief M.K.O.Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the 12 June, 1993 Presidential election, declared himself

President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He was arrested at the orders of the Head of State for treason, jailed and subsequently died in detention. The trio of General Olusegun Obasanjo, General Shehu Yar'Adua and General Oladipo Diya were arrested for alleged coup attempt and jailed; General Shehu Yar'Adua died in detention also. The military government of General Abacha tolerated no opposition; he was a dictator par excellence. Since he understood the coup game, he cracked down on all perceived enemies of his government and policy within and outside the military. The height of the regime's human right abuse was the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa and other Ogoni activists despite the outcry from within the country and abroad. Another gruesome human right abuse the regime was accused of was the alleged murder of Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, the wife of the acclaimed winner of the 1993 Presidential election, for her continuous protest against the government. Nigeria became a pariah state under the General Abacha's regime. The international community closed her doors against Nigeria for the four and half years of General Sani Abacha's reign as Head of State.

The administration did well in the economy, it reduced the external debts from 36 billion dollars in 1993 to 27 billion dollars in 1997. The administration also increased the country's foreign reserve from 4.4 billion dollars to 9.6 billion dollars within the same period.<sup>21</sup> The unprecedented economic achievements of the regime were overshadowed years later by the discovery of mass looting of the national treasury and corruption by the Head of State. Twentytwo years after the demise of General Sani Abacha, the country, through the successive civilian governments, is still recovering Abacha's loots from banks around the world.

The military government of General Abacha created six states, taking the numbers of the states in the country to 36. The administration also reorganized the country into 6 geopolitical zones. The government established and funded five political parties as part of its transition programme. He announced the transition programme was to begin 1 August, 1998 and terminated with the Presidential election and a return to civilian rule on 1 October, 1998. General Abacha manipulated the political system and was adopted by all the five political parties as their sole presidential candidate for the 1998 presidential election. He died on 8 June, 1998 before the transition programme commenced.<sup>22</sup>

## The 1998 Showdown

### ***THE GENERAL ABDULSALAMI ABUBAKAR'S MILITARY GOVERNMENT (8 JUNE, 1998–29 MAY, 1999)***

General Abdulsalami Abubakar emerged the eighth military Head of State after the sudden death of General Abacha on 8 June, 1998. General Abdulsalami was a gentleman officer whom the responsibility of the country's leadership fell upon, although he was the number three man in the military hierarchy at the time. The number two man next to the late Head of State,

General Oladipo Diya, was in detention for an alleged coup attempt. General Abdulsalami was not known, all his days in the military, to have had political ambitions or held any political position. Till date, he is the only former military Head of State in Nigeria that has not sought for political office after retirement.<sup>23</sup>

His emergence as Head of State was received with great enthusiasm home and abroad. This was occasioned by the gross human right abuse and the failed succession plan of late General Sani Abacha. The International community had already closed its doors on Nigeria as a pariah State. General Abdulsalami made it clear from the outset of his regime that he was ready to return the country to civilian rule within a short period of time. He also promised that his military-led government would be the last and soldiers would be returned to the barracks to focus on their constitutional duty. The international community opened her doors to the country and Nigeria reclaimed her position and respect in the comity of nations. General Abdulsalami did not pay much attention to the economy; he was preoccupied with the transition plans. He got the support of the world and within three months as Head of State, he had visited Great Britain, the United States of America, Canada and Israel, a feat General Sani Abacha could not achieve in four and half years in office.<sup>24</sup> General Abacha only visited South Africa during President Mandela's inauguration while in office. General Abdusalami successfully executed his transition programme within eleven months and returned the country to democratic rule on 29 May, 1999 after 16 years of successive military rule in the country.

## MILITARY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Some scholars have argued that the Nigeria military has had a profound effect on the socioeconomic development of the country<sup>25</sup>. The contention here is that their policies, programmes and actions have created a measure of impact on Nigeria's socio-economic development on many issues and in different sectors of the economy. Some of such policies and programmes have profoundly shaped the foundation of the country's socio-economic development till date as the table below shows.<sup>26</sup>

**Table showing military regimes, their policies and programmes in Nigeria.**

S/N	SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTAL POLICIES & PROGRAMMES	REGIMES
1	Creation of 21 states in 1987	Babangida
2	Creation of 30 states in 1990	Babangida
3	Creation of 36 states in 996	Abacha
4	National Census of 1991	Babangida
5	Creation of Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)	Babangida
6	Peoples Bank of Nigeria and establishment of Community Banks.	Babangida
7	Establishment of Better Life for Rural Women Empowerment	Babangida
8	Family Support Programme	Abacha

9	Family Economic Advancement Programme in 1993	Abacha
10	Structural Adjustment Programme	Babangida
11	Establishment of National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986	Babangida
12	Local Government Reforms of 1991	Babangida
13	Enactment and implementation of War Against Indiscipline in 1984	Buhari
14	Minimum Wage Reform of 1998	Abdusalami
15	Construction of Third Mainland	Babangida
16	Final relocation of Federal Government to the Federal Capital Territory	Babangida

Sources: Eminue (2002)

From the table above, we can deduce that past military regimes in Nigeria have initiated one programme or the other, with immense impact on the socio-economic development of the country.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, Scholars have argued that that the stunted level of socio-economic development of Nigeria is caused by the corrupt and lack of accountability of military regimes. In the same vein, they believe the military appropriate more funds to itself indiscriminately during their reign in power than necessary. They are said to expend more on non-productive ventures than on productive ones, with negative effects on the socio-economic development of the country. Furthermore, the scholars observed that the rapidly growing oil revenues that coincided with the reign of military regimes were blatantly squandered and mismanaged than channeled towards

the socio-economic development of the country. Successive military regimes in Nigeria have remained an aberration of governance. Though, they have tried to engineer socio-economic development with several policies and programmes, they have barely created appreciable impact on the socio-economic development of Nigeria.<sup>28</sup>

### HOW THE MILITARY UNDERDEVELOPED NIGERIA

Military dictatorship not only in Nigeria, but in the whole of Africa, has instigated many evils and negative impact on the country in particular and the continent in general. Military rule has brought about:

(a) corruption (b) abuse of human rights (c) devaluation of currencies (d) economic decay (e) institutional collapse (f) has widened the gap between rich and poor (g) it has tarnished Nigeria's image abroad (h) they frustrated efforts for democratic rule (i) they changed the course of Nigeria's history (j) they created unemployment and suffering among Nigerians (k) they generally underdeveloped the country and the continent because there was no accountability.<sup>29</sup>

Albeit all these factors accounted for the evils of military dictatorship, the regimes have established more federal universities, polytechnics, unity schools and federal colleges of education. The NYSC program was established to reduce tension and ignorance of Nigerian people of their fellow Nigerians living in other parts of the country.<sup>30</sup>

Corruption in Nigeria under these regimes had gathered momentum. The regimes had ways of welcoming and accommodating corruption. For example, Babangida's administration pardoned and released the second republic politicians that were jailed for corruption by the Buhari regime. He also returned their confiscated properties to them. This trend, however, has made critics to make the inference that the regime had legalized corruption<sup>31</sup>. The Okigbo panel report revealed that Babangida established a 'dedicated account' into which the windfall from the first gulf war was paid. The account held the sum of 12.4 billion US dollars but at the time of enquiry only 206 million dollars were left there.<sup>32</sup> The two people who managed the accounts were Babangida and the then governor of Central Bank, the late Alhaji Abdulkadir Ahmed.

The Abacha regime was not an exception. He treated the Nigerian Central Bank like a family property; He issued cheques of billions of naira whenever he wished to; He was listed among the ten most corrupt world leaders with 2-5 billion US dollars loot. There was 4 billion US dollars looted money in which the UK financial services authority indicted fifteen British banks, and the 4-5 billion US dollars secret Nigerian debt buyback scheme. In addition, there was the 2.5 billion US dollars Ajaokuta steel debt buyback scam involving Abacha's minister. Others included 80 million US dollars over payment to chase Manhattan Bank, 10 million US dollars reversal payment on Paris Club debts and 27 million US dollars to SACE of Italy.<sup>33</sup>

General Abdulsalam was also accused of looting Nigerian treasury, which transpired in his Maizube Holdings, which is a collection of various businesses (farms, estates and all sorts of companies). One of his most recent establishments is the building of MAIZUBE Estate in Abuja, Nigeria. The estate has recently been leased/rented by Total for its staff. In order not to be discovered, Abdulsalam gave Israeli expatriates billions of naira to a construction that Nigeria could easily have done. The Israelis eventually sub-contracted every aspect of the construction to Nigerian builders, architects, engineers, painters, etc. They only paid out only 1/8 of what they were earned from General Abdussalam Abubakar.<sup>34</sup>

A CNN research conducted on the happiest countries in the world anchored by Mamie Hunter on 136 countries indicated that among all the countries that made up the first twenty happiest countries were democratically entrenched countries around the world. It also shows that among the least and last in the list was Afghanistan and Lebanon. The list of the first twenty is stated below –

### **World's happiest countries for 2023**

1. Finland
2. Denmark
3. Iceland
4. Israel
5. Netherlands
  
6. Sweden
7. Norway
8. Switzerland
9. Luxembourg
10. New Zealand
  
11. Austria
12. Australia
13. Canada
14. Ireland
15. United States

Stated 16. Germany 17. Belgium 18. Czech Republic 19. United Kingdom 20. Lithuania<sup>35</sup>

Based on the above list, Nigeria nor any African country that had been afflicted with military intervention and administration does not qualify in any way as they do not measure in all the indices of measurement viz; rule of law, safety and high level security, high gross domestic product, Benevolence to others, life evaluation etc. Nigeria ranks 95<sup>th</sup> out of the 136 countries surveyed and 6<sup>th</sup> in Africa.

### **TRANSITION TO CIVIL PROGRAMME AND MILITARY SINCERITY**

Within the period of thirty-nine years, 1960-1999, the Nigerian military ruled the country for twenty nine years in a series of coups and counter coup. These coups brought one military government to replace another. These replacements did not convince anyone that the military was sincere to hand over power to the civilians, even when some military governments promised or began the process of transition.<sup>36</sup> Ironsi government promised but was not even allowed to draw up a transition programme before it was overthrown. Another military government led by Gowon, promised to hand over government but later postponed indefinitely the transition programme. This shows lack of commitment and insincerity. Murtala Mohammed learnt a big lesson from Gowon's failure. He overthrew Gowon and started in earnest the process of transition, but again the Nigerian military over threw him and punctuated the transition. Obasanjo derived so many lessons from all of these occurrences and pursued with vigour his transition programme and handed over to a civil rule even though he was not sincere about transition<sup>37</sup>. Again the military overthrew the Shagari government. Buhari did not commit himself to hand over power before Babangida over threw him. Babangida tried to transform into civilian president. His attempt failed. But Abacha was not wise enough. After pushing out Shonekan, his attempt to transform into a civilian President was brought to an end by death. Abdulsalami like Obasanjo got the lesson and in a show of determination to prevent another coup, quickly proceeded with transition which brought into power Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as a civilian President under PDP. Thus, circumstances and not sincerity compelled Obasanjo and Abdulsalami to hand over power in 1979 and 1999 respectively.<sup>38</sup>



## CONCLUSION

The seed of ethnic discord had already been sown in the military, which ruled non-continuously for nearly three decades right from the first military coup in January, 1966. The ripple effects were coups upon coups, disbalanced civilian administrations, and even a civil war that lasted for thirty months.<sup>39</sup> This civil war has been described variously by scholars as the first black genocide on blacks that consumed about 3 million lives. Although military regimes recorded some successes, it was crazed with various magnitudes such as abuse of human rights, economic decline, and corruption, among others<sup>40</sup>. In conclusion, it is evident that the configuration of the military naturally provoked international condemnation because of the dual issues of human rights abuse and democratic degradation. An example of such condemnations was the nullification of the June 1993 election by General Babangida, which was criticized by the US with threats against his administration by severing US-Nigeria relations and freezing foreign aid worth 22 million dollars.<sup>41</sup> Whereas, various other scholars have also submitted that Nigeria equally received similar sanctions from Canada. Furthermore, the inhumane massacre of Ken Saro Wiwa with some other MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People) leaders under Abacha's administration in 1995 was greeted with a big frown and condemnation from international entities.<sup>42</sup> On the whole, since the nature of the military was antithetical to the values of democracy, which had gained increasing international currency, there was a resultant decline and replacement of military regimes with democratic rule, which is practiced and globally accepted today. But while the current development model still emphasizes democracy as the most desirable form of governance, it is evident that power is not with the people, but with those who have the economic muscle.

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