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Coup D'etat in Post Independence Nigeria

Joseph Gimba Nasiru & Professor S.O Abdulrahman

Abstract

Coup is an abrupt interruption of political process through the use of force to upturn the position of an elected incumbent in the name of reform. Since 1960, Nigeria has witnessed series of sudden and violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group especially in most cases by the men of the armed forces who in condemnation of bad governance, truncated the legal provisions of democratic process. Although coup has become associated with the entire world, it is inimical to peace, progress and development due to the warlike nature of the men of the armed forces. This work explores the series of coups that took place in Nigeria since 1966 and how this impeded the process of Nigeria's nationhood as a so-called "Giant of Africa". All the coups have their interest which are mostly connected to sentiment even though they all claimed reforms. Historical method is used especially written documents by surviving military men that wrote from their different perspectives. The scope covers 1966 to at least 2014 with the Enugu insurrection. 1966 was chosen because that was when the first coup took place and since 2014 Enugu insurrection, Nigeria is yet to witness another coup despite myriad challenges. It has been observed that without integrity and the fear of God, no regime will succeed in its ambition whether military or civilian. The men of the Armed forces could also join politics when the resign or retire as it is against their constitutional role to stage a coup. In retrospect, this work drew our attention to why coup is undesirable and why men of the Armed forces should concentrate on their civic duty of protecting the territorial integrity of the nation and that of the political class. It work will promote learning and research in the field of military history.

Keywords: Nigeria, Coup, Causes and Implications

Introduction

ALTHOUGH THE NIGERIAN POLITICS SHORTLY BEFORE INDEPENDENCE was dominated by ethnic chauvinism, bigotry and loyalty, it was far from military intervention until immediately after independence when ethnic loyalty became evident in the running of election and how this manifested itself in the coup that ousted the first democratically elected Prime Minister out of power during the First Republic. Since the first coup in January 1966, military intervention in the politics of Nigeria became a consistent and a continuous effort as an attempt for reform and to curb the menace of slowness in putting Nigerian map on global eyes. This need for reform has no doubt, blinded the eyes of some military men from protecting the interest of democracy to that of personal aggrandizement. Military intervention in the Nigerian politics has in a way, damped harmonious civil-military cohesion especially within the period that coups took place.

Coup is a global occurrence and is usually a sudden and violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group especially in most cases by the men of the armed forces who in condemnation of bad governance usually take laws into their hands despite been against the rule of law or any constitutional provisions. Over the years, decades, scores, jubilees and centuries, many coups have taken place from around the globe, some of which were: those in which Napoleon overthrew the Directory on November 9, 1799 and in which Louis Napoleon dissolved the assembly of France's Second Republic in 1851. Also, coup was a major occurrence in various Latin American nations in the 19th and 20th centuries (1960s) and in Africa after they gained independence. A recent one occurred in Mali which began in the night of 24 May when the Malian Army led by Vice President Bah N'daw, Prime Minister Moctar Ouane and Minister of Defence in person of Souleymane Doucoure were involved.

Coup d'etat is certainly avoidable if the civilian governments are up to their tasks in delivering the dividends of democracy that will trickle down to the grassroots. Once national cake is evenly distributed, the armed forces will not be aggrieved with the existing status-quo to go as far as demanding a change. Most often than not, before a coup could take place, there will be warning signals to depict bad governance and dissatisfaction from the electors before demanding certain reforms in accordance to the provisions of the constitution. And, if, demands for reforms were ignored, it will certainly create a condition for change of government thereby, giving opportunity to the military opportunists who are power mongers to use their ammunitions against such government that is

recalcitrant. For instance, many of the coups that took place in Africa and Nigeria in particular, they were with corrective undertones.

This paper tends to discuss military in African politics in respect to coup d'etat using Nigeria as a case study. The position is to state reasons for the coups and how the claims could not be justified no matter how good the intentions were because, in so many quarters, it is seen as unconstitutional and an aberration due to their modus operandi. They are to perform the role of securing the territorial integrity of the nation and that of ceremonial roles aside enforcing the law like the police and other security agencies.¹ The paper further examines the traditional roles of the military, the various military coups that took place in Nigeria since independence, the reasons and the consequences of their actions, why coups should be avoided and the way forward. In essence, this paper cuts across disciplines as it tends to be historical, sociological and political. Historical and multidisciplinary approach was used in data collection and analysis. The chronology covers Africa using Nigeria as an instance from the period of 1960 to at least 2014. It will therefore, serve the need of future references in the area of military history and politics.

Theoretical Framework

The best theory that can be used in analyzing this paper is the sociology of conflict theory. This is because, military intervention over time, has been as a result of dissatisfaction over civilian regime. Dissatisfaction over certain judgments could lead to reaction. More so, the role of the military is incompatible with that of the civilian. And defining and role differential could serve as a key role in determining the causes of conflict. According to Marx Weber's theory of conflict, Marx posits that there are three main sources of conflict which are: economic, social and political. This tends to focus on the competition between social groups. All the several coups could be attributed to this. One cannot sufficiently argue that there were no economic, social and political undertone in staging the various Nigerian coups.² Closely related to this is that of Ralph Dahrendorf. His theory of social conflict posits that conflict is necessary to achieve an end in the society.³ By this

Nasiru, J. Gimba, Military Rule and Nation Building Process in Nigeria. In *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Diplomacy*. International Sustainable Development Research Centre. Abuja. 2012. 98-107

Marx, K. and Engels, F. *The Communist Manifesto*. Trans Samuel Moore. 1848. 1967. London.²

Penguin. 15

Ralph Dahrendorf. Towards a Theory of Social Conflict. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol.³

2, No. 2. 1958. 170-183

theory, one can easily say coup is necessary for some military men to hold the instruments of power.

Meaning of Coup D'etat

It is similar to revolution but different in that, while coup is achieved by small group of people who seize control of all parts of the armed forces, the police, and other military elements, revolution is usually achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic, and political change. A coup is a change in power from the top that merely results in the abrupt replacement of a leading government official, example the President or Head of States and governments.

A coup is a seizure and removal of a government and its powers. It is an illegal seizure of power by a political faction, politician, cult, rebel group, military or a dictator. But it is good to note that a coup is only termed successful when the usurpers seize and hold power for at least seven days. When aborted, it is unsuccessful. In other words, even if it results in killing the politician in power and those who stage the coup could not exercise power over the instruments of state, that coup is regarded as not achieving its vested goals of holding power.

The Traditional Role of the Military and its Organisation

The role of a good military organization is characterized by hierarchy, centralization of command and unquestioned discipline, and authority as well as concentration of force. They have no room for the political methods because, it is antithetical to them and vice versa.⁴ This explain why military in African politics is usually a warlike politics. They operate on a zero-sum game. This is because, they are used to bloody combat. As a result, many coups are not without a blood shed to overthrow the existing government even though some may be bloodless.⁵ Although, the conflict and competition involving the major political parties that merged after independence in 1960 namely: Northern People Congress (NPC), National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) later for Nigerian Citizens and the Action Group (AG) etc. for the control of power within the federation, came to affect the constitutional role of the military (army), they are not to venture into politics. The military are to subordinate themselves to the authority

Bayo, J. Adekanye. The Military Factor, Politics in Military Context. Chapter Eleven. In Peter, P.⁴ Ekeh; Patrick Dele-Cole; and Gabriel, O. Olusanya. 1989. *Nigeria since Independence. The First 25 Years. Vol. V Politics and Constitutions*. Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project. Ibadan, Heinemann. 186

Bayo, J. Adekanye. The Military Factor, Politics in Military Context. Op.cit. 186⁵

of the legal government and to observe non-interference in the domestic party politics based on the liberal-democratic tradition inherited from Britain. So, the military are expected to mind their profession of war-making while leaving the business of politics and governing to the class of professional politicians. The military also, are to be impartial between various political parties competing for power while giving support to whatever party that is in control of government. This however, according to Bayo is inconsistent and counter-productive to the goal of civilian control if they must be neutral because, neutrality stipulates that the military should not be used as an organ of any partisan group. This according to him, was the reason for the downfall of Balewa regime partly because he was found guilty of this and this contributed to the coup of January, 1966.⁶

Various Coups that took Place in Nigeria Since 1960

First the paper will look at the various coups that took place in Nigeria before talking about their reasons or the causes of military intervention in the Nigerian politics. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has experienced the following coups: 1966 coup and counter coup, 1975 coup, 1976 coup, 1983 coup, 1985 coup, 1990 coup, 1993 coup and 2014 Enugu Government House attack.

The first coup in 1966 was led by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and Emmanuel Ifeajuna where they reportedly killed 22 people including the Prime Minister Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; many politicians and senior army ranks and their wives. Kaduna, Lagos and Ibadan were not spared in the attack and also, the Niger and Benue River experienced a blockade. It happened within two days before they were subdued. This brought Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi to power. The consequences were grave as it halted the activities of First Republic. This no doubt, was the genesis of distrust in the body politics of Nigeria as the plotters were people of Igbo extraction. Aside the plotters being Ibos, the baton was passed to an Igbo man. After independence, this began the trouble with Nigeria. This was seen as a case of conspiracy theory which further led to a counter coup in the same year 1966. In effect, the counter coup that followed was a retaliatory measure by the northerners who were hard-hit by the coup. This in consequence, led to the death of many innocent Igbo soldiers and civilians as a precursor to the Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970. Although the coup failed, it ended the First Nigerian Republic. Though the conspirators were arrested, it did not heal the wounds of the victims and with this began the beginning of the Supreme Military

Council of Nigeria (1966-1979) and also, the beginning of the 1966 anti-Igbo pogrom and the counter coup six months later. The counter coup was called "July Rematch" masterminded by Lt. Colonel Murtala Muhammad and many northern military officers on 28 July, 1966 in which the first Military Head of States Aguyi Ironsi met his waterloo and General Johnson Fajuyi in Ibadan by disgruntled northern non-commissioned officers which brought Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power by the conspirators.⁷

The 1975 coup was a bloodless coup that took place on 29 July 1975 when a faction of junior Armed officers overthrew General Yakubu Gowon when he was away to attend the 12th summit of Organisation of African Unity in Kampala, Uganda. Colonel Joseph Nanven Garba announced the coup in a broadcast. The plotters appointed Brigadier Murtala Muhammad as the head of state and Brigadier Olusegun Obasanjo as the deputy.⁸ The 1976 coup on the other hand, happened in February when a factional Armed Forces Officers led by Lt. Colonel Buka Suka Dimka attempted to overthrow General Murtala Muhammad. Murtala was killed in Lagos with his aide-de-camp, Lt. Akintunde Akinsehinwa at Dodan Barracks.⁹ The coup was crushed and Dimka arrested and executed by firing squad on 15 May 1976. And Late General Muhammad was succeeded by Olusegun Obasanjo.¹⁰ The 1983 coup was carried out on 31 December which led to the ousting of power of a democratically elected government of President Shehu Shagari and this brought General Muhammadu Buhari to power as head of state.¹¹ In 1985, another coup took place and led by the then Chief of Army Staff, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida overthrew General Muhammadu Buhari. Ibrahim Babangida later took power and detained Mumamadu in Benin until 1988.¹²

Siollun, Max. 2009. *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup Culture (1966-1976)*.⁷

Algoma. 98-110

Faiola, Toyin and Heaton, Matthew. 2008. *A History of Nigeria*. Cambridge University Press. See⁸ also, Ndaeyo, Uko, 2004. *Romancing the Gun: the Press as a Promoter of Military Rule*. Africa Research and Publications. Solomon, Obotetukudo. 2011. *The inaugural Addresses and Ascension Speeches of Nigerian Elected and Non-elected Presidents and Prime Ministers from 1960-2010*. University Press of America 66-68

Siollun, Max, opp.cit. 193⁹

Nigeria Arrests Leader of Coup. *The New York Times*. 7 March 1976. Retrieved 16 July 2019.¹⁰

Cited in wikipedia. 28-11-2022. 1pm

Omoigui, Nowa. *History of Civil Military Relations in Nigeria. The Second Transition, 1979-1983*. 2015.

Faiola, Toyin and Heaton, Matthew. 2008. *A History of Nigeria*. 271¹²

Another coup on 22 April 1990 took place to overthrow Babangida but he escaped. It was led by Major Gideon Orka.¹³ In 1993 also, another bloodless coup took place on November 17th. The Armed Forces headed by Defense Minister General Sani Abacha forced the Interim President of Chief Ernest Shonekan to resign. Shonekan succeeded Babangida in the aftermath of his annulment of the 12 June presidential election.¹⁴ Abacha stayed in power until his death on 8 June, 1998 at Aso Villa in Abuja and was succeeded by Chief of Defense Staff Major General Abdulsalami Abubakar as head of state¹⁵ who also led a successful transition to the present Fourth Republic. In 2014, there was also, the Enugu Government House Attack in March 8. Members of the militant group - Biafra Zionist Federation took control of the state house for about four hours and erected the flag of Biafra at the entrance of the house. It was led by Barrister Benjamin Onwuka who gave Nigerians living in Biafran territory an ultimatum to leave their land before 31 March 2014 or face death.¹⁶ Though it has become a recurring fight, the Nigerian government has been on top of the situation until otherwise.

Reasons or Causes of Coups and Military Politics in Nigeria

Causes are the reasons why military men often engage in politics. The number one reason is usually for puritanism or correction. Second is reprisal. For instance in 1966 first coup in Nigeria, Alexander Madiebo explained that, Nzeogwu told him that, the reason or the aim of his revolution was to get rid of the corrupt and incorrigible politicians and have them replaced with nationalists.¹⁷ The incorrigible means a lot. They are regarded as political profiteers of obnoxious status quo, ten percenters, those who are engaged in kickbacks and bribe, as well as those who have drawn the calendar of Nigeria backward and small in the eyes of international communities. Though Nzeogwu regretted using force to do this, when it could have been done through democratic election, he was compelled to do so because according to him, the system of election and democratic system was

The Orkar Coup of April 22, 1990. Cited in wikipedia. 28/11/22. 1.30 pm¹³
Nigerian Military Leader Ousts Interim President. *The New York Times*. 18 November, 1993.¹⁴

Retrieved 11 July, 2019. Cited in Wikipedia on 25/11/22. 2pm.
BBC News. Nigeria. Abacha Dies at 54. Cited from: bbc.co.uk¹⁵

Why we attacked Government House. ProBiafran Group. Sunewsonline.com. 11 July, 2014. See¹⁶

also: Onwuka, We Seized Government House for Four Hours. *Vanguardngr.com*. 11 July, 2014
Alexander, A. Madiebo. 1980. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Enugu. Fourth¹⁷

no longer possible in Nigeria.¹⁸ Another reason could be for reprisal or counter coup. For instance, Johnson Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi-Ironsi the first military head of state was overthrown in a counter coup since he was an Igbo man that emerged from Nzeogwu's led coup.¹⁹ As seen above, most often as not, military intervention in African politics are usually misguided though with corrigible undertones. Many great scholars including Tekena Tamuno²⁰, do not have contrary view as to the reasons for military ventures in politics and how their constitutional role does not permit that.

The reason for the 1975 coup was due to the unhappiness of junior officers at the lack of progress Gowon had made in moving the country forward towards democratic rule.²¹ In 1976 coup, Lt. Colonel Dimka cited corruption; indecision, arrest and detention without trial, weakness on the part of Muhammad and maladministration.²² In 1985 for instance, Babangida justified the coup to Buhari's failure to deal with the country's economic problems by implementing Buhari ideals called Buharism. He quickly promise to resuscitate the economy out of the decades' ashes of mismanagement and corruption. He then replaced the Supreme Military Council with Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) and this lasted until 1993. He himself, survived a coup attempt in 1986 and 1990.²³ In Gideon Orkar's coup of 1990, his reasons were: for the excision of five northern states of Nigeria namely Borno, Bauchi, Katsina, Kano and Sokoto²⁴ as he accused Babangida of life presidency, marginalization of the people of Niger Delta and the entire Southern part of the country. It was the most deadliest and bloodiest coup in Nigeria due to death toll recorded in the shootouts between the rebel forces and the government troops.²⁵ Abacha on his part, cited the stagnant nature of Shonekan's government, and his inability to manage the democratic process in the country as a cause for him to force him to resign.²⁶ Most often than

Alexander, A. Madiebo. 1980. 19¹⁸

Alexander, A. Madiebo. 1980. 29-34. ¹⁹

Tekena, N. Tamuno. 2012. *Stakeholders at War in Nigeria*. Ibadan. Stirling-Harden Publishers. ²⁰

3-77

Omoigui, Nowa. 2006. *Military Rebellion of July 29, 1975: the Coup against Gowon*. ²¹
Nigeria Arrests Leader of Coup. *The New York Times*. 7 March 1976. Retrieved 16 July 2019. ²²

Cited in wikipedia. 28-11-2022. 1pm
Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Buharism as Fascism: Engaging Balarabe Musa. London. February 20, ²³
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History, Socio-Economic and Political issues. Cited in wikipedia. 27/11/22. 10am
Omoigui, Nowa. The Orkar Failed Coup of April 22, 1990. *Urhobo Historical Society*. Retrieved ²⁵
13 July, 2015. Cited in Wikipedia on 26/11/22. 6pm.

Nigeria Military Ruler Assumes Absolute Power. *The New York Times*. 7 September, 1994.²⁶

not, all these boils down to issues of national questions. These problems emanate from how to order the relations between the despairing ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groupings so that they may have the same right and privileges, access to power and an equitable share of national resources. It also debate as to whether our constitution facilitates or inhibits our march to nationhood, or whether the goal itself is mistaken in order to seek other political arrangements to facilitate our search for legitimacy and development. So, Nigerians are concerned about how to live in harmony and self-determination to each, if need be. The issues left unresolved, always triggers coup.²⁷ Johnson, O. Olaniyi²⁸ and Olusanya, G.O. all expressed similar reasons to why Nigeria has not been freed from coups.²⁹

I also want to believe the problem to be in accepting our force unity despite variety of differences. For instance, our unity is based on fear of isolation and resources should we separate and this fear has created more problems than our unity. To me, it is better we face our fears and deal with it. For instance, in 1956, Nigeria would have attained independence but the disagreement between the leaders of the North and those of Western and Eastern Regions stalled it. The north preferred to solve the problem gradually but due to the fear of isolation and been subjected to pass an 18 Point Program on the floor of its regional legislature, which if enforced, would have seriously impaired the unity of the country, they accepted it based on the persuasion that, the unity of Nigeria was more important than its disemberment on the basis of the imaginary line of latitude that had been created for it by its elite.³⁰

Olusegun Obasanjo chronicled the genesis as not far from tribalism, favouritism, double standards and general indiscipline as a result of over-politicization within the army and in general. It was the mishandling of the elections in Western region and the subsequent total break-down of law and order which resulted in complete insecurity of life and property that was the last straw. The nation was sick they said and was at the verge of brink. And so, a rescue

Ayodele, Jimoh. The Concept of National Question. In Hassan A. Saliu, Ayodele Jimoh and ²⁷ Tunde Arosanya. Eds. 2006. *The National Question and Some Selected Topical Issues on Nigeria*. Ibadan. Vantage Publishers. 7

Johnson, O. Olaniyi. Understanding the Epileptic Nature of Nigerian Parties. In Ikime, O. Ed. ²⁸ *Groundwork of Nigerian History*. Ibadan. Heinemann. 91-117

Olusanya, G.O. Nationalist Movements. In Ikime. PP 545-569 and his book on Constitutional ²⁹ Development, 1861-1960. In Ikime. 518-544

Richard, A. Olaniyan and Adetunji Ojo Ogunyemi. Nigeria's Disamalgamation: A Chronicle of³⁰ the Codes of Conduct of its Advocates. In Jonn, A.A. Ayoade, Adeoye A. Akinsanya and Olatunji JB Ojo. Eds. 2004. *Nigeria Descent into Anarchy and Collapse?* John Archers. 56

operation was thought to be desirable.³¹ Corroborating this is Adewale Ademoyega who quoted Ifeajuna to have said the politicians have failed the people and that in effect, there was nothing to follow the political chaos except the disintegration of the country, unless there were men of goodwill who would rally round to fight for the survival of their country.³² In another evidence by W.E. Gutteridge, the initial coup had politically radical purposes: it sought to overthrow a conservative Northern dominated regime in the interests of a new concept of 'one Nigeria'.³³

The nexus between these various coups, centres on the need for reform. The plotters in one way or the other all accused the incumbent civilian or military regimes as unwanted. Is either they accuse them of slowness or lack of progress. Some also have personal ego and desire to rule. Be that as it may, the common denominator is that military intervention is an aberration and they usually fail to deliver on their promises. Sometimes, they are even worse than the people they accused.

Coup Management and the Role of Media

Managing coup is a very herculean task. However, coups are more likely to result in democratic system when the usurpers lead a peaceful transition.³⁴ Also, coups that occur during the Civil War might shorten the duration of such a war.^{35 36} Coup can also be used as a campaign against the civilians that have refused to reform the nation. And so, can be used as a tool and a method of managing political and economic crisis of a nation.³⁷ Although there are debates on how coups can be managed, existing studies provide insights on counterbalancing strategies. Long standing civilian regimes who know how to carry people along, can go a long way to prevent a coup. For instance since the Fourth Republic, Obasanjo was able to put up a structure that have literally disarmed the armed

Olusegun, Obasanjo. The Coup. Chapter six. In Olusegun, Obasanjo. *Nzeogwu*. Ibadan. Spectrum.³¹

78-103

Adewale, Ademoyega. 1981. *Why We Struck. The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*. Ibadan. Evans³²

Brothers. 72.

Gutteridge, W.E. 1975. *Military Regimes in Africa*. Studies in African History. Methuen and Co.³³

Ltd. 110-111

Brooks, Risa A. Interrogating the Civil Military Relations Subfield. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 22(1). 2019. 379-398³⁴

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Thyne, Clayton. The Impact of Coups d'Etat on Civil War Duration. In *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. 34(3). 2015³⁶

Fekete. Coup as a Method of Management. Crisis Management Methods in Hungary in the³⁷

Eighties. *Acta Oeconomica*. Vol. 42 (1-2). 1990. 55-72

forces from venting into politics by way of making himself the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. In Saudi Arabia for instance, Ibn Saud the founder of Saudi Arabia built two coercive institutions outside the regular army namely the Royal Guard made up of tribal retainers and the White Army (National Guard).³⁸ These combined forces could challenge any armed man that tries to alter the monarchical system. Other ways to prevent a coup is for everyone to commit to actions that represents the Rule of Law, stability and non-violence. Resistance through strikes and refusing orders and shutting down civil society could be helpful. This could deter the coup effort to attract international support. People can also focus on widely shared democratic values instead of individuals. The citizenry can trust the electoral process. This is because, coups tend to fail when government institutions like election are trusted. According to Daniel Hunter, preparing for coup is another way of managing a coup and is a must. That there is a need to prepare for a coup in order not to be taken unaware.³⁹ Again, it can be managed by foreign intervention. For instance, the United States and the donor countries can use their good offices to implement assistance for military and security institutions abroad to strengthen their governance and as well boost their businesses and economies for the purpose of stability. The United States can also implement the 2019 Global Fragility Act.⁴⁰ But this may pose suspicion and fear as to American domination of their economy and politics.

The media plays a very important role in directing and changing the course of a coup depending on how it is handled and managed. For instance, they usually play the role of a "market place of ideas" in order to provide a platform for alternative views.⁴¹ More often than not, the media dominate public discourse on why, how, when and where it happened. This helps in historical dissemination of information through reportage. The mainstream and social media sometimes, influences the way events played out especially when the media men are in support of a coup. This usually provide the room for the group staging the coup to seize the National TV broadcaster, Radio Television and other means to

De Bruin, Erica. *How to Prevent Coups d'Etat: Counterbalancing and Regime Survival*. 2020.³⁸

Cornell University Press.

Daniel, Hunter, IO Things You Need to Know to Stop a Coup. *Waging Nonviolence. People³⁹ Powered News and Analysis*. 2020, wagingnonviolence.org. Accessed 25-02-2023. 10am

Thomas P. Sheer, Edward A. Burner, Ena Dion and Emily Cole. *Making Peace Possible. United⁴⁰*

States Institute of Peace. 2022

Fatima el Issawi. The Role of Egyptian Media in the Coup. *European Institute of the⁴¹ Mediterranean*. lemed.org. 4:50 pm. Accessed 25-03-2023. 5:19pm. She is a Research Fellow at POLIS

Department of Media and Communication, London School of Economics

announce the change of regime. This happened as alluded in some quarters in the Burkina Faso coup of September 2022. Which removed the Interim President Paul-Henri Sandao Damiba.⁴² Media are often used to shore up their position. Media can be used as a tool to direct and motivate communication which might lead to the success or failure of a coup depending on the reliability of information provided. They can hold the politicians accountable for the freedom of the citizenry depending on how discreet the matter is handled.

The Implications and Legacies of Military Regimes in Nigeria and why Coups should be avoided

According to Peter P. Ekeh, paraphrased, African politics has declined to a streak of pessimism due to changes in African political hopes.⁴³ Citing Rene Dumont, this could be regarded as "False Start in Africa".⁴⁴ By extension, Ekeh reduced the problems of the Nigerian political process to difficult relations between state and society.⁴⁵ Military in African politics does not necessarily involve bargaining, compromise, persuasion and reconciliation among groups of otherwise competing individuals, all of whom have interest in peaceful resolution of their conflict, and none, are oriented toward destroying each other.⁴⁶ They have truly dashed African hopes in politics due to frequent change in government and the ethnic consciousness they created shortly after independence. The world is divided between democracy, communism and totalitarian regimes. As explained above, anything short of the traditional role of the military, will degenerate the society into a condition of anarchy because it is antithetic to Westminster metonym that is backing the Nigerian constitution. They are always in a blood pool. Even in monarchical system as seen in 1789-1799 France and the Russian Revolution of 1917, were not devoid of force; royal edicts; decrees and were not without mutinies, how much more military rule that only understand the language of war? So far, we cannot say they have done well since they ventured into politics because their actions of the use of force and illegal seizure of power

Emma Heywood, Emmanuel Klimis, Lassane Yemeogo and Marie Fierens. Burkina Faso: the⁴² Key Role Played by the Media in the Latest Coup. February 3, 2022. 4:26pm. *Reuters/Anne Mimault. The Conversion.com*

Peter, P. Ekeh. Nigeria's Emergent Political Culture. Introductory Chapter. In Peter, P. Ekeh;⁴³ Patrick Dele-Cole; and Gabriel, O. Olusanya. 1989. op.cit. 8
Rene, Dumont. 1966. *False Start in Africa*. London. Andrew Deutsch⁴⁴

Peter, P. Ekeh opp.cit. 8⁴⁵
Bayo, J. Adekanye. The Military Factor, Politics in Military Context. Chapter Eleven. In Peter,⁴⁶
P. Ekeh; Patrick Dele-Cole; and Gabriel, O. Olusanya. 1989. *Nigeria since Independence*. 186

usually characterized by blood shed of military men and sometimes even civilians is unconstitutional and has no basis in both domestic and international law.

There are many reasons to avoid coup. Among the many reasons, the following will be considered:

Coup should be avoided because, it rarely alters a nation's fundamental social, economic and political policies. Also, it does not usually or significantly redistribute power among competing political groups. It also creates fear in the civilians and even members of the armed forces who were not expecting such overturn. It discontinues existing policies and politics of the nation. It throws the nation into a state of chaos. It leads to destruction of lives and properties by way of shootings and killings. It also attracts global condemnation. It is an aberration because, it leads to dictatorship. Also, the military men, rule by decrees, edict, command and acts which may not favour the citizenry. Aside this, it is usually against the will of the majority for use of force and threat and thus, are denied their rights of free franchise. Sanction may also be imposed by the comity of nations who are working in favour of the rule of law and democratic ideals. So, it should be avoided by all means. Also, many a times, they will promise return to normalcy by handing over to the civilians but rarely did this happen. It was only the military head of state in person of Abdulsalami Abubakar ruled from 9th June, 1998 to 29th May, 1999 that handed over within a year to the civilians after restoring order at the death of General Sani Abacha.

The Way Forward

You don't have to seize power to support and correct any politicians. The lawmakers can do so if they are willing and have the moral fiber and justification to do so through impeachment or wait to turn things around when another opportunity provides itself through election which is done periodically. They can also join politics when they resign from their constitutional role as military officers. If it becomes necessary and compulsory to use force to save the nation under a condition of anarchy, the coup should be bloodless and a return to civil rule should be perfected within a year as exemplified by Abdulsalami Abubakar who took over from Abacha through natural forces other than coup. This last suggestion becomes necessary with the look of things in present day Nigeria where the politicians have no foreseeable reform agenda that will safeguard the economy and the unity of the nation because their consciences are seared. They

no longer conform to the rule of law. If the civilians cannot deliver, what hope do the people have left? Military takeover if properly managed, without ulterior motive of life presidency, prebendalism, profiteering, inertia, brigandage, and ineptitudeness will be a welcome development to avoid a situation of anarchy where Nigeria is today, already heading to being led by the politicians. But in all and constitutionally, change must be through election. So, any other means is illegal. The media also have a role to play in making sure that they garner the support of the masses in kicking against any illegal and unpopular regime that might want to impose themselves in governance. The media is the eyes of the people and a medium that serves as intermediary between the people's will and the government of the day. They can avoid been used to declare a coup because coup is illegal. This prompts the need for the media to be independent and to have a standing army of their own if possible to forestall such an illegal scene that is undemocratic.

Conclusion

In a nutshell and from the foregoing, it is crystal clear that Nigeria passed through many coups since 1960. It is also clear that the independence politicians did not do well as they were not able to deliver maximally to save Nigeria from the brink of disunity, political disorder and from the intervention of the military that follows. It has also been established that it is unconstitutional for the military to take over power by force. It has also been observed that despite avalanche of reasons on their intervention in politics citing the instances of incorrigibility and corruption, they are not different as they are part of the larger Nigerian society that is corrupt. All that is needed is to deal with the issue of corruption and manage well. If they must rule, they can pass through the normal tunnel (election) when they resign or after retirement. They can also offer advisory role or guidance to the politicians while playing their traditional role of protecting the territorial integrity of the nation. All that is required in this nation is fear of God, integrity and honesty as well as attitudinal change on the way we view things and act because, the change we need begins with everyone. It is further observed that both the politicians and the civilians all have cockroaches in their cupboards for failing to put Nigeria on the part of progress and development beyond the current state of affairs. All the darkrooms in our countries must be lighted up for the gloomy situations to disappear. We all have a role to play in staging this crusade as it is a constitutional role we owe Nigeria to be patriotic. Also, as stated above, the media

is the final stage on whether a coup succeeds or not. So, the media can be empowered against any unpopular junta or rebel group when the media is not politicized for such a vested end.

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