Demilitarisation and Democratic Re-orientation in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and Prospects

By *Said Adejumobi*

"Demilitarisation of the Nigerian polity is one of the most important and difficult exercises the Obasanjo Administration must perform for the nation. This project has to be thorough, comprehensive and even radical in conception. Unless the Nigerian military is transformed in this way, the country will never become a constitutional democracy."

Richard Joseph[1]

"We must establish a new relationship between a military order which will be subordinate to civil rule and a new civil rulership that will not receive its mandate from the military."

Peter Ekeh[2]

1.   Introduction

A military disengagement process often euphemistically referred to as Transition to Civil Rule Programme was recently completed in Nigeria.[3] This disengagement plan is unique in three important senses. First it is the shortest disengagement plan by the military in Nigeria's political history. More often, military regimes in Nigeria are used to the "luxury" of elaborate, extremely costly and mostly dubious political transition programmes with a minimum of three year period. Secondly, the disengagement plan is the least regimented amongst all military authored transitions in Nigeria's political history. It contained less "bobby-traps", "landmines" and "ambushes", which were the main features of the Baban-

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[1]   *Richard Joseph*, Nigeria and the Challenge of Leadership, Tell Magazine, No. 27, July 5, 1999, p. 49.

[2]   *Peter Ekeh*, Pitfalls in Renewed Transition to Civil Rule in Nigeria, in: Democracy and Development, Vol. 1, October-December 1998, pp. 12-14.

[3]   The Abubakar political transition programme was completed on May 29, 1999, with the handover of power to elected civilian leaders.

gida and Abacha political transition plans.[*] However, this does not suggest that the transition was on high count in terms of the "freeness", or "fairness", especially of its elections.

Thirdly, the disengagement process in terms of its net result, produced the emergence of the "retired soldier" as a new, but very powerful phenomenon in Nigerian politics. From Local Government council, to the State House of Assemblies, to Governorship, to National Assembly, and up to the presidency, retired soldiers emerged as a powerful social force. They now dominate the political space. Less surprise therefore, that the change of baton at the level of the Presidency was from a "serving general" to a "retired general". This trend of a "retired soldier" phenomenon has been variously interpreted. For some, what this clearly signifies is that it is not yet "Uhuru" for democracy in Nigeria, as what occurred can best be described as nothing but "army arrangement"[5]. Others simply argue that, although the transition process was filled with imperfections, it could serve as a starting point in the democratic reconstruction of the country. They posit that given the demention of the polity by the military, Nigeria is bound to go through two phases of political transition. The first is that which disengages the military from power, and the second, when the project and struggle for democracy actually begins, in a post-military era.

Given the above preview, how is the project of demilitarisation to be viewed in Nigeria? Is it synonymous simply with military disengagement and is it fully accomplished when civil rule is established? What is the linkage between demilitarisation and democratisation? How can a democratic re-orientation of the state and civil society be engineered in a country, which has been badly devastated by ruthless military dictatorship, domination and savagery for the last fifteen years? These are some of the salient issues which this paper seeks to address. Our objective is to provide a theoretical and, of course, practical basis, on which the project of democratic re-ordering of the state and society in Nigeria could be anchored.

[‡] For a critique of the Babangida and Abacha political transition programmes, see *Abubakar Momoh / Said Adejumobi*, The Nigerian Military and the Crisis of Democratic Transition: A Study in the Monopoly of Power, Lagos, CLO, 1999; *Jibo Ibrahim* (ed.), Expanding the Nigerian Democratic Space, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1997; *Larry Diamond / A. Kirk-Greene / O. Oyediran* (eds.), Transition without End, Ibadah, Vantage Publisher, 1997; *Olufemi Mimiko* (ed.), Crisis and Contradictions in Nigeria's Democratisation Process: 1986-1993, Akure, Stebak, 1995.

[5] The phrase "Army Arrangement" was popularised by the famous Nigerian musician Fela Anikulapo Kuti, who used it to describe the manipulations and intrigues of military rulers, in the process of political mis-governance in Nigeria.

2. Demilitarisation and Democratisation: Conceptual and Theoretical Nexus

In extant literature, the concept of demilitarisation implies the "disengagement" or "withdrawal" of the military from the political arena.[6] This definition of demilitarisation follows logically from its antonyms, that is, militarisation and militarism. Militarisation is viewed as the armed build-up and engagement of society, through military coups, authoritarian regimes, war, armed conflicts, internal military intervention and the dominance of patriarchal powerful military and repressive state apparatuses, while militarism refers to the pervasiveness in society of symbols, values, discourses validating military power.[7] The implicit assumption in the above conception of demilitarisation therefore is that as the military withdraws from the political arena, these identified practices and norms associated with militarisation and militarism would be vitiated and the polity and society would seek a civil balance.

However, this definition is more formalistic and structural, rather than process-based, and does not capture the twists and nuances in the notion of demilitarisation. The problematic of this definition arises primarily from its simplistic casualty or symmetry between militarisation/militarism and military rule. The point to emphasize is that the practice of militarisation and militarism is not synonymous with only military rule (but present also in civil regimes) hence, these practices do not simply get abrogated with the withdrawal of the military from the political arena. More especially, post-military states usually have entrenched norms and practices of militarism which are not easily deconstructed or eradicated with the formal transfer of political power from the military to civilians.

Our conceptualisation of demilitarisation therefore must transcend the idea of the formal withdrawal of the military from the political area. It must include the deconstruction of the ideological and institutional structures of militarism and authoritarian ethos, and the reassertion of civil control and democratic culture over the organs of the state, economy and civil society.[8] The latter (i.e. civil society) although outside the state area, usually gets acculturated with the symbols, language, values and norms of militarism under military rule, which require being addressed and deconstructed in a post-military era.

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[6] See *Bayo Adekson*, Nigeria in Search of a Stable Civil-Military System, Gower, Westview Press, 1981, p. 13.

[7] *Robin Luckham*, The Military Militarisation and Democratisation in Africa: A survey of literature and issues, in: *Eboe Hutchful / Abdoulaye Bathily* (eds.), The Military and Militarism in Africa. Dakar, CODESRIA, 1998, pp. 14-15. Also see *Susan Willett*, Demilitarisation, Disarmament and Development in Southern Africa, Review of African Political Economy, No. 77, 1998, pp. 409-430.

[8] See *P. Batcher / S. Willet*, Disarmament and Defence: Industrial Adjustment in South Africa, Oxford, Oxford University Press for SIPRI, 1998.

It is when demilitarisation is conceived in this broader sense, that is provides a linkage with the concept of democratisation. Democratisation involves the creation and expansion of the political space for multiple actors to interact, negotiate, compete, and seek political self-realisation, within set and permissible rules. Democratisation is a process through which the institutional infrastructures germane to the construction of a democratic polity are established (e.g. Parliament, impartial Judiciary and Police, press etc.), civil liberties are codified and guaranteed, the rule of law suffices and a process of constitutionalism engineered.[9] Democratisation should be viewed not as an event, but a continuous process[10], implicit with struggles and contradictions and could be fitful, perfunctory, rough and tough.

Demilitarisation and democratisation are therefore set in an organic linkage on two basic grounds. First, is on their background and object. They both constitute attempts at the reconstruction of the political order from an autocratic to a relatively more open political system. Secondly, they are in real senses products of social and political struggles, meant to emancipate a people. The end result of both when properly concretised, should be the establishment of a democratic political order and society.

3.   Demilitarisation Project in Nigeria: An Overview

Demilitarisation in the Nigerian context is mostly conceived in the forma and structural sense. That is the withdrawal of the military from the political arena. The method of doing so involves a constitutional-evolutionary process, through which new political institutions and structures are established (i.e. electoral body, political parties etc.) and a constitution-making process set in motion for the country.

Often times, some structural adjustment are made in the federal structure of the country through the creation of new states and local governments, out of the existing ones. In addition, some efforts at political re-education of the civilian political elite is conducted by the military. This was the method adopted in the Murtala/Obasanjo (1976-1979), the Baban-

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[9] There has been expansive discourse on the notion of democratisation both globally and in the African context. See for example, *George Sorensen*, Democracy and Democratisation, Colorado, Westview Press, 1993; *Eshetu Chole / Jibo Ibrahim*, Democratisation Processes in Africa: problems and Prospects, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1995; *Patrick Chabal*, A few considerations on Democracy in Africa, in: International Affairs, Vol. 74, No. 2, 1998, pp. 289-303; *Goran Hyden*, Democratisation and the Liberal Paradigm in Africa, in: Africa Insight, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1997; *Sadiq Rasheed*, The Democratisation Process and Popular Participation in Africa: Emerging Realities and the Challenges Ahead, in: Development and Change, Vol. 26, 1995, pp. 333-354; *G. Nzongola Ntalaja / M. Lee* (eds.), The State and Democracy in Africa, Harare, AAPS, 1997.

[10] See *Said Adejumobi*, The Structural Adjustment Programme and Democratic Transition in Africa, in: VRÜ, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1996, p. 433.

gida (1985-1993), the Abacha (1994-1998) and the Abubakar (1998-1999) demilitarisation projects. Perhaps, it was only during the Abubakar demilitarisation plan that new states and local governments could not be created partly because of time constraint.

Military regimes in their demilitarisation plans usually emphasize the object of democratisation. The component parts of the plan include the withdrawal of the military from the political arena, and some efforts at its re-professionalisation, a didactic process of political re-orientation for the civilian political elite, and the establishment of new political structures. However, there are apparent contradictions in the focus and processes of the demilitarisation project and the demand of democratisation. These are in three areas. First, the issue of establishing civil control over the military is seldomly addressed. For military regimes, the question of military subordinacy to civil authority is usually posed in material terms. That is, increasing the level of military expenditure, giving material inducements to military officers (like car gifts and salary increases, especially for the officers corps like it happened under the Babangida regime) and allowing the top hierarchy of the military unrestricted access to state contracts and the treasury.

The assumption is that once military officers are materially comfortable, they are most unlikely to be tempted to seize political power. But as Nicolo Machiavelli once observed, materialism and military life are diametrically opposed. The former breeds avarice, greed and reckless ambition, while the latter demands discipline, selflessness, sacrifice and commitment.[11] As such, what materialism produces out of the military, are mercenary soldiers. The issues of legal, institutional and operational modes of civil control over the military and also that of the institutional reform of the military, are left unaddressed.

Secondly, military authored demilitarisation plans take on the task of moulding a new political culture for the political elite and society. Ironically, what the military perpetuates through this is to further militarise the political space and deepen military psyche in the political society. As the example of the Babangida and Abacha demilitarisation plans clearly illustrated, the political society was suffocated with rules, regulations, overbearing controls and military orders, such that political actors were denied any initiative and were made to act like political robots. During the Babangida transition programme, over 1,000 decrees were issued on political and electoral matters, and politicians were screened and re-screened, with many banned or disqualified from participating in the political process by

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[11] See *Bayo Adekanye*, Machiavelli and the Military: The Prince and the Psychology of Empty Power, in: Strategic Studies (Islamabad), Vol. VIII, No. 2, 1985, pp. 9-36.

the military junta.[12] Invariably, the military became the only actor in its disengagement process.

Thirdly, the institutional base of militarism are neither deconstructed nor reformed in the demilitarisation plan. These include the police force, which under military regimes usually act as a Gestapo force, terrorising the civil populace and the state security service (SSS), which was transformed into a mafia group under the Babangida and Abacha regimes and became an instrument of fear, frenzy and civil insecurity in the society. The enfeebled nature of the judiciary made any redress by the civil populace difficult, if not absolutely impossible, hence, the rule of law was a hoax. There was blatant abuse and manipulation of the judiciary and the judicial process, as the issue of appointment, promotion, tenure and security of office of Judges depended largely on the whims and caprices of the military rulers. The consequence was that many of the Judges were either docile or inactive and succumbed to the intimidation and blackmail of the military. It was not uncommon therefore to see Judges referring to the military rulers as "Kabiyesi" (His Royal Majesty), whose actions or decisions cannot be questioned or inquired into by the citizens.[13]

The result of the foregoing contradictions of the military demilitarisation project in Nigeria is that post-military state or regime are usually very weak, with all the trappings of authoritarianism and are often susceptible to a military backlash through military coups or counter-coups.

4.   Genuine Demilitarisation and the Evolution of a Democratic Order: Issues and Problems

In demilitarising the Nigerian political and social space and engendering democratic re-orientation and a new democratic order, which would be stable and durable, there are three dimensions or issues which could serve as analytical/practical bases of reform, and on which those goals could be constructed. These are the military question, the issue of public institutions and the civil society question. The military question takes two major dimen-

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[12] See *Said Adejumobi*, Structural Adjustment and Transition to Civil Rule Programme in Nigeria, 1986-1993: A Shrinking of Democratic Agenda, in: *Olufemi Mimiko* (ed.), Crisis and Contradictions in Nigeria's Democratisation process, 1986-1993, op. cit. (Fn. 4)

[13] In 1989, A Chief Judge of Lagos State, Justice Ligali Ayorinde, in dismissing a suit brought before his court against General Ibrahim Babangida, challenging Babangida's decision on the dissolution of the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), referred to General Babangida as "Kabiyesi" (His Royal Highness), whose actions cannot be queried or challenged by any citizen. See *Clement Nwankwo*, the Nigerian Judicial System and Human Rights, in: *Larry Diamond* et al., Transition without End, op. cit. (Fn. 4), p. 404.

sions. These are the issue of reforming and re-orienting the military institutions and the issue of the retired soldiers in politics. These issues will be discussed in a sequential order.

5. Reforming and Re-orienting the Military Institution

It is ironic yet true, that the Nigerian military has been the worst victim of military rule. Es Aboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily rightly observed, military rule apart from being an important ingredient in the decay of the state in Africa has facilitated the disintegration of the military institution itself.[14] At the dawn of self-rule in most African states the military institution was regarded as the most patriotic, nationalistic and puritanic public institution. It was on this basis that the theory of the "modernising soldier", popularised in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly by western scholars, was constructed and legitimised. However, long years of military rule has fractured the military institution, both from within and outside, and lay bare the tenuousness of the "modernising soldier" argument.[15] From within, the professional ethos of *esprit de corps*, pyramidal hierarchy, discipline, and strict subordination have all been squandered. From without, the incompetence of the military in governance, with the greed, avarice, opportunism and reckless corruption by military officers have been exposed and made quite palpable to the society. The military, particularly in Nigeria, has lost all iota of respect and public credibility.

In Nigeria, although the size of the military has grown astronomically after independence, from a size of 10,000 in 1960 to 250,000 in 1970 and slightly down to around 150,000 in the 1980s, so also has been its claim on public resources. The military has over time maintained a high budgetary profile in the national accounts. From a budgetary allocation of 4% in 1960 (immediate post-independence era), this increased to 19.4% in 1973, down to 13.1% in 1981 and further down to 9.8% in 1987. Between 1994n and 1999, the allocation to the defence sector as percentage of the Federal Government budget was on the average of 15.8%.This did not include the extra-budgetary allocations made to the defence sector. Those allocations are far higher than that of the social sectors like education and health. The two sectors (education and health) were allocated an average of 2% and 1% respectively of the Federal Government expenditure between 1980 and 1990.

Paradoxically, neither the increase in the size of the Nigerian military, nor its colossal drain of public resources has been transformed into professional integrity and value. Military

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[14] *Eboe Hutchful / Abdoulaye Bathily*, Introduction, in: *Eboe Hutchful / Abdoulaye Bathily*(eds.), The Military and Militarism in Africa, op. cit. (Fn. 7), p. iv.

[15] For a discourse and critique of the modernising soldier theory, see *Bayo Adekanye*, On the Theory of Modernising Soldier: A Critique, in: Current Research on Peace and Violence, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1978, pp. 29-40.

professional ethos have deteriorated sharply in the Nigerian Armed Forces. Disorderliness, reckless ambition, intrigues, blackmail, dirty politicking, fraud and manipulations are the new norms of military life in Nigeria.

Indeed, a former Chief of Army Staff, General Salisu Ibrahim (retired) once remarked that the Nigerian Military has become "a military of anything goes". General Alani Akinriade (retired), a former Chief of Army Staff in Nigeria, also noted that the Nigerian Military has ceased to be a national or a professional army. According to him "the military has become politicised and ethnicised. Right from the military school in Zaria, students are trained to be governors, not generals, anymore. Those who want to be generals are only interested in being head of state, not as a general in the army."[16] As another retired officer, Colonel Emokpae, sums it up, Nigeria in his words "does not have an army"[17]. What exists is a praetorian guard of plunderers and what Wole Soyinka refers to as a "bankrupt military class"[18].

Political corruption and the primitive accumulation of wealth are the hallmarks of public life for the military elite in Nigeria. Many military officers, serving and retired, have manipulated their access or influence to state power and public parastatals to become stupendously wealthy, with diverse business interests in banking, commerce, transport, oil, aviation and real estate sectors.[19] For example, an examination of the 1993 boards of some financial institutions revealed that at least some 61 retired military officers were involved in those financial institutions.[20] This category of military officers (serving and retired) enjoys what a Nigerian Newsmagazine aptly described as an "unceasing good life"[21]. They have become an "ultra elite" in the Nigerian society.

The implication of the foregoing is that, on the one hand, there is a lot of tension within the military institution itself, between the political soldiers, who are the *nouveau riche* and the impoverished majority, who are mostly subalterns. On the other hand, there is also a lot of

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[16] General *Alani Akinrinade* (retired), We are not safe yet, in: Tell Magazine, No. 5, February 1, 1999, p. 32.

[17] Colonel *Roland Emokpae* (retired), We don't have an Army, in: Tell Magazine, No. 15, April 12, 1999, pp. 20-28.

[18] *Wole Soyinka*, Interview with Zia Jaffrey, in: Tell Magazine, No. 28, July 14, 1997, p. 15.

[19] See *Said Adejumobi*, The Military as Economic Manager: The Babangida Regime and the Structural Adjustment Programme, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, 1998; *Bayo Adekanye*, The Retired Military as Emergent Power Factor in Nigeria, Ibadan, Heinemann, 1999; *Kayode Fayemi*, Entrenched Military Interests and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria, Democracy and Development, Vol. 2, January-June 1999.

[20] *P. Lewis / H. Stein*, Shifting Fortunes: The Political Economy of Financial Liberalisation in Nigeria, in: World Development, Vol. 25, No. 1, January 1997.

[21] See This Week, May 9, 1988, p. 17.

tension between the military and the civil society. In this context, the military constituted a potential danger to the evolution and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. It is an institution which lacks professional ethos and a culture of servile subservience to civil and democratic authority. An overly politicised military cannot complement or support a democratic polity. Kent Butts and Steven Metz put the issue quite poignantly:

> "During the decades of military rule, the Nigerian military have lost nearly all semblance of professionalism and became thoroughly corrupted. Senior officers all became immensely rich through theft, while junior officers and enlisted men live in poverty. Today, there are no civil-military relations in the normal sense of the phrase. The military is incapable of self-reform and cannot lead democratisation. Only a radical transformation of the military and the wholesale replacement of the Officers' Corps could open the way for democracy."[22]

In order to achieve the goal of a stable democratic order in Nigeria there is the need for a restructured, representative and accountable military which in terms of its composition, especially at the top hierarchy, will take cognisance of the multi-ethnic nature of the Nigerian society, reclaim its professional ethos, and imbibe a culture of political subordinacy to civil control and authority.

The reform of the Nigerian military will involve three major and immediate policy steps. First is the policy of demobilisation. The Nigerian military in terms of its size tends to be unnecessarily unwieldy. Although the exact number of the nation's armed forces is not disclosed by the military authorities, however, it is estimated to be about 100,000. A trimmer, but competent armed forces would be of greater benefit to the nation. General T.Y. Danjuma (retired), a former Chief of Army Staff and the current Minister for Defence, had as far back as 1978 observed that the Nigerian Military is "very, very large, which neither the economy nor the defence needs of the country justified"[23]. He further noted that the size was based not on need or strategy, but was only compelled by the exigency of the civil war (1967-1970), which should have been appropriately re-adjusted after the war.[24] Danjuma remains an unrepentant advocate of demobilisation. Although it is quite difficult to determine what the optimal size of the military of any country should be, as this depends on a host of factors, which include an assessment of the threat to the security of a nation, the foreign military commitment of the country and its defence strategy and policy. However, informed opinion in Nigeria, both in the civil society and among government officials

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[22] *Kent Hughes Butts / Steven Metz*, Armies and Democracy in the New Africa: Lessons from Nigeria and South Africa, in: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College Monograph Series, 1996, pp. v-iv.

[23] See *Bayo Adekanye*, Nigeria in search of a stable Civil-Military System, op. cit. (Fn. 6), pp. 10-11.

[24] Ibid.

in the Obasanjo administration, contend that the country should downsize its armed forces to about 50,000. Indeed, General T.Y. Danjuma, the Minister for Defence, has specifically mentioned this figure. According to him, the Nigerian Armed Forces should be composed of 30,000 soldiers, 10,000 Airforce and 10,000 Navy personnel.

Although the Obasanjo regime is yet to take a policy position on this, however, Danjuma's view has generated much interest and gathered tremendous public support, from the civil society. The only step taken so far by the Obasanjo regime, shortly on its assumption of office, was to retire former military governors and some other senior military officers who held key political offices under the Abacha and Abubakar military regimes in Nigeria. General Obasanjo (retired), the current Nigerian President, has denied any intention of mass demobilisation by his regime, despite the position of his Minister for Defence, on the issue.

For any demobilisation programme to be meaningful, it must be thorough, methodical and well conducted. It must not degenerate into political blackmail and personal vendetta within the military. The first and major victim of demobilisation in the military should be the political soldiers who participated in military rule while others to be demobilised must be re-trained with new skills to cope with civil life.

The second dimension of military reform is the creation of a stable civil-military relation. A major step in this direction is to create constitutional provisions or legal order, which would explicitly deter military coup, and impose severe sanctions on military defaulters. Also, constitutional rules must be made which clearly establish civil control over the military. Firm constitutional guarantees on the military is necessary in order to protect the state and the armed forces from two types of potential dangers: from politicians who have military ambitions, who would like to use or misuse the military to attain political goals and from serving military men with political ambitions.[25]

Unfortunately, this issue of a constitutional guarantee has been a thorny one which military regimes and the military institution itself have often barred civilians from deliberating upon. For example, during the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly in 1989 under the Babangida Transition to Civil Rule Programme, the members of the assembly resolved to criminalize military coup by inserting such in the constitution. Clause 1 (4) of the 1989 Draft Constitution therefore states that: "Any take-over or control of government of Nigeria by any person or persons other than in accordance with the provisions of the present constitution shall remain a punishable crime at all times under Nigerian Law". This provi-

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[25] *Rudolf Joo*, The Democratic Control of Armed Forces, in: Chaillot Papers, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, February 1996, p. 5.

sion in the 1989 Draft Constitution was expunged by the Babangida regime with the flimsy excuse that military coups have always been illegal.

A perusal of previous constitutions in post-independent Nigeria (1960, 1963, 1979, 1989 1999) reveals that there are no adequate provisions on how civil control could be effec tively guaranteed over the military, beyond mere designating the President as the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (as contained in 1979 constitution). Three step could be taken to facilitate civil control over the military and engineer stable civil-military relations. First is to criminalize military coup and prescribe stiff sanctions for such, punish able at all times. In addition, a constitutional clause on civil disobedience can be inserted in the constitution, in the event of any military usurpation of state power. Second is the placing of broad policy decision affecting the military under the control of the Nationa Assembly.

The Parliament must have full powers to legislate on defence and security matters, in influ encing the formulation of a national defence and security strategy, in giving budge approval and in controlling spending-using "the power of the purse" in issues relating to "the power of the sword"[26], which will include the power of investigation of its activities Thirdly is prescribing what Bayo Adekanye refers to as "civic integrative" functions for the military, besides those of pure war-making and security tendering, especially in peace time.[27]

The third dimension to the re-orientation and re-professionalisation of the military is to evolve a programme of political and civic education for the military officers, on the need to subject themselves to civil control. As Thomas Sankara, a former military Head of State of Burkina Faso, once observed "a soldier without political education is a potential criminal" The political education process must in part create a basis for dialogue, mutual under standing and confidence building between the military officers, members of the politica class and the civil society. The issues of defence and security matters must cease to be the exclusive preserve of military officers. Those issues (i.e. defence and security matters) are issues which should be interrogated, analysed and debated by non-military actors (i.e politicians, civil society actors, academics, etc.). The trend in South Africa is quite instruc tive on this. There are some civil society groups like the Institute of Security Studies (I.S.S.) which concern themselves with analysing and interrogating defence and security matters, in South Africa. Those issues are not the exclusive preserve of the military in South Africa. It is through this process that a mutual social pact can be negotiated between

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[26] Ibid., p. 6.

[27] See *Bayo Adekanye*, Nigeria in search of a stable Civil-Military System, op. cit. (Fn. 6), p. 31.

the military and the civil populace, with the latter gradually establishing effective control over the former.

6. The Retired Soldier in Nigerian Politics

In recent times, there has been the emergence of the "retired soldier" as a new, but powerful phenomenon in Nigerian politics.[28] Although the trend of the involvement of retired soldiers in politics became noticeable under the Babangida political transition programme (1986-1993), it seemed to have reached an unprecedented and worrisome dimension under the Abubakar political transition programme (1998-1999). It is estimated that no less than 130 rich and influential retired military officers are members of the Peoples Democratic Party (P.D.P.), the current ruling party in Nigeria at the Federal level. Amongst them, at least 30 are of the rank of Major General and above, while the others comprise mostly of colonel and other ranks. Indeed, some have aptly dubbed the P.D.P. as a party of "Army arrangement"[29]. Currently, this social category constitutes the most powerful force in the political arena in Nigeria.

The large band of young military retirees reflects the high level of personnel turnover in the Nigerian military. The military has become the most unstable state institution in Nigeria. Factors like the Nigerian civil war, coups and counter coups, political blackmail, suspicion and intrigues among military officers have resulted in large scale retirement in the military. For example, any military coup, successful or abortive, is usually accompanied by large scale retirement of military officers. When a coup is successful, members of the ousted regime and their supporters in the military are often retired, if not detained. On the other hand, when a coup is abortive, the culprits are regarded to have committed treason, and thereby not only dismissed, but mostly executed. Also, when a military regime is disengaging from power, such process usually involves the retirement of some top military officers, especially those who have served the regime in important political positions. Through those processes, the Nigerian military is engaged in a cyclical game of internal self-destruction.

But what is the import of the involvement of the retired soldiers in politics? While it is true that retired military officers have citizenship rights to participate in politics, contest elections and hold public offices, the concern of the civil populace is centred around three main issues. First is that the involvement of retired soldiers in politics may signal the re-militarisation of politics in Nigeria, by other means. This is because military culture and training,

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[28] For a detailed discourse on the "Retired Soldier" phenomenon, see *Bayo Adekanye*, The Retired Military as Emergent Power Factor in Nigeria, op. cit. (Fn. 19).

[29] See *Danlami Nmodu*, PDP's Army Arrangement, in: Tell Magazine, January 11, 1999, p. 27.

which they were schooled in, is antithetical to democratic norms and practices and may reinforce authoritarian and military values in the political arena.[30] Second is to interrogate the motive or rational for such involvement. Given the fact that most of them had previously controlled political power or had access to it when they were serving officers, what else do they wand by re-capturing political power through the ballot box? Third, how possible is it for there to be an even playing political field, between an enfeebled civilian political class, persecuted, suppressed and emaciated by long years of military rule and a crop of rich and powerful military retirees. Moreover, as the latter group enjoyed the tacit support and approval of their serving, but most junior military colleagues, who conducted the political transition process.

While the issues raised above may be quite complex in their manifestations and may not lend themselves to ready answers, what is quite obvious is that entrenched personal and group interests is a major factor in the involvement of retired military officers in politics. The need to protect their mostly illegally accumulated wealth, institutionalise and consolidate their power, control and hegemony over the state and society in Nigeria is a major factor in their involvement in electoral and party politics. However, the effects and consequences of their participation in democratic politics remains quite uncertain as such is presently an unfolding process. What may be conjectured is that those effects would certainly be mitigated by complex environmental variables, which will include the engagement of the civil society in the democratic process.

7.   Reclaiming Public Institutions

One of the major legacies of military rule in Nigeria is the erosion and destruction of the institutional capacity and autonomy of public institutions, which in the main constitute the institutional infrastructure for a stable democratic order. These include the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the police force, the electoral institution, and public parastatals and agencies. Those institutions were transformed into organs of patronage and client list network by the military rulers. Appointment, promotion, discipline and funding of those institutions were determined largely by networks of personal and informal connections with the leadership.

In addition, those institutions became thoroughly corrupted leading to the perversion of institutional goals. For example, under the Babangida regime (1986-1993) most public agencies ran unaudited accounts for over five years. A classic case was that of an extra-

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[30]   See *Oyeleye Oyediran*, Tentative Qualitative Criteria for Measuring the Progress of Democracy and Good Governance in Africa, Paper presented to the Conference on Democracy, Civil Society and Governance in Africa II, organised by the Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF), Addis Ababa, December 1998, pp. 7-8.

ministerial agency called the National Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (D.F.R.R.I.), which expended over 5 billion Naira (Nigerian currency) of public funds for about five years, of which its accounts were neither audited nor the money properly accounted for.[31] Similarly, under the Abubakar Junta (1988-1999), it was reported that the Nigerian Maritime Service, a Federal Government parastatal, had its foreign accounts completely depleted through dubious contract awards on the instruction of the Head of the military junta, General Abdulsalam Abubakar.[32]

The consequence was that public institutions became thoroughly depreciated and devalued and could not deliver public goods and services or guarantee public welfare. For example, the police force rather than protect the people terrorised them, the civil service rather than facilitate government business, became privatised through a culture of bribery and corruption, while public services like electricity, water supply and telephone services virtually collapsed. Indeed, the bankruptcy of political leadership rapidly destroyed the fabric of state institutions.

Certainly, the project of democratisation in Nigeria must incorporate the revitalisation and reconstruction of public institutions as a very important element of that process. Without those institutions, the nascent democratic order will likely be constructed on a foundation of sand.

8.   The Civil Society Question

In Liberal Civil Society theory, the Civil Society is believed to be the most effective agency of democratising society and the best antidote to military rule.[33] This perspective privileges the civil society with the virtues of freedom, justice, fairness, equity and the expansion of the democratic space. However, despite the claims of the Liberal paradigm, it is important to make two observations on the civil society discourse. First, civil society is defined not by its homogeneity, but its heterogeneity. Secondly, it has no determining characteristics, it could be democratic or reactionary or a complex mixture of both.[34] Essentially, the civil

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[31] See Newswatch, October 5, 1992.

[32] See *Anselem Okolo*, Ssh: Looting from above in progress, in: Tell Magazine, July 5, 1999, pp. 35.39.

[33] For a discourse on the Liberal view of the Civil Society Theory, see *A. Seligman*, The Idea of Civil Society, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1995; *J.W. Harbeson / D. Rothchild / N. Chazan* (eds.), Civil Society and the State in Africa, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1994; *John M. Makumbe*, Is there a Civil Society in Africa?, in: International Affairs, Vol. 74, No. 2, 1998, pp. 305-317.

[34] See *Said Adejumobi*, Reconstructing the Future: Africa and the Challenge of Democracy and Good Governance in the 21st Century, Development and Socio-Economic Progress, December

society is an arena of social, political and ideological struggles, in which different groups and class interests seek expression and claims and attempt to create hegemonic practices in society. As such, civil society is a complex terrain and should not be confused with the "civic community". The "civic community", as Robert Fatton points out, may be marked by egalitarian political relations, a fabric of trust and co-operation and democratic ethos, the civil society may not be.[35]

Historically, the existence of a vibrant civil society has been part of the political and social life of Nigeria. The project of political decolonisation was woven around the struggles of civil society groups.[36] What is new in the present conjuncture is the renewal of the political struggles of civil society groups towards what Nzongola Ntalaja aptly referred to as the struggle for the "second independence" (i.e. democratisation).[37] In recent times, the civil society in Nigeria has played significant and decisive roles in the trajectory of the chequered political events leading to the enthronement of democratic rule in Nigeria on May 29, 1999. These include the struggle against vicious military rule, large scale human rights abuses and pervasive social and economic oppression of the Nigerian people.

However, the civil society itself has been plagued by severe contradictions some of which could be considered as part of the backlash of long years of military rule. First is what the author refers to as the malaise of militarism and autocracy. Many civil society groups in Nigeria, especially human rights and pro-democracy groups, lack internal democracy, accountability and responsiveness. It is ironic that these groups in terms of their internal organisation lack what they advocate – democracy. Some leaders of civil society groups could best be described as "small tyrants", who run their organisations like "personal fiefdoms".[38] They have internalised the signs, symbols and behaviour of military leaders, and often times perpetuate their rule as "President for life" of sort in those organisations. A civil society without democratic culture cannot sustain or deepen a democratic political order.

1998; *Peter Gibbon / Yusuf Bangura / Arve Ofstad* (eds.), Authoritarianism, Democracy and Adjustment, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitute, 1992, p. 21.

[35] *Robert Fatton*, Africa in the Age of Democratisation: The Civic Limitation of Civil Society, in: African Studies Review, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1995, p. 72.

[36] See *James S. Coleman*, Background to Nationalism, Benin City, Katrineholm, Brobury and Wistrom, 1986; *Peter Ekeh*, The Constitution of Civil Society in African History and Politics, in: *B. Caron / A. Gboyega / E. Osaghae* (eds.), Democratic Transition in Africa, Ibadan, Credu, 1992, pp. 187-212.

[37] *G. Nzogola Ntalaja*, The second Independence Movement in Congo-Kinshasa, in: *P. Anyang Nyong'o* (ed.), Popular struggles for Democracy in Africa, London, Zed Books, 1987.

[38] See *Sylvester Odion-Akhaine*, Our Colony, Lagos, Panaf Publishing, 1998, p. 70; *Sylvester Odion-Akhaine*, The Limits of Democratic Groups, The Guardian, April 9, 1996, p. 23.

The second contradiction is the politics of funding of civil society groups. Due to the harsh economic conditions in Nigeria, many civil society groups (especially those with political bent) are financially insolvent and thereby depend on organs external to them for financial support. This is either from the foreign donor community (through the international NGOs or private philanthropic organisations) or the state. This development often compromises or at least attenuate the autonomy of the civil society groups. More importantly, it also lead to a wave of opportunism and financial aggrandisement in civil society groups. Because of the financial incentive, there has been the sudden birth of many "make-shift" civil associations or what Mathew Hassan Kukah aptly refers to as the "cloned civil society organisations"[39]. Thus, there has been the rise of a crop of civil society entrepreneurs, to whom NGO activity is a business enterprise through which they make profit and illegally accumulate wealth.

The third contradiction is that some civil society groups subsist in the tactics of force and violence as method and language of political expression, rather than dialogue, negotiation and consensus. The tradition of militarism has had a socialising, but debilitating impact on those groups. This is why some associations with ethnic bent have been involved in recent inter-communal conflicts in Nigeria. A perception of binary opposition between the military predators and the citizens, the oppressors and the oppressed, a relationship which evoked stiff, but sometimes violent resistance by civil associations under military rule, remained ingrained in the operational logic of some groups. However, there is the need to transcend the politics of the old order to a new era of peaceful political engagement with the state by civil society groups in a democratic dispensation.

The efficacy of the civil society under democratic rule in Nigeria will require changes in some important respects. There must be the democratic re-orientation of those groups. The civil society must shed the vestiges of authoritarianism and dictatorship. Issues of internal democracy, due process, accountability and responsiveness must be taken seriously and respected. Also, there must be the deepening and politicisation of those organisations.[40] The deepening of an organisation implies its increasing capacity for self-organisation and development, which is crucial to its strength and vitality. Its politicisation involves the ability of civil society groups to transcend their parochial group differences.[41] Ultimately, the sustainability and consolidation of a democratic order in Nigeria would depend largely on the quality and efficacy of its civil society.

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[39] *Mathew Hassan Kukah*, Democracy and Civil Society in Nigeria, Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 1999, pp. 265-266.

[40] See *Lars Rudebeck / Olle Tornquist*, Introduction, in: *Lars Rudebeck / Olle Tornquist* (eds.), Democratisation in the Third World, Uppsala, Seminar for Development Studies, 1996.

[41] See *Said Adejumobi*, Reconstructing the Future, op. cit. (Fn. 34).

9. Conclusion

The process of military disengagement from the political arena has been concluded in Nigeria, however, the process of demilitarisation, conceived in a broader sense, is yet to be fully accomplished. Demilitarisation from this perspective involves more than the formal notion of military withdrawal from politics to include the deconstruction of authoritarian and militaristic rules, norms, and practices in the state and civil society. The heinous legacies of military rule are pervasive and deleterious, which cannot be wished away by the mere transfer of political power from the military to elected civilian rulers. Demilitarisation should not be conceived as an event, but a continuing process, whose object is re-establishing democratic culture and values in the state and society.

In achieving the goals of demilitarisation and democratic re-orientation in Nigeria it is important to emphasize three salient issues. These are: resolving the military question which involves a complex process of demobilisation, re-professionalisation of the armed forces and the establishment of firm civil control over the military. Second is the task of reclaiming public institutions which constitute the institutional infrastructure of a stable and enduring democratic order. This include the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the police force, and public parastatals and agencies. Third is the democratisation and empowerment of the civil society through deconstructing authoritarian practices and a military psyche which afflicts the civil society. Questions of internal democracy, due process, accountability and responsiveness must be squarely addressed by civil society groups. Indeed, strengthening the fragile democratic experiment in Nigeria will require the vitality and resilience of the civil society.

ABSTRACTS

South Africa's System of Official Languages

By *Klavs Skovsholm*

From the moment the foundations of today's Republic of South Africa were laid down in her first Constitution of 1909 until the entry into force of her Interim Constitution in 1994, South Africa has had two official languages: English and Afrikaans. Throughout this period of time, these two languages were treated on a footing of equality – with the exclusion of all local languages spoken by the vast majority of black South Africans. With the exception of the Constitutional clause on voting rights, the language clause was the only Constitutional clause which could not be changed by the South African Parliament by simple majority.

The Interim Constitution broke radically with this rule by introducing 11 official languages. A rule which is upheld in the South Africa's Final Constitution of 1996.

This article places its emphasis on the current rules of official languages under the Final Constitution. It is argued that these rules are not as onerous as they may seem at a first reading, and, in spite of the clear goal of a multilinguistic society, in reality some languages are used more frequently than others. In addition to looking at the Constitutional provisions, this article gives some examples as to how the South African Society has responded to having 11 official languages in the Final Constitution.

Demilitarisation and Democratic Re-orientation in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and Prospects

By *Said Adejumobi*

In the last decade and a half (1984-1999), Nigeria existed under brutal military dictatorship, a situation which facilitated the militarisation of politics, the economy and the civil society. Although a military disengagement process was recently completed in the country in May 1999, in which elected political leaders took over the reigns of power, however, the process of demilitarisation and the establishment of a stable and enduring democratic order is yet to be accomplished. The nascent democratic institutions and processes remain very fragile and susceptible to a military backlash. The task of genuine demilitarisation in Nigeria, the paper

argues, will involve the deconstruction of the institutional base and norms of militarism at the levels of state management, the economy and civil society. Such will include practical policy steps in three major areas. These include, addressing what the author refers to as the military question, the reclaiming of public institutions and the democratisation of the civil society. These elements the paper submits, would constitute the building blocks of a new and enduring democratic order in Nigeria.

Integrated Nigerian Immigrants in Douala – Problems and Insertion Strategies

By *Blaise-Jacques Nkene*

This paper is based on a field-research between July and September 1999 in Douala-Cameroon. In this coastal town, situated in the central belt of Africa and characterised by both cosmopolitanism and distrust towards foreigners, exists an important colony of Nigerians, which by the years have succeeded to become deeply rooted to an extent that contrasts radically with the precarious situation of other foreigners. The present study intends to reveal the rules and stakes of the game of integrating foreigners into an urban environment focusing on the strategies as well as the mechanisms of adaptation used by the Nigerian immigrants. The author demonstrates how, even facing an urban environment whatsoever repulsive it may be, the immigrants have been successful to become an indispensable factor for the cohesion of both social and economic life.