Chapter 4
Reinventing the Military as a Political Actor: Alternative Discourses of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria

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> *Any military has an impact on its political system, with its political roles being a "question not of whether, but how much and of what kind." No military in short, can be short of political influence, save through the rape step of total abolition*

(Welch, 1976, p. 2).

Introduction

After about 30 years of military rule (punctuated by brief periods of civilian rule) the Nigerian military handed over power to a civilian leadership in May 1999. Observers and Nigerians alike raised questions about the future. What did the future have in stock? What would be the new role of the military? How long would they stay in the barracks and what are the prospects of the "ballot box" rather than the "bullet box" getting grafted in the Nigerian political soil? Can the new civilian leaders regulate and control the behavior of the military, as their civilian masters? How alien to Africa, are the principles of an apolitical professional military and civilian supremacy? What new roles does the military play in the democratic polity? To what extent would the military be accommodated satisfactorily in the new democratic arrangement? In what structures and through what processes does the military exert its weight as political actors and how?

Yes, there are more questions than answers. In order to attempt some answers to these questions, I suggest that: One, the military is part and parcel of the process of state formation and is therefore a political institution; two, the military intervenes in the politics of every modern state; however, the situation is even more complicated in states that are democratizing, after long periods of military rule; three, in

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assessing civil-military relations in African states, it is important to note that the concept of an apolitical professional military is as alien to pre-colonial Africa as is the concept of civilian supremacy; four, the extent of the military's relevance as political actor mostly depends on the extent to which Nigerian politicians and leaders nurture the democratic polity into maturity; and, five, the relevance and credibility of the military as a political actor are often buoyed by the demonstration of *democratic deficit* by civilian politicians and leaders (Ebo, 2008, p. 4).

The Military as a Political Actor

The military is part and parcel of the process of state formation and is therefore a political institution (Dandekar, 1994). Traditionally, the formation of the state (especially the conquest state) has always intimately involved the military – whether these were Greek and Roman city-states, imperial systems like the Chinese, Byzantine and Roman Empires, federal states or societies like the Hausa-Fulani states in West Africa, or patrimonial states as found in Near-Eastern and Southeast Asian societies. In fact "the growth of the polity in the direction of statehood was in part a process of militarization" (Mazrui, 1975, p. 74).

This is further illustrated by the definition of the state. Max Weber identifies the monopoly of the instrument of violence or coercion, as one of the most important attributes of modern states. As Fortes and Evans-Pritchard described the situation – "The political organization of a society is that aspect of the total organization which is concerned with the control and regulation of the use of physical force" (Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 79; Mazrui, 1975, p. 74). The concept of force is therefore crucial to the definition of the state; so also is the idea of a standing military to use this force.

Ali Mazrui therefore captured the point succinctly when he asserted that "Statehood [. . .] has so far been the final consumption of that marriage between politicization and militarization" (Mazrui, 1975, p. 75) and that what we have now is a basic transition from "the warfare polity to welfare polity" (Mazrui, 1977, p. 9).

This welfare polity has been marked by a paradoxical process of attempting to divorce the military (which had contributed so much to the rise of the modern state) from politics in the state. But as Welch Jr. and Smith correctly observed

> No nation's armed forces can remain apart from politics. Politics is concerned with the distribution of values and power within a society – and the military can hardly be prevented from participating in that process in some manner (Welch & Smith, 1974, p. 5).[6]

Like other political organizations in the state, the military participates in politics to protect its own interests. As Uzoigwe contended and demonstrated (with cases),

> In no state, traditional or modern is the military totally divorced from the political structure. The degree of integration, however, of the military and politics varies from state to state (Uzoigwe, 1977, p. 23).

This leads me to my next point – that the concept of *civilian supremacy* is alien to Africa (Ebo, 2005). To understand the role of the military in the politics of African states, it is important to understand this historical background which reflects some continuity amidst Africa's historical discontinuity. In fact, the idea was borrowed from Europe. In pre-colonial African states, the distinction between the military, economic, political, social, and religious institutions of government was blurred. The average male citizen was a potential warrior – part of the "invisible" army. It is pertinent to quote Uzoigwe's observation of the warrior in Africa as a political being:

> The warrior, in a traditional society, was a political animal, more so than the rank and file of the citizenry. He saw politics as state power; he knew that the art of politics concerns how to acquire that power, how to wield it effectively, and how to preserve it. Most importantly, he knew the surest means of achieving state power is through the agency of the warrior (Welch & Smith, 1974, p. 5).

Military power was therefore an indispensable part of the political calculus in the traditional society. It was the life-blood of the state.

In pre-Shaka Nguni State, for example, the chief and his officials were also the commanders of their people in war, and political leaders in peace and war. Thus, "the military and politics were dangerously fused" (Uzoigwe, 1977, p. 25). The interlacustrine states of Bunyoro Kitara and Buganda provide another interesting set of examples. In these states, "the ideal king was the great warrior." As Uzoigwe clearly showed, here too, "the military was not distinct from the political structure: it followed closely the organization of the state." The "Abakungu" (the territorial administrator) derived his power from the king, usually as a reward for military valor. In fact, Bunyoro tradition is known to have originally provided that only outstanding warriors be made "Abakunga" (ibid., p. 25).

On the West Coast, in Oyo States, the Alafin (the leader of the Yoruba) was required to be a great warrior who exhibited militant leadership. It is interesting that Alafin Ajaka was deposed by the Oyo Mesi (Council of State) for his lack of militarism. On his rehabilitation or return to power, however, he was said to have been "more warlike than his predecessors." He had learned his lesson. While Oyo was not a military state, the military and political institutions were also fused. Even among the East African Kikuyu, where kingship had been abolished, the "Kiama" or the council of elders, which ruled, usually comprised retired warriors. It is therefore interesting that the "Anake" (young warriors who formed the "council of war") not only represented the youth in government, but knew they could, through upward social mobility, attain the coveted position of "Kiama." Thus African warriors were "an indivisible element of the central government." But since "they were also military leaders as well as administrators, they played crucial roles in territorial administration" (ibid., p. 28). The fusion of the state and the military made the African warrior a political being. The apolitical professional military of the modern African state is therefore, not an indigenous institution.

Following my argument above, it is suggested that, just like the idea of an apolitical professional military, the concept of *civilian supremacy* is also alien to

Africa. In a very interesting study, S.N. Eisenstadt demonstrated that the separation of civil and military authorities, with the supervision of the military by civil powers, "lies in the modern European experience, and especially in the liberal ideology of the nation-state" (Eisenstadt, 1976, p. 2). According to Eisenstadt, this concept derived from the historical experience of types of societies such as the classical Greek and Roman city-states and the imperial system like the Chinese, Roman and Byzantine. In all these societies, "the military was seen as distinct from civil authority and the control of the military by civil authority was deemed as a crucial problem" (ibid., p. 4).

The failure to control the military had always caused disunity and disintegration for these societies. The Greek city-states fell because the warlords could not be controlled. Old Imperial Rome witnessed long periods of attempts by emperors to be independent of the military; and China had always had problems with its warlords in the periphery. Eisenstadt's argument, therefore, is that the concept of an apolitical professional military under civilian control is rooted in European attempt to centralize political authority. This attempt to control the periphery meant that autonomous but dangerous warlords had to be depoliticized and gradually turned into a professional institution. As he put it:

> The greater the difference and distinction between the periphery and centre and the greater the tendency of the centre to mobilize and control the periphery or the more that the centre and periphery struggle over mutual control the more will the distinction between civil and military authorities tend to develop (ibid., p. 12).

This was the modern European experience. It was different from other types of societies where these elements of distrust between military and civil authorities were not as significant. For example, in feudal societies, and in patrimonial societies of the Near-East, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, "the line between civil and military authority were not strongly drawn and the strength of a ruler may have been judged by the strength of his army as against that of the armies of other princes" (ibid., pp. 4, 5). Army commanders performed other civil functions, but "in no case was this seen as a usurpation of non-military power" (ibid., p. 5).

In essence, the problem of civil-military relations in African states can be related to the problems of institutional transfer. Both political and military institutions in post-colonial African states were imported. But the values which underwrite these institutions had not been sufficiently internalized. Very often the rules governing these institutions in Europe were neither well understood nor accepted in Africa. Hence, political institutions (parties, parliaments) inherited had difficulty in taking off. The colonial period was not a good schooling period. It was essentially autocratic, but bequeathed to Africans European democratic institutions.

Furthermore, the military institutions as borrowed from Europe had not imbibed the professional values which created professional corporate identity and respect for civilian supremacy. Moreover, the officer corps of most African military institutions had been slowly Africanized. This affected the development of professional values which should have buttressed the military establishment. By the time

coups started punctuating the political process, the development of professional military values were only inchoate. It was therefore not surprising that the boundaries between the polity and the barracks were so blurred. Thus, one of the most salient issues in civil-military relations in Africa related to the lag between the introduction of borrowed political and military institutions and the internalization of the values which buttress these institutions.

S.E. Finer (1962), in his classic identifies four **"levels of intervention"** by the military – (1) influence, (2) blackmail ("whitemail"); (3) displacement and (4) supplantment.

Influence involves (in a political culture where legitimacy is unobtainable by the military) the use of normal constitutional channels, or by collusion or competition with civilian authorities – to alter the direction and content of policies. On the other hand, *blackmail* (or *whitemail*) entails the use of intimidation or threat of use of violence against civilian authorities in a political culture which resists overt military control. *Displacement* and *supplantment* on the other hand epitomize the failure of the military to defend civilian authorities against violence and/or the threat of the use of violence by the military to displace or supplant civilian incumbent, in fluid political context in which the legitimate government is low or unimportant.

The fluid situation created by the contending norms over the military's place in African societies was very conducive to military intervention by supplantment or *coup d'état*. Military power was therefore an indispensable part of the political calculus in the traditional society. It was the life-blood of the state. Could it be that given the inadequate internalization of professional values, African military institutions are having problems of how to strike a compromise between inherited values of civilian supremacy, on the one hand, and Africa's warrior tradition which hardly made any distinction between the civilian and military sectors of the society, on the other? This area needs more research. As many African countries (including Nigeria) democratize in Western style, the major issue is the nature of civil-military relations in a democratic setting.

Given the above definition and the distinctions among levels of intervention, it can be argued that the military in any modern state intervenes in politics, in one form or the other. As Claude Welch observed, the difference is "not a question of whether" but "how much and of what kind?"

After about 30 years of military rule, the Nigerian polity faces two broad challenges: One, the extent and nature of civilian "control" or regulation of the military, given the Western liberal model of civil-military relations, it had inherited; and, two, how the military retains its relevance in the new and changing context of civil-military relations.

It is my contention, that since 1999, the military has tried to remain relevant by using a network of relations developed over time, while influencing policy and decisions through established channels. Similarly, civilian political leaders have also used established democratic institutions and processes to regulate the military. Let us see how these have worked out so far, beginning with civilian regulation of the military and its affairs.

Civilian Supremacy and the Dynamics of Regulation of the Military

The term democracy has become very polyvalent over the years. However, it is generally accepted that there are, at least, five principles of democracy.[1] First, the authority wielded by rulers should emanate from the people. Second, there is a rule of law which ensures that all are bound by law and seek redress lawfully; third, the leaders must be seen as legitimate, because they have the *right to rule* having been duly elected (or selected), and that they are *ruling rightly*; fourth, that the people have a choice, not only of leadership, but also values such as freedom of association, of thought and expression. Fifth and, finally, the leaders must be accountable for their mandate to the people.[2]

I contend that the democratic institutions inherited at the independence by Nigerian political elites were basically Western. Two major institutions of relevance to our discussion come to mind. These are – the political party and the military. Both institutions are borrowed from the West and have had problems of adaptation in the African political environment. The processes of institutional transfer at independence had implied the adoption of Western-type political parties and the military establishment.

Both were expected to perform the same functions as in Western countries from which they were borrowed. The political party was expected to aggregate and articulate the interests of the members, and provide alternate leadership and programs of action. On the other hand, the military was expected, in the liberal Western culture of civil-military relations, to be professional, apolitical, and to submit itself to civilian supremacy. The environment into which these institutions were being transferred was regarded as inconsequential. It was therefore, no surprise that many Western analysts were very disappointed in the 1960s when Africa did not turn out to be a major duplicate of Western democracy as it was hoped.

They then lionized the military as the only modern, national, cohesive, puritanic and self-abnegating institution which could restore order and embark on modernization of their various countries (Bienen, 1971; Elaigwu, 1981; Finer, 1962; Stepan, 1974). From democracy, Western analysts retreated to the importance of organization in the context of institutional fluidity in these "praetorian" states.

A Western model of democracy cannot be transferred unmodified to Nigeria and be expected to succeed. Democratic institutions borrowed must be domesticated or adapted to local conditions, in the light of the country's experiences and problems. Let me illustrate this point. Political parties and military establishments were transferred to Nigeria in the terminal colonial period. At independence colonial armies had become national armies (Momoh & Adejumobi, 2002). In many cases,

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[1] See also Burk (2002) on the application of theories of democracy to civil-military relations.
[2] See fuller discussion Elaigwu (2005a).

the colonial armies were seen as armies of conquest and suppression, rather than as symbols of these new nations (Miners, 1971).

It was soon discovered that there was a major lag between these institutions and the values which were supposed to underwrite them. Both democratic and military institutions in post-colonial Nigeria were neither well understood nor accepted in the country (Clapham, Herbst, & Mills, 2006). Furthermore, the military institutions as borrowed from Europe had not absorbed the professional values which created professional corporate identity and respect for civilian supremacy. Similarly, politicians schooled in the colonial authoritarian political culture, found it difficult to operate a Westminster parliamentary democracy with its emphasis on tolerance of opposition, accommodation of divergent viewpoints, and participation. The ethno-regional and geo-ethnic context in which they operated further complicated the problem. In addition, the concept of institutionalized opposition was not very common in Africa. Opposition emanated from within the main frame of the society and after due discussion, a consensus decision was usually taken. Thus the institutionalized opposition of the new democratic setting had no culture to back it up, especially in terms of the accommodation of the views of the opposition, and tolerance of dissent. Opposition was thus seen as personal animosity or enmity.

Many of the politicians had neither understood the rules of the game nor had they accepted them. For many of them, politics was not a *game*, it was a *battle*. As the rules were blatantly violated, politics became a very dangerous "game," for the atmosphere in the political arena became polluted, and in the absence of any form of ventilation, endangered the lives of the players as well as spectators. Yes, Nigeria had political parties (in fact, many of them) but lacked the values which would make them operate in democratic setting. The exercise failed once; it failed the second time, failed the third time, and Nigeria is now back at the drawing board. I am not suggesting that these were the only reasons for the failure of past attempts, but they were major reasons.

Did the politicians have the chance to reassess themselves and learn from their mistakes, albeit, in a hard way? No! The other borrowed institution, the military, had also been supposedly transferred "successfully." It had performed in the Congo (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo – DRC) creditably. In its role to kill and maim in the defense of the nation, it was no doubt relatively effective. But its functions were supposed to be essentially against external enemies, not against its own nationals which it had a duty to defend. One of the cardinal values of the Western military was to respect the values of civilian supremacy. The Nigerian military was to be apolitical and professional, and only act on the orders of the civilian rulers. Had the Nigerian military adequately absorbed these values by 1966 when it was faced with political challenges? No. Again, there was a lag between the borrowed institution and the values which were to make the institution operate smoothly in the imported Westminster model of government.

In January 1966, the military intervened in politics, contrary to the values which were to regulate its operations. This second institution had also failed. It became a predatory institution, imploding with reckless abandon into the political arena – thus rendering extremely fragile the boundaries between the ballot box and the

barracks – an essential component of Western liberal democracy. Between 1966 and 1999 (when the military handed over power to civilians) there had been six military coups – January 1966, July 1966, July 1975, December 1983, August 1985, and November 1993. There had been many abortive coup attempts, of which the only officially acknowledged ones were February 1976, December 1985, April 1990, December 1995 and 1997.

If there is any message this illustration has for Nigerians in this period of the country's new effort in democratic governance, it is that,

> To be successful, an African democracy must be sensitive to local conditions; the simple adoption of an institutional framework designed elsewhere is unlike to be successful (Wiseman, 1990).

If Nigeria had been bequeathed a British political model in 1960, in 1979, it made a trans-atlantic trip to the United States in search of a new model. It also failed. Nigeria's problem is not really constitution-making. Its main problem lies in constitutionalism (i.e. everyday constitutional practice).

Discourses on Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria

Given the long sojourn of the military in Nigeria's political arena, Nigerians had, over the years, discussed the role of the armed forces in politics. There were various debates on the process of military disengagement and the role of the military in a democratic polity (Amuwo, Bach, & Lebeau, 2001; Azeez, 2006; Ihonvbere, 2000; Nwolise, 2002).

Like other polities in developing nations in which there is a thin line between the *barracks* and the *ballot box*, many questions arise. How does "democracy" get domesticated, with structures and processes established to ensure its durability? What kind of civil-military relations can be established, which protect democracy? To what extent does the military remain a "political tiger" on whose back civilians seem to be riding? What are the conditions under which civilians can get off its back and let the tiger co-exist with the *ballot box* in the same polity? Does the solution lie in the abolition of the military? Is the military merely an additional "middle" in the muddy waters of development?

In Africa, there are at least four patterns of democratization in countries in which the military has intervened in politics.

First, the incumbent military elite may declare a *self-induced democratic agenda for change* as happened in Nigeria (under Obasanjo, Babangida, Abacha, & Abubakar), or under Rawlings in Ghana, and in Strasser/Bio's Sierra Leone.

The second pattern may arise out of a *populist backlash*. Here "democracy" emerges as a result of a successful populist pressure by the masses as happened in Benin and Gabon, but started and was aborted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Togo. This pattern of military disengagement may create a new basis for a democratic beginning.

There is, however, a third pattern – military recalcitrance such as in Togo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here the military resists popular pressures and digs in as rulers, even in the face of popular pressures and depends largely on instruments of state coercion, at times with a verisimilitude of political parties masking military rule.

Finally, there is a pattern of *benevolent acceptance* in which there is a tacit acceptance of military rule. It could include the civilianization of the erstwhile ruling military or revolutionary elite. Uganda and Togo are also examples. Uganda provides a revolutionary basis for a transition to democracy, while often military recalcitrance may lead to a violent upheaval. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Laurent Kabila followed closely Ugandan President Museveni's technique of launching the change of government from the bush. Like in Uganda, the DRC witnessed the transformation of former "terrorists" from the bush to the State House. Ironically, in 1998 erstwhile comrades rose against Kabila, and the rebellion spilled over to the DRC's neighbors. Kabila was assassinated and succeeded by his son. Uneasy calm still reigns in DRC.

By the end of the twentieth century, a new wave of "democracy" had swept across Africa (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997; Bruneau & Trinkunas, 2008; Diamond & Plattner, 2010). The world had changed and political leaders in Africa had to accept the principles of democracy and multipartism. In Nigeria, the new political leaders who came to power in 1999 accepted that civilian elites had obligations to the military, while the military also had obligations to the state (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2000).

What is the nature of discourse in Nigeria on the pattern of civil-military relations? Given the instability in the polity as a result of serial military coups, a number of Nigerians (albeit, Africans) discussed various patterns of civil-military relations (Bland, 1999; Kennedy & Louscher, 1991; Quaker-Dokubo, 2002). Let me summarize these discussions under the following patterns of civil-military relations: (1) civil – military diarchy; (2) the socialist model; (3) the developmental militia model; (4) conscious civilianization and (5) the Western liberal model.

The Civil-Military Dyarchy

This model of civil-military relations was made popular by Nigeria's first President, Rt. Hon. Nnamdi Azikiwe. In an apparently desperate attempt to prevent serial military coups and their destabilizing impact on development, Azikiwe proposed power sharing between the military and civilians. He suggested that the military and civilian elites should share power for 5 years. After 5 years, the military should withdraw to the barracks and allow civilians to run government. During the 5 year transition period, the military would have veto powers.

The fear of the coups frightened Azikiwe to give veto powers to the military. However, veto power or none, the gun is enough veto power. Who can tell the military to withdraw to the barracks after 5 years? In a similar vein, the late

Mr. G. Ikoku suggested the sharing of powers between the military and civilians. The resultant government out of this coalition, he called *cimilicy* (Kalu, 1983).

A variant of this is to have an elected functional head of government while during the interim period there is a military council acting as the political umpire and performing the ceremonial roles of the Head of State. As Ghana's government under Prime Minister Busia found out, even this did not protect it against Acheampong's coup of 1972.

The Socialist Model

This pattern of civil-military relations was attractive to some leftist scholars in Nigeria and Africa. The socialist polity exhorts the supremacy of the state and state power in trust for the people. The underlying presumption is the ability of this system to maximize its distributive capability in order to reduce drastically inequalities among individuals and groups. If the liberal Western model exhorts the freedom of the individual, this model emphasizes the collective interest of members of the community. The mass socialist party is dominant and all-embracing. Even the military is part of this socialist party and has a stake in the government. The experiences of the Soviet, the Chinese and the Tanzanians (under one-party system) illustrate this. Thus if Lin Piao, the late Chinese Army Chief of Staff was ambitious, he had to work within the party to manoeuver his way to leadership, given his military support. It was alleged (by some) that he was quietly eased out in a helicopter crash.

This model is grafted on the strong ideological commitment of the people. Where the ideological base is fragile, there may be coups and attempted coups. As an illustration, frightened to death by the 1964 mutiny, President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (then Tanganyika) embarked on a new military establishment that would be part of the political party, be subject to political education and have a stake in the government. As Nyerere argued, there is always the risk about having an army at all in a developing country, but since you cannot do without an army in these times the task is to ensure that officers and men are integrated into the government and party so that they can become no more of a risk, than, say, the civil service.

A few years later, Nyerere found that he had to use the same army to invade Uganda. Having tasted the experience of ousting a Head of State (Idi Amin), the Tanzanian army carried out an abortive coup later.

It is interesting that while the Nigerian Socialists on the Political Bureau[3] succeeded in getting the committee to recommend a socialist system of government for Nigeria in 1987, it opted for a Western liberal model of civil – military relations. I shall get back to this.

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[3] The Political Bureau comprised fifteen persons chosen by the Babangida regime in 1986 to go around the country, collect, collate and analyze the views of Nigerians about their country's state of affairs.

The Developmental Militia Model

Many Nigerians, fed up with high budgetary allocations to the military which they saw as a sybaritic class of uniformed men, in peace times, suggested new roles for the military in a democratic setting. This model insists that the functions of the military in peace time should be clearly defined. In this model, the military like all institutions of the state, is an agent of development, and has no business being idle during peace time.

Thus, the military is expected to participate in agriculture, road construction, building of bailey bridges, delivering paramedical health services in rural areas, the socialization of youths, the distribution of food during natural disasters, and contribute to the general development of the country. To reduce its dependence on national budget, it is expected to bid for contracts, secure and execute same. The services of the Air Force (specially trained to service commercial aircrafts), the navy dockyards for servicing ships and boats; the engineering and signal corps in communications are seen as demonstrable areas of technical competence which the military can deploy to national developmental efforts. This model sees the military as essentially a developmental militia in a developing country. Perhaps this was the spirit of the 1995 draft constitution which vested many of the secondary functions mentioned above in the Armed Forces of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1995). This model still has to fill the gap of the political relationship between the military and civilians in the political arena. Many Nigerians are in favor of armed forces that are actively involved in the nation's developmental process.

Conscious Civilianization

Where the military has intervened in politics, a number of options are open to the military leader. It can go Kemalist like Turkey's Ataturk did. Here the military hero pulls off his military uniform and becomes a full-fledged civilian. He is no longer in control of the armed forces. He then can subject himself to elections for the state's premier office. The dangers are that he may be overthrown or have his ambitions upset by his colleagues in the army unless he has support in the force and societal pressures for civilian rule are great.

Nasser and Franco provide a good variant of this. Nasser's successors, Sadat and Mubarak, emerged from within the armed forces and their hold on the armed forces was reputedly strong. On the West coast of Africa, there is an epidemic of civilianized soldiers – Idris Derby of Chad; Compaore of Burkina Faso; Ghana under Rawlings; Niger under Mainasara; and Yahya Jameh of Gambia. This model does not hold attraction for many Nigerians.

Another variant of this model is where there is a conscious attempt by leaders to civilianize their political personality and at the same time create a verisimilitude of political parties as a means of mobilization of the masses. They retain their military constituencies. Mobutu Sese Seko of the DRC and Eyadema of Togo tried these

techniques. In Nigeria, General Sani Abacha tried to do the same when his government manipulated the country's five political parties to nominate him as their consensus candidate. Since he died before the plot was dramatized, it is still a speculation on how he was going to manage this extraordinary demonstration of political confidence.

Yet a more humorous variant of this was the Central African Republic under former Emperor Jean (or Saleh) Bedel-Bokassa. Under the ghost of Napoleonic splendor, Bokassa civilianized himself into the Emperor of the new Empire. The way he was overthrown is a lesson to African leaders.

Finally, an interesting variant of this model was the Union Government suggested under Col. Acheampong's government in Ghana. The Union Government was to be formed without political parties and their electoral problems. As Ghana's former Transport Minister argued:

> The [National Redemption Council] NRC rejected the academic view that 'democracy' is only secure and assured when the people are led like swine, once every five years, to vote in their rulers who proceed to ignore all their fears and aspirations.[4]

Unfortunately General Akuffo's coup prevented us from seeing what lessons this variant has. Museveni's Ugandan no-party democracy was an interesting variant of this until he caved in to the pressures for a multiparty democracy.

Perhaps another variant of this model is the Ghanaian and Nigerian experiences in which erstwhile military leaders served as leaders in the democratization process – thus acting as a bridge in the military–civilian democratic transition. Rawlings of Ghana served for two terms as President of Democratic Ghana Republic before he left the scene for President Akuffor. In Nigeria, Gen. Obasanjo was brought out of prison, pardoned and elected as president for two terms before leaving the scene, as part of the democratization process. In Nigeria, however, many politicians and observers openly complained of about the militaristic style of Obasanjo in the way he ran a democratic and federal polity, in the context of the Western liberal model of civil-military relations.[5]

The Western Liberal Model

This model emphasizes the separation of politics and the military as in most of Europe and The United States of America. This model of civil-military relations is predicated on the assumption that the military has no power of its own. Its legitimacy is based on the consent of the society. The supreme authority in the state is reposed in the elected government which then defines clearly the goals of the military.

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[4] *West Africa*, 30 October 1976, first column.

[5] *Tell*, 1 July 2002 pp. 30–32, 2 September 2002, pp. 22–29, 16 September 2002, pp. 31–44, 30 September 2002, pp. 22–25.

The military is subordinate to its civilian masters and carries out its duties in accordance with the wishes of their civilian authority. The military is expected to be apolitical and professional. In 1960 and 1979, Nigeria opted for this model of civil-military relations, only for the military to stage a come-back as civilians abused political power, manipulated the rule of the game of politics and appropriated the socio-political and economic system. This is not necessarily evidence that the military was a more efficient achiever. It often happens that as the credibility of politicians sags, the legitimacy of the military surges.

Thus, while the Report of the Political Bureau of March 1987 recommended a socialist political system for Nigeria, it recommended a Western liberal model of civil-military relations. According to the Report:

> The orientation of the present military has changed from what it used to be in the pre-colonial and immediate post-colonial era. The military now attracts highly professional people as well as resourceful individuals with academic background. All these go to suggest that the military has something to contribute to national development. But the military's involvement in the political process could further politicize it and pose danger to stability of the nation. It should, of course, be involved actively in the promotion of social welfare of Nigerians (including their own) in national development and political self-emancipation [...] they should be involved in professional roles as well as in regulated social functions. ... Outside of this, while the military should not be involved in party politics and social mobilization, they should be involved in the task of national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1987, p. 156).

Nigeria chose the Western liberal model of civil-military relations which it had also inherited at independence in 1960, to manage its defense (Saliu, Amali, & Olawepo, 2007). According to section 217(2) of the 1999 Constitution, Nigeria is "one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state" which has established and equipped as Army, a Navy and Air Force (collectively called the Armed Forces of the Federation) for the purposes of:

– Defending it from external aggression;
– Maintaining its territorial integrity and secure its borders from violation on land, sea and air;
– Suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities when called upon to do so by the President (subject to conditions prescribed by the National Assembly);
– Performing such other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.[6]

The 1999 Constitution does not clearly spell out the secondary role of the Armed Forces as was done in the 1995 Draft Constitution.

In essence, the armed forces are expected to defend the integrity of the state and its sovereignty against outsiders primarily, but not against its own citizens and not to interfere in the country's internal socio-political structures and processes.

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[6] *This Day*, 31 January 2007, p. 7.

The armed forces are therefore the repository of instruments of warfare which are monopolized by the state. Their use also has to be controlled by the state. It is the responsibility of the state to organize its armed forces and control its use in the most efficient manner in a democratic setting. What provisions does the Nigerian Constitution have for achieving this? Nigeria has always enshrined in her constitutions a Western liberal model of civil-military relations which emphasize the principles of civilian supremacy.

Section 1(1) of the 1999 Constitution makes it clear that the Constitution "is Supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria." Reacting to the Nigeria's history, Section 1(2) of the 1999 Constitution declared that "The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person take control of the Government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provision of the Constitution." Since the Constitution provides for change of government through the ballot box, this Section is a declaration of the illegality of coups (military or otherwise) as a means of acquiring power in the state.

The executive powers of the federation are vested in a democratically elected President who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation. He is also empowered to exercise his functions indirectly through his Vice-President, ministers or other officers in the public service of the Federation. Section 218 of the same Constitution gives the President as the Commander-in-Chief the "power to determine the operational use of the armed forces of the Federation." This includes the power to appoint the Chief of Defense Staff, the Chief of Army Staff, the Chief of Air Staff, the Chief of Naval Staff and any heads of other branches of Armed Forces as may be established by an Act of the National Assembly. This is a clear institutional demonstration of civilian supremacy.

In addition to these, the President is also the Chairman of the Army, Navy, and Air Force Councils which directly deal with the general issues of recruitment, promotion and welfare of the respective services. The Constitution goes further to establish two important constitutional bodies on Security and Defense, which are also chaired by the President. The National Defense Council (NDC) advises the President on matters relating to the defense of Nigeria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The membership of this council comprises the President (as Chairman), the Vice-President (as Deputy Chairman), the Ministers of Defense, the Chief of Defense Staff and The Chief of Army, Naval and Air Force, and any such person as the President may choose to appoint. This is a demonstration of civilian supremacy even in matters of national defense.

The National Security Council (NSC) advises the President on any "matter relating to public security." Membership of this Council includes – the President as Chairman, the Vice-President as Vice Chairman, the Chief of Defense Staff; the Ministers of Internal Affairs; the National Security Adviser, the Inspector-General of Police; and such other person as the President may decide to appoint. Again, the composition emphasizes the supremacy of civilian rulers. Matters of security are not decidedly military.

In the day-to-day management of defense, the functions of the president are carried out by the Service Chiefs under the supervision of the Minister of Defense. In the light of Nigeria's civil war, the Office of the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) was created to facilitate the coordination of defense matters. The CDS was first appointed in 1979, under the Second Republic.

The National Assembly (i.e. the legislature) has two basic functions with regard to the armed forces – lawmaking and oversight. Under the Constitution, the National Assembly is empowered to make laws for the regulation of "(a) the powers exercisable by the President as Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces of the federation; and (b) the appointment, promotion and disciplinary control of members of the armed forces of the Federation" (Section 218, 4). In addition to this, the National Assembly is also empowered to make laws which will ensure the implementation of the "federal character" principle (in Section 14, 3–4) in the composition of the armed forces of the Federal Republic. Unlike under military regimes in which the military enacted decrees which governed their affairs, their civilian masters are now empowered to make laws for the military and for their operation.

By legislative practice, the second function performed by the National Assembly is that of oversight. Both chambers (the Senate and the House of Representatives) have standing committees on Defense. They also have committees on each service of the armed forces, such as the committee on the Army, Navy and Air Force. These committees carry out oversight functions on the armed forces. Recently, these committees summoned the Chiefs of Armed Services to explain the circumstances surrounding the hijacking of a Nigerian naval ship in Somalia; the court martial of Nigerian military mutineers from a peace mission, and the dismissal of some Admirals from the Navy. In some other cases, there have been public hearings to get public input on relevant defense-related matters. These could not be contemplated under a military regime.

Most important, perhaps, is the National Assembly's power of appropriation. For the activities of the Armed forces to be effectively carried out, it needs budgetary allocations from the National Assembly. Even though part of the executive branch, it is not unusual to see the armed forces' representatives under the delegation from the Ministry of Defense, requesting for additional funds to those recommended by the President. Under military regimes, these were not matters for "bloody civilians." Budgetary matters of the military were treated with secrecy and with dispatch – in a hierarchical and centralized manner. Ironically, service chiefs have confessed that civilian regimes have been more sensitive to the needs of the armed forces than military regimes. They point often to the Shagari regime and its proactive funding of the armed forces, especially the Navy.

From the above, it is clear that in the context of an inherited Western liberal model of civil-military relations, the subordination of the military in Nigeria's democratic setting has been carefully and legally institutionalized. It also means that unlike the centralized mode of operation under military regimes, the armed forces cannot remain influential as a political actor, unless it finds alternative networks for penetration of the structure of influence in the democratic polity. This is my next focus.

The Military's Adaptation to the Democratic Setting

As from 29 May 1999 the political context in which the armed forces operated changed substantially (Mohammed, 2006). There was no longer a military government and a new civilian leader (albeit a former military leader, Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo) had assumed power. The military withdrew to the barracks. As the boundaries of the barracks shrunk, so did the parameters of the ballot box (or the political arena) expand. The exit of the military automatically entailed the retirement of military officers occupying political positions.

Shortly after assuming power, the new President retired 93 senior military officers who had held political positions during the military regime (Garba, 2008, p. 181). The enunciated rationale was to depoliticize the military and re-professionalize it. There were feeble reactions to this from civil society, but the *angst* against the military was such that Nigerians were more concerned about the military leaving the political arena. At this point in time, the atmosphere was dominated by civilian weariness of the military and the latter's apprehension of the civilian society.

The long period of military rule had also witnessed cracks in the barracks. Many of the younger officers were very anxious about the mutual suspicions among the officer cadre in the barracks. They hoped that the change would enable a serene atmosphere for re-professionalization. In addition, there was a general belief in the barracks that the military's adventure into governance had threatened the institutional soul of the armed forces, which badly needed urgent redemption. The change of regime provided opportunity for this.

Re-professionalization of the Armed Forces

Years of adventurous existence in the political arena had led to distractions from its professional duties. Mutual suspicions among officers, because of allegations of coups, had destroyed mess life. The *esprit de corps* of the military had been badly eroded. At some point the military tiger became Nigeria's albatross – at one time part of the solution, while at another, part of the problem. The military exhibited many paradoxes – of political rectitude versus the politics of poverty; institutional political hygiene versus the dilution of professionalism and the transformation of the military political physician into a political patient suffering from an overdose of the ailment he had set out to cure.

The new civilian regime, with new service chiefs embarked on a new form of re-professionalization. The new Commander-in-Chief was not an absolute military Head of State, but a constitutional head of the armed forces, operating within the constraints of law.

Part of the re-professionalization program carried out by the new government was to upgrade the quality of training in military institutions while diversifying the context of the training to include studies on "The State and the Socio-Political Environment."

The National Defense Academy (NDA) was upgraded to a defense university in status, awarding graduate and post-graduate degrees (Yoroms, 2005). The leaders in the academic wing are mostly civilians, while the military technical wing remains an area dominated by military personnel. The Commander and the Deputy Commander are both military officers – usually from different services. The NDA trains young soldiers who on graduation get commissioned as second lieutenants. The institution has a civilian provost of academic programs. It also organizes its Commanders' Annual Distinguished Lectures which brings together civilian, military and retired military members of the society for exchange of ideas on important societal issues.

For middle level officer training, there is the Command Training and Staff College (CSC) in Jaji, Kaduna. The CSC trains officers of the rank of major or its equivalent. It is decidedly a military institution, drawing many of its lecturers from the civilian society. Like all military institutions in Nigeria, courses on "The State and the Socio-Political Environment" are also taught.

The Nigeria Defense College (NDC) is based in Abuja. Senior Officers of the rank of Lt. Colonel and above as well as some selected public servants from the civilian society constitute the participants of this college. This course provides, at this senior level, for interaction among military and civilian participants. In addition, the college has a post-graduate program for its graduates at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, from which graduates of this college have acquired Master's degrees.

The National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, provides the opportunity of training for the top-most policy makers, in the military, the public service and the private sector. Even more than the NDC, this program has trained top policy makers in Nigeria, since 1979. Some former Heads of State such as General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, were graduates of NIPSS. So have been many Chiefs of Defense Staff, Inspectors-General of Police, Directors-General of the State Security Service, the Heads of Civil Services at state and federal levels. Their research projects have fed in-puts into national policies, even though many Nigerians believe that the institution can still be utilized more functionally.

Apart from these, there is the Nigerian Military School (NMS) in Zaria, which has produced young soldiers since the colonial days. Each service has its specialized training school – armor, medical, signal, engineering, and others, depending on the service. These training programs are in addition to the training of military personnel in Nigerian universities.

All services have their exercises and training programs and carry out joint exercises and training occasionally. There have more exercises under the democratic polity. Military leaders of government were often wary of exercises and training because such had provided platforms for coups makers in the past.

Eventually, the average military officer is more knowledgeable about the Nigerian society than the society knows about the armed forces. The average military officers are highly educated, with the average young officer having a Bachelor's degree. Many have Master's and Ph.D. degrees and have authored books.

Thus, the process of re-professionalization has included professional knowledge of the military and its role in a democratic polity, but it also includes the expansion of the parameters of the military's knowledge of the larger society. This includes the principle of civilian supremacy over the armed forces.

Some of the major challenges which the military had to deal with in the new democratic setting thus included:

(a) The reorganization and sanitization of the military in order to re-professionalize it;
(b) The de-politicization of the military – reducing the impact of societal cleavages;
(c) Restoration of discipline and respect for hierarchy;
(d) Heightening the morale of officers and men – especially by paying attention to welfare of officers and men;
(e) Creating a new sense of nationalism, patriotism and *esprit de corps;*
(f) Proper and prudent expenditure of resources to increase the battle-readiness and fire power of the armed forces;
(g) Reduction of high attrition rate in the military;
(h) Restoring institutional self-confidence; and
(i) Re-orientation of values and structures towards enhancing the efficiency of the military under a democratic polity.

In the past 10 years of democratic rule, the military has faced these challenges and succeeded in acquiring new legitimacy among Nigerians. It can be argued that the military has successfully re-professionalized, even if it faces old and new challenges like military establishments anywhere.

Civil-Military Relations: Towards Mutual Confidence-Building

Given the gap between civilians and the military in 1999, the Institute of Governance and Social Research (IGSR), with the support of the National Assembly, the British Council and the Department for International Development (DFID), organized *The Dialogues between Civilians and the Military in Quest for Democracy.* These dialogues provided a medium for the military and civilians to exchange ideas and better understand one another. The frank discussions on both sides and the spirit of camaraderie which came out of these Dialogue series, led the National Assembly to focus on the special needs of the Armed Forces – especially under the leadership of the Hon. Alhaji Ghali Na'Abba, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives (Ostergard, 2000).

The Speaker of the House of Representatives set up a Committee to recommend necessary laws that would enable the armed forces to effectively face the challenges of the twenty-first century. As a result of the work of this committee (in which all military and paramilitary agencies were represented), four bills were proposed by the then Speaker before the two chambers of the National Assembly on:

1. The Reserve Forces Bill, 2002
2. National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) Law Review Bill;
3. Security Services Minimum Infrastructure Development Bill; and
4. Military's Secondary Role Bill.

The Reserve Forces Bill was to cater for the military's concern about the rate of waste in human resources, after the retirement of officers. The National Emergency bill addressed the military's concern that national disaster should utilize military's formation around the country and their facilities to engage in rescue operations. There had been more emphasis on relief than rescue in disaster operations in the country. The bill on security minimum infrastructure development set minimum level of infrastructure for security agencies, adapting UN indicators to the Nigerian situation. The fourth bill on the Secondary role of Security Agencies was an attempt to clearly delineate the role of the armed forces in national development. Their primary roles have been stated in the constitution.

The importance of these bills is that the civilian society had become sensitive to the challenges facing the military and the need to address these to enable the military to participate effectively in national development. Unfortunately, the term of that legislative assembly expired, even though some of these bills were at the public hearing state. The new legislative assembly tried but failed to retable these bills. However, the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Aminu Masari, announced in January 2007 that the National Assembly had embarked on the review of the *Armed Forces Act* to meet Nigeria's democratic experience. Not much has really come out of the National Assembly since then. Basically, the bills had demonstrated the new concerns of the political leaders for the armed forces.

The Armed Forces and Societal Penetration

The military had adapted to the new democratic setting in many interesting ways (Luckham, 2003, p. 10). In this process of adaptation to the new setting, the military has not always operated as an institution. While in formal interactions within the dynamics of the democratic polity the military operates as an institution, this is not always the case. In other circumstances, individual retired military or groups of retired military personnel position themselves in statuses of influence (Adekanye, 1999; Okeke, 2007). Nor is there any evidence that such position as acquired are the result of networking by retired military persons. What is, however, clear is that such military individuals have sought their positions with the zeal and determination acquired in the military. While there is an association of retired military officers, it has dealt more with the welfare of retired military officers (such as payment of pension benefit) than the systematic penetration of the political arena (Yesufu, 2005).

Given Finer's category of influence above, the armed forces, as an institution, has learnt that they can only retain their political relevance if they utilize existing democratic institutions and processes. The armed forces have maintained effective liaison with the National Assembly on the budget process. Only recently the Senate

promised to increase the budget of the armed forces, given their intervention in numerous cases of democratic violence and the Niger-Delta.

The regular interactions between the Minister(s) of Defense and the Service Chiefs also reduced the number of areas of friction. In addition, the President also meets with the Minister(s) and the Service Chiefs as necessary.

Since May 1999, the military has used the exigencies of Nigeria's security as good excuses for its relevance. In fact, occasions for such are not lacking. As illustrations, the necessity to deal with security issues at the Gulf of Guinea, the rebels in the Chad who spilled over to into the northeastern part of the country causing havoc; the Bakassi peninsula crisis; the violence and criminal activities in the Niger-Delta; Nigeria's role in International Peace Keeping and Enforcement Operations; and disaster, rescue and relief operations – all provide opportunities for the military to exert its influence and/or blackmail (*whitemail*) government into doing what it would desire. These are opportunities for the military to showcase its relevance and capability.

Other demands on the expertise of the military give it opportunities to demonstrate its relevance as well as influence decisions. From May 1999-July 2009, there have been, at about 400 cases of violent communal and electoral violence. In major cases of violence which overwhelm the police, the president has had to call out the military to assist the government to handle domestic violence. The cases of major violence in Kaduna in 2000, Jos in 2001 and 2008 and 2010, Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Katsina in 2009, the military's capability restored relative order in these areas and gave the institution greater credibility. The case of communal violence, when all groups in the affected areas usually seek refuge in military barracks, is evidence that the armed forces still serve as a symbol of national unity.

Similarly, the use of the military in the electoral process also gave it high visibility. However, the allegations of the use of security agencies to perpetrate election fraud put the military on the defensive. The armed forces, as stated earlier, regularly utilized opportunities for public hearings and budget hearings to push their interests. There are situations in which members of the armed forces who felt aggrieved have gone to the National Assembly for support.[7] Thus, officers dismissed from the Navy, and soldiers who had mutinied in transit from peacekeeping operations (and were court marshaled and jailed) protested to the National Assembly which had special hearing sessions for these purposes. In other cases, some retired and dismissed military officers had gone to the courts which, in a few instances, have reversed the decisions of the armed forces.

As the Nigerian Police Force demonstrate greater weakness in the maintenance of law and order, the credibility of the armed forces has increased. The Governor of Abia, for example, has asked for the military to stem the tides of armed robbery and kidnapping in the state.[8] So have other states in the Federation. The implication for

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[7] *Daily Independent*, 18 February 2009, p. 3.

[8] *The Nation*, 28 November 2009 (http://thenationonlineng.net/web2/articles/26898/1/Abia-2011-Opposition-to-Governor-Orjis-second-term-is-based-on-sentiments—Aide/Page1.html) (accessed 27 February 2012).

the regular use of the armed forces for the maintenance of law and order is of grave concern to Nigerians.

Over the years, there were other informal ways in which retired members of the armed forces have penetrated the Nigerian society. In the main, some of them have adjusted to the new setting, learnt the rules of the game and have become active players.

In the political arena, General Olusegun Obasanjo ruled the country as an elected president from 1999 to 2007. Similarly, the President of the Senate, Brigadier General David Mark (rtd), has been a Senator since 1999. There are quite a number of ex-military officers in the Senate, and the federal cabinet. Some have also been elected governors since 1999. The former Chief of General Staff or vice-president under the military, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu is now an active politician. General Ibrahim Babangida, the former President is an active member of a political party and was a Presidential candidate in 2011. General M. Buhari who was Nigeria's Head of State was also a four-time presidential candidate of a political party. The list goes on.

In the economy, many ex-military officers are chairmen of banks and companies. While not identifiable as a class, ex-military officers have been very active participants of the commercial class (Amaike, 2007; Badmus, 2005). They can be regarded as stars in the commercial class.

In virtually all aspects of endeavor in Nigeria, military personnel has penetrated the system. Many retired military men are now pastors and *imams*, and some have become traditional rulers. Universities, law chambers and research institutes are replete with ex-military men and women. In essence, it can be argued, that their military training equips them with skills to fit into larger society.

Nigeria's political leaders have also tried to win the confidence of the armed forces by responding to some of their urgent needs. Increased salary and welfare packages, such as car loans were offered the military under President Obasanjo. In addition, there have been attempts to equip the Air Force and the Navy with new planes and ships respectively. Military barracks in many parts of the country have been renovated. But these are by no means enough. There are many demands of the military which have to compete with demands of other sectors for national resources. One area that has been improved is the payment of pensions. Many retired military men and women have complained about the slow process of pension payment in the past. They could not understand why it was fine to lay down one's life for one's country while one was not given the benefit of one's sweat after due service to the country.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the military is part and parcel of the process of state formation and is therefore a political institution. It is also my contention that while the military intervenes in the politics of every modern state, the situation is even more complicated in states that are democratizing, after long periods of military rule.

I have argued here that in evaluating the pattern of civil-military relations in African states, it is important to note that the concept of an apolitical professional military subject to civilian supremacy is alien to pre-colonial Africa. In spite of its experiences in the past, Nigeria's political elite still opted for the Western liberal model of civil-military relations in 1999. The general and popular will of the people seems to be in favor of keeping the military in the barracks to deal with its professional and to additional duties, while leaving issues of the ballot box to the politicians. It is a consensus among Nigerians that the military should be fully involved in issues of social and economic developments.

The military has transited fairly well from being dominant and central political actors to being guardians of new central political actors. In doing this, it has institutionally found avenues for influencing policies and decisions which affect its interests. More importantly, the role of political leaders as conflict generators and the resultant violence have increased the demands for the military in the polity. Its credibility is increasing and it has become more relevant than it was at the beginning of the democratization process, 13 years ago. The anxiety of many observers is that the regular use of the military for handling domestic conflicts (or violence) may have the embedded dangerous seeds of attenuating the democratization process. Thus, the extent of the military's relevance as political actors mostly depends on the extent to which Nigerian politicians and the leaders nurture the democratic polity into maturity. Thus the relevance and credibility of the military as political actors, is often buoyed by the demonstration of democratic deficit by politicians and leaders. Nigeria has to watch out!

The retired military personnel has adapted fairly well into the larger society and has penetrated various facets of human endeavor. However, it is not clear at this point, that this is the result of networking. It seems to me more the result of using leadership skills learnt by individuals in the military to survive in the larger society to which they have returned.

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