

Journal of Policy Initiatives

Vol 3(1) 2000

**GLOBALISATION AND HUMAN SECURITY IN
AFRICA: BARRIERS TO ITS REALISATION**
Lanre Adesemi

**DECOMPRESSION OF AUTHORITARIANISM
OR THE EXPANSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC
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INDIVIDUALS

Annual
Subscription ₦600.00 (Nigeria)
Rates £45/\$65.00 (International)

 ₦350.00 (Nigeria)
 £30/\$45.00 (International)

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Published by Strategic International Press Ltd. P.O. Box 16485, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria.

ISSN 978-33561-5-1

Journal of Policy Initiatives Vol. 3 (1), 2000

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SELF-SUCCESSION AND CIVILIANIZATION OF THE MILITARY HIERARCHY: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

By *FATILE, JACOB OLUFEMI**

INTRODUCTION

Military intervention in politics is extremely common outside the North Atlantic area, where the armed forces are more likely than not to be among the most important power contenders in any political system, and the military regimes are at least as widespread as either totalitarian or democratic ones¹. Although much has been written on military intervention in politics, the phenomenon has continued to intrigue analysts and scholars of the military in politics.

What was considered as unnatural and a deviant phenomenon before 1945 has now become widespread: the active and increasing role of the army in politics. A government dominated by an army was considered "unnatural" not because it was a new phenomenon—it had been recognised by political philosophers because some social scientist refused to accept military rule as being natural as civilian rule². The hesitation of social scientist to study the military has had a variety of causes, ranging from ignorance of historical and political facts to antagonism towards war and the military profession. As recently as the 1930's military government was identified as the ultimate type of totalitarianism. Totalitarianism can lead to the personalisation of rule, to patrimonialism in the exercise of it, and in some cases even to the privatisation of the state, which prevented the development of institutionalised government. Indefinite eligibility is thus decidedly incompatible with constitutional democracy.

For nearly a century now, Nigeria as a nation has continued to experience unending suffering brought upon them first, by Western imperialism and at different times, by the military and their civilian collaborators. The military having tasted power and found it irresistible, has become a prisoner to it, preferring to remain there to the exclusion of other sectors of the society. And they have never relented in justifying their illegitimate hold on power. The most

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ridiculous of such rationalisation is the one that says that the military could be as democratic as the so-called politicians³.

For more than a decade and half, Nigeria has been experiencing military rule in her polity. Democracy, the much sought after system of government has completely eluded the country all this while⁴. At a time, the military dictatorship did everything to perpetuate itself in office through a fraudulent transition programme. In fact, the campaign for the self-succession of General Sanni Abacha remains a clear indication of the 'smoke and no fire' essence of the transition. A regime that violently restrained ideas and groups is not only unacceptable and wicked; it cannot turn round and claim respect for freedom of speech and assembly in those who clearly are committed to 'derailing' its transition programme since that is what self-succession mean.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Succession is one of the serious problems confronting any political order. It was much neglected during the liberal age, because it was generally believed that movement towards constitutional democracy would provide a universally satisfactory answer; for under a constitution, the succession is usually provided for at all times. Indeed, provisions or traditions of succession are closely linked to the type of regime of which they form a part. Hobbes went so far as to claim that "there is no perfection of government, where the disposing of the succession is not the present sovereign" which is line with radical absolutism⁵.

Constitutionalism is based upon precisely, the opposite notion, namely that good governance requires the fixing of the succession by the constitution. Dunner argued that historically, succession may be based upon five major grounds viz: charisma, heredity, wealth or some other "objective possession", election and force. These five types of succession, according to him, often occur, however, in combination such as the hereditary and wealthy class in Venice, or the combination of election and force in totalitarian system⁶.

Succession is a problem at all levels of government and all organizations; it is most serious at the apex of the hierarchy. Democratic system has evolved a characteristics solution to the problem of succession and has consequently resolved a basic question that vexes all sorts of regimes. Hereditary monarchies left the matter to

a biological lottery, which at times, worked well enough. Hereditary aristocracies had much the same solution. Modern dictatorships confront no new problem when the dictator is near senility and the issue of succession demands attention. How to accomplish transfer of authority without serious disturbances in the life of the state has been a topic for political speculation through ages.

All schools of thought on power agree that no ruler is completely disinterested in the issue of succession or power inheritance. From Machiavelli to the idealistic Jeremy Bentham, there is a unique agreement on the desire for power perpetuation either through self or through acknowledged surrogates. The Military is, indeed, no exception to the politics of power inheritance, power sharing, class consolidation, elite formation, and substructure exclusion⁷.

Bala Takaya argued that the Obasanjo regime in Nigeria did not just install its political preference, it also cultivated and entrenched the intellectual arm of the Kaduna Mafia in strategic points of the polity, thereby ensuring its perennial influence in the government and governance of the nation⁸. The prominence of entrenched public officers in all the regimes and administration of nation cannot be successfully explained on account of coincidence, accident of history or sheer brilliance of the officers. Definitely, all the Nigeria administrations including the military, have constantly exhibited a desire to select successors. The military as guardian (if not kingmaker), has become a factor in the political transition programme of every military regime, making persons identified as anti-military to be deemed as uniquely disadvantaged. In view of this and, perhaps because of the fact that the military had ruled the nation for the better part since independence, political romance with the military is considered an edge in socio-economic and political calculation.

"Godfathers" have emerged from the military class. Indeed, there has also emerged a potent rivalry between other "godfathers" who feel threatened by emergence of military godfathers⁹. The interaction and responses between the military and other direct or indirect seekers of office have logically become the bone and meat of politics of succession in a transitional government. Nigeria, like any Third World country, is no exception. The crucial but unexplained question is: Can a serving soldier like late Head of State, General Sanni Abacha, trained and conditioned in the culture of a professional fighter, successfully initiate and sustain a democracy with its implication for tolerance,

accommodation and consensus, which are antithetical to the command and obey culture of the military? If there exists a military option to democracy, as some people would have us believe, could Late Abacha have achieved that option without purging himself of his dictatorial heritage? From his political and economic policies, Abacha's transition was aimed at transmuted him into a civilian President. This might have been responsible for the several macabre events that the country witnessed under his regime¹⁰.

Democracy is all about making choices. One is even allowed to make wrong choices, which can be rectified at the very next available opportunity, which is usually at the next election. Such wrong choices are voted out of office. But where there is only one candidate fielded for an election—as we have in the case of the adoption of General Abacha as the consensus candidate by all the five parties that were established by his regime in Nigeria—there is no choice to be made. It then becomes more of imposition on the people because they have been deprived of the right to choice.

The propensity to perpetuate rulership indefinitely is perhaps the most outstanding contrast between politics of the emergent states and those of the established democracies, especially Britain and America. It is unthinkable that a party in office should want to rig an election in order to stay in power, or a military President or Head of State trying to manipulate the electoral process so as to transform into a civilian President. A British politician would not normally want to remain prime minister for as long as his party continues to win election. No law forbids him to do so, but there is a general acceptance that the talent for leadership is not the exclusive property of any one individual¹¹.

In United States, the problem of succession has received equally a happy solution as a result of the good sense of successive Presidents. As a matter of general political principle, quite apart from the personality of Washington, the question of indefinite eligibility had provoked a disagreement of views¹².

THE PRAETORIAN STATE, THE PRAETORIAN ARMY, AND THE PRAETORIAN TRAP

In the words of Robert Gilmore, the military institution is concerned with the management and use of controlled violence in the service of the state according to terms laid down by the state. When the

military institution veers from this role to participate in or to influence other non-military agencies and functions of the state including its leadership, then militarism exists in greater or lesser degree¹³.

The modern praetorian state is one in which the military tends to intervene and potentially could dominate the political system. The political processes of this state favour the development of the military as the core group and the growth of its expectations as a ruling class; its political leadership (as distinguished from bureaucratic, administrative, and managerial leadership) is chiefly recruited from the military. Constitutional changes are effected and sustained by the military, and the army frequently intervenes in the government. In a praetorian state, therefore, the military plays a dominant role in the political structure and institutions. Broadly speaking, a modern praetorian government may develop when civilian institutions lack legitimacy or are in position to be dominated by the military¹⁴.

Military intervention into civilian affairs is usually not precipitated by military groups. In most cases, civilians turn to the military for political support when civilian political structure and institutions have failed, when factionalism develops, and when constitutional means for the conduct of political action are lacking. The civilian therefore begins to indoctrinate the military with their political ideologies. Several examples of this process can be found in the Middle East and Latin America.

At a time, the Abacha military dictatorship in Nigeria did everything possible to perpetuate itself in office through a patently fraudulent transition programme; it is certainly apposite to examine the problem. Dare prefaced his work by situating the military in its exact political context contrary to the received liberal orthodoxy which conceives of the military as a political institution. Professor Dare correctly noted that “by its nature, the military is a political force and the military apparatus is part of the state power and does participate in policy formulations particularly on security matters”¹⁵.

“Praetorian trap” is when a political system is unable to free its administration from the stranglehold of its armed forces. Indeed, it is one thing to experience a coup, it is another thing to be caught up in the “trap”. Why then do nations get caught up in this trap? Dare revisited three major schools of thought (1) The Military Characteristic Factor (2) Societal Disorganization and (3) The Dependency Theory. The first school was pioneered by Morris Janowitz in 1964 with the

publication of his book, "The Military in Political Development of New Nations". According to Janowitz, the modern military organization possesses certain attributes that dispose it to intervene in politics such as its: puritanical ethics, professionalism, patriotic zeal, managerial ability and rationality, internal cohesion, discipline, and decisiveness¹⁶. Based on these factors, the military is conceived of as an ideal type or as the most "modern sector of the society" with glaring technical and administrative superiority over the other sector of the society.

The societal disorganization school led by Samuel P. Huntington places emphasis on the nature and structure of society as the salient factors in the explanation of military intervention in politics. The main argument of this school is that because of the absence or weakness of legitimate and effective political institutions, conflicts and contradictions cannot be easily mediated and resolved. In the circumstances and because of it "Prestige, responsibility and material resources", the military moves in to restore order. Again this argument has been criticized for being too simplistic, restrictive and historical¹⁷.

The dependency school, on its own part explains the prevalence of military regime as a manifestation of the economic (and the military) dependence of the Third World States on the advanced capitalist powers¹⁸. In order to explain political instability and coups, therefore, we must examine the political economy with emphasis on the mode of production and accumulation, class relations and struggles as well as the character and nature of the state. Seen in this context, political instability resulting in military intervention must therefore be seen as a manifestation of inherent contradiction in the struggle by dominant power elites to consolidate their position, put down challenges to their power and expand their accumulative base.

The two basic types of Praetorian armies are the arbitrator-type and the ruler-type. The arbitrator-type army imposes a time limit on army rule and arranges to handover to an "acceptable" civilian regime and does not necessarily relinquish its political influence when it returns to the barracks¹⁹. The arbitrator army may eventually become a ruler army, if the conditions for the return of a civilian regime are not fulfilled. It is even possible for a ruler army to eventually turn the rein of power over to a civilian regime, if the conditions for the return of the civilian rule are fulfilled²⁰.

The existence of organized civilian groups has a bearing on the army's decision to surrender its rule. Where no such groups exist, that is, in a state of near anarchy, the arbitrator-type army may continue to govern despite its civilian orientation and its desire to return to its own affairs. In such a situation, the arbitrator army continues to govern by default, because it is the only organized group in the state. Where organized civilian groups do exist, the military as a whole withdraws from the government, although at times a key military figure will continue as chief of state²¹.

The ruler-type of Praetorian army increasingly tends to abandon or convert existing institutions, ideologies, and procedures in favour of the newer institutions for modernization that are proposed by theories of rapid growth. The ruler type of Praetorian army has no confidence in civilian rule and has no expectation of returning to the barracks.

This attitude may be a consequence of the development of an important sector of the officer corps of an independent political orientation opposed to the ruling civilian groups. Alternatively, civilian disorganization may have reached the point where progressive elements are unable to put their program into effect. Ruler-type officers distrust politicians to the extent that they themselves feel it is necessary to occupy formal positions in the government structure.

The ruler-type army considers itself the one elite group capable of governing; therefore, it usually tries to assure the indefinite continuation of army rule by capitalising on the uncertainty of politics. Taking advantage of the lack of political and social cohesion, the ruler-type army establishes an independent organization and strengthens its rule in order to manipulate already disorganised forces. In order to achieve stability it must legitimise itself through the creation of its own political party or some type of corporate group and create an ideology to support its political organization.

SELF SUCCESSION ISSUES IN AFRICA

Self-succession is the act of manipulating one's self into remaining in government power (as the Head of State/President) instead of giving room for another successor, after a stipulated period. It is a situation where an incumbent leader succeeds him either through constitutional or unconstitutional means. But in most cases, this occurs in the military regime, where forces and violence are used. It does not

necessarily mean that it is only military government alone that self-succeed themselves, but it also happens to some civilian presidents, having served their normal term in office, rig elections and are later proclaimed to be re-elected into office.

Thus, self-succession is when a military ruler uses all the forces at his disposal both legal, illegal, conventional and non-conventional means to his advantage and transforms himself into a civilian Head of State. Such a leader does not need to subject himself to an electoral process and even if he decides to, he sets the rules in ways that his position to emerge victorious is not in any way threatened. However, it should be said that over the years, many of the military regimes that had ruled African countries were put under a lot of pressure to democratise by Western countries, especially America. When these military rulers decide to democratise at all, they resort to self-succession as a way of keeping themselves in power. Africa indeed, West Africa, is full of regimes that succeeded themselves as we have in countries like Togo, The Gambia, Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Niger Republic, Mali, Ghana, Benin Republic and Nigeria among others.

In Ghana, Fiakpa²² argued that Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings, after coming to power in two different coups, finally decided to democratise. In 1991, the ruling Provisional National Defence Council formed a political party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). Rawlings contested in the 1992 Presidential elections on NDC platform and won, although the opposition boycotted the election. After his first term, which ended in 1995, Fiakpa argued further that Rawlings sought re-election, which he again won due to his high popularity among the Ghanaians who saw him as a Saviour. Fiakpa asserted that his re-organization and good management of the economy of Ghana, and the transformation of the psyche of Ghanaians from that of a hopeless and debt-ridden country, endeared him to his people.

As for Gambia, in July 1994, a group of young army officers led by 29 years old Lt. Yahaya Jammeh seized power in The Gambia therefore overthrowing one of the continents largest running democracies under Dauda Jawara. In 1996, Jammeh resigned from the army and ran for the Gambian presidency as a civilian. President Yahaya Jammeh contested in the election with his party "Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction". His party won 55 percent of the vote²⁶. Jammeh just like Rawlings was popular amongst his people because of the way he improved the lives of the people of his small

country by fighting against poverty and dependency. So it was no surprise that he won the election. Ifedi²⁴ however argued that Yahaya Jammeh went through not completely satisfactory electoral process. According to him, it was alleged that Jammeh manipulated the electoral process to declare himself as the elected President.

Another country, which had experienced self-succession, was the Republic of Niger. They had a civilian rule for almost fourteen years after their independence on the 3rd of August 1960. The military staged a coup d'etat led by Lt. Col. Seyu Kountetie and now just like the Gambia, an ex-army officer is president. The same ideology of all these previously mentioned cases also occurred in the Niger Republic. In order for the world to recognise Niger Republic as a democratic country, Ibrahim Bara Mainasara decided to allow an election in which the people could choose the President of their choice and Ibrahim Mainasara took part in the election and when the result came out, he won an overwhelming majority in the election which was released by the Electoral Commission of Niger Republic²⁵. Also, it was alleged that the election that took place in Niger was not fair and Mainasara manipulated the electoral system by using his influence and the military might to impose himself as the Civilian President of his country²⁶.

In Togo, President Gnassingbe Eyadema, then a colonel in the Togo lese army shot his way to power in 1966 via a military coup. Eyadema has been in power since 1966, and it was not until recently he yielded to calls for a multi-party election in 1990. Notable figures like Edem Kodjo and Koku Koppigoh all fell by the wayside²⁷. For a long time, the opposition has remained divided, the direct result of the process is that the form of democracy being practiced in Togo cannot be said to be wholly genuine.

Olaniyonu²⁸ observed that in Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaore also self-succeeded himself after two years of military rule, accepted democracy, contested, and won the election. He came to power through a bloody coup against Thomas Sankara and ruled the country as a military man till 1991, when he set a transition programme in motion. Compaore's Labour Movement (ODT-MT) party swept the polls and formed the government with some small parties. Thus, Compaore is one of the West African military rulers who transmuted into civilians.

In some other countries like Uganda under Yoweri Museveni (a rebel leader), resigned his office as a military Head of State and contested in the country's election and he emerged as the winner.

In Egypt, before President Nasser's time, Egypt practiced a monarchical system of government. On July 23, 1952, the free officers led by Nasser staged a coup d'état and successfully seized power from the Monarch. As part of the transition process, by 1961, the free officers formed a political party known as the National Union and later changed the name to Arab Socialist Union in 1965. Olaniyonu noted that the party got an overwhelming majority of members of Parliament in 1965 and Nasser became the President of Egypt²⁹. Following the Israel defeat of Egypt in the six-day war of June 1967, Nasser offered his resignation to the Parliament. But popular demonstration persuaded him to remain in office. He died of heart attack in 1970.

The lessons from Nasser's transmutation into a civilian president, Olaniyonu contended that the decision was made by the people's representatives in parliament³⁰. And with the popularity of Nasser in Egypt and the whole of the Arab World, his choice as President was part of the pioneering efforts at instituting democracy in Egypt. In fact till today, Egypt has maintained the same selection process.

Following the assassination of Anwar Sadat, Mubarak came into power in Egypt as a military man. As a result of pressure from the Western nations, particularly European countries and America, he consequently organized a one-party system election and was able to manoeuvre himself to become a civilian President. Since that time, he has improved the economy of Egypt and modernised every aspect of Egyptian life as a whole³¹.

SELF-SUCCESSION IN NIGERIA

African Heads of States, with one or two exceptions, have been following the same trend of government and been succeeding themselves in most of the countries. Nigeria is no exception.

According to Oluleye³², it all started in the mid 1960's, when most colonized countries in West Africa having gained their independence from their colonial masters, entered into a period of bitter power struggle by party leaders. This gave way to the take over of power by the military in most West African countries; although, by using

different strategies, most of these military rulers eventually became civilian Heads of State³³.

In Nigeria, the Obasanjo regime returned the country to civilian rule by handing over to a civilian democratic government in 1979. But unfortunately by December 1983, another military officer took over the government in a coup and suspended all the democratic set-up. An attempt in 1993 to return Nigeria to a civil rule was thwarted by the annulment of the elections, which took place under General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida.

General Sani Abacha on seizing power in November 1993, began the march towards "true democracy" with a usual Nigerian style by dissolving all the then existing democratic structures³⁴. Consequent upon the coming to power of General Abacha, and in the heat of his transition programme, speculations became rife that he wanted to perpetuate him in office; the allegation he repeatedly denied until he died.

NECON, which was headed by Chief Summer Dagogo Jack, screened all the various political parties seeking registration after which five political parties were registered. Abacha funded and established the five political parties. Through some manipulations some parties were not registered. The government skillfully and tactically fully hedged out these parties because they contained some NADECO members³⁵.

Nicholas Musa, former chairman, of the defunct CNC (congress for National Consensus), Plateau State argued that Abacha ran the five parties from day one. Ode³⁶ noted "he had agreement with the key players of these parties from day one. They pledged to work for Abacha and implemented it". The key officers of the parties were always called to Aso-Rock and ordered to call recalcitrant members to order.

In addition, Ode³⁷ quoted Dejo Raimi, an ex-officio member of the National executive committee of the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) that Useni was in charge of the UNCP, Wadas Nas, Abacha's special adviser took care of Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN) Wole Oyelese (Special Adviser) was supervising Grassroot Democratic Movement (GDM); and Laz Unaogu (Special Adviser) supervising the congress for National Consensus (CNC). According to him, they were all watching with interest the activities of the parties.

Moreover, money was given to the political parties to organize the conventions to nominate Abacha as their sole candidate for the presidential election. Many of the politicians having realized that Abacha was interested contesting for presidency opted to go to the National Assembly. UNCP adopted Abacha at a convention in Kaduna, NCPN at Owerri, CNC at Markurdi, DPN at Port Harcourt and GDM at Maiduguri.

Gbadamosi asserted that the Abacha presidency shifted to a higher gear when the big masquerades in the Northern politics came out into the open³⁸. The Northern politicians under the leadership of Alhaji Tanko Yakassi sanctioned Abacha's endorsement and asked Nigerians to "endorse the choice because of his unique suitability for providing continuity, peace and stability and the consolidation of the nation's achievements under his leadership"; but Yakassai's group was only one of the key broad based coalition to further the civilianisation agenda. There was also Adekanola's National Association of Patriotic Professionals (NAPP).

The group was born to infiltrate strong professional bodies and troublesome trade unions. This is to neutralize opposition to Abacha civilianisation, which might still lurk in these quarters³⁹. Already the Nigerian Bar Association was comatose, the Nigerian Bar Association, just like the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), remained divided. While ASUU, NUPENG, PENGASSAN and NUC were reeling from Abacha's hammer. By 1998, many Nigerians had different opinions on whether General Abacha should contest the 1998 Presidential Polls. Prominent among other groups calling for Abacha to contest the elections was the "Youth Earnestly Asked for Abacha '98", a movement under the chairmanship of Mr. Daniel Kanu. According to him, "We have searched the nook and crannies of this country and we are yet to find a leader that is sincere, selfless, disciplined, hardworking, and above all, God fearing"⁴⁰. The group organized in Abuja, a carnival tagged "Abuja Two-million man March by YEAA". A lot of musicians were lavished with money to attract the populace in large attendance to show on Abacha's worthiness to become his own Successor⁴¹.

As YEAA and NACYAN sought to present a picture of massive support for the transformation of Gen. Abacha to a civilian president in Abuja, pro-democracy forces moved to present an alternative viewpoint in Lagos. Under the canopy of the United Action for

Democracy (UAD), these Human Rights and Civil Liberty organisations organized what was tagged a "Five-million man March"⁴². But as the march in Abuja was encouraged and protected by the police (since it was for the government), the march in Lagos, which was against Abacha, was annulled. Unlike the Lagos 5-million march which was aborted, the Abuja Carnival was transmitted live on NTA and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, the two mouth organ of the government. In addition, a battery of organizations also sprung up for the actualisation of the Gen. Abacha dream (see the table below).

LIST OF PRO-ABACHA CAMPAIGNERS AND THEIR LEADERS

	ASSOCIATION'S NAME	LEADERS
1	Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha '98 (YEAA).	Daniel Kanu
2	National Mobilization and Persuasion Committee, (NMPC).	Godwin Daboh
	Abacha Solidarity Movement (ASOMO).	Ladi Aladi
3	21 ST Generation Insist on Abacha.	Shevdeen Adeshina
4	Vision '98 Abacha for President.	Mohammed I. Hassan
	Movement for Indigenous Democracy MIDIA.	Shuaibu Zakari
5	Radio Listener's Club.	Segun Adeyemi
	Nigeria - British Youth Organisation.	Abduraheem Barry
6	Nigeria Youth Democratic Diplomat NYDD.	Etukes
7	Gen. Abacha Movement for Peaceful and Successful Transition GESAM.	Tomi Tokoya
8	Nigeria Local Government Consultative Forum, NLGCF.	S. B. Bello
9	NANS - Faction.	Oludare S. Ogunlana
10	United Action for Nigeria (UAN).	Nija E. Asuquo
	Agenda '98.	Sergeant Awuse
	All Nigeria Youth Movement.	Mohammed Sani,
11	National Mobilization for Abacha (NAMA)	Akwashiki,
		Femi Aluko
12	Vision 2010 for Abacha	Bukar Mandara
	National Mass Mobilization of Nigeria (NMMN).	

SOURCE: Tunde Asaju, "Abacha's Campaigners, Smart Nigerians. See Goldmine in Pro-Abacha Campaigns", *Newswatch*, Lagos, February 9, 1998, p. 19.

The traditional rulers were not left out in the clamour for Abacha to contest as President. After a one-day meeting of the leaders of thoughts and Traditional Rulers Forum in Abuja, the traditional rulers met with Gen. Abacha to urge him to contest the August 1998 Presidential election. The Sultan of Sokoto who spoke on behalf of the

Self-Succession and Civilianization of the Military

traditional rulers noted: "We have carefully looked around and hasten to say that you are the person fully qualified to occupy the seat". They further appealed to the Head of the Military Junta to consider contesting for the post of Civilian President in 1998 in the interest of peace, unity and prosperity. The Head of State while reacting to this offer, stated: "I see it as a recognition of what this administration has done"⁴³.

The military administrators were also busy competing for the General's attention and affection, by making such calls also, even the serving ministers in his cabinet turned the campaign into their major pre-occupation⁴⁴. The whole idea, which is a kite-flying gimmick, was to explore ways of achieving a smooth transfer of power from Abacha to Abacha without the General going through the electoral route. The scheming actually started with the postponement of the local government elections in 1997. With no protests or complaints from any quarters, Aso Rock saw it as a veritable instrument for the actualisation of the self-succession plan of the late General Abacha⁴⁵.

THE PROS AND CONS OF SELF-SUCCESSION

The admirers of self-succession are of the opinion that it enhances continuity in policies and programmes in a country. For instance, in Nigeria, those campaigning for Abacha Presidency pointed to his economic reforms which they claimed brought much progress to the people, his strong will and discipline and rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructures as evidence of his achievements in the last four years⁴⁶.

Okpalaeké contended that the Abacha politicians believed that "before his arrival on the scene, Nigeria was sweating under the weight of fiscal indiscipline, public waste, hyper-inflation and an unstable exchange rate of the naira". This they argued was drastically brought down under the Abacha regime; the financial sector was sanitized with the attention paid to redress the bastardisation of the banking industry⁴⁷. The supporters of self-succession was also of the opinion that the Head of State will be able to complete leftover projects or policies from the last administrations i.e. continuity in economic policies. They further claimed that self-succession has turned the economies of some countries around by increasing the usually depleted foreign resources.

Moreover, the supporters of self-succession believed that it could bring political stability to countries that adopted it since most leaders that use the system of self-succession were ex-army officers⁴⁸. Not only that, it has been argued that self-succession can also make a country to be recognised by other developed countries. In Ghana for instance, after Jerry Rawlings became the civilian President, the whole world recognized Ghana as a democratised country because the people were not forced to vote for Rawlings, and Ghana was able to assert itself in global affairs.

On the contrary, we have those who present an alternative viewpoint on self-succession. This school of thought believes that it does not enhance the process of democracy in a country. Self-succession (at least, as practiced in most African countries) is not democratic especially when the incumbent decides to twist the election results and the way it is conducted by using his power as Head of Government. Egypt is an example. President Mubarak introduced one party system and as the Party Leader, he contested the election, thus the people were not given a chance to choose the candidate of their choice, thus democracy was not attained. In Nigeria, self-succession can be disadvantageous as it stifles democracy. For instance, General Abacha made it difficult for political aspirants to come out and contest against him as security agents of the government were set on their trail⁴⁹.

In addition, self-succession may deny the people of their right to vote for the candidate of their choice. For instance, in the case of Nigeria, since all the five political parties adopted Abacha as the consensus candidate, voting in an election will first be a mere formality. It may also make the government to be unstable. Again in Niger Republic, President Ibrahim Mainasara was not really elected by the electorate but rather imposed himself on them.

It is important to state that self-succession may also bring about political instability if the self-succession of a president continues in the country. Arap Moi, the Kenyan president who keeps succeeding himself in the elections of the country, because of this, there have been violent clashes in the country and social unrest because of his policies which the people are against. In Nigeria, self-succession may lead to political instability because of the fear of domination of an ethnic group over the other ethnic groups. This may cause distrust, unease, and instability among various ethnic groups.

CONCLUSION

A major accomplishment of the architects of democracy has been the contrivance of orderly modes of succession to places of authority. The democratic formula goes beyond the question of succession in its ancient form. It not only provides a means of filling posts of authority when they become vacant, it assumes that they will become vacant at frequent intervals without either the trauma or dislocation of a revolution. The democratic technique for the determination of succession is thus combined with a method for the termination* of the life of government. An election poses the question whether the ruling clique should continue in power, and if not, by whom it shall be succeeded.

As far as Nigeria is concerned, the Abacha strategists who were working silently to ensure he transformed himself into civilian president hung their hope on the trend in the West African sub-region. There is President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana. He ruled the country for about 18 years. Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso is another. He transformed himself into a civilian president from military Head of State. About four years ago, Ibrahim Mainasara dropped his khaki uniform and contested a controversial election that led to his becoming president. In October 1996, tiny Gambia went to polls to elect a President, their military Head of State who retired from the army contested the election and "won". But Nigeria should not be compared with these other countries in the sub-region. "Gowon tried to perpetuate himself, he failed. Babangida tried it and failed. Abacha also tried it too, history is on the side of the Nigerian people"⁵⁰.

Moreover, Liberia, Togo, Zaire, and Ghana are examples of countries where there had been a shifting process of democratisation. In most of the countries that had been named, military tyrants who had stayed in power after coup d'etat had formed political parties, organized elections on their terms and got themselves elected as President⁵¹.

The idea of calling on the late Head of State, Gen. Abacha to join the Presidential race showed that our political class is incompetent for the leadership role; and also, it signified that our clamour for democratisation is a mere lip service.

The three social contract theorists, Locke, Rousseau, and Hobbes, argued that the Europe of the 17th and 18th centuries needed a powerful

ruler whose legitimacy however derived from the people. Arguing their case, Rousseau averred that the general^{will} must prevail at all times. The submissions were the precursor of the modern concept of popular sovereignty which locates ultimate power in the people⁵².

Studying Machiavelli's Prince or Hobbes' Leviathan is however a historical academic exercise for the modern man. There is hardly any doubt that the best arrangement for governing the modern state is democracy. The beauty of democracy, which is generally accepted as government of the people, by the people and for the people, is not in who emerges but how he emerges. The ruler may not necessarily be the wisest, but where the rules are scrupulously followed and the general will allowed to prevail, a foolish man is not likely to emerge.

Besides the modern democratic arrangement does not just focus on the man, but the institutions of government which acts as a check on arbitrary use of power.

One particularly important document is the constitution. It is the supreme law of the land to which the head of government is subjected. The generally accepted concept of separation of powers (in different forms) also ensures that the line between the democratic ruler and the despot remains thick at all times⁵³.

In the pursuit of late Abacha ambition to succeed himself as civilian President, civilized conduct, democratic norms, rule of law and conscience had no place. Nigeria is ripe to implement her own democratic ideals. She cannot be dictated to by the whims and caprices of any individual, group, or nation. Having learnt their lessons bitterly over the years, Nigerians at this juncture are matured enough know what they want in whom they want to lead them. The re-orientation of the military is very important at this age when the whole world is practising democracy. Military system of government is fast becoming out-dated.

The late Chief Obafemi Awolowo once said that 'the worst civilian regime is better than the best military regime'. The military must be reminded of their primary responsibilities, which is basically security, and not the running of government. The military should be reorganised so that the country can have a professional military class rather than a partisan military. The military must know that as long as it suspends the law and constitution of the country by subverting the sovereignty of the people, it is digging its own grave. Only a truly democratic regime

based on the rule of law and constitutionalism can restore the professionalism of the military. Without democracy, the military as an institution has no future. For as the saying 'the king truly owns the title but he does not own the throne. The throne belongs to the people, and if the king insists on wearing his title to the grave, the people can always have the throne'.

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