

MILIDEMOCRACY AND THE MILITARIZATION OF CIVILIAN SPACES: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC PEACE IN NIGERIA

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MILIDEMOCRACY AND THE MILITARIZATION OF CIVILIAN SPACES: Implications for Democratic Peace in Nigeria*

Ekwutosi E. Offiong, Ph.D. & Oliver N. Okon, Ph.D

One of the legacies of military interventions in Nigerian politics has been the evolution of retired preponderant military politicians who have commandeered the structures of the post-military governance in Nigeria with influence perpetuated covertly and overtly. Extant pieces of literature have investigated the theme of ex-military influence on Nigeria's fourth republic. However, little attention has been given to the culture or attitude of the militarization of civilian spaces, as a means of ensuring peace, by Nigeria's fourth republic Presidents with a military background. Adopting the democratic peace theory as a framework, the work explains trends in the militarization of civilian spaces by succeeding heads of Nigeria's executive in the fourth republic. It argues that such disposition and practice are antithetical to democratic culture, especially as military is known for rights violations. It is, therefore, recommended that civil problems be managed by civil means through civil institutions.

KEYWORDS: *milidemocracy, civil-military relations, democratic peace theory, peace by peaceful means, civilian space*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular institutions in post-independent Nigeria has been the Nigerian military. Its firm, it built from its ingenuity in truncating civilian administrations and institutions. Since the attempted putsch of July 15, 1966, the military had struck, re-struck, and perpetuated its rule over the country between 1966-1979; 1983-1993; and 1993-1999. Thus, for the first thirty-nine years of its independence (1960-1999), the military had 'recolonized' the country for some good twenty-nine years and in the process, left some indelible marks that have brazed contemporary attempts at democratization.

Extant pieces of literature have attempted to trace the sinew between present democratic anomalies and the legacies of age-long military autocracies. For instance, Ekpo and Agorye (2018) have demonstrated quite explicitly that repressive military regimes are responsible for the level of docility, cowardice, identity politics, and sycophancy exhibited by the Fourth Republic Nigeria youths – a trend they considered as insidious to democratic culture and good governance. Even so, Egbe (2014) in his study noted that “Nigeria has not improved beyond what existed in the military era” since the electoral system and judiciary are still bedevilled with malfeasances that qualify the fourth republic more as a civil rule than democracy. Such developments, Yagboyaju warned, present “pieces of evidence of a possible relapse into...immediate past autocratic experience” (2011:103).

Part of the legacies of the decades of military rule has also been what we would term 'civilian autocracy'. As argued by Oke (2010:31), the post-military “political class continues to dispose and demonstrate known military attributes and values in issues that are characteristically civil and democratic”. Such disposition is further facilitated by the over-centralization and personalization of political power which has created autocrats and emperors, disguised as civilian leaders (Oke, 2010:35-36). The present republic as such, becomes a hybridization military-civilian culture characterized by “incomplete liberalization, lack of inclusiveness and deficient application of the rule of law” (Kifordu, 2011:29).

The hijacking of the present republic by retired military generals (Ekpo et al., 2019) further complicates the problems mentioned above. This "milidemocray", aside from pontificating military culture, engenders the drive to utilize military options in solving civilian problems. One of such dominant culture has been the militarization of civilian spaces. This paper adopts the Democratic Peace theory to explain the implications of such a culture on democratic peace and governance.

Conceptualizing Milidemocracy and Militarization

The importance of conceptual clarification in discourses cannot be overemphasized. Aside from the amorphous nature of some words, the definition of concepts helps to explore popular perceptions on the meaning of words, as well as, place them on contextual margin or license regarding the praxis of their usage to fit the demands of the theme of discourse. Such keywords to be conceptualized in this work include milidemocracy, militarization/militarism, and peace.

Milidemocracy

The word milidemocracy originates from the marriage of two concepts – military and democracy – to depict or connote a government that exhibits the features or characteristics of democracy and military autocracy. The concept, arguably invented in Nigeria, has been used to represent the disparate relationship between military and civilian institutions in terms of power-sharing. For instance, Abidde's (2006) usage of the word in her article, "Suggesting Military Democracy for Nigeria", portrays a military inclusion in the civilian government, a notion which mirrors the Huntingtonian "subjective civilian control" – a civil-military relation model that advocates the civilianization of the military (Huntington, 1957:83). Accordingly, milidemocracy represents the merger of "what is good about the military, i.e. decisiveness, tolerance and discipline; and what is great about civilians, i.e. inclusiveness and locality" (Abidde, 2006).

Also, the concept has been utilized to describe the transformation of direct to indirect military rule through the manipulation of democratic processes and elections to favor the emergence and dominance of Nigeria's fourth republic by retired military politicians (Ekpo, Agoyre and Tobi, 2019). This point, Obioha (2016:251) emphasized this when he averred that "most general elections organized by the military to transit power have been descriptive of milidemocra[c]y, where previous military officers acquire democratic power through stage-managed processes". The concept of milidemocracy has also been adjudged by Ofodum (n.d: 103), the founder of *African Law Journal*, to be synonymous with dicta-democracy – both of which he described to include "a government that practices democracy but not a true democracy".

For the sake of this work, we define milidemocracy to be the manifestation of traits, remnants or infiltration of military and autocratic culture (such as military megalomania, indiscriminate deployment of troops or force against civil crimes, peace by forceful means, subversion of civil institutions by militaries, and superfluous

Militarization/Militarism

Militarism and militarization are concepts commonly used interchangeably to describe a military-dominated society.

For instance, Luckham (1994:24) has defined militarization as a “multidimensional process through which some elements - such as military coups and regimes, authoritarian government, the dominance of patriarchy, powerful military and repressive state apparatus, war, and armed conflict, rising military spending and arms import, and external military intervention – become dynamically linked, both to each other and more widely to capital accumulation and projects for national and international hegemony” and militarism as the pervasiveness in society of symbols, values and discourses validating military power and preparation for war.

According to Higate et al. (2018:2), in the United Kingdom, particularly, both concepts have been used to question the size and profile of the arms/defense industry, the global proliferation of a nation's private military and security industry, the ubiquity of military signs, symbols, and heritage sites in public spaces, mainstream media's general tendency to support military action, the frequency with which the armed forces are deployed to fight, the relative lack of resistance to wars, and the pontification of imperial past. The terms, Bernazzoli and Flint (2009:449) observed, have evolved from one that used to imply the growth of a separate, dangerous military ethos to one that now stresses the ingrained nature of military mindset in civil society. This is best captured by Cynthia Enloe (2004) whose concept of militarism as an ideology within civil society is the observance of the following features: (a) that the best way to resolve conflicts is through armed conflict; (b) that conflict is a natural part of human nature; (c) that having enemies is a natural condition; (d) that hierarchical relations produce effective action; (e) that a state without a military is primitive, hardly modern, and hardly legitimate; and (f) that any man who refuses to use force in times of crisis is endangering his status as a man (Ctd. in Bernazzoli and Flint, 2009:449).

The above is supportive of Thee's (1977:296) position on the symptoms of militarism which he listed to include: the rush to armaments, the military's expanding position, its use of force as a tool for political dominance and influence, and its rising sway over civilian activities. Thee's indicators of militarism define our framing and application of the concepts in this work.

Theoretical framework: Democratic Peace Theory

The democratic peace theory analyses and engages the phenomenon of peace and war within and amongst states.

It sees conflict and peace as a product of the system of government. It evaluates how governance structure and strategy can bring about domestic peace, engender domestic conflict, and international cohesion or confrontation within a certain group with a distinct governing pattern as against others with variant governing systems. The governing pattern here, being the liberal democratic system of governance.

According to some, Democratic Peace Theory is the most influential liberal contribution to the discussion of the origins of war and peace (Rosato, 2003:585). As the name implies, it is modelled to pontificate the role of liberalism, which is attributed to democracy, in eradicating domestic and international contradictions while ensuring “perpetual peace”. It embellishes the idea that some integral ingredients present in liberal democracy can “cause” and ensure global and domestic peace, while the absence of it can engender wars and conflict, both from within and without.

The democratic peace theory's central claim is that democracies are not hostile to one another (Balci, 2011). This is due to the fact that they both adhere to domestic institutions that forbid the use of force and share common principles of “live-and-let-live” (Rosato, 2003). Immanuel Kant happens to be one of the earliest proponents of this theory. Kant, in his book *The Perpetual Peace*, argued that the normative aspect assists the foundation for peaceful interactions between democratic governments, which are founded on the common ideals of partnership, respect for one another, and compassion (cited in Balci, 2011).

Indeed, Kant advocated three main institutional reforms to eliminate the greatest self-inflicted tragedy of humanity, i.e. war. Kant thought that if national governments become “republican” (i.e., democratic), an international federation of states (along the lines of the UN or the EU) is established, and a certain degree of permeability between states to allow visits by foreigners (“the right to visit”) ensured, an ever-lasting peace among nations would eventually occur (Caranti, 2013). At the domestic level, Kant had given precepts on what qualified an entity to be labelled “republican” thus:

The civil constitution of every state shall be Republican. Three main features characterize a republican constitution: *freedom* of each member of the society, *dependence* of everyone upon a single and unified legislation, legal *equality for*,

i.e. non-discrimination before the law. Two additional requirements are: a) rulers must legislate by interpreting the general will; b) there must be a sharp distinction of powers; in particular, the legislative is to be well separated from the executive. These constitutional features are thought to be relevant for the cause of peace because only in a republic people influence the decision on whether the state should enter a war. Since the people themselves would suffer from the atrocities of violent conflict, there are reasons to believe that they "will have great hesitation in embarking on so dangerous an enterprise" (Ibid.).

This is against an autocratic state in which rather than being one of the citizens, the ruler wields absolute control over state security apparatuses

Confronted with new realities and challenges on the earlier proposition of Immanuel Kant, scholars have modeled, remodeled, and added more to the analysis of the democratic peace theory's debate. Two schools have emerged: the dyadic and the monadic schools. For instance, Professor Rummel (1983), in a view described as "monadic", claims that democratic peace theory encapsulates the notion that democracies are peaceful when it comes to their foreign policy, regardless of whether or not other governments are also peaceful; that as a result, democracies only wage war on dictatorships when provoked or attacked. Rummel's position is summarized by Gobetti (n.d:22-3) to comprise two hypotheses: the first hypothesis stipulates that governments with a "libertarian" (democratic) rule do not engage in violent behavior among themselves.

The second hypothesis holds that the higher the level of "libertarianism" in a political system, the lower the level of violence expressed by this regime, both domestically and in its relations with other states, regardless of the nature of the regime with which it comes into contact. That is democratic leaders, who should seriously weigh the opinions of the population, prefer to select peaceful solutions to avoid the escalation of violence that leads to insurrections or war. Inversely, autocratic leaders engender wars and violent conflict through suppression, repression, and resolution by using force in the settlement of problems, thereby escalating minor conflicts into major global crises.

For Ekpo, Agoyre and Tobi (2019), the military only succeeded itself through some demarches that would eventually culminate in the civilianization of the military and the militarization of the civilian populations. Such demarches included the military fiat (Decree No. 24) that was forced on the Civilians as the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria – a constitution that created an almighty executive head as well as a hyper-centralized government that ridicules its chosen federal nomenclature. Others included the strategic funding and influencing of the internal politics of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP); the PDP's adoption of a retired military general and former head of state, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as its flag-bearer and his subsequent emergence as the super head of the federal executive (Ekpo, Agoyre and Tobi, 2019:8-11).

Chief Obasanjo, therefore, ruled rather than governed. His disposition towards human rights, the rule of law and constitutionalism resonates with what was obtainable during his stint as a military head of state (*see* Falana, 2010; Adeniyi, 2011). Even so, he saw himself as a military man first before a civilian and piloted the affairs of the country in that regard. This explains his lust to surround himself with retired military generals and his reservations about giving political appointments to officers who retired below the ranks. This led to Ekpo, Agoyre and Tobi (2019:10) concluding that Chief Obasanjo “ran his administration as a quasi-military regime, confiding overtly and covertly on the 'expertise' and political sagacity of its comrade in fatigue and off fatigue.” While the comrades in fatigue were the retired generals he coveted, those in fatigue were serving officers. The former, he befriended overtly, the latter, he engaged on the utilitarian basis of ensuring peace by violent means – a clear case of milidemocracy.

When democracy was restored in mid-1999, autocracy was relaxed, constitutionalism was restored and the role of the military was restricted, according to the constitution, to “defending Nigeria from external aggression; maintaining its territorial integrity; suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the president” with confirmation from the National Assembly (Section 217[2][a-c]). This had given birth to a resurgence in the expression of grievances by groups and peoples who felt relatively deprived in the Niger Delta and South East.

The dyadic model of democratic peace resonated in the work of Doyle (1983). The dyadic hypothesis considers that liberal governments are not peaceful; as such, they are merely idyllic among themselves, but hostile toward non-liberal countries. Its core is based on the premise that "republics" gradually create friendly ties among themselves to the point of integrating through a pseudo-federation of republics, and that they are adversarial with nations that do not participate in this federation (Doyle, 1983 cited in Gobetti, n.d.:26).

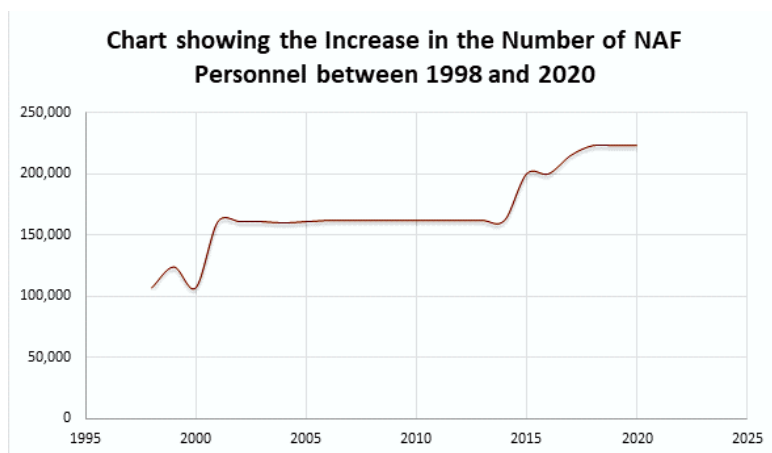
Invariably, the internal dynamism in the governance structure of a state fosters its internal peace and this internal peace is now exported on the nature of relations states foster with each other. As aptly captured by Russett (1993), "in an economy of checks and balances, the division of power and the presence of public debate in the formulation of public policies implies that the decision to enter into large-scale conflict is an extremely difficult one" (qtd. in Gobetti, n.d.:29). The elements of the balance of power, the principles of separation of power, and the element of public debate and public opinion serve as constraint factors (home) and constraint cum deterrent factors (away) against internal clash and external aggression. That is to say, democratic countries do not even experience major internal conflicts, as the level of every democracy is measured by how peaceful a country is. If incidentally, a conflict arises, peaceful approaches, rather than force, are adopted in an attempt to resolve such issues. In the same vein, democratic states do not fight themselves but other autocratic states either as aggressors (dyadic) or only when attacked (monadic).

While democratic peace advocates for the settlement of conflicts by peaceful means, it dreads the act of militarization or militarism as it is seldom people-oriented and culminates in repression and exhibition of autocratic tendencies by governing elites. Nigeria has witnessed an increasing level of militarization in the recent past with military options utilized even for civil and criminal cases. We adopt this theory to explain the implications of such actions.

Trends in Militarization in the Fourth Republic

Nigeria's fourth republic was ushered in on May 29, 1999, following decades of military politics, gimmicks, and rule. However, the genuine intentions of the military to liberalize the power corridors of the nation's fourth republic remained very blurred and a subject of scholarly debates.

The attempt at settling these grievances, through violent means, marks the beginning of the militarization of Nigeria's fourth republic. Chief Obasanjo started with massive recruitment of personnel into the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF). Empirical data available shows that the strength of the NAF parachuted from 107,000 in 1998 to about 124,000 by 1999. By 2002, it had climaxed to about 161,000 with a total of 162,000 personnel recorded in 2007 - a year President Obasanjo left office.



Data Source: Trading Economics (2024)

President Obasanjo utilized the army so much in settling civil disputes. Aside from President Obasanjo's subsequent militarization of elections, Frank and Ukpere (2012) have noted some outstanding adoption of military might by the Obasanjo administration to address civil issues. One of such was the deployment of troops, in 2000, to 'Odi' in Bayelsa State "to massacre innocent citizens without recourse to the National Assembly" (2012:288). This was against extant laws which, as we have mentioned earlier, mandates the National Assembly to legitimize such venture through its validation and scrutiny. President Obasanjo, yet again, in 2001 deployed troops to 'Zaki Biam' in Benue State. This, according to Omilusi (2015) "was one of the outcomes of militarized psyche which cherished obedience without complaint" (2015:14).

The deployment, aside from culminating in the killing of innocent citizens, also contravened the extant laws which we have cited above. His passion for the use of force and deployment of troops in any civil unrest was legendary. Discussing this phenomenon of milidemocracy about the Obasanjo administration, Oke noted thus:

Most culpable in this regard is the former president (Obasanjo) who in power assumed the position of 'Alpha and omega' in administering the country. The ex-president was dubbed "impatient, intemperate and very often dictatorial"...Also in the words of Professor Wole Soyinka, democracy has been openly, blatantly and contemptuously rubbished by the president (2010:36).

Nevertheless, the decision by the Obasanjo-led administration to use violence against the militants in the Niger Delta was another militaristic tendency which stretched, amplified and escalated the grievances of the Niger Delta stakeholders. His administration normalized the culture of indiscriminate deployment of troops – a practice that was reversed subsequently by his successor who had no military learning.

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua who succeeded President Obasanjo had no military background and had made tangible attempts at correcting his predecessor's impunity and disregard for extant laws. He reversed some illegal and autocratic policies of the Obasanjo administration and made concerted efforts to pursue the rule of law as against the rule of man (Adeniyi, 2011). Until his demise in May 2010, President Yara'Adua was an apostle of democratic peace and was so committed to the pursuit of peace by peaceful means. Throughout his years, there was no further recruitment of personnel to the NAF of which capacity remained at 162,000 (Trading Economics, 2024). He had no use for them aside from that entrusted to them by the supreme law of the land. The magic string which the Yar'Adua administration pulled at quelling the disturbance at the Niger Delta proved very successful and enduring. The Amnesty Programme initiated by the Yar'Adua administration brought about enduring peace which has stood the test of time in the Niger Delta.

President Yar'Adua's disposition for peace by peaceful means was also emulated by his successor, Goodluck Jonathan who like his predecessor, had neither military leaning nor background. President Jonathan continued the Amnesty program and is blamed for treating the Boko Haram insurgency at its early stage with kid gloves. His failure to deploy troops 'on time' and the state of emergency declared in 2012 and 2013 is also blamed for further escalation of the conflict. More so, Omilusi (2015) has noted the cases of the militarization of elections by the Jonathan-led administration. Of important mention were the 2014 governorship elections in Ekiti and Ondo States. While 30,790 troops were deployed to the former, over 70,000 were actively involved in the latter. The elections (civil affair) were transformed into a "war" where "troops took their positions [with] almost every 100 meters from the entry point of the states, police officers and soldiers mounted various checkpoints, with blood-hound dogs sniffing for any likely breach of peace by supporters of the various political parties" (Omilusi, 2015:10). The Jonathan administration was also found wanting for adopting force in quelling the protest that welcomed the obnoxious removal of fuel subsidy in 2012. Nevertheless, he demonstrated some degree of restraint like delaying the deployment of troops to the North East and bowing to public opinion during the anti-subsidy removal protests.

In 2015, however, another retired army general, Muhammadu Buhari defeated the incumbent to become the next president. Riding on insecurity to secure his victory, he made bogus promises such as bringing the Boko Haram insurgency to an end by his first hundred days. This, alongside his autocratic antecedents, beamed grey indicators of a possible return to the militarization days. Thus far, the General Buhari-led administration has proved such premonitions valid. For instance, available data has indicated a sharp rise in the number of NAF personnel. The population count of NAF personnel had increased from 162,000 in 2014 to 200,000 in 2015 and climaxed at 215,000 by the end of 2017 (World Bank, 2019). While this increase could be argued to be a direct reaction to the dynamics of threats to national security, it also shows the administration's inclination to peace by violent means.

Just after his inauguration in May 2015, President Buhari, for instance, adopted the confrontational approach by vilifying the amnesty program and cutting its allocation by 70 per cent in the proposed 2016 budget.

The government subsequently, amidst tension, militarized the creeks of the Niger Delta. There were massive sorties, killings, arrests and assaults against the stakeholders in the creek. One of such assault led to the desecration of the shrine and the death of the father of one of the leading militant heads, Government Ekpemupolo, in September 2016. The military actions culminated in the resurgence of militancy in the region. One of the militant groups, the Niger Delta Avengers, warned that "the Niger Delta Avengers cannot be blamed for the continuous bombing of crude oil installations since the government has been relentlessly carrying out military build-ups to continuously harass communities" (Aljazeera, 2016). By the end of 2016, the unrest in the Niger Delta had led to the plummeting of Nigeria's oil production from 2.2 million to 1.4 barrels per day with the country losing about N2.7 billion (\$14 billion) daily. Electricity generation also declined from 4,800 megawatts in August 2015 to 1,000 megawatts in May 2016 (Onuoha, 2016).

The Buhari administration is also notorious for the launching of several military operations which is used to deface civilian spaces. The operations, it appears, also seek to intimidate civilian populations which in most cases, pose less threat than the civil institutions can manage.

Table 1: Showing Some Locations and Purposes of Military Operations, Sub-Operations, and Exercises Since 2015

S/N	CODE-NAMES	GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	PURPOSE
1	Awatse	South West Coast	Anti-Militancy/Vandalism
2	Clearance	Kogi/North Central	Anti-Crime
3	Crocodile Smile I and II	Niger Delta and Ogun State	Counter-Vandalism
4	Delta Safe (replaced Pulo Shield)	Niger Delta	Anti-Vandalism
5	Dokaji	North West/Central	Anti-Banditry/Rustling
6	Gama Aiki	Northern Borno and Environs	Counterterrorism
7	Lafiya Dole	North East	Counterterrorism
8	Mesa	Nationwide	Anti-Crime
9	Operation 777	Nationwide	Public Safety
10	Python Dance I	Anambra	Anti-Crime
11	Python Dance II	South East	Anticipating Crimes
12	Ruwan Wuta II	North East	Counterterrorism
13	Safe Haven	Plateau and Environs	Ethno-Religious Conflict
14	Sharan Daji/Habin Kunama I and II	North West	Anti-Banditry/Rustling
15	Shirin Harbi	Bauchi/Gombe	Anti-Restiveness
16	Tsera Teku	Warri, Delta State	Anti-Piracy/Vandalism
17	Whirle Punch	Kaduna State	Anti-Robbery/Banditry
18	Whirle Stroke	North Central	Herdsmen/Farmer clashes

Data Source: Jones (2018); Odunsi (2018); Breaking Times (2017).

The various operations and their purposes demonstrate how much faith, the Buhari administration has in the use of force, violence, and intimidation to arrest civil issues. What more would explain the fact that military personnel are deployed to anticipate and fight crimes, restiveness and other roles which the police and other civil agencies could fantastically manage? The military was even rumoured to have embarked on an immunization mission against Monkeypox in Rivers State in October 2017, as part of its operations (Onoyume, 2017).

The perambulation of the military around civilian spaces and their humongous operations has proven to create and escalate problems where none existed. A case here is Operation Python Dance II which was designed by the Buhari administration to, rather than explore non-violent options, provoke the secessionist group, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), into actions that would justify brutality since all legal options had failed to favor the government (Ekpo, 2018). Just as anticipated, this aim was achieved with several casualties recorded. The military, on September 15, 2017, pronounced the group a terrorist organization even before securing a court order to that effect (Ekpo and Agoyre, 2018:48). Same was the case in December 2015 where, due to the obstruction of a military convoy, over 830 members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria were slaughtered by men of the Nigerian military (Isuwa, 2015).

Accordingly, every initiative that conveys peace by peaceful is considered ignoble. This explains why billions of dollars are still channelled into the importation of weapons and amours to combat terrorism in the North East against other alternatives such as the funding of the North East Development Commission (see Ekpo and Mavalla, 2017) which would have helped tackle the root cause of the problems.

The Implication of Militarization on Democratic Peace

Democratic peace, as we have stated earlier, advocates the use of peaceful means in pursuing or advancing peace. It assumes that the rate at which a state is democratic is measured by how peaceful it is. That is to say, the more democratic a state is, the more peaceful it is likely to be and vice versa. Thus, every democracy pursues peace and would do everything to avoid violence as a means to a peaceful end.

Democratic peace also worries about positive peace which tackles issues from their roots rather than negative peace which is interested in maintaining the status quo irrespective of how unjust it might be.

The burgeoning rise in the culture of militarization in Nigeria echoes the fact that democratically, Nigeria is not peaceful and in terms of peace, Nigeria is not democratic. The data from the Democracy Indexes (DI) and Global Peace Indexes (GPI) in the past decade have been consistent with the fact that the most democratic states are as well, the most peaceful states. Since 2007, 27 countries in the world have dominated the DI as the most democratic states and of these 27, 8 Western European countries - Sweden, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Luxemburg, and Switzerland; 1 Northern American country of Canada; and Australia, made the top 10 (Kekic, 2017). By its 2017 publication, Ireland and New Zealand had made it into the top 10 without dislodging the others (Economist Democratic Index, 2017).

Coincidentally, the GPI had placed 8 of these “democratic countries” within the first 10 of the most peaceful countries. Almost the same scenario repeated in its subsequent reports of 2017 and 2018 (GPI, 2017; 2018). Though most of these countries have featured, with high rankings, on the Global Militarization Index (GMI) of 2018 (Mutschler and Bales, 2018), they do not employ violent means for peaceful ends and the GMI is not based on military presence, and infiltration of civilian spaces but on military spending (in relation to GDP and health spending), population (in relation to physicians) and weapons (in relation to population) (Ibid.4). Would it be safe to say that the most democratic states are the most peaceful states?

Statistics have also demonstrated that Nigeria's gain in peace ratings sometimes has implications for its democratic ratings. For instance, when in 2011 the GPI rating of Nigeria was 142nd with 2.743 points, its DI rating stood at 119 with 3.83 points. By 2012, Nigeria's GPI rating had reduced to 146 with 2.801 points and affected its DI position which fell to 120 with 3.17 points. Consequently, militarizing Nigeria's democracy would have negative implications on democratic peace since force would be used as a means to negative peace.

Populating civilian spaces with military personnel who have a checkered history of human rights violations cannot be without consequences. Naturally, the military mind, Samuel Huntington, has argued, is "pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic, militaristic, pacifist, instrumentalist...realistic, and conservative" (Huntington, 1957:79) and most of these attributes, if utilized outside its *raison d'être* and established checks, contribute nuisances to democratic culture. The Nigerian military has a very ugly history of professionalism and respect for human rights. Aside from dozens of successes and attempts at sacking constituted authorities and institutions through coercion, the military utilized maximum force to perpetuate its gains.

There were no limits or exceptions to which human rights could be violated. The effects are enormous and still, define the perception of an average Nigerian on who, and what, military personnel represent. The various military operations (see Table 1) which have become viral since 2015 are characterized by degrees of abuses and violations of fundamental human rights. In the December 2015 violent assault against the Shiite communities in Kaduna, the lives of over 830 "bloody civilians" did not matter. As part of the military's "show of force" in Operation Python Dance II, "soldiers are reported to have manhandled, assaulted, maimed, tortured and forced some IPOB members to swim the stagnant and muddy waters by the roadsides" (Ekpo and Agoyre, 2018:41). Although the military on the 30th of October, 2019 denied the report about its publicized national operation code-named "Operation Positive Identification", which was supposed to have taken place between November 1 and December 23, 2019, the editorial of *This Day* newspaper has this to say about it and others of its kind:

...In a democracy, why should internal civil security issues and security issues and operations be in the hands of the army? Even if there is a need for troops to be deployed in the streets for some specialised civil action, should the directive not emanate from the minister of defence rather than the army chief?...How precisely will soldiers 'check out' the sundry cartel of criminal gangs?...Whatever may be the weakness of the police force in Nigeria today, it remains the constitutionally authorised institution to deal with internal security and the military can only be co-opted, where and when necessary.

The federal government, specifically President Muhammadu Buhari, therefore has a responsibility to reassert the civil essence of this democracy. Unless that is done, we denigrate into a regimental enclave and these routine infringements on civil liberty become axiomatic. We are worried because this is not an isolated incident. It is a growing pattern. In the guise of national security, the military has encroached into the civil space. Yet, the continuous presence of soldiers in combat gear all over the country is a negative indicator to the civil populace. ...In a democracy, why should it erode the sense of democratic freedom. It signals to outsiders that all is not well. The soldiers themselves get into the belief that we are in an emergency situation in which they can trample on the rights of citizens (This Day, 2019).

While the psychological violence of flashing military fatigues, small arms and light weapons and 'force' on peace-loving civilians could be very intimidating and gory, such perambulation of soldiers around to fight petty crime is repercussive of the fact that the Nigerian government is not ready to pursue peace by peaceful means. Crimes do not just happen. They are propelled by some fundamental and structural conditions, which if not corrected, can only recycle such crimes in stages, phases, and locations. Democratic peace does not use the military to intimidate civilian populations as a means of maintaining the status quo, fighting or anticipating crimes, but fighting off every structural imbalance that will weed off every triggering and proximate cause of crimes.

Militarization and the practice of peace enforcement have culminated in the normalization of force by both the citizens and the government as a veritable tool for the pursuance of political ends. There is a popular cliché that is fast becoming an *a posteriori*. It states that "the only language the Nigerian government understands is the language of force". A case is the Niger Delta militants who had to take up arms before they could merit "amnesty" packages, and subsequently, the continuous funding of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

Another instance is the herders who had to inflict serious damages on the farming communities in Kaduna before its governor, Nasir El-Rufai, traced them to their respective states (Cameroon, Niger Republic, Chad, Mali, and Senegal) to offer reparations as a means of forestalling future attacks (Channels TV, 2019). Even the spat of violence in the recent elections in Rivers and Akwa Ibom States are analysed in the context of the aborigines using force to resist federal force, often euhemerized as “federal might”, which is mostly indicated in the superfluous deployment of troops to influence electoral outcomes (*see* Ekpo, Agoyre and Tobi, 2019b). The Boko Haram group had to attack and kidnap hundreds of school children to be negotiated with by the federal government. Most groups are now threatening the government with violence with troops stretched and actively engaged in the northeast, north-central and the Niger Delta. Militarization, therefore, has made might right, normalized violence and would, in the long run, constitute more threat to the government than could be managed. It is eroding democratic culture and is breeding autocracy.

Actively using the military to quell civil disturbances has a cumulative effect of polluting the already stained military ethos. It exposes soldiers to politicking and corrupts the remnant of apolitical traits that are left in them. It is a historical fact that one of the factors that radicalized the Nigerian military and eventually culminated in the putsch of January 15, 1966, was the "government's use of the army to suppress civil disturbances (which required political solutions rather than an iron fist)" (Siollun, 2009:27). Repeating the same mistake further threatens the chances of an uninterrupted republic since the army corps is becoming increasingly politicized and decreasingly professional. This is a cumulative threat, not just to democratic peace, but to the nation's entire democracy.

Indiscriminate militarization of civilian spaces has also led to inter-professional rivalry and confrontations between the military and civilian institutions such as the Nigerian Police, the Nigerian Civil Defence Corps, the Federal Road Safety Corps, etc. While the civil law enforcement agencies go about with their constitutional businesses, cases abound where they are harassed, beaten and even killed by men of the Nigerian military who, due to the long decades of military rule, still hold this narcissistic and megalomaniac tendency of its superiority over the civilians and every institution that represents them.

The recent killing of 3 policemen in Ibi, Taraba State, by soldiers of the 93 Battalion is the most recent of such unspeakable megalomania. This case was even more tragic and worrisome as the police officers were killed by the soldiers to free a notorious kidnap kingpin, Hamisu Wadume, who had been successfully arrested by the police (Ogundipe, 2019). If inter-professional rivalry between the military and civil security institutions is to be overlooked, the protection of criminals by personnel of the Nigerian military should not be taken lightly. It is the worst form of professional corruption with implications for democratic stability and peace. If the police, as law enforcement agents, are not safe, who is?

Concluding Remarks

The 21st-century world is a world of democratic frenzy. Nigeria's pursuit of peace through peaceful means would not only incur internal benefits by addressing fundamental and structural problems targeted at addressing the general needs of the populace. It would place Nigeria at the position of advantage within the league of democratic states in the international circle. It will drive investment, drive foreign direct investors, drive stability, drive growth and ensure the future and sustainability of the nation's democracy and its democratic culture.

Militarization, on the other hand, is a threat to these dreams. It is an aberration that the military is seen, heard and felt (negatively or positively) across the nooks and crannies of civilian spaces, in a democracy. The effects, as we have considered above, are malicious and deleterious. If Nigeria must advance its democratic culture, if it must attain sustainable peace, if Nigeria must champion the cause of human rights, then it must pursue peace by peaceful means. Part of such reassurances would be the withdrawal of the military from civilian spaces and its subsequent restriction to its constitutional roles. Just as in the case of the Niger Delta, the government must make efforts at finding peaceful solutions to existing violent conflicts. The government must also be tactful not to escalate social disturbances such that they escalate to the level that the military might become necessary.

Civil institutions and law enforcement agencies must be encouraged at the strategic and tactical levels to champion the cause of crime-fighting. In this way, the military would be taken off civilian spaces and the risk of utilizing it or the problems that come with its presence would be greatly minimized.

As a democracy, the nation's peace should not be a hot or negative one but a positive peace where peaceful methods are used to pursue peaceful means. Military might and militarization, therefore, must become things of the past.

NOTES

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