

## The Birth and Formation of the Nigerian Army: A Background to the Conundrum of Ethnic Rivalry and Military Doctrine

**William Abiodun Duyile**

Department of History and International Studies, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti  
Email: abiodun.duyile@eksu.edu.ng

### **Abstract:**

*This study examined the genesis of the Nigerian Army, the activities in context with policy and platform preference in tactics, strategy and doctrine. Nigeria's response to the myriad of challenges faced by the Nigerian Army and the role it played pre- 1970. The research also traced the history of the Nigeria Army, and postulates factors in the organization that engendered ethnic rivalry. A retrospect and review of the facts was made, in order that scholars would have an insight on perceptions as well as the reasons why the choice of strategic platform favored the Army. The research identified the reasons why the Army is considered the number one force in the Nigerian state and the land platform is most favored. The other contribution to knowledge is the correlation between ethnic rivalry and the choice of platform.*

### **Keywords:**

Platform; War; Ethnicity; Small Arms

### **I. Introduction**

The historical beginnings of the Nigerian Army can be traced to the three nineteenth century formations in the geographical land mass now known as Nigeria. The resistance encountered by European explorers and settlers in Nigeria, as early as 1861, was clearly indicative of the fact that the traditional Nigerian society was not devoid of the army (Duyile, 2005). As earlier stated the formation that began what should be aptly described as the modern day military started from the establishment in 1862 by Captain John Glover of a small Hausa militia (dubbed Glover's Hausa) to defend the British colony of Lagos (Duyile, From the Marine Department to the Nigerian Navy: The Development of Nigerian Maritime Capability, 1914-83, 2015). The British had intervened in the political bickering in Lagos and were quick to take an advantage of this turmoil in Lagos in favour of Britain hence the need to have a force that would defend this newly acquired territory.

However the mission of defending Lagos was later expanded to include imperial defense when the militia was deployed to the Gold Coast during the expedition of 1873 – 74 (Daily Times, 1985). Officially, the Hausa militia became the Hausa Constabulary in 1879, when an independent Hausa force was carved out and given exclusively Army functions. This demographic recruitment base perpetuated the use of Hausa language as the lingua franca of command in Ghana and Nigeria where it persisted into the 1950s (Daily Times, 1985). It also marked the historical origin of the ethnic imbalances and strategic doctrines that has characterized Nigerian Armed Forces until 1966. This became the setting that engendered the preferred agenda for Nigeria's policy on platforms for battles (Osadola, 2012).

Secondly, the activities of the Royal Niger Company, and the fact that the company accepted political responsibility for administering the territory of the then Northern Nigeria, made it increasingly necessary to protect the territory with the establishment of some form of military presence (Nwachukwu & Osadola, 2019). The Royal Niger Company provided as an addition to its business, security to British citizens residing in “Northern Nigeria.” We must not forget that at this period of the 1880s was the peak of European rivalry for African land. The British edge over other European counterparts was due to its maritime dominance. The British could not bequeath this edge to Nigeria’s military strategy. This led to the creation of the Royal Niger Company Constabulary in 1888 to protect British interest in Northern Nigeria (Duyile, 2016). It later provided the nucleus of the Northern Nigeria regiment of the 1 and 2 Battalion when they were created in 1900. This was part of the reasons why the people from Northern Nigeria later had an edge over the more maritime South.

Thirdly, the “Oil Rivers Irregular” was established between 1891 and 1892 by Sir Ralph Moor, later re- designated the Niger Coast Constabulary and formed the basis of the 3rd Battalion of the Southern Nigeria Regiment of the West African Frontier Force (WAFF) (Duyile, 2019). It should be added that Ralph Moor dominance at sea gave them an incursion hitherto on the hinterland. The littoral strategic value was seen as esoteric and was considered unimportant to later strategic policy developers.

In all the three formations, the somewhat innocuous word “constabulary” used in renaming the formations was intended not to confirm the fears of indigenes, of Britain’s maintenance of a standing army. In 1897 WAFF was founded under the command of Colonel Fredrick (later Lord) Lugard to counter French encroachment from the north. Lugard was an Army officer and based his strategy on land platforms paving the way for emphasizes on Land Battles. By 1901 WAFF was an inter territorial force composed of the Nigeria and Gold coast regiments, the Sierra Leone battalion, and the Gambia Company, and commanded by a small number of British army officers and non commissioned officers seconded to the force. WAFF was under the colonial office in London, but an officer responsible directly to the local colonial governor commanded each regiment. The regiments were consolidated into the Nigeria regiment of the WAFF, when the Northern and Southern Nigerian protectorate were amalgamated on January 1, 1914 (Duyile, 2005).

On 1 January 1914 the hitherto separate British protectorate of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated to form the colony and protectorate of Nigeria. The new military command had barely been established when Nigeria got involved in its first war. These colonial units fought in World War 1, in the German colonies of Cameroon and Togo, and in German East Africa (Osuntokun, 1970). These German colonies it must be said were not Nigerian enemies but the enemy of its colonial masters, the British. Nigerians for the first time were thrown into a war that did not concern them and more so, was of no interest to them but of interest to their colonial masters the British. Throughout the war a large terrain of Nigeria became an important source of raw materials for allies: Like every war, the exigencies of war put severe strains on all the colonies involved in which, in Nigeria’s case was even more stressful because of the recent amalgamation of both the north and southern Nigerian territories. Lugard’s appointment as the Governor of the British colony of Lagos, protectorate of Southern Nigeria and Governor of the British protectorate of Northern Nigeria was most appropriate as he was already familiar with the nation. Lugard himself was the architect of the two regions

joining together and as a result should be the best person to handle this job. The Lugard factor allowed for a more appropriate strategy and doctrine focused on Land platforms rather than the British dominance on sea platforms.

By the end of 1913 the armies of both southern and northern Nigeria were merged into one single brigade of five battalions known as the Nigeria regiment (Daily Times, 1985). Three of these battalions (including the only mounted infantry battalion) were stationed in the north and the remaining two in the south. The Nigeria Regiment consisted of two batteries of artillery each armed with 2.95-inch mountain guns, a mounted infantry battalion of three companies with a total strength of about 3800 men, and four infantry battalions each with an establishment of about 1,200 men; each infantry battalions had eight machine guns (Duyile, 2005). In all, the total number of combatants was about 5000 men plus 320 reservists, and there were about 400 gun carriers. The entire force was under the command of 122 British commissioned officers. In addition to this military force there was also in Nigeria a police force of 33 British officers and 2, 100 Africans, excluding of course the 'Dogorai', or native administration police (Daily Times, 1985). The Nigerian police had a semi military training and were armed with carbines. There was also a marine department with about 90 British officers and 1,000 Nigerian ratings. The marine departments had steamers; launchers or pinnacles for work in the inland and coastal waterways many of these steamers could be fitted with light, quick –firing machine guns (Duyile, 2016). The British downplayed maritime strategy taking into cognizance the geography of the Nigerian land space; it had not also forgotten its defeat by the 13 colonies of the United State of America and since then became reluctant in training colonies the nitty-gritty of maritime strategy, a significant standpoint whilst littoral doctrine was not pursued for Nigeria.

The British had hoped that since Nigeria is the biggest of the British dependencies in West Africa and the most populous of all her tropical possessions, except India; it is only pertinent if Britain might get many personnel's from the heavily populated nation, recruitment into the military was one that remained difficult to achieve (Osuntokun, 1970). In the past, members of the Nigerian regiment had been recruited almost entirely from Hausa and Yoruba tribe, but with the general increase in security in the country and with the completion of the Kano- Lagos railway in 1912, trade offered greater inducements than military service (Osuntokun, 1970). By 1914 the British were having increasing difficulty in the recruitment of Hausa and Yorubas. With this new development, the challenge posed to the British authorities were to look for alternative suitable manpower to join the military

The shortage of Hausa and Yoruba soldiers did however favour the views of the military commanders who had always advocated for the recruitment among the pagan tribes such as Munshi (TIV) and Dakkakeris, who can easily acquire the Hausa language as a language of command (Eweluka, 1980). The commandant argued that, because these pagan tribes were not Muslims, they were not so liable to be infected by any wave of fanatical religious sentiment such as the temporary success of Mahdism may any day excite (Osuntokun, 1970). This new doctrine (of recruiting non Hausas) had not gained much ground with the British military strategists before the outbreak of war, and as such only a few of these pagan tribes found their way into the army since their then backward state of civilization militated against their enlistment in large numbers (Osuntokun, 1970). The recruitment of the pagan people and the fact that they dwell on land platform re-emphasized land strategy, also inhibited ethnic rivalry.

During the First World War, the British strategy in African colonies was invariably to take the war to German colonies so as to deprive them of such colonies. This was also the French tactics of prosecuting the First World War. As the war proceeded an intense rivalry developed between the French and the British who were allies in the war about sharing the German colony of Cameroon. From the fall of Duala in September 1914 to the provisional partition in March 1, 1916, the rivalry showed in every way that colonial ambitions and the mentality of partition and scramble were the driving motives behind almost every action before and during the war (Duyile, 2016). The desire to takeover German territories was overwhelming in the approach of the British and French allies to the prosecution of the war. In the case of Cameroon, the British initially staked out a maximum demand for territories in the Cameroon, but as it happened during the partition era, Britain eventually gave ground in the Cameroon's in order to preserve her hegemony in the Middle East and East Africa.

The allies won the First World War and the Africans who fought for their colonial masters were left out of the victorious parties. However, there were some terms and views that came about as a result of the war, which helped the educated Africans to fight for what they had all along criticized the British over. The changed international situation with the spread of ideas such as mandates, trusteeship, native rights was to lead among other things to the emergence of agitation politics which for a moment brought into focus all the shortcomings educated Nigerians had always criticized the British administration for. The granting of rights to the people of Lagos to vote for their representative in the municipal council, constitutionally speaking, was the most important event associated with the war, since it placed Nigeria on the well trodden path of constitutional evolution followed earlier by Canada and the white dominions. However, it was on the 28th of December 1922 that an ordinance constituting the Nigerian Regiment of the West Africa Frontier Force was promulgated (Duyile, 2015). This was the West African Frontier Force (Nigerian Regiment) Ordinance. This ordinance made comprehensive provision for order, discipline, government, discharge and service conditions of military personnel and certainly would be regarded as the beginning of legislative and formal recognition of affairs concerning the modern day military. It is interesting to note that after Nigeria and the British Cameroons had for reasons of administrative convenience been amalgamated in pursuance of British administration ordinance of 1925, it was however expressly provided that natives of the British Cameroons shall not be recruited in the Army. This was abrogated on 3rd March 1927 whereby the provisions of the West African Frontier Force (Nigerian Regiment) ordinance were made to apply to the British Cameroons (Duyile, 2005). The reason for this relaxation would appear to follow from a liberal interpretation of Article 22 of the covenant of the League of Nations, which allowed the mandatory to train natives of a territory in military services for police purpose or for the defense of the territory. The prefix Royal was added to the Nigerian Regiment of the West Africa Frontier Force in 1928 (Duyile, 2005).

In 1928 the WAFF became the Royal West African Frontiers Forces. In 1930 the Nigerian Regiment had about 3,500men. During the 1930s, as part of RW AFF reorganization, its four battalions were reorganized into six, and the colony was divided into northern and southern commands, major units were at Sokoto, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Yola, Enugu and Calabar. Although northern recruits and the Hausa language predominated in the infantry and general support units, specialists were recruited mainly from the south for example, the signals company required fluency in English, so Yorubas were recruited for that unit (Daily Times,

1985). Apart from Calabar, the units states clearly what the strategic focus was for the British. Land platforms took the front burner ahead of littoral platforms.

In 1956 the Nigerian regiment was renamed the Nigeria Military Forces. Africanisation of the officer corps began slowly but accelerated through the 1950s. The First Nigerian Officer was appointed in 1948; by independence in 1960, there were eighty-two Nigerian officers mostly Igbo from the southeast. This ethnic imbalance within the officer corps contrasted with that in the rank and file, where northerners predominate. The imbalances in the military brought to the fore ethnic rivalry which later would hurt the Nigerian polity the 21st century included. On 7th June 1956, the Nigerian Regiment which formed part of the Royal West African Frontier Force was renamed the Nigerian Military Forces, Royal West African Frontier Force. After independence, Nigerian's Republican statutes removed the Royal Nigerian Military Forces and was thereafter designated the Nigerian Army (Daily Times, 1985). At independence, there were well over 300 British NCOs in Nigeria but by 1960 the number fell to 80 and in March 1964, only 21 of NCOs and Warrant Officers were left. The NCOs were mainly engaged in skilled technical duties (Daily Times, 1985).

## II. Review of Literature

### 2.1 The Military Foray into Political Rule

Nigeria appeared unified but in truth the nation is inherently in disunity nothing except the frequent pictures taken by leaders of the various nationalities either holding, shaking, or standing by each other presents our nation in unity (Oyewale & Osadola, 2018). Although there was tension in the land nothing seems to betray what transformation the nation was to undergo politically. The threat of insurrection remained within the military, and the unprecedented event of coup plotting in 1966 gave rise to fear and suspicion among military personnel's who then saw coups as a foreign import to the nation (Ojo & Osadola, 2017). There were clear indications that the threat of a coup was manifest at least in military circles before January 15, 1966.

A day before D-Day, in a two days conference in Enugu, the speech read out to military officers by Brigadier Maimalari , the brigade commander on behalf of Major –General Johnson Thomas Ummunnakwe Aguiyi Ironsi confirms the suspicion of a military coup (Illoegbonam, 1996). The essential element of Maimalari speech was to forewarn the soldiers of a yet to be proven plan by some faceless soldiers to foment trouble in the country. All commanders present were therefore warned to be alert and to enforce tight security measures once they returned to their posts. The meeting ended on schedule and the following day (January 15, 1966) was to see all the officers back at their various commands (Daily Times, 1985).

Before the scheduled departure of officers, the Brigade Commander (Brigadier Maimalari) organized a party on the night of the 14th January 1966 to celebrate his marriage for the third time and the return on the previous day from the United Kingdom of Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon where he spent the preceding six months attending the Joint Services Staff College. In addition to the return of Gowon, he was to takeover in the next day from Lieutenant Colonel Hilary Njoku as Commander of Second Battalion (Duyile, 2005). All these put together actually called for celebration.

As all these celebration were going on and at the termination of the party called by the Brigade Commander another nocturnal meeting began. The following officers were present and

a precedent of usurping power from the civilians began with the following officers; Adewale Ademoyega, Christian Anuforo, Humphrey Chukwuka, Donatus Okafor and Ifeajuna. These officers were to take charge of the Lagos end of the insurrection (Illoegbonam, 1996). For long, these majors and certain other officers in Army formations elsewhere in the country had been plotting to overthrow the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and topple the government of Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa's government (Duyile & Ojo, 2020).

Addressing fellow plotters in the meeting before action will begin; especially for the benefit of other officers present who before that day were not privy to the treason plot. He told them in no uncertain terms that Balewa government was rotten. Its decay would inevitably fester with catastrophic consequences on the body politic unless it was decisively excised. "Tonight," said Ifeajuna, "Tonight we will end the life of the regime." He code-named the Putsch "Operation New Wash". Ifeajuna and his other comrades were able to force or bring to consensus other officers and recruits to join the coup. Officers were assigned military and civilian targets to strike. And these were the roles assigned to each officer (in the Lagos end): "Major Ifeajuna and two Subalterns were to arrest the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Balewa, and the Federal Minister of Finance, Chief Okotie-Eboh. Major Anuforo and one Subaltern were to arrest Colonel K Mohammed and Lieutenant Colonel Unegbe. Major Okafor, one Captain and a Subaltern were assigned to arrest Major General Aguiyi Ironsi and Brigadier Maimalari. Major Chukwuka and a Subaltern were to arrest Lieutenant Colonel Pam. Major Ademoyega, a Captain and three Subalterns were to occupy and control all strategic locations of the Federal Capital, including the control room at Lion Building (the Police Headquarters), the P and T Telephone Exchange, Parliament Building, the Nigeria External Telecommunications Operations Rooms and the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). This group was also to set up roadblocks at strategic locations and Major Ademoyega was to make the early morning broadcast over the NBC (Illoegbonam, 1996).

Nzeogwu spoke to them "on the need to rid Nigeria of corruption, nepotism and all other forms of wrongdoings; to revive the nation and restore fundamental human rights far removed from issues of creed as well as sex. (Illoegbonam, 1996)" As Nzeogwu spoke he was unarmed, although other soldiers were issued live weapons none shot at him meaning they were not in opposition to the plan. Instead of Nzeogwu and his crew getting the political power they desired in order to make a change to the country. Power now had to fall on the laps of a man who was not among the original coup planners. Major General Aguiyi Ironsi became the first Nigeria Military leader. Ironsi ruled Nigeria for just six months before his compatriots in the Army killed him. After the military take over, national leadership devolved on General Aguiyi Ironsi, a southerner and an Igbo. This new change of guard shifted political power to the Igbos. A status- quo that frightens the north whose only reason of staying within the context Nigeria is a guarantee of not fallen prey to the better developed south of the country. The northern Nigeria set goal had been derived on the fact of it always remaining at the corridors of power. The north numerical advantage was its sole defense against perceived political and economic domination by the South. And with this advantage of the north; the British used the northern numerical strength as its bargaining chip to lure the north to become a part of the nation (Adefolarin, 1986).

The tiny organized clique of Majors, were cohesive in the mastermind of the coup. A School of thought has it that if the 1966 coup had been organized in today's army it wouldn't have been successful. The army then only comprises 10,000 recruits and 500 officers as against about 175,000 recruits and more than 2,000 officers of today. The original juntas were unsuccessful because the head of the army (Aguiyi Ironsi) together with the loyal troops

organized a resistance that halted the success of the original coup plotters. Therefore the coup plotters were not the people who ruled. The original coup plotters (members of which were arrested by the Aguiyi Ironsi regime) had a program for the country. It should be said that proper planning had been expended by the plotters in analyzing and understanding the Nigerian polity. They (the coup plotters) seem to have a clear knowledge of what it takes to move the nation forward. The spokesman for the original group, Major Nzeogwu, said in an interview:

We had a short list of people who were undesirable for the future progress of the country or who by their positions at the time had to be sacrificed for peace and stability .In a subsequent interview on British television, he said: We wanted to get rid of rotten and corrupt ministers, political parties, trade unions and the clumsy apparatus of the federal system (Illoegbonam, 1996).

The Ironsi administration from its beginning was marred with controversies. The people of Nigeria heralded the appearance of the military in government. In the South West of Nigeria the people were happy that those whom they perceive or termed as their enemies were in one clear swoop killed or removed from power. So also can these points be said of other regions in the south at least for the earliest days of the Ironsi regime. The North remained aloof, skeptical of what had befallen the country; there were consultations here and there in the north so that northerners would issue an appropriate response. Politically, the north has been most hit by the coup. The people who were killed by the coup planners were people who were at the helm of opinion and decisions in the north. After the lists of soldier who participated in the coup were read out and those who died from the direct consequence of the coup were known, insinuations began to creep into the politically minded people of the country and they began to hold onto their own beliefs.

The West could not agree less with the decisions of the coup planners after all the traitors have been removed from their region. The East woke up that morning (January 15) and found out their kinsmen were at the head of leadership. The north saw that January 15, 1966 meant a change of the status quo something northerners (elites) have always dreaded in the past. The Ironsi regime started off in the course of these controversies. The situation Ironsi (who indeed was not part of the coup) found himself overnight was one that calls for a deft and sincere leadership. To start with, he, before that day was not canvassing for political power but only agreed with the consensus of the military hierarchy that in other to keep Nigeria going it was imperative that the politician who at the period had lost face with the citizens should step out of power for the military. And out of that same consensus power was bestowed on Ironsi. The decision to take over from the civilians was arrived at when senior officers met to assess the implications of the bloody putsch, which had left the country in tatters and the military itself in disarray. “Officers present were: Major General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi, LT.Col. Francis Fajuyi, Lt Col. Victor Banjo, Lt.Col Jack Gowon, Lt-Col George Turbo, Major Patrick Anwunah, Commodore Wey and Lieutenant Colonel Hilary Njoku (Illoegbonam, 1996).

The new C in C assumed the mantle of leadership and he immediately assembled a team that would savage the geo-political and socio- economic decadence in the nation. From all indications, there was the need for the regime to focus its strength into rebuilding the disintegrating nation and re –unite its now deeply divided military. A decision agreed by many academics, writers, and other keen watchers of history to be indeed the best for Nigeria. “The first instrument he used in effectuating his administration was constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree 1966 otherwise known as Decree No. 1, 1966. Essentially this decree

suspended some provisions of the 1963 constitution of the Federal and modified others. The same action was taken in respect of the provisions of the Regional Constitutions. The decree gave the Federal Military Government the power “to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria or any part thereof with respect to any matter whatsoever”. It provided that “The military Governor of a Region (Duyile & Ojo, The First Republic and Democratic Governance: Intra Ethnic Politics Prior to the Nigerian Civil War , 2020).

- Shall not have power to make laws with respect to any matter included in the Exclusive Legislative List; and
- Except with her prior consent of the Federal Military Government, shall not make any law with respect to any matter included in the concurrent Legislative list.”

The implication of the above was that a unitary system of government had been put in place in resemblance of the structure and command of the military. “The executive authority of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be vested in the Head of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Government and may be exercised by him either directly or through persons or authorities subordinate to him”, political power unprecedented was concentrated in the center as never before. A motive strongly detested in the north. The Nigeria of then and now, was one that characterizes a lot of suspicion among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. Suspicion and rumours prevails over truth in our country and this continues to be our bane as a nation.

The people at the beginning of the Ironsi tenure supported the government of Ironsi, so it seems then, judging from the letters of support issued by politicians, technocrats, and Nigerians from all walks of life. The NPC letter was signed by Alhaji Hashim Adaji that of the NNDP was signed by Mr Ogunsanya and also Alhaji Adegbenro signed for the A.G.

In Ironsi’s short tenure, every decision taking or said by him in public glare were mostly discussed within the supreme military council. Major General David Ejoor, who wrote a book on the proceedings during the course of the Ironsi government, collaborated this view, and I quote from his book “The Supreme Military Council did discuss the matter (Duyile & Ojo, The First Republic and Democratic Governance: Intra Ethnic Politics Prior to the Nigerian Civil War , 2020). Although as was to be expected in the situation, there were conflicting views, there was a consensus that the coup leaders should be tried (Daily Times, 1985)” Although most critic of Ironsi personalized every decision (controversial) made by the government as that of Ironsi. It must be said it was a general consensus of the S.M.C., which consist of people from different ethnic groups. However, those who later kicked out his government hammered on the fact that he was pursuing an Igbo agenda, an issue that culminated in his death. Decree 34, to many was the last straw that broke the camels back (Adefolarin, 1986). The early removal of the government was due to the misconceptions that arose from the Decree. The decree was intended to flush out regionalism. Ironsi during his tenor spoke about the functions of his administration under the new dispensation and reiterated the need for destroying the old structures of Regionalism for a more “effective” unitary system. “The public services of the former federation and regions became unified into one national public service Commission. It was a result of so much misconception from northern elites and the glaring sabotage done by the northern elites that made the good intentions of Ironsi disappear from the people. The masses especially in the north were fed with misconceptions and it was out of the need that this grumbling was to be doused that created an opening for the counter coup planners to strike a fatal blow to the Ironsi government costing him his life.

It is a fact that most of the Majors who took part in the Nzeogwu coup were Igbos and also a fact that the Igbos profited more from the coup. The Igbos coup coinage emphasized by writers of the period created the ambiguity that brought about a lot of misconceptions in the north, which led to the collapse of the Ironsi regime. The northern elites felt slighted by the January 15 coup because it affected them most and this led thereafter to the plan to revenge the January 15 coup hence the need to have a northern coup. If the first Nigerian military coup could be excused for an Igbo coup then the counter coup of July 1966 should be called a northern coup. Although the purpose of writing was not to argue if either the coup of January or July should be seen in this ethnic bias what is the emphasis is to state the facts and since facts are sacred readers can deduce assumptions or theories. The Western Region like in the first coup remained aloof. The crises in the western region have left the region void of a true leader with genuine follower ship. The leaders of the western region have been imprisoned or those who were free remained quiet watching the proceeding in the society.

The West aloof stance allowed the struggle for political power to be two pronged-the East versus the North. There was no doubt that the counter coup was a continuation of the first coup. Although many historians would rather remain aloof when the question of a Hausa revenge coup is pronounced as the reason for the coup –the events before and after the coup professed some sort of ethnic bias in the prosecution of this coup. Whatever may be the stance held by various historians; what is sure was that anyone who plans a coup did it for a reason and that reason is simply to hold on to power. In countless books and other publications, the counter coup has often being painted as the coup that brought to fore the civil war crisis. Most writers of this piece of history imply this fact. The counter coup was indeed envisaged and this excerpt from Chuks Ihoegbunam's Ironside compliments this view held by the writer: Lieutenant Andrew Nwankwo, the Supreme Commander's Air Force ADC, picked up the receiver instantly (Illoegbonam, 1996). Bad news, he tautened his physique. The voice at the other end of the line belonged to police superintendent Joseph Adeola. His message was that the much feared and much rumoured counter coup had indeed started.

By evaluating this discussion over the phone, it is indeed clear that the nature of the society especially in the military supports the fact that the coup was not a hidden one. It has been a major academic exercise by historians to try and resolve the reason why Ironsi was slow in crushing the coup if it was an open secret. No one would be able to say clearly why the man delayed in stopping the coup that later took his life. However the coup planners were not as sluggish as Ironsi. They were swift in their execution of duties on the D-DAY of July 29, 1966. Government House, Ibadan 3 o clock: Adeola, the man quoted above telephoned lieutenant Andrew Nwankwo that captain Rowland Ogbonna had telephoned him with the news that lieutenant Colonel Gabriel Okonweze, Major John Obieno and Captain E.B. Orok, all of the Abeokuta garrison, had already been shot dead. Immediately, the message was pronounced and the rumours of coup began to filter into the ears of the entire public. On May 29, 1966 "spontaneous" riots broke out in many parts of northern Nigeria aimed at southern Nigerians especially southerners of the Igbo stock. It was said then and continues to be repeated to this day that the impetus for the riots was the unification Decree.

The writer's beliefs do not tilt toward this reason. The scope of the riots meant that their conception, planning and execution took a long time to materialize. No one could have organized in only five days the riots, which engulfed most of northern Nigeria. But decree 34 was the bait used in perpetrating this plans. Surely it should be regarded that immediately after the first coup was achieved and the military took power those groups who felt aggrieved about the handling of the first coup suspects manifested their disapproval by planning the counter

coup. As soon as Adeola had informed the soldiers in the telephone call, Nwankwo took the terrible news to lieutenant Umar, Colonel Fajuyi's ADC. He quickly called Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, his loyal Chief of Army Staff, who was holding fort in Lagos. But he could not reach Colonel Gowon.

Ironsi as a result of the unification Decree 34 was touring round the regions to calm the nerves of Nigerians who were being partially misinformed on the implication of decree 34. The rumours strongly going around then especially in the north was the fact that the government was going to dismantle regionalism thereby bringing every region completely under the leadership of the government of the center. And the government of the center was perceived as an Igbo government (although the writer faults this statement). From what can be deduced it must be said that those who opposed his government was insinuating in the people an ethnic coloration. Ironsi was at Ibadan the capital of the southwest region (in 1966) when the coup began. Colonel Fajuyi was the governor of the southwest and was enthusiastic about the arrival of the GOC; it was in this euphoria that the bitter news of coup was delivered to the hearing of both the GOC and the governor. The Abeokuta garrison was in turmoil and in a short time, the opposing coup plotters have had an upper hand and were heading for Ibadan; with the army in disarray and the GOC in Ibadan there was no doubt the nation was heading for another crisis.

In the Army, you simply are expected to obey lawful instructions but with soldiers not obeying their seniors it became clear that the military structure and command was again collapsing into turmoil. The grudge of those who captured Ironsi were thus: Decree 34, the feeble way the first coup plotters were being treated, the killing of the Sardauna, Maimlari and many of those who were killed in the first coup. Those who opposed Ironsi's government distrusted the Ironsi government and were skeptical of its intentions; from all indications the coup was to avenge the events of January 15. Ironsi was captured and killed together with Lt Col. Fajuyi and so many others both civilian and military. Gowon became the new leader of Nigeria.

The counter coup brought to fore the northern clique in the army and since then Nigeria had been at their mercy. Although Britain has been blamed for giving power to the northern region; it is to be added that the northern defense against the more developed south had before 1966 hinged on population a lure the British used in cajoling this region. Success of the counter coup gave another option to the north, the hold on the military hence a new military clique since 1966 has been at the corridor of power (Emah & Osadola, 2021). The two coups of 1966 had so many casualties; some of these casualties were: Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Chief Samuel Akintola, Chief Festus Okoties Eboh, Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun, Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari, Colonel Kur Mohamed, Colonel Ralph Shodeinde, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Pam, Lieutenant Colonel Abogo Largaema, and Lieutenant Colonel Chineyelu Unegbe. All of the above were casualties of the first coup. The counter coup casualties: Lieutenant Colonel Gabriel Okonweze, Major John Obieno, Lieutenant E.B.Orok, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, Lieutenant Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi and Major Donatus Okafor. Many others died during riots, which occurred after the coups (Duyile, 2015).

Gowon officially became Head of State on August 1, 1966. One of the first things he did was to abrogate the unification Decree No.34 of 1966. Ordinarily, it was to be expected that the genocide would stop. The north (Northern Soldiers) had taken back the administration of the country and by now should not lose sleep. The riot persisted even though power had come back to the north only to subside sometimes later. It must be said that the crisis that later

engulfed the whole nation especially the east and the north did not begin from these places but from the west. In 1962, the crisis within the ruling Action Group party of the Western Region led to the detention of some of its leaders, including its leader Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The crisis in the west was master minded by the federal government. The proclamation of direct rule by the federal government in western Nigeria followed by the creation of the Mid-western Region out of the Western Region began a lot of uproar in the west. The census controversies of 1963 also added to the woes. The elections of 1964 and the ensuing disagreements among the parties were three of the many problems that endangered the very existence of this nation.

Also the events after the coups and the steps taken by the coup plotters (counter coup) showed the lack of planning and the revengeful intention of the second coup manifesting itself in the chaos, confusion and the scale of unnecessary killing which spread throughout the country. General Yakubu Gowon speech immediately he took power:

I receive complaints daily that up till now Easterners living in the north are being killed and molested and their property looted. It appears that it is going beyond reason and is now at a point of recklessness and irresponsibility

Immediately after the coup was successful, an ad-hoc conference of the representatives of the Regions had been called on 9 August 1966 in Lagos. The meeting made the following recommendations:

- a. Immediate steps should be taken by the supreme commander to post military personnel to barracks within their respective regions of origins.
- b. Having regard to its peculiar position the question of maintenance of peace and security in Lagos should be left to the supreme Commander in consultation with the military Governors
- c. A meeting of this committee or an enlarged body should take place in a week's time to recommend in broad outlines the form of political association, which the country should adopt in the future.
- d. Immediate steps should be taken to unify or modify any provisions of any decree, which assumes extreme centralization.
- e. The supreme Commander should make conditions suitable for a meeting of the Supreme Military council urgently as a further means of lowering tension (Illoegbonam, 1996).

An analysis of the above showed that the first decision made at the meeting was a catalyst to the Civil War. The inevitability of the civil war became apparent. The first recommendation was implemented on 13 August 1966. Troops who were from the East as a result of the decision taken at conference in Lagos had to be posted to Enugu, while troops of non Eastern Nigeria origin in Enugu moved to Kaduna and later to Lagos to form the Battalion of the Nigerian Army (Osadola & Asyanbi, 2022). In simple analysis, it meant the nation was unknowingly arranging its division more so a Civil War. It was the last thread that splinted our nationhood. In September 1966, a conference was convened in Lagos with representatives of all Regions to discuss the possibility of preparing a new constitution. By the end of the year, the situation had deteriorated to an extent where the central government could no longer effectively assert its authority in the Eastern region of Nigeria. But efforts continued to find ways of reconciling the people of Eastern Region to the rest of the Federation. For instance, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the Yorubas led a delegation to the East to persuade Lt. Colonel Ojukwu against secession. But all efforts did not yield useful results. Also, early in 1967, the Supreme Military Council including some top men of the armed forces held a meeting at Aburi, (Ghana). This meeting was held in order to find a solution to the country's crisis at that

time. Other places where peace meetings were held outside Nigeria included Kampala in Uganda; Niamey in Niger Republic and Addis Ababa the Ethiopian capital. Apart from the above-mentioned places, the commonwealth secretariat in London also initiated a number of peace moves; and meetings were held which both sides attended. Unfortunately, the negotiations were not fruitful because there were fundamental differences in the approach of both sides of the issues at stake

The formal ceremony of total surrender took place on Jan. 15, 1970. This took place at a deeply moving ceremony in Dodan Barracks Lagos. After the agreement to renounce secession, Lt. Colonel Effiong, the commanding officer, said that on behalf of what was Biafra, he accepted the new 12 state structure of the country- Nigeria.

## IV. Result and Discussion

### 4.1 The Nigerian Military Doctrine Paradox

Military doctrine sets priorities for military forces and prescribes how the forces should be structured and employed to achieve the goals of policies. Just as tactics constitute the basic and fundamental means of achieving a postulated strategy, doctrine guides the troops by providing a well synchronized and methodical concept of fighting for the optimal fulfillment of the objectives of strategy (Osadola & Emah, 2022). For this research, it is military doctrine, more than anything else that actually prescribes how battles are fought and won. With Nigerian's defense policy objectives, the overall strategy is to deter any attack on its territorial integrity and should deterrence fail, to repel or defeat the enemy and end the war on terms favorable to Nigeria. Added to these are to maintain at all times, the strategic capability to support Nigeria's friends and allies in peace-keeping and peace enforcement operations so as to promote international peace and security; in the 21st century, internal wars as insurgency, terrorism are now new battles. Doctrine is a vital instrument for the survival of nations, in general, and the military, in particular. Doctrine is a part of the central pillar of defense planning, training and operations.

### 4.2 The Parallel between the Army formation and the evolved Military Doctrine

Nigeria's conquest by the British was done majorly by a land force. The conquest of nationalities from land may have inspired or drawn the first stint towards a doctrine based on land platforms. However, this researcher believes that Seamanship has existed in Nigeria's maritime environment long before the first European set his foot on the Nigerian soil. The southern flank of Nigeria is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean. The littoral area of Nigeria comprising the coastal states, had acted as a barrier to shield the empires of the hinterland. The defeat of the littoral spaces allowed for the defeat of those from the hinterland. That in the first place established the fact that the conquest of the hinterland became a land war. Notwithstanding that the British conquest of littoral spaces allowed for the land war. The recruitment of Nigerian force personnel more from the hinterland created a natural psychological mindset that tended towards land. As identified earlier, higher recruitment of personnel from Northern Nigeria factored naturally the fighting on land, coupled with the fact that the land force took part in the two World Wars cum the population of the Army was more than the maritime forces. The role the army played during the first coup and civil war adds to the edge land strategy and doctrines have over others. The army is suited to a Northern or hinterland doctrine and strategy to fight battles on land. History and geography proves this. A maritime strategy and doctrine would have been most unsuitable.

## V. Conclusion

The research also traced the history of the Nigeria Army, and postulates factors in the organization that engendered ethnic rivalry. A retrospect and review of the facts was made, in order that scholars would have an insight on perceptions as well as the reasons why the choice of strategic platform favored the Army. The research identified the reasons why the Army is considered the number one force in the Nigerian state and the land platform is most favored. The other contribution to knowledge is the correlation between ethnic rivalry and the choice of platform.

## References

Adefolarin, A. (1986). Political Science and Government of West Africa. Lagos: Macmillan.

Adu, B., Ade-Ajayi, J., & Tidy, M. (1986). Topics in West African History. Essex: Longman.

Anifowoshe, R. (1965). Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience. New York: Nok Publishers International.

Daily Times. (1985). History of the Nigerian Military. Lagos: Daily Times.

Daily Times. (1985). Nigerian Year Book: A Record of Events. Lagos: Daily Times.

Duyile, W. (2014). Nigerian-Cameroon Bakassi Peninsula Crisis: A Retrospect of Nigerian Tecnocrats Views Prior to the Court Case at the Hague. International Journal of Humanities and Social Invention, 5 (4), 67.

Duyile, W. A. (2005). Lecture Note on Military History (1 ed., Vol. 1). Sapele, Delta State, Nigeria: Nigerian Navy Engineering College.

Duyile, W. A. (2015, September 4). From the Marine Department to the Nigerian Navy: The Development of Nigerian Maritime Capability, 1914-83. Ph.D Thesis, 38. Benin, Edo State, Nigeria: UNIBEN Publishers.

Duyile, W. A. (2016). The Nigerian Marine Department Contribution to British Colonial Economy. The Nigerian Journal of Economic History, 1.

Duyile, W. A. (2019). Contexting and Historicizing European and Riverine Nationalities Patterns of Seamanship and Waterborne Warfare Prior Colonial Nigeria. London Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences, 59.

Duyile, W. A., & Ojo, O. O. (2020). The First Republic and Democratic Governance: Intra Ethnic Politics Prior to the Nigerian Civil War. ICHEKE: A Multi- Disciplinary Journal of the Faculty of Humanities, 114.

Emah, G. S. and Osadola, O. S, (2021) The Indifferent Attitude of The Ibibio to The Biafran Enterprise in The Context of The Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970, International Journal of History and Philosophical Research 9 (03), 1-8

Eweluka, D. (1980). Military Administration in Nigeria. London: Longman.

Illoegbonam, C. (1996). Ironside: The Biography of Aguiyi Ironsi, Nigerian First Head of State. London: Press Alliance Network.

Nwachukwu, J. U. & Osadola, O. S., (2019) Nexus between Elections, Good Governance and Democracy in Nigeria, 1922-1979, Global Scientific Journal, Vol. 7, Issue 5,

Ojo, E. O., and Osadola, O. S., (2017) The Nigerian Federation and Secession Threats – The Case of the IPOB, Journal of Public Policy in Africa, (JOPPA) African University, Zimbabwe, Vol. 5. Issue 2,

Okay, A. (1990). Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule. Lagos: Macmillan.

Osadola, O. S., & Asiyanbi, S, B (2022). The Nigeria War of Unity 1967-1970: Strategies and Diplomacy. Polit Journal: Scientific Journal of Politics, 2(3), 145-155. <https://doi.org/10.33258/polit.v2i3.740>

Osadola, O. S., and Emah, G. S. (2022). "Terrorism in Nigeria and Her Neighbours".

Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi Dan Perubahan Sosial, Vol. 9, no. 3, Sept, pp. 439-48, doi:10.33258/konfrontasi2.v9i3.237.

Osadola, O. S., (2012), A Historical Analysis of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria, Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2012, <https://www.grin.com/document/202626>

Osuntokun, A. (1970). Nigeria in the First World War. London, England, Great Britain: Longman.

Oyewale, P. O. and Osadola, O. S., (2018) Military Regimes and Nigeria's Economic Growth, 1966-1999, Journal of Social Economics Research, Vol. 5, No. 1, 29-38