

From Military Rule to Civilian Administration: Consequences of Abuse of Power in Nigeria

Összefoglalás: Olusegun Obasanjo elnöksége alatt több mint kétszáz, többségében civil állampolgár vesztette életét a nigériai hadsereg megtorló támadásaiban, mert a tudósítások szerint agitátorok és fegyveres milíciák tagjai biztonsági tiszteket öltek meg Odi és Zaki Biam tartományban 1999-ben és 2001-ben. 2017 januárja és 2023 januárja között a Nigériai Légierő „véletlenül” tizenhat alkalommal bombázott és ölt meg ártatlan nigériaiakat Muhammadu Buhari elnök kormányzása idején. Mindkét katonai vezető a hadseregből lépett át a polgári igazgatásba. Mindketten a hadsereget felhasználva, nem demokratikus eszközökkel vezették Nigériát. Mindketten nyugalmazott hadseregtábornokok voltak, akik később elnökként vezették Nigériát. A tanulmány témája a két elnök alatt állandósuló hatalommal való visszaélés súlyos következményei, amelyek az áldozatok élethez fűződő alapvető jogainak megfosztásához vezettek. Az események pályája kvalitatív tartalomelemzés segítségével, összehasonlító szempontok alapján került felvázolásra. Az eredmény azt mutatja, hogy a katonai uralom korábbi vezetői esetében egyfajta demilitarizálási folyamatra van szükség, mielőtt politikai pozíciót keresnének. Nigériának stratégiailag kell kezelnie ezeket a kérdéseket, azért, hogy a vezetők egyértelmű politikai eszközökkel kezelhessék a kérdéseket a terrorizmus elleni küzdelem érdekében. Ezenkívül foglalkozni kell a hadseregben szolgálatot teljesítő katonai személyzet jóléti szükségleteivel és a munkakörülmények javításával is.

Kulcsszavak: Hatalom, élethez való jog, katonai uralom, polgári közigazgatás, igazságszolgáltatás.

Abstract: Olusegun Obasanjo was sitting president in Nigeria when over two hundred, mostly civilian citizens were killed in a reprisal attack by the Nigerian military because security officers were reportedly killed by agitators and militia gangs in these two communities, Odi and Zaki Biam in 1999 and

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[2] Agbiboa, D. E. (2011): "Between Corruption and Development: The Political Economy of State Robbery in Nigeria." *Journal of Business Ethics*. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-011-1093-5.

[3] Orluwene, O. B. (2014): "The Politics of Development Strategies in Nigeria since Independence: An Overview." *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 3., (6.), <http://doi.org/10.5901/ajis.2014.v3n6p391>

[4] Dahida, P. (2013): Corruption as the Bane for Under-development in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*. www.iiste.org (Online) Vol. 15, 2013.

[5] Ákánle Oláyinká and Nkpe David (Ed.) (2022): *Corruption and Development in Nigeria*. New York: Routledge.

[6] Oke, O. A.-Offoha, E. N. (2021): THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT. *International Journal of Business and Public Administration*, 18., (1.), P. 86. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A694029967/AONE?u=anon~94aaf078&sid=googleScholar&xid=310d7c79>

2001 respectively. Also, between January 2017 and January 2023, under suspicious circumstances, the Nigeria Air Force „mistakenly” bombed and killed innocent Nigerians sixteen times during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. Both were leaders who transformed from the military into civilian administrations. They both ruled Nigeria under the force of militia through undemocratic means. Both leaders were retired army generals who later ruled Nigeria as civilian presidents. The grave consequences of abuse of power, perpetuated by both, leading to the deprivation of the fundamental rights to life of the victims are the subject matter of this paper. I have drawn the trajectories of these events using qualitative content analysis based on comparative perspectives. The result shows the need for a demilitarization process for previous leaders of military rule before seeking political office. Nigeria must address these issues strategically so that leaders can deal with issues through clear political means to combat terrorism. Also, the need to address the welfare needs of serving military personnel within the force and improve work conditions is addressed.

Keywords: Power, right to life, military rule, civilian administration, justice.

Introduction

Of the 63 years of Nigeria's independence from colonial rule, the most populous black nation on earth's surface was under military rule for 29 years. This has led to underdevelopment in many aspects of her existence, both infrastructurally and in developing key governance institutions. Unfortunately, this has made her to be among the most corrupt countries and the poverty capital of the world. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6]

The increasing unpopularity of military rule and the global condemnation of its authoritarian attributes saw many countries including Nigeria move away from military rule to embrace democratic means to bring leaders to power. As Nigerian citizens, this has given the right to past military rulers who had hitherto served under military rule, the right to aspire to civilian offices under the guise of coming to serve. Nigeria placed no restrictions on this group of people nor were there strategic means for preparing them for a proper transition from authoritarian rule to democratic leadership. This has in no small way, impacted their governance style, leading to negative implications for the governed. There have been several cases in Nigeria where some persons in government unlawfully used the privileges of their official capacities to harm, coerce, or take advantage of other citizens thereby causing loss of lives and the deprivation of their rights to justice. The arbitrary denial of the right to life is contrary to international and national laws. International and national laws of Nigeria clearly highlight the inalienable right to life. Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1992/72) recognizes the inherent right of every person to life, adding that this right „*shall be protected by law*” and that „*no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life*”. On the other hand, Section 33 of the Nigerian constitution (1999) provides that: *Every person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in the execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offense of which he has been found guilty.*

Abuse of Power by Ex-military Rulers in Civilian Capacities

Instances when former president Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari abused their offices will be highlighted here. The examples have been chosen for two reasons. Firstly, their actions caused the loss of hundreds of lives. Secondly, both of them are the only Nigerians who were former army generals who retired and became presidents in civilian governments. Obasanjo was military head of state between 13 February 1976 and 1 October 1979 when he voluntarily resigned to give way to the civilian government of Shehu Shagari. Obasanjo later contested elections and became a civilian president between 29 May 1999 and 29 May 2007.

Muhammadu Buhari was military head of state between 31 December 1983 and 27 August 1985 when he was deposed from office by General Ibrahim Babaginda. After retirement, he later contested elections and became a civilian president between 29 May 2015 and 29 May 2023.

During the civilian administration of Obasanjo, two gory incidents happened at Odi and Zaki Biam which reflected the gross abuse of power. The first one was at Odi. There were allegations that 12 police officers were murdered in Odi, an oil-rich predominantly Ijaw community in Kolokuma/Opokuma Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. This community has been agitating for the preservation and protection

[7] Onyeji, E. (2019, November 23). Why we will never forgive Obasanjo, Alamieyeseigha. Retrieved from Premium Times INTERVIEW: Odi 1999 Massacre: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/features-and-interviews/364370-interview-odi-1999-massacre-why-we-will-never-forgive-obasanjo-alamieyeseigha-odi-community-chairman.html?tztc>

[8] Iyorwuese, H. (2002). *Beyond Hate and Violence: Understanding the Tiv Struggle for Citizenship Rights and Social Justice in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nigeria) Ltd., pp. 40.

of their oil resources and against the consequent environmental degradation and pollution. The killing of the police officers was as condemnable as the reprisal action taken by the incensed military officers. Soldiers decided to take laws into their own hands by engaging in murderous reprisal attacks on 20 November 1999. Unarmed civilians - old, young, and women - were massacred and the entire village was literally razed. At least one hundred Nigerians were killed for the offense committed by a few. Though a truce was later established between the federal government and the people, intermittent conflicts with militants continued to be a recurring decimal. Such conflicts are mostly difficult to completely resolve because the affected persons find it difficult to forgive the system that killed their loved ones. The Odi massacre *birthed the spread of militancy in the entire Niger Delta*. [7]

Thereafter, the affected community went to court to seek redress. In February 2013, the Federal High Court ordered the Federal Government to pay an equivalent of around 37.6 billion naira (37.6m USD) as compensation to the people of Odi. The order was initially disobeyed by the government. It means that the same constitution that declared the inalienable right to life was denigrated by those who ought to preserve the law. The action was a *brazen violation of the fundamental human rights of the victims to movement, life and to own property and live peacefully in their ancestral home*. [7] Militancy and oil bunkering continued in that area because the government succeeded in the battle against the people but could not sustain the peace. This is an illustration of bad peace.

The second horrible incident that occurred during the administration of President Obasanjo was similar. It took place between 20 and 24 October 2001 in Benue state in the Tiv villages of Zaki-Biam, Gbeji, Anyiin, Iorja, Sankera, Ugba, Tse-Adoor, Kyado and Vaase. The army referred to the invasion as “Operation No Living Thing” or “Zaki-Biam massacre.” Their mission was to annihilate the people. 19 persons including soldiers and Jukun militiamen were previously ambushed, killed, and mutilated by Tiv militias, and their bodies were discovered on 12 October 2001. The invasion was a retaliation for the killing of the soldiers.

There have been historical clashes between the Tivs and Jukuns *over land, indigeneship, economic and political power*. [8] Though Lt. General Luka Yusuf apologized for the killing in 2007, it took six years of denial before the army admitted the offense. Nobody was prosecuted and President Obasanjo neither apologized nor recompensed the people of Zaki Biam. Retired Lt. General Victor Malu, a Tiv, accused the then minister of defence Lt. General Theophilus Danjuma, from the Jukun

tribe, for ordering the 3rd armored division to execute the onslaught against the Tivs. However, such actions could not have happened if it did not get the approval of Olusegun Obasanjo, the President and commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Once again, because of gross abuse of power, lives and property were destroyed by the same persons statutorily requested to protect them. If such a murderous response could be unleashed on fellow citizens of a country, how could the same soldiers justify their presence in peacekeeping operations in other countries?

Let me assure you that if I am elected president, the world will have no cause to worry about Nigeria [...] we will improve intelligence gathering and border controls to choke Boko Haram's financial and equipment channels [...] and I, Muhammadu Buhari, will always lead from the front and return Nigeria to its leadership role in regional and international efforts to combat terrorism.

Muhammadu Buhari, Chatham House (2015)

From campaign promises to sixteen bombardments

Expectations for better security were very high when Muhammadu Buhari came into office in 2015 because of his military background. He had promised to secure Nigeria in his manifesto. He had traveled to Chatham House in the United Kingdom to publicize his agenda to the world during his campaign. While delivering a speech at the United Kingdom, Buhari promised to secure Nigeria. As commander-in-chief of the federation, I wish to focus on how Buhari superintended over the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) at a crucial time when terrorism threatened the stability of the country. Firstly, it is also important to mention that during Buhari's government, the media were cajoled into deodorizing the term 'terrorists'. Rather, they referred to them as bandits.

Within the tenure of Buhari's administration, NAF 'mistakenly' bombarded and killed innocent Nigerians on sixteen occasions. These were people living within their private premises. Just like the Zaki-Biam massacre which occurred during Obasanjo's government, none of these victims or their families were compensated. At least 300 such persons were killed from the miscalculations of the air force. It has been argued that either some personnel of NAF had compromised the security of the country, or they are discontented at their conditions of work. The salary structure of NAF is weak. For example, the salary of a Pilot Officer in the Nigerian Air Force (Legit, 2023) is 187,159 naira (187 euro); Flying Officer 218,400 naira (218 euro); Group Captain 352,631 naira (352 euro).

[9] Owolabi, F. (2020): *Children killed as air force accidentally bomb Borno village*. <https://www.thecable.ng/children-killed-as-air-force-accidentally-bombs-borno-village>

[10] Arogbonlo, I. (2021): *Things fall apart – Reactions as Nigerian Air Force mistakenly Kill over 20 soldiers*. *Vanguard newspaper*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/04/things-fall-apart-reactions-as-nigerian-air-force-mistakenly-kill-over-20-soldiers>

[11] Oluwasanjo, A. (2021): *Air Force bombs wedding guests in Niger State*. Retrieved from Gazette News: <https://gazettengr.com/air-force-bombs-wedding-guests-in-niger-state/>

[12] Olowolagba, F. (2021): *NAF reacts to alleged killing of woman, 4 children in Zamfara by airstrikes*. *Daily Post*: <https://dailypost.ng/2021/07/14/naf-reacts-to-alleged-killing-of-woman-4-children-in-zamfara-by-airstrikes/>

[13] Dogara, B. (2021): *Nine dead, many injured as fighter jet allegedly bombs Buhari village in Yobe State*. *Vanguard News*: <https://punchng.com/nine-dead-many-injured-as-fighter-jet-allegedly-bombs-buhari-village-in-yobe-state/>

I wish to enumerate the sixteen times when the NAF missed targets and deprived innocent citizens of their rights to life between January 2017 and January 2023.

On 17 January 2017, a jet belonging to NAF mistakenly bombed a camp for Internally Displaced Persons, IDP, located at Rann village under the Kala Balge Local Government Area of Borno State. At least 126 civilians were killed. [9] The Air Force claimed that they thought that the camp was an encampment of members of the Boko Haram sect. There is no record to show that the families of the deceased were compensated. At that period, Major General Lucky Irabor was Commander of the Multi-National Joint Task Force who was also the Theatre Commander of Operation Lafiya Dole in Northeast Nigeria. Nobody was prosecuted for this crime against humanity. In January 2021, Irabor was promoted to the position of Chief of Defence Staff.

7 July 2019: In pursuit of jihadists, a Nigerian fighter jet struck at the Gajiganna village in Borno state, and some 13 civilians were mistakenly killed (The Defense Post, 2019). The victims were neither named nor honored.

13 April 2020: At least 17 persons were killed when a Nigerian fighter jet bombed Sakotoku village in Borno state. Among the persons killed were women and children who were sitting and playing under mango trees. [9]

25 April 2021: Airforce jet reportedly killed over 20 soldiers in what was also reported as a mistake. The soldiers were on a mission to fight the Boko Haram insurgency when they were hit at Mainok located 55 kilometers from Maiduguri. [10] For the military to hit their colleagues during operations, shows the poor level of communication within the force.

13 June 2021: In search of terrorists, Nigerian Air Force Alpha Jet again bombarded Genu town in Niger State and stray missiles hit wedding guests in Argida village. Two persons were killed, and many were injured. [11]

12 July 2021: Airstrikes by NAF killed a woman and her four children in Sububu area located between the Shinkafi and Maradun Local Governments of Zamfara state. [12] The woman was not named, and her family did not receive any form of justice.

15 September 2021: A jet belonging to the NAF shelled and killed 9 persons and injured at least 30 others at Buwari community, Yunusari local government area of Yobe State (Dogara 2021). It was also reported as a mistake

after the NAF initially denied any link of the tragedy to its fighter jets. They later admitted the error, but justice and compensation did not get to the families of the victims.

26 September 2021: NAF again, shelled and killed 20 persons and injured many at Kwatar Daban Masara in Lake Chad, which connects Nigeria and neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. On this occasion, authorities claimed that the enclave was known for harboring terrorists. It was later found out that the victims were fishermen. [14]

20 February 2022: The NAF killed seven children while at least five others were injured at Nachade village in the Maradi region of Niger Republic (Sahara Reporters, 2022). Though there are cooperations between the neighboring countries of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad to fight inter-state terrorism, bombing across the borders of Nigeria was a strange incident.

13 April 2022: At least six children were mistakenly bombed when the NAF struck at Kurebe area of Shiroro Local Government of Niger state. [15]

7 July 2022: At least six people were mistakenly killed and many injured by an Air Force jet when it struck at the Kunkunna community, located at Safana Local Government Area of Katsina State. [16]

13 December 2022: A miscalculated NAF airstrike in Kaduna destroyed the properties of residents with no compensation given to the affected persons. [17]

19 December 2022: 64 persons including armed militants and civilians were killed and many others were killed when the NAF mistakenly bombed the Mutumji community in the Maru local government area of Zamfara state. [16]

25 January 2023: Hunters specially attached to the Joint Security Task Force were killed in an airstrike apparently carried out by the Nigerian Air Force in Galadima Kogo in Shiroro local government area of Niger state. [18]

24 January 2023: Again, the NAF bombed and killed 39 persons and injured six others in the airstrike at Kwatiri, a rural community in Nasarawa State, North-central Nigeria. The victims who were pastoralists, were returning from Kwatiri, a border community between

[14] Sahara Reporters (2021): There Was No Mistake – Nigerian Military Justifies Air Strikes On 20 Borno Fishermen. *Sahara Reporters*: <https://saharareporters.com/2021/09/30/there-was-no-mistake-%E2%80%93-nigerian-military-justifies-air-strikes-20-borno-fishermen-labels>.

[15] Sahara Reporters (2022): Six Children Killed As Nigerian Air Force Fighter Jet Targeting Bandits ‘Mistakenly’ Bombs Civilians In Niger State. *Sahara Reporters*: <https://saharareporters.com/2022/04/21/six-children-killed-nigerian-air-force-fighter-jet-targeting-bandits-%E2%80%98mistakenly%E2%80%99-bombs>

[16] Premium Times (2022): Dozens killed as Nigerian military plane bombs Zamfara community. *Premium Times*: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/571223-just-in-dozens-killed-as-nigerian-military-plane-bombs-zamfara-community.html>.

[17] Odeniyi, S, (2023): Accidental airstrikes: Innocent civilians pay deadly price as NAF intelligence wobbles. *Punch newspaper*: <https://punchng.com/accidental-airstrikes-innocent-civilians-pay-deadly-price-as-naf-intelligence-wobbles/%E2%80%98mistakenl%E2%80%99-bombs>

[18] Egigogo, M.R, (2023): ‘Unidentified’ aircraft bombs several vigilantes in Niger State. *Premium Times*: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/577719-updated-unidentified-aircraft-bombs-several-vigilantes-in-niger-state.html>

[19] Ejekwo-nyilo, A. (2023): Nigerian Air Force belatedly owns up to airstrike that killed 39 along Nasarawa-Benue border. *Premium Times*: <https://www.>

Benue and Nasarawa states, where they had gone to pay fines for the release of their cattle which were seized by the Benue State Livestock Guards. The NAF and the governor of Nasarawa state, Abdullahi Sule, vehemently denied the bombing. At a point, they resorted to playing politics with the deaths by shifting blame to the governor of Benue state Samuel Ortom, claiming that the tragedy was caused by an unidentified drone! The blame was occasioned by the fact that Governor Ortom had banned open grazing which was used by herders. This decision did not go well with some groups of persons. In June 2023, almost six months after the bombing, the NAF belatedly confessed [19] that they were truly the ones who carried out the deadly attack. Again, justice was neither given to the families of the affected persons nor was apologies sent to Ortom for the false accusation. The many denials by the government were to hide the ineptitude and unprofessionalism of those involved. The Nigerian Air Force denied the bombings under President Buhari just as the army denied the massacre in Zaki-Biam under President Obasanjo.

Another report by some of the freed Chibok girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorists in April 2014, stated that three of their classmates were killed by the wrong bombardment of the Nigeria Airforce around the Sambisa Forest area of Borno State on a date that was not published.

Negotiating with terrorists and the weak political will to act

Apart from killing innocent civilians while attacking terrorists, two events occurred which will be examined here. The first case was the agreement to exchange five militant leaders arrested and detained by the Nigerian government, for the release of 82 Chibok school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in April 2014. The deal was brokered by negotiators which included the Swiss government, the Red Cross, and Barrister Mustapha Zanna, who was a lawyer to the slain founder of the Boko Haram sect, Mohammed Yusuf (Maclean, 2017). Though it was good that the government secured the release of the girls, it must be mentioned that the number of Nigerians killed by terrorists and by the misguided bombardments by NAF were neither taken into consideration nor compensated. More such incidents of killing and kidnapping occurred because previous offenders were not punished. Negotiating with terrorists and paying them ransom gives them the resources to reinvest into their heinous crimes. When the fundamental rights of the people are not respected because the government failed to perform its statutory duties to provide security for the people, such tragic events will no longer be big news because one tragedy overtakes another in quick successions.

Secondly, the misguided shelling of civilians by the NAF occurred many times and long enough to suspect that the actions were intentional. To give credence to this assumption, was the mysterious accident of July 2020 which led to the death of Flight Combatant Tolulope Oluwatoyin Sarah Arotile under very suspicious circumstances. She was hailed for her precision in hitting the dens of terrorists in the northeastern part of the country. Surprisingly, tragedy struck her when she was on a short holiday in the city of Kaduna. *She died on 14 July 2020 as a result of head injuries sustained in a road traffic accident at the Nigerian Air Force Base in Kaduna State, when she was inadvertently hit by the vehicle of a former Air Force Secondary School classmate who was trying to greet her* (Akinpelu, 2020). Thereafter, she was quickly buried without an autopsy. There were very high suspicions that she was killed because of her zero tolerance for terrorists while doing her job. It was logical to believe that a system that killed innocent targets instead of terrorists, could also kill anyone who was attacking terrorists.

NAF has no excuse to record the sixteen mistakes mentioned here because it has been very well-equipped and funded by the government since its establishment in 1964. There is a weak political will by the government to effectively defend the country. NAF has at least 120 aircraft including 12 Embraer EMB 314 Super Tucano aircraft, 9 Chengdu F-7s, 3 JF-17 Thunder Block II, at least 3 reconnaissance jets for surveillance, armed attack drones, several attack helicopters, and other military transport aircraft. It also built a \$38-million project facility for the aircraft. In October 2023 NAF received two additional Diamond-62 aircraft as part of its efforts to intensify ongoing air operations against insecurity in the country. They expect more military hard wares including M346FA aircraft, AW109 Trekker light attack helicopter, AH-1Z Super Cobra, T-129 ATAK helicopters, and the King Air 360i Beechcraft aircraft. [20]

It is on record that many tragedies were recorded during the administration of Muhammadu Buhari. *When he assumed office on May 29, 2015, the cumulative number of people killed in Nigeria, according to the NST was 34,972. Since then, the death figure has risen to 98,083 as of May 16, 2023.* [21] Within Buhari's tenure, 63,111 Nigerians were killed in a country that was not at war with its neighbors. 63,111 death toll is conservative because only reported cases from multiple sources were included. Many other cases are either under-reported or not reported at all.

Despite engaging in a coup that brought him to power as head of state in 1983, and contesting elections four times before he became civilian president, Buhari's

[20] Olayiwola, A. (2023): NAF receives two additional aircraft. *Punch newspaper*: <https://punchng.com/naf-receives-two-additional-aircraft/>

[21] *Vanguard Newspaper* (2023): Insecurity: 63,111 persons killed in Buhari's eight years. Retrieved from: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/05/insecurity-63111-persons-killed-in-buharis-eight-years/#:~:text=When%20President,Retrieved%2027%20September%202023.>

[22] *Premium Times* (2018): Benue Killings: I'm surprised IGP Idris disobeyed my directive – Buhari. Retrieved from: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/261518-buhari-visits-benue-over-killings.html>

desperation showed that his lust for power was an inordinate ambition that was not backed with the wisdom for leadership. In January 2018 when murderous militia attacks worsened in Benue state, President Buhari ordered Ibrahim Idris the Inspector general of police to relocate to the troubled area. The police chief refused to take the president's order and the president was not aware of this until March of the same year. [22] Meanwhile, more persons were already killed. Here the need to superintend over subordinates to ensure that directives are carried out cannot be over-emphasized. After eight years in office, he left Nigeria in tatters – less secure and highly indebted.

The above examination of the administrations of Obasanjo and Buhari attests to the belief that when soldiers retire, they may not be the best choice to lead civilian governments in a country like Nigeria. The reason is that it is difficult for them to practice democracy because it contradicts their military orientations. Such leaders become 'despotic democrats' outside of army uniforms. As soldiers, Obasanjo and Buhari reportedly fought on the side of Nigeria during the civil war of 1967. However, as civilian presidents, they succumbed to ragtag terrorists and abused the fundamental rights of the very people they swore to protect. Abuse of the rule of law is antithetical to good governance. Kaufmann (2005) was right when he posited that governance should bring about improvements in capacity, accountability, and reducing corruption without which no other reforms will have an impact.

Recommendations

In order to address the problems enumerated above, the Nigerian government may need to take the following actions.

Intending political leaders who have been in the military for many years before retirement must be subjected to special training that demilitarizes them to fit into civilian political leadership. There is a need to reshuffle the personnel within NAF and to increase their salaries and conditions of service because the records of mistaken bombardments between the four-year period of January 2017 and January 2023 show unprofessionalism and discontentment for the job. The need to recruit and efficiently train more personnel as a way of increasing its numerical strength which is just over 18,000 personnel as of 2021. Though it trained 150 commando-like

Advanced Special Forces operatives also known as Panthers, much overhauling needs to be done because of the country's huge internal security challenges and the fact that it is the powerhouse of the West African region. Also, the Nigerian government must set aside a day to remember civilians who had lost their lives through mistaken military bombardments, death through non-state actors, and victims of election violence. This activity will create a balance with the Armed Forces Remembrance Day annually organized on 15 January to honor fallen Nigerian soldiers.

Finally, the Nigerian government must request that its air Nigerian Air Force provide full accountability for their continuing unprofessional actions; while the government must provide financial compensation and other necessary assistance to the victims and their families.

