

## BOOK REVIEW

*Military Politics in Nigeria: Economic Development and Political Stability* by Theophilus Olatunde Odetola, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Transaction Books, 1978, xxvi + 179 pp.

### I

During the 1960s, military takeovers were witnessed in a number of African countries, including Nigeria where two military coups occurred in 1966. The military coup was one response to the breakdown of political stability and the stagnation of economic development having spread across the African continent. Upon the failure of a civilian party system observers have questioned if and how the military would be able to regain the stability lost and continue with development. Theophilus Olatunde Odetola, the author of this book, seeks to answer the above question by comparing the performances of the military government with those of the civilian multi-party system in Nigeria. He focuses on specific problem areas that are significant and sensitive with respect to political stability and economic development. In order to analyze systematically policy making and policy execution as practiced by the military system and the multi-party system, he restricts his consideration to a limited range of topics: (1) national integration, (2) the distribution of power between the federal government and state government, and (3) economic development.

Before going on to discuss these topics concretely, however, in Chapters 1 and 2 the author scrutinizes theoretical issues concerning military politics in the third world at large. He considers these problems through a reexamination of the existing theories of political sociology. He holds that theories concerning the role of the military in developing nations lag behind the realities of the situation because of the following factors: (1) the lack of clarity in defining concepts such as political development, (2) the conservative bias of political analysts, by which any deviation from democratic norms is considered abnormal, and (3) the lack of intensive study of the internal dynamics of military coups. Most existing political sociologists, such as Deutsch, Rustow, Almond, etc., conceive of political development as increased political participation. They assume that the relationship between economic modernization (improved manpower through literacy, urbanization, an improved communication network, etc.) and political development is positive, since these improvements will lead to mobilization and participation. But this formulation, the author claims, has weaknesses. He draws attention to, among others, the destabilizing effects of economic development. An increased rate of economic development often leads to political instability, since it tends to induce a rising level of demands from organized groups like trade unions, students and peasants movements, the urban proletariat and ethnic groups. Certain preexisting conflicts, such as one centering around an ethnic group, may be also exacerbated by economic modernization and social mobilization. Rejecting the con-

cepts of modernization and participation as the principal ingredients of political development, the author holds that the generation of an increased capacity to deal with new political situations can be seen to lie at the root of political development. He agrees with Klinghoffer's definition that "the ability to act effectively in such a complex, modernized environment is political development."

Odetola advances his discussion concerning such concepts relating to the politics in the developing nations as those of authority, legitimacy, and military capability to rule. It is hardly possible here in the limited pages to give an outline of his sophisticated arguments. One notable feature, however, can be pointed out. His arguments always tend to lead to an approval of the military politics in Nigeria. For any government to claim legitimacy, he argues, it must exhibit both effectiveness and authority. He asserts: (1) constant economic development leads to prolonged effectiveness, (2) prolonged effectiveness lends legitimacy to a government, (3) there is a positive correlation between military rule and high economic development, (4) there is, therefore, a positive correlation between military rule and prolonged effectiveness, and (5) thus, military governments (who have intervened forcibly and therefore illegitimately) may earn or acquire legitimacy through prolonged effectiveness (pp. 26-27). The author disagrees with the Western analysts' postulation that assumes a government and a "loyal opposition" along parliamentary lines as the basis for legitimate rule. Western theorists, he notes, have neglected coercion as an instrument of rule, and placed an undue emphasis on "concensus." The kind of coercion which the military has used in Nigeria, he claims, is a prerequisite of rule and is not always coterminous with dictatorship (p. xii). Having investigated the internal dynamics of military coups, he contends that the military can foster political and economic developments, and it does have the capability to learn on the job once in power, contrary to the opinion of many observers who have doubted the military's ability to rule. "For the present," he conclusively argues, "military government is more suitable for third world countries" (p. 7).

Another topic of interest discussed in Chapter 2 is that of the organizational characteristics of the military. "In organization terms," Odetola enunciates, "the military is a paragon of a modernized political system" (p. 16). According to him, traditionally, the military was regarded as operating essentially through such bureaucratic modes necessary to achieve efficiency and control as hierarchy, order, discipline, centralization, etc. Thus he often refers to the military system in Nigeria as a "military-bureaucratic system." He further draws attention to some emergent organizational characteristics which have been added to the military by the introduction of modern weaponry (such as nuclear warheads, new intelligence gathering mechanisms, etc.) into the contemporary military establishment. For example, the adoption of such achievement criteria as skill (as opposed to seniority and age), which has been necessitated by the technological innovation of warfare, has, he notes, resulted in a shift of emphasis from formal to informal modes of communication and therefore to persuasion; and to increased initiative, involvement, cooperation, and participation. These new features of military organization conflict with traditional ones. The author's argument in this respect is not clear. He has, however, optimistically concluded that these new characteristics "appear to have given added flexibility and maturity to the

military capability to manouver in different political bargaining situations. This situation accords well with the situation in Nigeria, where the military as a bureaucratic organization . . . faces the problems of rule in a largely traditional and plural society" (p. 18).

## II

Chapter 3 treats of "Political Development and Political Stability in Nigeria." Odetola seeks to demonstrate that the military-bureaucratic system in Nigeria has successfully fostered political development in a way that contributes to political stability. He focuses upon national integration as the specific dimension of political development. He discusses this problem with respect to three aspects: communal integration, reduction of the elite-mass gap, and reduction of the urban-rural gap.

Before 1967, Nigeria was made up of four regions: three in the south and one in the north. The northern region was larger than the three southern regions combined with respect to both population and land area. This unequal balance had, Odetola emphasizes, serious consequences. The fear spread that one ethnic group would dominate another. Primordial ethnic loyalties took precedence over the idea of one Nigeria. Political parties derived their authority from narrowly based ethnic groups and were in turn motivated to repay the loyalty of their clientele by means of political patronage. It became impossible to guarantee the rights of minority groups that had no political parties to represent their interests. There was, the author claims, no single source of authority and this subsequent crisis of authority exacerbated the tensions (pp. xv, 53-54).

The military government took several steps to solve the problems caused by the disunion of Nigeria. One of the most notable performances of the military in this respect, according to the author, was the abolition of the former federal system of four regions and the creation of twelve states in their place. This helped to realize a stronger central government and weaker local states, thus fostering greatly the political integration of Nigeria. Since the states are weaker than the former regions, the author argues, they can only come together in coalitions based upon mutual interests. This situation has, according to him, created opportunity for development of cross-cutting interests and pressures (as, for example, in the movement of personnel and trade) among the several states (pp. 59, 143). The military government has, the author holds, also made endeavors to reduce the gap in income between the small elite and the large mass, as well as to reduce the urban-rural gap, while the civilian government could do little to improve the situation. For example, the ratio of the top salary to the lowest was reduced from more than 28:1 (by 1966) to 16:1 (in 1970). In order to raise the standard of living in the villages, the military government took several steps, including the reorganization of the marketing boards in favor of farmers and the dispersion of industries to rural areas.

Chapter 4 discusses "Resource Allocation and the Structure of Power in Nigeria." Odetola seeks to demonstrate that under the party system the federal government was unable to carry out purposeful, nationally-oriented programs of economic and social development because of the inadequate organizational structure of power distribution between the federal and the regional governments. The military-bureaucratic system,

however, has moved to take greater control of strategic areas of policy and has shown greater ability to manage national affairs. Under the party system, the principle of the fiscal autonomy of each region was maintained. This principle, the author notes, ran counter to the principle of a unified national policy, and encouraged regional separatism. As a consequence, the imbalance between regions was widened on one hand, and the fiscal position of the federal government became progressively weaker on the other. The military government has taken steps to enhance the fiscal power of the central government. It has made-up the disparity between fiscal needs and the revenue sources of the states. Federal allocation to the states has always been more than 50 per cent of the total revenue of the states, and it would be impossible for such states to operate without an allocation (p. 93). The military government expanded the "Distributable Pool Account." For example, while 100 per cent of export duties went to the state of origin under the party system, only 60 per cent goes to the state and the rest goes to the distributable account under the military-bureaucratic system. The military government, according to the author, has exhibited a willingness to use the account as an instrument to even out development (p. 104).

Chapter 5 treats of "Economic Development in Nigeria." While many observers have emphasized the military's ineptitude in handling problems of third world economic development, Odetola tries to show that in Nigeria the military has performed more efficiently than the party system with respect to economic development.

Before 1966, the structure of economic decision-making in Nigeria, the author notes, lacked central coordination. The National Economic Council (NEC), the central planning institution, was not so much a unified planning institution as a congeries of diverse, separate, and independent regional planning units all coming to rubber stamp their individual plans. The right of each regional government to pursue its own development policies was built into the establishment of the NEC. The NEC was given a clear mandate "to provide a framework of intergovernmental dialogue without encroaching upon the duties and responsibilities of the respective governments."<sup>1</sup> Thus, according to the author, the development process lacked a coherent social policy objective and each regional unit went its own way (p. 111). The military government, the author holds, revamped the planning machinery. It scrapped the NEC and established organizations which could more adequately deal with unified planning and its execution such as Supreme Military Council, Joint Planning Board, Economic Advisory Committee, etc. The new economic decision-making structure assigns to the federal government the preeminent position in planning at the national level. The state governments, which are represented on the Joint Planning Board and Economic Advisory Committee, are given largely advisory powers (pp. 114-15). In this way, the military has, the author claims, made a greater breakthrough in economic development in Nigeria. He compares concretely the economic performances of the military government with those of the civilian government, by giving various statistical figures. For example, manufacturing increased more than 300 per cent from 1963 to 1971; the contribution of industry to the GNP in 1971-72 is

<sup>1</sup> See Nigeria, Ministry of Information, *Nigerian Second Development Plan* (Lagos: Government Printer, 1962), p. 1.

higher than for any comparable year before 1966; the growth rate in 1972-73 is more than three times what was recorded in 1962-63, and so on. Relating to the economic policies of the military in Nigeria, the author points out the following characteristics: that the military government has given greater encouragement to the development of heavy industry, as opposed to consumer-oriented industry; that it has achieved greater economic nationalism than the party system, while avoiding outright nationalization; and that it has not demonstrably preferred a public-type economy over private economy (pp. 130-40).

### III

Chapter 6, entitled "Conclusions," summarizes the findings in the preceding chapters with respect to both policy implications and theoretical implications. Odetola repeats concisely the arguments and the conclusions enunciated before.

This book may be said to have offered an outstanding appraisal of military politics not only in Nigeria but also in the third world at large. The author's criticism of the existing theories of political sociology concerning military politics is sharp, and the analytical framework employed in this volume is fruitful. Its research on Nigerian military politics has produced good results. It can be said that this volume is such a must for students of the military's involvement in politics, that it may call for a great debate upon the role of the military in the developing nations. It should, however, be kept in mind that this is not a neutral or disinterested work. The author is firmly on the military side. As to theoretical implications derived from the findings in this book, he repeatedly emphasizes, among others, the military's superiority in its governing ability over the party system as follows: "The strength and resilience of a military regime is predicted not upon its increasing dependence on physical threat to back up its commands, but upon an acceptance of its authority and legitimacy . . . the Nigerian military . . . has evoked its physical power less and less, but has acquired increasing legitimacy through economic development and by building institutions as instruments of government" (p. 150); and "one implication for theory, therefore, is that the military cannot be ignored as an important ruling agent in third world countries" (p. 154).

The General Gowon government, whose performances the author favorably appraised in this book, was toppled by another military coup in 1975. A military uprising occurred in 1976. In the postscript written to fit these events, which occurred after he had submitted the manuscript for this book to press, the author holds that, the argument enunciated by him was valid then as it is now, "that the military will remain a force to be reckoned with in modernizing societies to the extent that it remains an effective organization" (p. 159). In October 1979, Nigeria reportedly returned to the civilian multi-party system, officers having gone back to the barracks. It would be very interesting to hear the author's comment on this event. There is nothing for it at present but to be satisfied with citing the words from the very last part in the conclusive chapter of this book. "Since military organizational characteristics, in the context of ruling, may behave in this threshold manner, it can be concluded that they are eminently suited for short periods, especially when civilian party systems break-

down. It is quite possible to have a civilian-military-civilian-military typology in developing nations" (p. 157).

Odetola emphatically rejected the civilian system in the Nigerian situation at the time his book was written. He prefers coercion to concensus, stability to participation, and development to equality. Although he advocates the reduction of elite-mass and urban-rural gaps, it is not necessarily out of a desire for equality, but because he knows that too great a gap "has been responsible for riots, protest demonstrations, and industrial unrest" (p. 74). In view of the tragic history in post-independence Nigeria, however, it would be understandable that he should eagerly support the military system in Nigeria. Nigerians suffered such huge losses in human lives and properties from the bitter civil war of 1966-70, that many of them desperately longed for law and order. National integration is badly needed if Nigerians are to live safely and if the nation is to develop economically. The ideological stand of the author, who is professor of sociology at the University of Ife, Nigeria, is clearly that of a Nigerian nationalist. He asserts that, only the military is capable, at this time, of laying the basis of national integration and political stability in Nigeria (p. 146). He recommends that the military government adopts policies that will foster a more consuming loyalty of the nation, and as such he encourages the development of organizations with nationwide appeal, such as the national teachers union, national medical association, national transporters union, national farmers association, national trade unions, and so forth.

This is, as discussed before, a sophisticated, but bold, justification of military politics in Nigeria, specifically of the Gowon administration. It would be essential for the readers of this book to avail themselves of a critical research of military politics in Nigeria, in order to obtain a more balanced appraisal of it. (Keisuke Yamaguchi)