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## The Military in Politics: Assessing the Impact of Military Rule on Imo State, 1976-1999

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### ABSTRACT

Nigeria is one of the nations of the world with a history of military domination in her political activities. The earliest incursion of the military in the political affairs of the African polity was encouraged by the upheavals which encrusted the political atmosphere of the country in the first republic. Traditionally, the acquisition of power by the military at the centre (federal level) automatically means the presence of the military at the helm of political affairs in the federating units, as military personnel were usually appointed as governors or administrators at the state level. Periodically, this trend was felt in Imo state from creation in 1976 through 1999 when the military officially relinquished power and recognized a democratically elected government in Nigeria. Numerous impacts were created on Imo state, during this period, by the various serving military governments in the administration of the state, and the examination of these impacts therefore forms the central discourse of this study. Adopting historical methodology of data gathering which encouraged ample utilization of primary and secondary sourced materials in the study, findings, however, revealed that in as much as the developmental woes of the state, within the stipulated period, was attributed to the political activities of the military governors – a maxim held and promoted presently in some quarters, there were still elements of benefits that accrued from the activities of military governments in Imo state.

**Keywords:** Assessing, Impact, Military, Politics, Imo State

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### INTRODUCTION

Like some countries in Africa and the world at large, Nigeria has a history of military involvement in her domestic politics. The earliest involvement of the military in the political affairs of the African polity in the post-independence era was encouraged by the political ruckus in the polity felt among the politicians of the first republic. Though a causal factor, this phenomenon does not constitute the root cause of the situation that created conducive atmosphere for the military intervention in the nation's politics during this period.

The foundation of the political conundrum which encrusted the atmosphere of Nigerian political terrain in the first republic was laid by the British colonial masters in the colonial Nigeria. Adewale Ademoyega seems to corroborate this avowal in his analysis of the contributory factors to the political problem of Nigeria which prompted the January 15, 1966 military coup in the country. In his words:

*Nigeria's political problem (in the first republic) sprang from the carefree manner in which the British took over, administered, and abandoned the government and people of Nigeria. British administrators did not make an effort to weld the country together and unite the heterogeneous groups of people. This does not imply that British administrators did nothing good for Nigeria; far from it. Many things stand to their credit... Nevertheless, there was one evil that outlived British administration, namely political non-advancement. When the British came, they forcibly rubber-stamped the political state of the ethnic groups of Nigeria, and maintained that status quo until they left. Upon their departure..., the people resumed fighting...[1].*

K.B.C Onwubiko equally seems to concur with the above expression, thus he avows:

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*The reason (for the political problems of Nigeria in the first republic was) ... that (the country) is multi-nation in composition, that is ... (it is) made up of many ethnic groups with their different languages, customs, cultures, and traditions. These ethnic groups brought together by the accident of colonial conquest and occupation had not been completely integrated into a nation-state before independence was achieved. Consequently, as soon as the unifying influence of the colonial power was withdrawn, the diverse forces of ethnic particularism or tribalism reared their ugly heads and began to plague the body politic..., political power, public offices and public wealth[2].*

The above essays, therefore, blamed the British activity of welding various ethnic nationals to form an artificial political entity and the inability of the Europeans to promote unity among these diverse groups prior to their emancipation from colonial domination, as the root cause of Nigeria's political imbroglio in the first republic which, unarguably, made military intervention inevitable.

The subsequent era in the country's political existence experienced military domination. At the federal level, power changed hands through incessant coup d'état and this was ruinous to democratic principles in the African polity. Additionally, nepotism became a glaring feature of the country's politics during this period, and the constitution remained passive as the Military Governments ruled by decrees and edicts. In the federating units (states), military personnel were appointed as governors or administrators and placed at the helm of affairs - a development which negated "... the traditional principles of federalism ..."[3]. However, in the course of their political administration of the states, these state governors laid some notable impacts. On this premise, thus, the study sets to appraise the impacts of these military governors in their course of administration focussing on the south-eastern state of Imo, from creation in 1976 to 1999 when power was formerly relinquished to democratically elected government by the military.

The study comprises of six sections with the first and second sections embodying the abstract and the introduction, respectively. Section three characteristically surveyed the land and people of Imo state, while the fourth section briefly looked at the history of the state. The fifth section assessed the impacts of military rule on Imo state within the stipulated period, while the study was concluded in the sixth section.

## **LAND AND THE PEOPLE OF IMO STATE**

Imo State represents one of the five south-eastern states in Nigeria, and one of the thirty-six states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Known as the Eastern Heartland and with three (3) Senatorial Districts, the state is situated east of the River Niger occupying the Basin of Imo River from where it takes its name. It has contiguous borders with Anambra State to the north, River State to the south, Abia State to the east, and the River Niger and Delta State to the west[4]. Owerri is the capital and the largest city. Other major towns in the state include Isu, Okigwe, Oguta, Orlu, Akokwa, Mbaise, Mbaitolu, Mbieri, Orodo, Nkwerre, and Orsu.

Prior to the creation of Abia State, Imo state covers an area of 12,698 square kilometres[5]; presently, the state has an area of 5,530 square kilometres[6], and lies between latitudes 4° 45' and 7° 15' north and longitudes 6° 50' and 7° 25' east[7]. Demographically, Imo State has a population and a population density of 3,934,899, and 744 people per square kilometre, respectively[8]. The population is largely made up of Christians; there equally exist elements of traditional religious practices and adherents to Islamic religion. In addition, there are other ethnic nationals amidst its population, but as an Igbo state, the population is dominated by the Igbo people with Igbo language as the only indigenous language.

The capital and the largest city of the state since creation, Owerri has remained the fastest growing town in the state with a good number of hotels, housing estates, industrial layouts, good roads and drainage networks. The town is accessible by road from all parts of the eastern states. The Aladimma, Ikenegbu, and Federal Housing Estates are additional features that added grandeur to the town's beauty. Owerri has accelerated in development that the towns of Amakohia, Akwakuma, and Orji are now microcosms of greater Owerri. A brand new city known as New-Owerri is gradually emerging at the south-western section of the town. As contained in its master plan, the emerging city will be

housing industries, most government offices, and the residential houses for high government functionaries. This thus explains the rationale behind the siting of the commissioners' residential houses at the emerging city[9].

There are twenty-seven (27) local government areas in Imo state[10]. In the current political dispensation in the state, each of these local governments has an appointed political and administrative head known as the Caretaker Committee Chairman. These individuals seem not to be exercising their full powers as the political and administrative heads of their respective local government areas because of the appointive nature of their offices, and with the introduction of the Fourth Tier Government project of the state government under Owelle Rochas Anayo Okorocho, otherwise known as the Community Government Council (CGC). In this system (the fourth tier government), the traditional rulers of each of the "five hundred and fifty-eight (558) autonomous communities"[11] and the presidents-general of the town unions had been placed at the helm of political affairs in their respective communities. The principal rationale behind the introduction of the fourth tier government in the state was to ensure grassroots development[12].

Additionally, Imo state has abundant natural resources exploited in commercial quantities. Currently, the state has the following ministries: justice; agriculture and natural resources; education; health; commerce; industry and tourism; finance; works and transport; youths and sports; and women affairs[13]. These contrast the ministerial structure of the first administration of the fourth republic in the state which was made up of twelve (12) ministries to include works, housing and transport; education; health; petroleum and environment; justice; information and culture; finance; lands, surveys and urban planning; public utilities and rural development; women affairs and social development; youths and sports; commerce, industry, and tourism[14]. In addition to the ministries under this administration were four bureaux namely economic planning, project monitoring, local government and chieftaincy affairs and special duties; and extra-ministerial departments to include the judiciary, civil service commission, and the audit departments[15].

At the traditional setting, each community in the state celebrates different festivals either to honour ancient deities or to mark a historic event of great pertinence in the area. One of the most popular of these festivals is the Ahajioku festival usually celebrated by the farming communities. There also exist in the state tourist centres which serve the purpose of tourist attractions. Some of these tourist centres include the Imo wonder-lake resort and conference centre in Oguta, Abadaba Lake in Okwuohia town of Obowo Local Government Area, the Ancestral home of King Jaja of Opobo in Amaigbo town of Nwangele Local Government Area, Rolling Hills at Okigwe, Iyi Okwu at Ihioma town, Eziama mystic spring at Ideato South, Iyi Ogidi spring in Amaifeke town (precisely in Ofeahia Amaifeke autonomous community) of Orlu Local Government Area, Iyi Mgbede spring in Orlu, and the Nekede zoo and gardens[16].

## **A HISTORY OF IMO STATE**

As earlier indicated, Imo state is presently one of the thirty-six (36) states of the Nigerian federation. The state was created in February 1976, following the splitting of the former East Central state of Nigeria into Imo and Anambra, respectively[17]. The East Central state was among the states created by the Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon in May 1967, shortly after the aborted agreement reached in Aburi Conference.

The history of Imo state cannot be discussed in the absence of the history of Igbo people. The reason being that the area constituting Imo state is part of Igboland; thus as an ethnic state inhabited by the Igbo, the activities of Igbo people had been persistently felt in the region since time immemorial. Igbo language is spoken throughout the state, while English language remains the official language – a colonial factor.

The history of the Igbo has been a matter of speculation, hence, the existence of conflicting traditions on the history of the people. For instance, there is the autochthonous or homeland account which establishes that the Igbo have been in their present location since the beginning of time[18]. There is also an account which holds that the Igbo people migrated from the Middle East and settled in their present location[19]. However, it should be noted that all these traditions affect the region presently constituting Imo State as a home of the Igbo people.

Prior to the imposition of British colonial rule in Nigeria, the area constituting Imo state, as a common feature of Igboland, consisted of a large number of small independent groups welded together by a

common language, customs and strong economic linkages[20]. Then, the society was democratic with an intricate system of political institution conferring leadership on the elders. This assertion is corroborated by Michael Omolewa when he observed that:

*The Igbo people and social organization (during this period) differs remarkably from that of the Hausa, the Kanuri, the Yoruba and the Edo... Unlike these large political groups, the Igbo did not evolve the monarchical structure. Rather, each village was ruled by a council of elders[21].*

The political system of the region equally provided scope for individual mobility in which the society was in all senses greater than the individual. The region of the present day Imo state, just like the entire Igboland, was egalitarian and republican in nature during this period. The economy of the area was primarily a subsistence one which depended on agriculture. Trade contact existed between the people and the Europeans in the riverine areas. A typical example was the trade contact between the people of Awo-Omamma and the European trading companies of John Holt and Miller Brothers in Oguta, in the present day Imo state. The Njaba River was instrumental to the trade, which was on palm produce [22].

During the British conquest of what is today known as Nigerian territories, many parts of Imo state suffered the British campaign. An example was the invasion of Aro (presently in Abia State) which culminated in the Anglo-Aro war of November 1901 - March 1902 where the people suffered the superior military might of the British. Other areas of the state that bore the brunt of Aro invasion include southern Ngwa (also presently in Abia State), and some areas of Owerri. The invasion had been necessitated by the British intention to control trading activities in Igboland, as well as institutionalize colonial administration.

The British attempt to impose foreign rule in Igboland was resisted by the people of the area constituting Imo state. The people's resistance took the forms of outright hostility to the Europeans, riots, and disobedience to imperial orders. A typical example could be drawn from the Ahiara incidence in 1905 when the people of Ahiara in the present day Mbaise region of the state killed a European doctor found in their territory[23]. There was also the case of 1929 when the women of Aba (presently in Abia State) became riotous over the imposition of taxes on them. The British, in most cases, found it challenging to quell these violent situations when they erupt.

The subsequent political activities of the nationalists in the colonial Nigeria (especially after the first quarter of the twentieth century) was instrumental to the eventual decolonization of the Nigerian polity. The sustained nationalist movement was based on the demands for self-government. Consequently, Sir Arthur Richards introduced a constitution which came into force on January 1, 1947. The constitution provided for the creation of three councils for the North, East, and West. It equally called for the division of the country into three regions of North, East, and West. The area covered by Imo State (both old and new) was then part of Eastern Nigeria.

Subsequently, on May 27, 1967, twelve (12) states were further carved out of the existing regions of the Nigerian state, by the Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon. This had been encouraged by the imbroglio which engulfed the political atmosphere of the country during this period. In this development, the areas which would become known as Imo state were part of the East Central state.

Afterwards, precisely on February 3, 1976, Imo state emerged from the East Central State as one of the new seven states created by the government of General Murtala Mohammed. The state, upon creation, had seventeen (17) administrative divisions to include Aba, Afikpo, Arochukwu, Bende, Etiti, Mbaitolu/Ikedur, Mbano, Mbaise, Mgbidi, Ngwa, Nkwerre, Owerri, Okigwe, Oguta, Ohafia, Umuahia, and Ukwa[24]. These administrative divisions constituted parts of the thirty-five (35) divisions of the East Central State introduced under the Divisional Administration System of the administrator, Mr. Ukpabi Asika[25]. The capital of the state was situated at Owerri. However, in 1991, the military government of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida carved out the present day Abia state from Imo state – a development which altered the original geographical feature known with the state since the creation of 1976.

Since its creation, Imo state has been ruled by nine (9) military administrators or governors, and five (5) civilian governors. While the military potentates include Commander Godwin Ndubuisi Kanu

(1976 – 1977), Commodore Adekunle S. Lawal (1977 – 1978), Colonel Sunday A. Adenihun (1978 – 1979), Brigadier Ike O.S. Nwachukwu (1984 – 1985), Navy Captain Alison Madueke (1985 – 1986), Commander Amadi Ikwechegh (1986 – 1990), Commander Anthony E. Oguguo (1990 – 1992), Navy Captain J.N.J Aneke (1993 – 1996), and Colonel Tanko Zubairu (1996 – 1999); the civilian governors, on the other hand, include Chief Samuel Onunaka Mbakwe (1979 – 1983) - the successor to Colonel Sunday A. Adenihun and the first civilian governor of Imo state, Chief Evan Enwerem (1992 – 1993) – the successor to Commander Anthony E. Oguguo, Chief Achike Udenwa (1999 – 2007) who succeeded the military government of Colonel Tanko Zubairu, Chief I.G. Ohakim (2007 – 2011), and Owelle Rochas Anayo Okorochoa (2011 – Date). The impacts of military administration on the state (the central discourse of the study) are x-rayed in the next section.

## **MILITARY RULE AND THEIR IMPACT ON IMO STATE, 1976-1999**

As indicated in the preceding section, Imo state was carved out of the defunct East Central state of Nigeria alongside Anambra state. The East Central state had been created in 1967 alongside North Western State, North Central State, Kano State, North Eastern State, Benue/Plateau State, Lagos State, Western State, Mid-Western State, South Eastern State, West Central State, and River State[26].

Having been created by a military government, Commander Godwin Ndubisi Kanu of the Nigerian Navy was appointed as the first military governor of Imo state. On assumption of office in March 1976, Commander Kanu appointed civil commissioners who were to assist him in his new assignment. In his maiden broadcast, he remarked that his administration “was ready for action – action to heal the social wounds of the past five years and action to move forward with the entire people of the state who regrettably had marked time for so long ...”[27]. The broadcast had been necessitated by the numerous and intricate problems of the new state, coupled with the gargantuan expectations of the people. Though his administration did not last long (existing for only nineteen months), Commander Kanu’s administration created some notable impacts which are felt in the present Imo state. For instance, the administration launched in 1976 the Local Government Reforms and created twenty-one (21) Local Government Areas; provided the Owerri Master Plan; launched the Universal Primary Education that afforded young *Imolites* the opportunity of having compulsory and free primary education in the state; as well as built and completed the Orlu and the Okigwe roads secretariats in Owerri[28].

What is more, Commander Kanu’s administration saw to the completion of four hundred (400) out of one thousand (1000) housing units projected at Aladimma which were distributed to civil servants and people in the private sector; the completion of the Ariaria Relief Market – a project embarked upon for the purpose of ameliorating the sufferings of the victims of Ekeoha Market Disaster; the construction of the Owerri, Aba, and Umuahia roads which were pursued with vigour; the construction of general hospitals at Ohafia, Isuikwuato, Etiti, Ohaji, and Orlu; the establishment of the Imo Broadcasting Service (IBS) which began to function in December 1976; the construction of rural water schemes; the electrification of one hundred and twenty-five (125) towns; the establishment in June 1976 of the Agricultural Development Corporation which did not only diversify farm inputs but also increased farm output through the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) agricultural project of the Federal Military Government; the setting up of twelve (12) new secondary schools in the state; the construction of Clay Products Limited at Ezinachi; granting of incentives to communities with the aim of achieving the Operation Feed the Nation objectives in the state; and the establishment of Fund for Small-Scale Industries (FUSSI) aimed at encouraging small-scale industrialists[29]. The administration equally constructed and opened in November 1976 the old building of the Imo State Library (which presently has been demolished as a result of the relocation of the library by the administration of Owelle Rochas Anayo Okorochoa, from its former location along Bank Road to Port Harcourt Road, precisely at the back of the Imo State House of Assembly Complex). The construction had been carried out following the division of the East Central State Library Board into Imo and Anambra States Library Board, respectively, with the creation of both states from the East Central State. The East Central State Library Board had come out of the Eastern Regional Library Board with the creation of the East Central State from the Eastern region in 1967. However, following the termination of his appointment in August 1977, Commander Kanu was succeeded by Commodore Adekunle S. Lawal as the military governor of Imo State. Like his predecessor, the administration of Commodore Lawal was short-lived; it came to an end in July 1978.

On assumption of office in August 1977, Commodore Adekunle S. Lawal continued from where his predecessor stopped. The impacts of his administration were felt on the state in the areas of the reactivation of the Standard Shoe Factory in Owerri; the rehabilitation of Oguta/Egbema road by direct labour; building of the Oguta motel; laying the foundation stone of the International Glass Industry in Aba (which was subsequently leased to Churchgate Group); the inauguration of the Owerri Capital Development Authority – OCDA (which was charged with the responsibility of designing and maintaining the master plan of Owerri); the launching of the Federal Housing Scheme (which was instrumental to the execution of Federal Housing projects at Umuguma, and Egbeada in Owerri); opening of the Aba-Obikabia road; and the formal opening of the College of Technology, Owerri[30]. Having been established through Edict No.16 of April 1978, the college started functioning the same year at its temporary site at the premises of Government Technical College (GTC) along Egbu road, Owerri. Subsequently, precisely in 1987, the name of the institution was changed to "The Polytechnic Nekede, owerri" having moved to its present and permanent site at Nekede in 1981. On April 17, 1993, the institution was further renamed The Federal Polytechnic, Nekede, by the federal government[31].

Commodore S.A. Lawal was succeeded by Colonel Sunday A. Adenihun following the appointment of the latter as the military administrator of Imo State. Adenihun's appointment had marked the beginning of the transition to civil rule as planned by the Federal Military Government. His activities as a military governor were mostly felt on the preparation of the state for civilian administration which he later handed over to.

Following his assumption of office in July 1978, Colonel Sunday A. Adenihun launched in the state the "Nigerian Statesman" on October 1, 1978. This represents one of the most outstanding impacts of his regime on Imo State. The "Nigerian Statesman" was launched in line with the preparations for transition to civilian administration. The principal rationale was to ensure that the voices of the people are heard on issues affecting the state; it was also meant to serve as a medium through which the people air their views, grievances, and aspirations. This is in tandem with the reason for the introduction of news papers in the Nigerian political environment by the nationalists [32]. Furthermore, Colonel Adenihun commissioned the Shetland and Boat for fisheries at Oguta Lake; and the Brand Clay Works Limited at Amuro-Okigwe. His regime saw to the opening of the Michael Okpara College of Agriculture, Umuagwo (which was subsequently upgraded to a Polytechnic status, and as a result was renamed Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo); the commissioning of the Ezinachi Clay Industry Limited; and the opening and commissioning of the Nigerian National Petroleum Depot at Aba. He also inaugurated the first Imo State Council of Ndi Eze on September 17, 1979, as well as installed street lights in the state capital[33].

Following his regime's end in September 1979, the state had a taste of civilian administration. Known as the first civilian government in the state since its creation, the government assumed duty on October 1, 1979, and was headed by an Obowo born Port Harcourt based lawyer, Chief Samuel Onunaka Mbakwe. Chief Mbakwe had emerged as the first executive governor of Imo State having satisfied the provisions of the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) in the gubernatorial polls in the state by winning the majority of the votes cast under the platform of the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP). He had wrestled the gubernatorial seat of the state with Chief Collins Obi of the National Party of Nigeria, a Dikenafai born banker who appeared to be his archrival in the 1979 gubernatorial race.

In his speech on assumption of office, Governor Mbakwe promised that his administration will "... revitalize agriculture; rebuild the rugged, muddy rails and rickety bridges; stabilize the farmlands; liberalize education; establish industries, ... restore the dignity of man in Imo state, and improve the economy and standard of living of ... (the) Nigerians"[34]. However, the administration came to an end following the change in government at the centre on December 31, 1983. The junta headed by General Mohammadu Buhari had seized power in a coup as a result of the anomalies associated with the second republican regime. Consequently, the impact of military rule began to manifest again on Imo State.

Succeeding Chief Mbakwe as the governor of Imo State was Brigadier (later Major General) Ike Omar Sanda Nwachukwu. Born of Igbo father of Isuikwuato extraction and a Hausa-Fulani mother, he was appointed the military governor of the state on December 31, 1983, and he assumed office in January 1984. According to a source:

*The task of the ... military administration (of Ike Nwachukwu) was Herculean. The administration inherited an empty treasury as a result of the financial imprudence of the first civilian administration. The debts inherited by the military administration included ₦86.6 million arrears of workers salaries; ₦356 million owed to contractors; ₦800 million owed to the Federal Government and ₦11 million in respect of bounced and unfunded cheques. Faced with this unpalatable backlog of debts and the inevitability of keeping the ship of the state afloat, the ... administration adopted belt tightening measures to bring along sanity to bear on the government and the governed[35].*

The impacts of Brigadier Nwachukwu's administration were largely felt on revenue generation. The revenue base of the state was widened by the administration, and the existing sources of revenue were streamlined and strengthened. The payment of survival levy by the indigenes and non-indigenes of Imo State residing in the state was introduced by the administration. Furthermore, the administration facilitated property rates collection by embarking on lawful business and property survey in the urban centres, and commissioned the Adapalm Oil Mill in Ohaji (whose work was started by the administration of Chief Sam Mbakwe). The impacts of the administration were further felt in the areas of building two ponds at the Oguta indoor Fish Hatchery; commissioning of the Amaraku Power Station (whose work was started by the administration of Chief Sam Mbakwe); establishment of thirty (30) customary courts and a court of appeal; launching of the Imo Blood Bank project; commissioning of six rural water schemes at Oguta motel, Agwa, Mgboko, Umuohiagu, Atta-Njaba, and Obodoukwu; merging of the Imo Broadcasting Service, and the Imo Television Authority (ITV) into the Imo Broadcasting Corporation; reduction of the number of ministries in the state from seventeen (17) to nine (9); launching of the Imo State Mobile Courts to bring sanity to road users; launching of the Imo State Sports Endowment Fund; reduction of the number of local governments from fifty-nine (59) to the original twenty-one (21); and the relocation of Imo State University from Etiti to Okigwe and the consequent commencement of construction work on the new site[36]. The Imo State University had been founded in 1982 by Chief Mbakwe whose administration was equally known for the establishment of the Imo Television Authority, the Concorde Hotel, Akanu/Ibiam Federal Polytechnic Unwana (in the present day Ebonyi State), the defunct College of Education at Amaigbo, as well as increased the number of local governments in the state to fifty-nine (59)[37].

The impact of military rule continued to be felt on Imo State in post-Nwachukwu era. Following the termination of his appointment in August 1985, Ike Omar Sanda Nwachukwu was succeeded by Navy Captain (later Commodore) Alison Amaechina Madueke whose administration lasted from September 1985 to August 1986. Madueke's administration introduced the special environmental sanitation court; built the giant asphalt plant at Aba; as well as constructed Owerri Modern Market. The administration also built a ₦35 million Owerri regional water scheme and the Ohafia/Arochukwu regional water scheme. Additionally, Alison Madueke's administration contributed its quota in the construction of the Imo airport by laying the foundation stone of the airport, launching the Imo airport Appeal Fund, and the inauguration of a six (6) man task force for the construction of the airport[38]. In Orlu, the administration reconstructed the Urashi Bridge; and issued directives on the establishment of industries resulting in the establishments of an oil mill, a pineapple orchard, and a piggery[39].

Succeeding Alison Madueke, the regime of Navy Commander Amadi Ikwechegh equally made notable impacts on Imo State. Previously the officer-in-charge of the Nigerian Navy Hydrographical School and the commanding officer of the NNS LANA (a Nigerian Navy's Hydrographical Survey Ship), the "intelligent and no-nonsense administrator" (as he was described by his former Senior Assistant Secretary, Chief Theodore Orji)[40] appeared to have lasted longer in power than his military predecessors, lasting from August 1986 to September 1990. He was appointed by the Babangida administration.

The impacts of the administration were largely felt on the state in diverse areas. In the education sector, the administration reduced the boarding fees paid per term in the post-primary schools in the state from ₦120.00 to ₦100.00[41], as well as moved Imo State University to its permanent site at Okigwe (now Uturu). To encourage rural development and skill acquisition among the youths of the state, the administration launched the State Directorate for Rural Development and the Open

Apprenticeship Scheme. The Directorate reconstructed 2,012.2 kilometres of new roads and drilled 152 water boreholes in various parts of the state[42]. Furthermore, the administration ensured that the Fire Service Station and the control tower of the airport got to an advanced level; commissioned the Aluminium Extrusion (ALEX) Plant, Inyishi (whose construction was initiated by the administration of Chief Sam Mbakwe); reconstructed the burnt Owerri Main Market; provided a relief market behind Owerri central stadium; established the state Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC); inaugurated the Imo Transport Corporation (ITC) on August 24, 1988; reconstructed the Owerri and Aba main sports stadium; built standard tennis court at Owerri; reconstructed and expanded the Oguta Golf course to international standard; initiated the construction of Imo State Specialist Hospital, Aba, and the Imo Health Foods Limited, Umuahia; hosted the 9<sup>th</sup> African Handball Clubs Championship in December 1987; and constructed and commissioned the Grasshoppers Handball Stadium in Owerri[43]. Also, the administration built and opened formally the Primary Health Centre at Itumbauzo in present day Abia State, as well as completed water projects at Mgbidi, Akatta, Aji, Nempi, Amiri, and Ubulu communities located at Oru Local Government Area[44].

Navy Commander Anthony Emeluwa Oguguo succeeded Navy Commander Amadi Ikwechegh in September 1990 following the exit of the latter as the military governor of Imo State. His assumption of office as the state's chief executive marked his second home-coming to Imo State having served previously in the capacity of the Aide-d' Camp (ADC) to the first military governor of the state, Commander (subsequently Rear Admiral) Ndubuisi Kanu. During this period, he gathered "indepth knowledge of the culture, diplomacy, and disposition of the people of Imo State"[45] which had aided him tremendously in his administration. The administration, however, came to an end in January 1992.

The military regime of Navy Commander Anthony Oguguo saw to the completion, and commissioned the Imo airport project which was ongoing for a while; gave free education at the primary level in the state; built and commissioned the Aba shopping plaza; and commissioned the Umuelemai water scheme in Isiala Mbano. The administration equally built Fish Pond, recreation complex, and multipurpose hall at Bende Local Government Area[46]. Furthermore, the administration of Anthony Oguguo made a grant of ₦150,000 to assist in the implementation of the Idam Ibiam Memorial Complex at Unwana in Afikpo Local Government Area (in present day Ebonyi State)[47]. The complex was a rural development project embarked upon by a renowned elder statesman, Eze (Dr) Akanu Ibiam.

Governor Oguguo was succeeded by the civilian government of Chief Evan Enwerem who had won the gubernatorial election in the state under the platform of the National Republican Convention (NRC). By this time, nine new states had been created in Nigeria resulting in the existence of thirty (30) states structure in the polity. The states were created by the administration of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida who had earlier in 1987 increased the number of the Nigerian states from nineteen (19) to twenty-one (21) with the creation of Katsina, and Akwa Ibom states. This new development had an effect on Imo State as Abia State was carved out of the state. Consequently, some of the major geographical and infrastructural acquisitions of the progenitor were lost to the progeny; for instance, the major towns of Aba and Umuahia became part of the newly created state, and Imo State University Okigwe was re-designated Abia State University Uturu with the identification of Uturu in the creation as the territory of Abia State. The government of Chief Evan Enwerem was short-lived, lasting from January 1992 to November 1993. This was as a result of the military occupation of the government at the centre which on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1993, brought to an end the interim national government of the third republic headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan. Consequently, Navy Captain James Nwabueze John Aneke became the successor to the civilian government of Evan Enwerem having been appointed the new military administrator of Imo State by General Sanni Abacha.

Appointed in December 1993, Navy Captain J.N.J Aneke assumed duty "as the 10<sup>th</sup> Chief Executive of Imo State, the 8<sup>th</sup> Military man to rule the state, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chief executive since Abia State was carved out, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military Administrator of the state since creation ..."[48]. Prior to his appointment as the military administrator of Imo State, he was the Deputy-General Manager (Arsenal), Naval Dockyard, Lagos[49].

Governor Aneke's administration impacted enormously on various sectors of Imo State, some of which include the agricultural, industrial, educational, finance, information, and the legal sectors. In the agricultural sector, Governor Aneke's administration improved agriculture with the introduction of the Imo State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) which rendered help to farmers including women-in-agriculture, in crops, livestock, fisheries and agro-forestry production; supplying of fertilizers, agrochemicals, improved maize seeds, improved cassava cuttings and cassava tubers to farmers; disbursement of agricultural credit loans to encourage small scale farmers in the production of more food and raw materials for the state; building of the Okigwe Grain Silo, and the Ubomiri Grain Storage Silo; and erosion and flood control in different parts of the state such as Umuna Orlu, and Avu, respectively. In the industrial sector, funds were disbursed for small scale industries; the standard shoe factory in Owerri and the clay products limited at Ezinachi were reactivated; hectares of land were provided for the establishment of an international electronics/electrical/vehicle sales market at Naze; and the commencement of the construction of the Aladimma shopping mall[50].

In the education sector, the administration rehabilitated schools such as the Emmanuel College; constructed classroom blocks at the Housing Estate Primary School, Aladimma; converted the World Bank Project School into a Boys' Secondary School; decongested urban schools by establishing three new secondary schools to include Boys' Secondary School New Owerri, Ikenegbu Girls Secondary School, and the Development Comprehensive Secondary School at Douglas Road Owerri; installed computer facilities at the Ministry of Education and the Secondary Education Management Board with the aim of facilitating accurate record keeping and retrieval; introduced the Alliance Francaise Centre which was (and is still) instrumental to the development of French Language in the state – a development which promotes international cooperation between Imo State and France; and opened women education centres at Isiala Mbanjo and Orlu Local Government Areas. More so, in the finance sector, the impacts of the administration were felt in the areas of restructuring the Board of Internal Revenue in line with Decree no. 3 of 1993 which makes the board a professional (technical) body at the federal and state level, and the re-designation of the Head of the Internal Revenue as Chairman and Chief Executive; while in the information sector, a TVRO satellite dish was installed by the administration which boosted the reception capacity of the IBC TV Station. The administration also completed the amphitheatre at Mbari Cultural Centre (otherwise known as the Rosy Arts Theatre, which presently provides an ultra-modern cultural centre for both the Imo State Cultural Troupe – Omenimo, and other individuals and organizations with an interest in culture); provided incentives for law officers; commissioned the Ndiogbuonyeoma (in Okigwe LGA), Umunakara Isu (in Nkwere LGA), the Seat of Wisdom Seminary Ulakwo (in Ngor-Okpala) rural electrification projects; commissioned the Awo-Idemili Satellite Water Scheme, and built hand pump boreholes in Ngor-Okpala, Owerri, Oguta, and Ohaji/Egbema LGAs, etc[51].

The regime of Governor Aneke ended in August 1996, following the appointment of Colonel Tanko Zubairu as the new military administrator of Imo State. The last military ruler of the state, the regime of Colonel Tanko Zubairu came to an end in May 1999 as a result of the transition of power from the military to the democratically elected government of the Fourth Republic. His handing over power to Chief Achike Udenwa who had been elected under the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) made him the third military ruler of the state to be succeeded by a civilian government. The earlier military potentates in this category were Colonel Sunday Adenihun, and Navy Commander Anthony Oguguo who were succeeded by democratically elected governments of the Second Republic, and Third Republic, in the state, respectively.

The administration of Colonel Tanko Zubairu is presently remembered for the construction of the Owerri-Añara road, the Ogbaku-Izombe road, and the MCC-Uratta road[52]. His administration is equally remembered for laying the foundation stone of the Imo State Liaison Office in Abuja[53]; and for founding (through the First Lady, Maimuna Zubairu) the FSP Park Complex located between Mbari Street and Wethedral Road in Owerri which till today remains the best play ground for Imo children, and the FSP Primary School at Ugwu Orji built to international standards with the purpose of serving the educational needs of Imo children. These legacies which have stood the test of time were provided under the Family Support Programme of the First Lady[54].

Also, the quelling of the 1996 riotous situation in Owerri constitutes another impact of the regime of Colonel Tanko Zubairu on Imo State. The capital city of Owerri was engulfed in an orgy of riots and destruction consequent of the crimes perpetrated by a coterie of ritualists, and the deteriorated security

in the state. Occurring in September, the ire of the people had been ignited with the killing of an eleven (11) year old Master Ikechukwu Okonkwo (from Ihube in Okigwe Local Government Area of the state) by ritualists whose headless body was shown on the television. Consequently, the people went berserk, destroying properties believed to be ritualists' and advanced-fee fraudsters'. The Piano Plaza and Stores located at Ikenegbu, Chibet Hotel situated in Onitsha road, and the Otokoto Hotel in Amakohia (all in Owerri) were affected by the rampage. The owner of the Otokoto Hotel, Chief Vincent Duru (alias Otokoto), was named the initiator of the ritual killing of Master Ikechukwu Okonkwo.

To nip the situation in the bud, a panel of inquiry was inaugurated by the administration of Colonel Tanko Zubairu which recommended the forfeiture and confiscation of the vandalized properties. Accepting the recommendations of the panel, the administration, additionally, ceded the property to Federal Security Agencies such as the police and the customs. An example was the Otokoto Hotel which was ceded to the police; however, its right of occupancy was revoked by the administration of Chief Ikedi Ohakim[55].

## **CONCLUSION**

The preceding section evidenced the fact that there are some benefits that accrued from military rule in Imo State. These benefits are divulged in the enormous impact created by the various administrations in this category on the state. The ascension of the military to power in the state was as a result of the incessant coup d'état felt at the centre (central government) during this period; consequently, a military governor or administrator was usually appointed by the reigning military Head of State. Even prior to the creation of Imo State in 1976, military rule had been felt in the various parts of the State which during this period was part of the Eastern region of Nigeria administered by Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. Ojukwu had come into power following the fall of the First Republican Government which was expedited by the coup of January 15, 1966. The coup sporadically flagged off subsequent military coups in Nigeria.

The view has been held in some quarters that the emergence of the military as political leaders in Nigeria had been malignant to the development of the various parts of the polity. Azubuike Clement Uche seems to have been a proponent of this view when he rightly asserts:

*One of the most ugly (sic) features in Nigerian political scene is the incessant intervention of the military in her politics. Right from the time she got her political independence in 1960, there has been the scramble for political power between the top military officers and the politicians, with the military having an edge in terms of the number of years in power. This has been described as the most formidable obstacle ... to her (Nigeria's) development[56].*

However, judging from the impacts of military rule on Imo State, one could conclude that with reference to the state, military rule impacted positively on the Nigerian society. Against being the bane, it contributed its quota to ensure that adequate development is achieved in the polity.

The fact that military rule created popular impacts on Imo State does not necessarily indicate the absence of negative or unpopular impacts on the state created by the regimes. There were cases of funds misappropriation and embezzlement associated with some of the administrations. This was the case with the administration of Colonel Tanko Zubairu leading to his being summoned by the members of the Imo State House of Assembly in the succeeding government to appear before them and give an account of his stewardship of the state. The former Chief Executive not only refused to appear before the house but went to court to seal the chances of the house probing him. He claimed that as a military administrator, he owned no civilian accountability[57].

Again, the long years of military rule in Imo State could be said to be responsible for the existence of militarized political culture evident in the political behaviours of some of the civilian rulers in the state in the present democratic dispensation. Etim O. Frank and Wilfred I. Ukpere seemed to have noted the existence of this political trend in the larger Nigerian society; thus they averred:

*Consequent upon the long years of military governance, the obvious outcome ... (was) militarized political culture, manifested in the political behaviours*

*of the dramatis personae in the democratic arena. The Nigerian civic culture was eroded and militarized culture imbibed. Thus, the rule of operation became that of order, combat, rather than dialogue, disregard of court orders and violation of human rights became the tenets of militarized civic culture in a democratic dispensation[58].*

An example of militarized political culture in the political behaviours of the civilian rulers of Imo State could be drawn from the militaristic activities of the immediate past civilian governor of the state, Chief Ikedi Ohakim, which was felt by both individuals and organizations. Presently in the state, his administration is mostly remembered for the assaults meted out on Rev. Fr. Eustace Okorie[59]; forcibly changing the name of the state university to Evan Enwerem University which was against the wish of *Imolites*; and his refusal to pay the standing arrears of the staff of the university, instead, he called for the lockdown of the university (and instructed that the keys to the offices be submitted at the government house) when the staff threatened to embark on strike.

From the foregoing, it is therefore apparent that in as much as the military did not create only positive impacts in the course of their administration of Imo State, their activities during this period also did not yield only negative results. However, judging from the impacts divulged in the preceding section, one can comfortably conclude that like some of the civilian administrations in the state, military administration contributed immensely to the development of Imo State.

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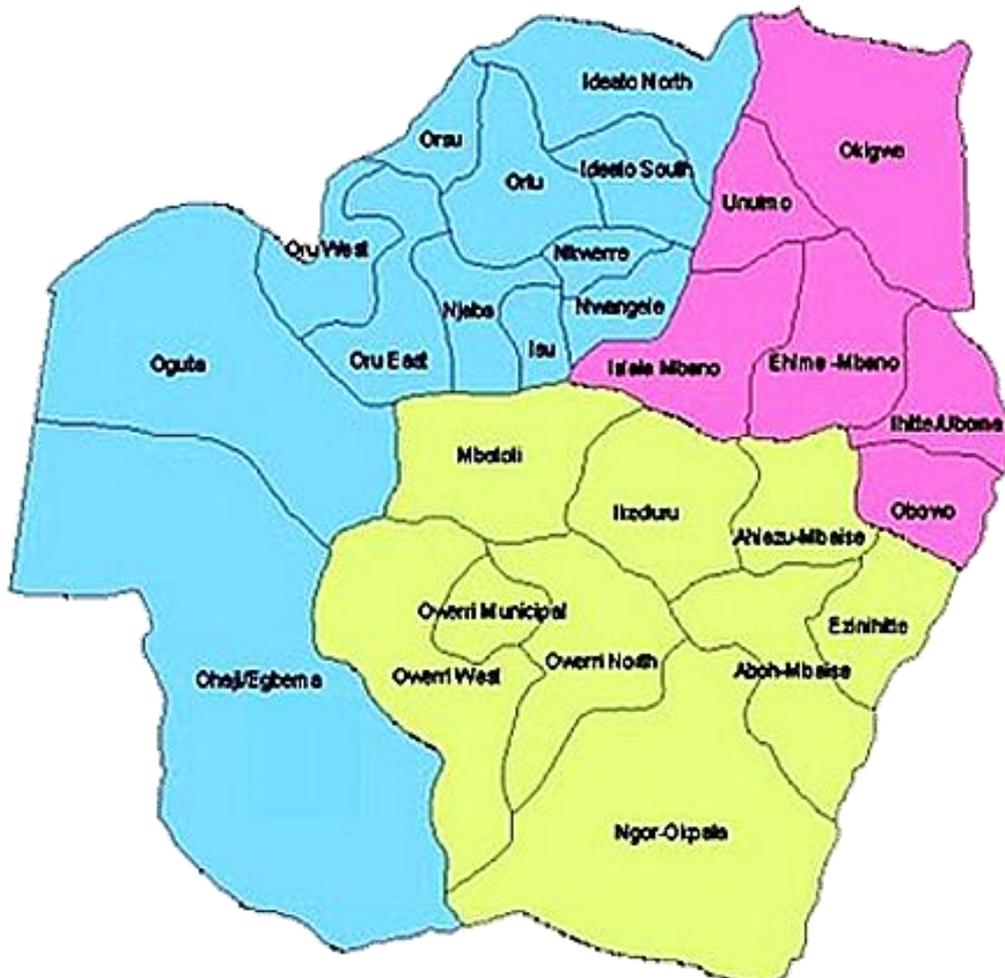
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## APPENDIX

### MAP OF IMO STATE SHOWING THE TWENTY-SEVEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS



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