

# The Military and National Development in Nigeria: A Literary Perspective

Elizabeth N. Enokora

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria, West Africa

## Abstract

Critical attention has been drawn to the works written by the civil society who condemn the military particularly for their (mis) rule and military coups in Nigeria. However there are some fine military personnel who have not only fought the historic Nigerian Civil War to keep the country together, they have also distinguished themselves in writing that deserve some critical focus. These writers embrace Marxist literary approach to the study of literature which serves as a veritable tool in sustainable human development and nation building. Literature is invaluable to the growth and development of a nation. It sensitizes the populace to imbibe positive ethos and attacks vices that bring about underdevelopment. The values of democracy, patriotism, justice, development are some of the virtues which literature promote. Thus creative writing helps to direct the citizenry towards adopting a more robust and humanistic tendencies for nation building and motivates and sustains national development. The objective of this paper is to show the role of literature in nation building particularly in shaping the military and its functions and benefits which impact positively on humanity generally. To do this, this study will therefore examine the content and vision of Nigerian writers in order to sharpen and contextualize the subject of this discourse and buttress that creative writings such as is discussed in this study is relevant in national development.

**Keywords:** literature, military, nation, development,

## INTRODUCTION

Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics?

-Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981: Preface)

This study analyses the effect of literature on the military in particular and the wider society in generally. It specifically examines how works written by both the civil society and the military work for the advancement of national cohesion and development. In doing this it attempts to correct the erroneous impression that suggests that literary activity in Nigeria is the prerogative of the civilian writers who write to right the wrongs in the society. It demonstrates that the men in *khaki* too are equally inspired and visited by the Muse, the god of inspiration and creativity to compose highly artistic fictions which contribute immensely to the development of the nation. The laudable contribution by the men of the Armed Forces of Nigeria to national development have neither been clearly understood or fully explored and highlighted. This may be due to the ill-famed and prolonged incursion of the military into politics right from the time of the first Nigerian military administration of Gen Johnson Thomas Aguiyi Ironsi who took over power from January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1966 up to the end of the reign of Gen Sani Abacha on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1998 through to that of Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar who also became the Head of State of Nigeria after the death of Gen Sani Abacha on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1998. However he later handed over leadership successfully to the civil authority in May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1999. This period of military rule hoisted a season of anomie on the nation because coups and counter coups, some of which were bloody, brought about leadership of impunity, terror and dictatorship in the nation. These antidemocratic tendencies created a great vacuum in governance and a negative impression which appear to obliterate the merits of the military interregnum and the vibrant functional literature written by the military personnel which impacts positively on human psyche and the nation.

The military and the civil leadership have mismanaged the affairs and the coffers of the country right from independence to date to the displeasure of the governed. This has truncated any attempt at progress in the nation which is vivid when one considers the valid comment of the famous African novelist, Achebe (1984:1). He contends that "The trouble with Nigeria" is largely and squarely the problem of leadership because her leaders are not willing to rise up to their responsibility. Achebe's bone of contention is that the handiwork of Nigeria's unscrupulous leaders and the poor management of the nation's resources have been the bane of the nation's underdevelopment. This study is relevant and timely especially at this crucial time in the history of the nation when insurgency and security issues are at the front burner of the nation's challenges because it will strengthen nascent focus in this new frontier of national development.

## CONCEPTUAL PREMISE: Marxism and the African literature

Literary theorist and critics in Africa believe that literature is utilitarian and serves a functional purpose. This is because literature in African addresses important problems in the society and also proffers solutions through

which such problems can be tackled and solved. This is why literary works in Africa target political corruption, dictatorship, inequality, oppression and problems that dominate the continent. This Paper therefore advocates a Marxist Sociological approach to the study of literature which targets class struggle and social relations within an environment through which shared concepts, values and attitudes influence an individual positively. This is why literature in Africa is transformative and a tool for social mobilization and reconstruction and also serves as a catalyst against disunity, inequality and dictatorship.

Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (2007:461) centre their argument on Marxist literary criticism and contend that Marxist criticism includes “state–citizen relations, the relation between hegemonic knowledge that percolate through the agency of local elites, and the dialectical interplay between society-as-context and literature-as-products”. They also assert that the “the role of the African writer as the vanguard in the revolutionary effort” is to change the society. In the same trust of Marxist theory, Mao Tse-tung (1985:50-63) also writes that all cultures, literatures and arts, belong to a particular class struggle which targets definite political ideology that transforms the society.

Against this background, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’ (2007:476-477) likens the poet to the politician since both deal with humanity and their concerns including their involvement with political power and treatise. He equally affirms that both the politician and the poet trade with words and are products of the same society that produced them. He concludes that “literature and writers cannot be exempted from the battlefield” of change since they struggle to free man from negative tendencies that strangulate him and a “people’s collective consciousness”. This is why Achebe (1966:78) argues that the African creative writer must focus on social and political issue of the moment in order to be relevant to his people and society.

This paper therefore hinges its argument on the proposition that there is no such thing as arts for art’s sake or arts that exist above classes or detached from the people, politics or government. This indicates that literature is utilitarian and serves society’s functional realism and a writer’s idealistic vision (Eagleton, 1976: vii-viii). Literature therefore encodes and decodes a people’s worldview which symbolizes their life and socio-political realism inherent in their history, politics and fiction. Marxist sociological approach to the study of literature is therefore vital in mobilizing change and social reconstruction which is relevance of this study. Literature does not grow in an empty space, it reflects a people’s life, class, experience, economic, cultural, political and social realities. This means that the artist who is rooted in an environment uses history and socio-political treatises which are interconnected to feed literature.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is at the instant of the author’s experience, observation, data collection and analysis. Theories on literature, politics, society and the military are also considered. Consequently this paper is an overview of the author’s intentions, deductions, inductions, textual and contextual analysis as a result of data collection and analysis which yielded valuable material for this write up. This paper will also look at the literary background and antecedences under which this study is adapted.

## **LITERATURE BACKGROUND AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ANTICIDENCES**

Literature in Nigeria has a long and complex historical heritage and remains the canvas which writers use to explore their vision and circumstances. These concerns are greatly influenced by socio-political and economic factors because literature is conditioned by time, place and circumstances. Nigerian writers do not just record contemporary issues; they also fight to positively change the society. The exigencies of the time and the need to tackle internal problems compelled them to be forceful, angry, passionate and unique. Thus they protest against colonialism, crisis, inequality, dictatorship, depravation, corruption and focus on stasis, socio-economic and political issues that plague the independent African state and negate progress.

In this context, this paper it gives credence to the views that from the 1950s to the early 1960s Christopher Okigbo, Chinua Achebe, JP Clarke-Bekederemo and Wole Soyinka pioneered literature in Nigeria targeted at national reconstruction. They wrote with such a distinctive flair and a sophisticated craftsmanship because they were committed as patriots in educating the world that Nigeria and indeed Africa have a rich and valid culture. Hence, they declared and demonstrated African cultural authenticity in response to the negative representations of Africa by the West. To do this they praised traditional African beliefs and romanticized the continent against the patristic justification of European colonization of Africa when the continent was seen as *tabula rasa* in which to imprint history, culture, and civilization. With reference to their creative skills, Ojaide (1989:59) declares that they were self-conscious in their writing because they want to prove their talents and so they tried to impress. This altruistic and artistic exploration at this time was relevant and timely because of the Western Eurocentric syndrome that believes that Africa had no valid culture and also due to the exigencies of the time, the period when colonial domination of Africa was rife and Africa needed to prove their worth and legitimacy. These writers were very eloquent and imaginative, thus they became the standard bearer for artistic exposition in Nigeria.

As nationalists, they emphasized fervent devotion to Mother Africa and criticized colonialism and Eurocentric views about Africa brought about by colonialism and neo-colonialism. They demonstrate the conflict of marrying two cultures which is antipodal to Nigeria's national development. To substantiate this assertion, Okigbo in *Labyrinths and Path of Thunder* (2008) show his disillusionment with this cultural marriage and examines the contradictions in colonialism, cultural alienation and religious conflicts. Africa is the victim of this encounter:

Rain and Sun in single combat;  
on one leg standing  
in silence at the passage  
the young bird at the passage  
...  
Scar of the crucifix  
over the breast,  
by red blade inflicted  
by red –hot blade,  
on right breast witnesseth (2-4).

The above excerpt shows that this unequal relationship between Africa and the West, that Africa is on the receiving end because it is dominated by the West which should not be accepted.

Soyinka's *Idanre and Other Poems* reflects the authentic Yoruba world view and proves that Africa has a vibrant culture working for them. His "Abiku" deals with the myth of the wandering child where supernatural powers and rituals are used to keep the wandering child from dying young again and again in order to live like other normal children. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* equally demonstrates that Africans have genuine values, law and order disintegrated by the European incursion into Africa. In his works he tries to restore the genuine African tradition negatively affected by colonialism in which Africans are perceived as subservient. According to Achebe (1964:157-8), the Africans did not just "hear of culture for the first time from Europeans" because African "societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth" and values which were destroyed by colonialism and which he believes the Africans must fight to regain. In restoring the dignity of the traditional society; he was mindful not to create a perfect example of the Golden Age, which may be imperfect and unexciting, but to plead the cause of the past and situate it accurately because it was distorted by the white man. In so doing this he admits "that like any other people's past, ours had its good as well as its bad sides".

JP Clarke-Bekederemo is notated for his historical writings and his sensitivity to the state of the nation. He deploys myths, imagery, symbols and cultural prototype to comment on contemporary problems in Nigeria. Beyond these, he forecasts that there will be doom for the country if nothing is done to change things for the better. *A Reed in the Tide*, *Casualties* and *A Decade of Tongue* capture the poet's experience and his concern for his culture, environment and the horrendous effects of the Nigerian Civil War on Nigerians. His "Streamside exchange" in *A Decade of Tongues* is philosophical and a statement on the brevity, transient and uncertainty of things and life. He uses the metaphor of the tide and the use of market days common in Nigerian culture to comment on life and the transient nature of things. Consequently this group of writers defend African heritage and expose the ugliness and the oddities found in the Nigerian system which strangle the poor socially and politically and keep the nation stagnated. As the most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria which is blessed with rich human and natural resources have not found its rightful place in the comity of nations in world.

The inept and corrupt Nigerian military and political leaders in Nigeria loot the nation's treasury and force themselves into power which has negative implications for the nation's economic growth and nascent democracy. This situation prevailed after the euphoria of political independence had died down and the people suffer a myriad of social, economic and political problems. For example there was extensive power tussle, corrupt practices, looting of national wealth with impunity and a total breakdown of law and order which the government could not find any solutions to. This scenario among others was not conducive for any meaningful development to take place in the nation and so this provided a soothing ground for the military to hijack political leadership and Nigerian writers who became saddled by these events and the hardship that greeted the majority of the ordinary Nigerians after the civil war which brought about much suffering on the people.. Thus, the Nigerian Civil War which inspired writers served as a watershed to the high-volume of literary exposition in the country at this point of political turbulence and insecurity problems in the nation.

In the midst of this predicament, Sallah (1995:16) responded with the view that the Nigerian poets experienced harsh economic and political realities of the 1970s to early 1990s typified by political instability, tyranny, inflation, wars, conflicts, starvation, stifle, dispossession and so they assumed

the task of art for social advocacy in the hope of quickening their possibility of attainment of a better world. Without sacrificing their artistic integrity, they have employed their art to engineer purposeful

social change. They are social gadflies; poets with drums, poets with spears, poets with guns, poets with bows, and arrows. They are poets who have learned to employ the magical potency of language in order to radically alter the landscape of complacent minds and to inspire them to fashion a more humane future.

The writers are social reformers and so their preoccupation is justified by the zeitgeist and the prevailing socio-political factors that informed their poetry. Hence they communicate multifarious feelings, ideas and vision inherent in the society. Against this backdrop, Ojaide (2007:130-133) declares that writers as vanguards of change, occupy a pride of place in their society and act against anything that bring about lack and underdevelopment. He also declares that writers and literature are inseparable and invaluable to the growth and development of a nation. Their writings, he argue result into multiple achievements and successes because as prophets they foresee danger and cry out against it before it takes place which helps to heal the society of its wounds. In the same vein Soyinka reveals in an interview with Streitfeld (1994: Cl 3) that “As a writer I have a special responsibility, because I can smell the reactionary sperm years before the rape takes place”.

This study examines the functions and benefits of literature and delves into the works written by the non uniformed men who condemn the military for their role in politics for over thirty one years. During this time there were wide spread criticisms directed at the military for their abuse of power, corruption, economic sabotage, poverty and most importantly, for their role in the Nigerian civil war which almost tore the nation apart and many people lost their lives as a result. Beyond the above issues at stake, the integrity of the Nigerian military with regards to professionalism and its image as a tool for deterrent against civil unrest and as an element of unjust political activity were questioned and undermined. When the military first took over power in 1966, they were greeted with jubilation and perceived as an instrument of repression to the erring politicians. Journalists captured the mood of the moment in the lines below:

With the transfer of authority of the Federal Government to the Armed Forces, we reached a turning point in our national life. The old order has changed, yielding place to a new one... For a long time, instead of settling down to minister to people’s needs, the politicians were busy performing series of seven day wonders as if the act of government was some circus show... still we groped along as citizens watched politicians scorn the base by which they did ascend. (*Daily Times*, 1966).

This extract calls for jubilee because the soldiers were perceived and accepted as liberators. At the end they were ridiculed as villains and their political activities were seen as an aberration that should not be tolerated. This dramatic twist filtered into the Nigerian creative writing and all that symbolized the military like its uniforms, tactics, maneuvers, bombs and guns etc were despised and captured as deadly weapons and also the military men themselves were portrayed as opportunists who came into power for a jamboree and to amass wealth. This leads to the adage which says that the best military regime is worse than the worse democratic government.

## **LITERATURE MILITARY AND NATION BUILDING**

The concept of literature is varied and at times may not be essay to fully conceptualise. Literature is an imaginative work of art literature expressed through the use of language borne out of an individual’s innate ability or desire to say something which can be in form of a fiction, drama or poetry. It is the totality of a people’s life or culture written as an artistic value which mirrors issues that deal with leadership, class struggle, politics, security and cases of national development. Literature is concerned with social, political, cultural, and economic issues in a given environment. Ngugi wa Thiongo (1972) writes that “ literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum; it is given impetus , shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political, and economic forces in a particular society”. Olaniyan and Quayson (2007:101) articulate this when they assert that “the dominant conception of literature is as a pathfinder for the society, a deconstructive searchlight of truth against all the dark burdens that circumscribe the ability of the community to achieve its best and realize its finest aspiration”. Literature therefore is a body of a work of art which is concerned about an idea(s) or a subject and acts which serves as a veritable tool in nation building because it stabilizes the society and sets out to meet variegated objectives.

One can concludes from the forgoing that literature prods and directs the society profitably which the military stands to benefit from. The military and the society as a whole benefit immensely from literature which invariably promotes national development. Officers of the Armed Forces with good linguistic skills and proficiency perform creditably well in their chosen career and are also able to decode and comprehend concepts which help in their profession and the growth and the development of the nation. The Nigerian Armed Forces is charged with the respectable role of protecting the country from internal and external aggression especially in this era of technocracy, globalization and insecurity. This task of protecting the citizenry, safeguarding the nation’s territorial integrity and the security of its borders from violation; are not just the issue of brute or jungle

force. It is a case of applying sound education found in the humanities, science, engineering and technology which language and literature transmit, enhance and sustain. Achebe (1975: 9-29) is subtle when he argues that:

What kind of science can a child learn in the absence, of for example,  
of basic language competence and an attendant inability to handle concepts?"

He locates the burden of science, technology, engineering and development which serve as panacea for development on the artist whose primary duty is to educate and transfer knowledge.

A true assessment of an educated person is not just anybody who has formal education or one who has gone to school, but one who can read, write, comprehend and decipher concepts. Achebe further virtualizes that growth and development are not just "a question of having lots of money" spent on "blueprints drawn by the best experts available". He sees growth and development as a thing of the mind and the will which lead to creation and which belong to the arts and the ability to communicate and decode concepts and hypothesis which literature and language enable. Furthermore Achebe argues that in the beginning was the Word or the Mind which began the work or story of creation/invention. The thrust of the message here is that there can be no science and technology, engineering and development or even transformation without literature and language which precedes the work of invention and technology.

Literary texts teach readers to imitate heroic qualities and personages which the texts portray as virtuous and so readers are exposed to positive character traits which help them to be responsible and law abiding citizens. Literature entertains and helps the military and the general public to mold their character and attitude to life especially as they imbibe positive African values which help transform the society generally. Achebe (1966:25-29) once more explains that as a writer his readers look up to him as a teacher because his novels teach them intrinsic values of life which makes them regain belief in themselves because the "writer cannot be expunged from the task of "re-education and regeneration " of his people and society, but to "march in front of it". The African writer teaches a moral lesson through the right application of language, style and theme derived from the African myths, fables and allegories. This helps the people to learn from their foibles with new insights and a view to helping them change their perceptions and out look to life for the better. It also helps to inculcate discipline which the military thrives in.

By promoting virtue and condemning evil, literature helps to maintain law and order and by criticizing what is bad it promotes development. Consequently the writer in order to be relevant uses appropriate techniques to extol the virtues he intends to create. A well written piece of art promotes development because it is a powerful weapon of progress due to its ability to positively influence decision making and people's way of life. Themes on democracy, civic responsibility and liberties can best be taught and understood through the reading of literary works and the armed forces needs a well defined and developed mental education in the discharge of its duties.

As the totality of a people's consciousness literature has the ability to educate the populace to embrace cultural ethics and mores for change. This is why its value is immeasurable to learning and development in the society as a whole. Writers put their creative ability to work by highlighting and promoting successes achieved in the society and when they deal with negative aspects, they portray them as despicable with their use of negative symbols and imagery which make their readers shun and frown at such trends that do not help the society. Issues of democracy are positively harnessed and promoted, by so doing, they uplift traditional values. Also when language is well crafted it imparts ideas to make people better. Literature also helps to calm the body and soul while it entertains and make people cope with life generally. It also helps the officers learn how to obey law and order particularly with respect to their superiors since the military is an organization based in a chain of command and authority or hierarchy with each level of authority subjecting itself in obedience to the superior in order of higher authority.

Literature has continued to function as an avenue for self expression from built up tension through poems, short stories and letters which serve as an outlet for out pouring of built up emotions for private, emotional and national concerns. Writers criticize betrayed hopes of democracy and ills in the society in order to make those guilty to refrain from such wicked acts. This negative portrayal of vices mold people's character against acts that dehumanize man and teach them and other well meaning Nigerians to say no to wars, coups and to imbibe positive qualities that build the society to an idealistic state.

### **CIVIL VOICES THE MILITARY AND NATION BUILDING**

The task of building a nation is a collective responsibility this is why writers place their literary works at the service of humanity in order to reshape their country and promote democracy. Subsequently Nigerian writers capture socio-political events and argue that the leadership of this country, both military and civilian; including their cohorts, has robbed the country of its quest for unity and development. Since politics, history and literature are linked; writers take bold steps and dig into history as source material to criticize persons, issues and traits that plague the nation. This is why the foibles of the military in the ambience that surrounded the Nigerian Civil War have always been a regular subject in the Nigerian literary discourse. These issues are portrayed as

destructive because writers depict such events in a bad light in order to serve as a warning and to caution the leaders/politicians against sowing the seed of discord again in Nigeria. Thus writers, who are menders and builders of their respective societies, condemn the leaders, particularly the military leaders for gunning for the spoils of political economy instead of building the bridge of unity and fraternity. They warn those in the realm of affairs not to lead the country into another bitterness and destruction that ravaged the nation. They also defend the voiceless and the defenseless by speaking against all forms of tyranny in their societies.

One of such literary icons is Christopher Okigbo who is an early victim of the war he prophesied in his poems and whose death in 1967 created a vacuum in the Nigerian literary scene. His *Labyrinths* and *Path of Thunder* (2008) predicted the Nigerian Civil War because of the tensed political atmosphere that prevailed in the country in the 1960s. The First Republic was characterized by widespread corruption and mismanagement of resources and the standard of the average Nigeria was deplorable.

Against this backdrop, the poet salutes the military that came in to salvage the situation with “Hurrah for Thunder” in delight against the politicians who disappointed Nigerians with their style of leadership. He however warned the “hunters” not to share the “meat” because “thunder” will strike them:

WHATEVER happened to the elephant-  
Hurrah for thunder-

The elephant, tetrarch of the jungle:  
With a wave of the hand  
He could pull four trees to the ground;  
His four mortar legs pounded the earth:  
Wherever they treaded,  
The grass was forbidden to be there.

Alas! The elephant has fallen –  
Hurrah for thunder-

But already the hunters are talking about pumpkins:  
If they share the meat let them remember thunder.

The eye that looks down will surely see the nose;  
The finger that fits should be used to pick the nose (60).

However the caveat that warned the “hunters” not to share the national booty because of the consequences which was also a prophecy was ignored. The men in *khaki* performed even worse than the politicians whom they ousted and the imagery of thunder, gun, bomb, military uniform and the military itself which represented instruments of power and repression; reeled and rattled in Okigbo’s poetry indicating danger and carnage. Arms and ammunitions were freely used by the soldiers to silence the politicians and they turned out to be politicians in military uniform. It is ironical that the poet who jubilated and used the tropes of jubilation and excitement to greet the military soon found out that they were masquerades masked with human identity.

Against this development the poet sings a deafening song for the Eagles:

NOW THAT the triumphant march has entered the last street  
corners,  
Remember, O dancers, the thunder among the clouds...

Now that the laughter, broken in two, hangs tremulous  
between the teeth,  
Remember, O dancers, the lightning beyond the earth...

The smell of blood already floats in the lavender-mist of  
The afternoon .  
The death sentence lies in ambush along the corridors  
of power;  
And a great fearful thing already tugs at the cables of  
the open air, (58).

Okigbo’s reacts to the prevailing imbroglio with “paths of thunder” which is apocalyptic. He was apprehensive that the leadership tussle, greed and the insensitivity of the government to the needs of the people will tear the country apart because he had premonition of the impending doom. As it is expected a dark cloud which Okigbo predicted changed the history and political map of Nigeria where sadly this talented poet and many Nigerians lost their lives.

Because of the existing chaos, Festus Iyayi, a post Civil War writer and human rights activist, who also died on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 for the cause of ASUU Strike, espoused an incisive and sordid tale of the Nigerian civil war in *Heroes*. He encapsulates decadence in a bastardized human society ruined by greed personified in the main character Osime Iyere. The novelist narrated how the top echelons of the society: generals, politicians, business executives, government officials and the elites initiated the war which was fought by the ordinary Nigerians whose actions represented heroic deeds. The calibers of people who exert influence on the leadership of the country are also corrupt which points to the depth of which decadence has sunk in the society. His novel is a metaphor which represents the social and political intrigues and intricacies that impact negatively on the peoples' psyche which hinders growth and development. In the intrigues he exposed military exploits and escapade which amount to brutality and man's inhumanity to man. The soldiers are also portrayed as tyrants, brutes, sadists, opportunists, murders and rapists. Osime Iyere recalls with anguish a dehumanizing encounter he had with the Federal Troupe: "The bastards kicked me all over my body, even in the testicles". Indications of brutality and dehumanization are common in the novel which includes cases of rape, murder and agony inflicted on ordinary citizens because the war turned men into animals and they lose all senses of reasoning:

Three years ago, we had peace. Three years and it almost like twenty years since the radio broadcast the news without stopping to give more details about the number of people lost or captured. The war was stupid but even more stupid were the reasons given for it, the reasons that led to it. Why couldn't the people, the leaders, have been more honest with each other? Why did they have to be dishonest to cause a war? (*Heroes*, 13).

The rich and highly placed with political and economic powers use them to the detriment of the poor whom he sympathies and aligns with. It is pitiable that the generals start the war and take the glory for the war fought by the other ranks that exhibit heroic qualities and bear the brunt of what they know nothing about. This group of people symbolizes love, heroism and humanity are the majority poverty-stricken that suffer all kinds of trauma and do not know where their next meal will come from.

In the same canvas Isidore Okpewho's *The Last Duty* relates the appalling story of a war torn nation told from the angle of six characters: Ali, Chief Toje, Odibo, Aku, Oghenovo and Oshevire. The storyline reflects the historic Civil War experience exposing the physical and psychological disintegration and torture inflicted on the average Nigerians. Aku, Oshevire and Odibo are stereotypes who represent the victims and the voiceless in the society where the misuse of power and might lead to insecurity, militarization, executions, sexual harassment and immorality. This is why Chief Toye Onovwakpo, an impotent and a successful business magnet exploits the existing circumstances to keep his business challenger, Oshevire in detention while he lusts over his wife Aku, whom he uses to boast his virility:

She needs food, clothing, maintenance and protection very badly. With her husband far way and under the firm grip of detention she cannot help herself, alone and unattended. I am in need of self- reassurance. **I need very badly to confirm that I still possess within me that natural power without which a man has no claim whatsoever to the qualification** (133). Emphasis mine.

This "fair exchange" as Toye Onovwakpo puts it, underscores the type of covetousness and immorality that were celebrated during the war.

This period of the Civil War threw the whole nation into a political eclipse. In the midst of these bleak events; J.P Clark-Bekederemo, added his own descant voice on the state of the union. His works intersect with the Nigerian reality and relive the bloodbath and destruction that took place during the war: thus his *State of the Union* and *Causalities* reflects his passion and feelings for his nation. In his *Causalities* he emphasizes that everybody is a victim in times of war and that is not only those who fight and die during the war. For him the casualties include the Federalists and the Secessionists among others:

The casualties are not only those who are dead;

They are well out of it.

The casualties are not only those who are wounded,

Though they await burial by installment.

The casualties are not only those who have lost

Persons or property, hard as it is

...

The casualties are not only those led away by night;

The cell is a cruel place, sometimes a haven,

No where as absolute as the grave.

The casualties are many and a good number well

Outside the scene of ravage and wreck

They are emissaries of rift  
So smug in smoke-filled rooms they haunt abroad,  
They do not see the funeral piles  
At home eating up the forests (37).

The above extract shows that victims of war are all embracing and they include those in prison, the injured and of cause; the dead. The lesson is that people should look for solutions to national problems and avoid wars because it is destructive and its effects are monumental.

In Clarke-Bekederemo's *State of the Union* he revisits the same political crises of the African contemporary society and finds it absurd that those who came to make peace became the aggressors:

These days, the whistle has not gone  
But the pack is off rushing for short cuts,  
And nobody bothers when they return  
With so much meat in their mouths (13).

In this coup de theatre the soldiers are referred to as the "cleaners" who end up sweeping the national treasury and surpassed the politicians in their greed and self aggrandizement:

They are themselves so full  
Of muck nobody can see  
The bottom of the pool  
For the mud they carry  
And cast so freely at a few (5).

This paradox is vivid and a reality in the Nigerian polity context because those who came into politics to clean up the filth, ended up "cleaning" up the treasury because their interest in leadership was very personal and not national.

Language is a potent device used by writers to fight a noble cause and so most despots fear this and try to silent the artist. The pen they say is a double edge sword deadlier and mightier than the sword. The rich literary steam that took place during the political upheavals in Nigeria condemning political events caused the Nigerian writers to be persecuted, detained, exiled and at times killed by government particularly under military regime. Osundare (2007:7) recounts that the ruling class is afraid of "the writer's destructive power". Ken Saro Wiwa, a famous writer and an avowed environmental activist and the nine other Ogoni sons were executed in 1995 for an alleged involvement in the murder of four Ogoni chiefs. Wole Soyinka was incarcerated in 1964 on the account of his views on the Nigerian Civil War. In 1994 again he fled the country for his dear life on self exile because he feared prosecution and possible execution because he criticized the military regime under the leadership of General Sani Abacha as being autocratic. Osundare has also told horrifying stories of how he was trailed and interrogated by the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) because of his views on governance. African writers according to Olaopa (2013) are society's watchdogs who "bark" when the moral scale of the society is thwarted because the writer has a purpose which he passes across and defends.

## MILITARY WRITERS AND THEIR THEMATIC PREOCCUPATION

The civil populace has been in the forefront of artistic creation in Nigeria and so has turned out more sophisticated literatures. At this juncture this paper examines the literature written by the soldiers in order to record and appraise their artistic contribution towards nation appropriately. As trained soldiers burdened with the responsibility of defending the nation and supporting the civil authorities, the men in *khaki* too are influenced by the dictates and uniqueness of their profession, values, regimentation, loyalty and traditions which reflect honor, gallantry, gory, discipline and also being human; they exhibit material and physical needs and inclination. They too are talented and so write highly ordered and artistic creation which educates, entertains, informs and transforms the society like their civilian counterparts.

Some of these military writers mainly poets are Mamman Vatsa, Ronald N. O.Emokpae, Peter Atuu, J.I.P. Ubah, H.M. Lai, L. O. C. Anene, Abagyeh, Wali, Abia-Okon, Akilapa, Olu Akinyode, S. G. Aleonewse, T. Oluwole and others. These writers have at one or the other served this great nation. I have deliberately omitted their ranks because most of them have been promoted since the publication of their works; some have also retired, while others are dead. Their works appear in *Poetry Post*, *Muse*, *Okeke*, *Omabe*, *Soja*, *Oduma*, *Black Orpheus*, magazines and in books such as the *Anthology of poems*, (*Anthology*) edited by L.O.C Anene, *Migratory Voices (Migratory)* written by L.O.C. Anene and J.I.P. Ubah, *Songs of Lokoja Nigeria's Cradle (Songs)*, and M. Vatsa, an accomplished poet and a prolific writer, have published eight collection of poems for adults and eleven for children written in English, Hausa and Nupe languages. He also edited *Voices from the Trench (Voices)*. Some of Vatsa's poetry collections are *Back Again at War Gate (Gate)*, *Reflections on Warmister (Warmister)*, *Ufuoma*, and *Verses for Children and ABC Rhymes, (ABC RHYMES)*.

These artists direct their vision to facilitate democracy and build the nation. They express themselves on both national and private concerns some of which are targeted on the military profession, patriotism, war,

courage, national unity, life and death, culture and tradition etc. The salient and fundamental military career which they imbibe direct them towards effective participation in building and the defense of their father's land. The qualities they portray are peculiar to the armed forces which holistically prepare them to carry on with the duties of national cohesion; with this they have written their names on marble in the service of the nation.

### **MILITARY VOICES ON THEIR PROFESSION**

The poems in this category are dedicated to the military service and loyalty to the State. Lai's "Soldiers" in the *Anthology* is a soldiers' creed and manifesto. It declares to the soldiers to be neat and have a smart and clean turn out when in their uniform and also to be clean shaven and punctual whenever they are called to duty. Apart from these; his focus is on military dictates and expectations, he also advised soldiers to always seek clarifications whenever they are in doubt in order to learn. To him officers must be well trained to be strong, courageous and fit to endure difficult challenges when the occasion demands. He went further to inspire young officers to be knowledgeable, current and finally to always strive to do their best in order to climb the ladder of success.

The Armed Forces is highly structured and organized by a certain degree of superior quality which is also cohesive, unified and hierarchical. As a result a junior soldier has no "right" but only the one ascribed to him by his superior. Consequently Uba's poem flashes a subtle critique in order to educate the populist on the culture practiced in the military where it is expected that a junior soldier would only ask questions whenever he is in doubt or when he needs clarifications, but not to prove that he knows more than his boss. When superior officer talks, a junior officer must "behave" and listen because he has no right to talk except to clear his doubts when asked to do so. Uba's sarcasm thrown in a moderated tone is directed at the military profession which believes that a junior soldier is inconsequential in the scheme of things:

Quiet when I talk  
what do you think  
I bought my rank  
or you don't see it?  
when with a senior  
whether you're right  
or, as always wrong  
...  
just to talk  
except you're asked  
you have no right  
you just can  
clear your doubts (*Anthology*:37).

This soldiers' creed expressed in the above excerpt is embedded in the military profession. The poem emphasizes that soldier need to be smart, intelligent, neat, vigorous and above all, trendy. Uba also believes that an ideal soldier should always seek clarifications when in doubt in order to improve himself and render services to his nation and manage crises without expecting any political appointment or reward but only in the spirit of his vocation. He should also explore his strengths, exhibit his knowledge and worth and know his limits and weaknesses. On the other hand, the nation should reward him for his loyalty and devotion to duty and so he should be honored whenever he passes on.

Akinyode's "Sacrificial Lambs" is philosophical on the nature of life and death and sees death as inevitable. In a metaphorical undertone, he rationalizes that soldiers especially the other ranks are sacrificial lambs offered to the gods as ransom in order to protect Nigerians having sworn to do so. The "gods" in his poem refer to those in government and the generals who are prepared to sacrifice the junior soldiers in order to satisfy their inordinate ambition and stay on in power:

When the gods are annoyed with us,  
we roast and turn to appease their anger (*Voices*, 25).

Of course the junior soldiers are always the victims of war who fight and die while the generals take the glory and celebrate when a war is fought and won by the junior soldiers. To his colleagues he admonishes them to be steadfast, alert, skilled and well motivated in order to do their job effectively. Okunyade (2010:203) recounts that the poet does not blame the soldiers for war crimes but instead he presents them as victims of a strong force which "love to hold on to power for egocentric reasons".

In "Do not Mourn Me" the poet questions the rationale behind too much crying and mourning for soldiers who die in war noting that this is futile because millions have died in the course of their service to keep the country together and that, that which they fought and died for was only obtained after their death; that is, they paid the prize to keep the country together but did not live to see it. He however believes that the fallen heroes should be honored and celebrated because they lived, fought, and died for others to live because of patriotism for their nation which is a worthy course. This brings to mind the essence of the Nigerian Armed

Forces Remembrance Day which is celebrated every 15<sup>th</sup> of January every year to remember the fallen heroes which is a worthy event. As for those who want to hear tales after the war, he has this message for them:

come not to ask me  
after the end of a war  
of what I saw during the war  
cause I will likely say, I survived (*Voices*, 27).

Aleoneuse's "The Military Officer" (31) and his "First Day in NDA" (33) in *Voices* are informative on military career and life in NDA. "The Military Officer" is a rendition of the training, lifestyle and vision an officer receives which he sees as ultimate and a step to climb up the ladder of success. To do this it depicts a newly commissioned officer who graduates from the Academy trained in character, leadership and in learning. Because of the rigors of his training; the newly commissioned officer is confidence and knowledgeable. When he goes to the outside world, he bubbles with "enthusiasm" and "exuberance", which will enable him to climb the ladder of success. Sure this will definitely attract new commands, appointments and positions which go with an enhanced salary, a befitting accommodation and a car. And of course studying, sitting and passing promotion examinations will enable him to have an upward mobility. Consequently he grows both in age and in rank and when he moves to the cadre of Colonel, he becomes sober and reflects on life, his past and then he becomes sober and gets ready for retirement. Other officers like him in his position may aspire for generalship which is the ultimate in the military and this attracts more comfort and confident. At this stage of life in his profession; he becomes "seventy percent politician" and "military thirty" which means he is moving towards retirement.

His "First Day in NDA" enacts the drama that awaits a newly admitted fresher (a clown) on his arrival to the NDA. The aspiring officer cadet is immediately welcomed by both surprise and confusion because quickly the senior cadets rush him in order to de-civilian him. The next encounter is informative and an eye opener:

"You clown come here;"  
He bothers less to know your name  
You tell your name  
Not knowing his, and questions pure:

"What is my name?  
Am I your girl friend?  
You are just here  
And I know your name  
Why don't you know my name?"

You laugh in surprise  
And great confusion,  
You feel you are in a wrong place,  
But this is NDA ( *Voices*, 33 ).

Obviously this is NDA "where there is No Definite Arrangement". His de-civilianization; militarism and militarization have just begun into a long journey of military training and puttying. The young "bloody civilian" must be made "bloodless" and "de-clowned" as soon as he steps his feet into the gate of the Academy in preparation to attain the heights in the profession he has chosen for himself. Instantly he must be "tune in" in order to fit into the training. Aloneness's poem is borne out of his personal experience in NDA as a cadet which he uses to educate the public about life in the Academy and the military profession in general. This will help those aspiring to come to NDA in order to become officers to know what to expect.

Emokpae's "Soldiers Watch Word" in *Voices* is written in the foregoing trend. He declares that when a soldier is sent on an assignment, it is an order, a command and a task which must be accomplished in order to achieve victory with the application of intelligence, confidence, determination, good will and conduct. The officer is thus pushed to action because a command is a call to duty. Ideho's "The Ex-service Man", Jibrin's "Goodbye Ex-service Man", Jones's "Major to Major", Ogundeko's "Complaints of an Officer's son " all in *Voices* are some of the poems which depict military life. Having noted this trend in military poetry, one is convinced that there is a relationship between their profession and their poetic expression.

### **MILITARY VOICES ON WAR**

The military and war are inseparable. The Nigerian military has demonstrated a high sense of professionalism and a level of responsibility when it comes to "offensive and defensive warfare" judging from the trained personnel, the examples of its roles in quelling civil unrests in Nigeria and their performance when they go on outside military service in neighboring African countries. These patriotic military personnel recount their ordeal and experiences in their poems which serve as monument and corrective measures or a warning to those planning a repeat performance of the Civil War. This is because they recount tales of horrors; violence and

destruction which the poems recapture that took place which will make any sensible person not want a repeat.

Atuu is greatly revered in any discussion on military poetry in Nigeria because he is vibrant, poignant, strong, intelligent, terse and compact. Vatsa (1989: xvi) refers to him as giving "deep insights with few words" with a balanced language greatly worded. This highly talented poet educates and entertains his audience on many spectrum of national discourse. His "Advance to Contact" in *Voices* gives a vivid account of how eleven soldiers fought on in a battle in spite of bullets that rained on them, but naturally and surely they trudged on against the threat, encroachment and attack:

We adopted an arrow head formation  
And kept our eyes  
Awake on the bush ahead  
And we moved along.  
We dashed on  
And crowded to no cover  
And the bullets  
Rained against us  
In hard drops,  
At the end we were six  
Almost half gone (43).

This poem reveals that success in a war is unpredictable and that no one can truly predict the extent of the destruction of any war or what the outcome will be. The main thrust of this poem is that war can get started but nobody can predict the end or how defend less and help less man can be in a war no matter the kind of operational tactics or strategy employed. The above war situation was hectic and tragic. The military world view conveyed in this poem is also found in his "Soldiers Story", "Parade" and "Rifle Pin" all in *Voices*.

Vatsa is a talented military officer, a teacher and a poet, informed by patriotism, African culture and love to leave a poetic monument in Nigeria. He saw a vision of a new Nigeria after the civil war as a symbol of hope, nationalism and unity in his poem "If I Must Die" in *Voices*. In this poem he stresses that it is mean and callous for a privileged few to drain the nation's treasury, start a war that they cannot finish and leave it for the lowly, a group he symbolizes and empathizes with to fight the war:

War are started by the mean  
And left to be fought  
By fools like me,  
After they have drained  
The nation lean  
They turn to poor me  
To shoot to kill  
Those against whom  
I have no ill (128).

During the Civil War the generals and the politicians who controlled power and started the war; fled to other countries for safety leaving the poor who are the victims to die while they stay away in comfort zones overseas until victory to come back to celebrate and take the glory. This poem is a satire on the civil war which the persona sees no reason why the war that claimed many lives should be fought in the first place.

### **MILITARY VOICES ON DEATH AND BEAUEMENT**

The theme of death conveyed in dirges finds expression in command poetry. The soldiers seem vulnerable to accidents and death as a result of their constant involvement in crises, bush exercises and war. Consequently they express themselves on issues of mortality and the transient nature of life which teaches a lesson on existence. Like their civilian counterparts, they express pain when affected by bereavement. Akinyode's "Why Fear It" in *Voices* teaches a lesson on the inevitability of death which has claimed many when they least expected it. He stresses that death which is dreaded by many and least expected should not be so because it is inevitable and a debt which all must pay because millions have gone and many more will still go including his colleagues. On a philosophical note he prompts his readers to reflect and accept the inevitability of death and prepare for it since there is no escape. His "Transition" in the *Anthology* is influenced by the death of a loved one which gave him a sad and deadly blow and which he accepts as unavoidable.

Also in "Kumla-Obituary" Abaygyeh recreate the pain and grieve he encountered at the death of a friend and colleague in Jaji. In order to let off steam, he dedicated this poem to immortalize his friend whose death came to him as a pseudo-reality. Remembering the death of his friend was agonizing and the memories hit him badly and so this poem is a way to say good bye to a loved one as mark of respect and honor. The demise left a vacuum:

The morning saw my eyes unable to open

And the noon found them loaded with red tears.  
The news now took grip of me that you  
Have gone to quiet up with the majority  
Where the sun and the moon do not set

We sat in the class and the sun shone  
Through the Jaji windows but we felt cold  
That you were gone. We had waited for your  
Car to hoot us up in the midnight  
And there in the class your locker  
Stood still, an empty chair beside it,  
Just as your seat at the dining hall remained loaded  
With breakfast, yet none to eat it.  
Your friends are here, your parents are here,  
May the Lord welcome you with warm embrace (6).

The message for us here is that life is short and uncertain. We will one day or the other die or lose a loved one which could be a family member, colleague, friend or an acquaintance. Secondly some deaths will be easier to bear while others will be more difficult, and at the same time some deaths will be expected while others will come as a surprise which will leave a vacuum difficult to fill in our lives.

### **MILITARY VOICES ON CELEBRATION OF LIFE**

Apart from seeing life as transient, ephemeral, uncertain, and beyond the control of man which is a universal phenomenon, the *khaki* men also celebrate life and live it to the fullest because nobody knows when death will come-calling particularly for the soldiers who are more vulnerable to death because of the nature of their career. Like every other human being, soldiers are not only inspired to express themselves on war, death and their profession, they also celebrate life and all that it entails. Abagyeh's "life" in *Voices* is a declaration and an appropriate ode to this section. His verse exudes energy, excitement and life:

Life should be a thing  
Free as a bird,  
Flying and perching  
Where she wills,  
Changing place with time  
And season,  
laying and hatching  
Free-independent birds (4).

This is a celebration of life inspiring readers to feel free and to live life freely to the fullest especially when we know that death is a must and comes like a thief.

The military cannot enjoy life without the life of the Mess. In recounting his mess experience, Vatsa recounts in "Back in the Mess" that

The food is generous  
But the tastes are numerous  
The major quantity is always  
Foreign to me  
The old reliable cook attends to  
the table  
With such precision that only  
Experience  
Can throw a challenge at him (*Warmisster*, 10).

The Mess is usually a place where soldiers go to enjoy, unwind, wine and dine.

### **MILITARY VOICES ON PATRIOTISM**

This theme is very much evident command poetry. They show love to the people, the nation and the black race as a whole. One of their allegiances is that they pledge to keep the law of the land and to serve their country even if it means giving up their blood and they do not to hesitate to offer sacrifices in the interest of the nation. In these poems we see deep love for the nation and sense of patriotism. Uba's "Patriotism" in the *Anthology* captures this fact. He urges his audience and his colleagues to love their country and keep the pledge which they made on commission because this will help to develop the nation. He also states that one's responsibility to the nation is to offer sacrifice and keep the law of the land.

Anene's celebrates and pays tribute to his nation Nigeria out of love which he is very proud of in "Tide

on the Gulf" in *Voices*:

Nigeria, our great mother-land,  
As we with pride survey  
Your plains and plateau,  
Charming rivers and lakes,  
The riches of your soil,  
Forest, and grassland,  
Your children  
Numerous like the stars  
...  
Endowed with breasts  
To feed, her children.  
...  
Heroes emerged  
To protect you.  
Blood was shed (14).

He surveys and adores Nigerian's landscape which produced heroes who fought for her independence to keep the nation intact even though blood was shed and says that is it blessed with abundance human and natural resources. For him the future is bright and will continue to improve for the better and that there is hope for the oppressed and the nation. The poet; a retired army officer and as a seasoned geographer, has a sound knowledge of the Nigerian landscape and the strength and potential of the nation which blood was shed "to sanctify". As a poetic technique, he interchanges the image of the nation and that of a mother who is endowed with breasts to feed her numerous children. The Nigerian land which is personified is used as a metaphor for a mother. Also the image of an iroko, a tree that lives for many years and survives all odds is used to compare to Nigeria, which he calls a "true martyr" that has passed through difficult times like slavery, colonialism, civil war and neo-colonialism. Despite the negative historical past, he believes that there is hope for the nation and that it is wisdom to live and courage to die in defense of one's land. Anene's "Tide on the Gulf" is a testimony that the soldiers are patriotic and dedicated in serving the nation.

Vatsa's *Ufuoma*, an Urhobo word which means peace in English, is informed by a sense of patriotism and love for the nation written immediately after the Nigerian Civil War in order to preach peace and unity in diversity to keep the country together:

Ufuoma  
peace of the mind  
is better than riches  
happiness of any kind  
is the pillar of all ages  
it is the best proforma (49).

This poem teaches Nigerians that it is possible and better to live in peace and so he preaches brotherhood. Also written in the foregoing trend of discussion is Okafor's "Africa", Atuu's "Black Mother" and James' "Africa Chameleon" all in *Voices*. These lyrics are written in praise of Africa, the land, her heroes and the black Diaspora.

## VOICES ON CULTURE AND TRADITION

African Literature is cultural and sets out to preserve its aesthetics relevant in this global age where some of the African cultures, values, respect and identity are gradually fading away because Africans embrace western lifestyles without realizing its danger to their culture and traditions. Many of the poets under discussion were born and brought up in traditional society which help to mold their character and world view. These poets tend to teach morals by upholding African beliefs and values by showing that they love Africa, its culture and traditions. This is why they celebrate its glorious past and feel nostalgia about its good old days when there was harmony in nature and the environment. They use positive images, symbols and idioms to say positive things about Africa, its past and condemn modern vices brought about by "civilization" which lead to underdevelopment and many current destructive tendencies in the society. Armed with this, they teach their readers to imbibe positive African values that encourage development, growth and cultural preservation.

Abagyeh's "The Moon", Akinyode's "I Remember" in *Voices* and Emokpae's "Enugu 1984" in the *Anthology* are some of the poems written with this inclination. Abagyeh's "The Moon" is influenced by the rich oral tradition which believes that the moon has an alluring influence in the affairs of man and the environment. The poet invites the tender moon in his world because it soothes, warms, stabilizes and inspires him. So it is personified as a beautiful, wonderful mother, and a nurse with an alluring ability to erase the poet's gloom and consoles him in his temperaments:

Mother moon  
Your smile is blue  
And your gaze blooms  
And it erases the gloom  
I find myself in  
When you smile at me  
And lure me  
To change my mood (2).

In the African mythology the moon is believed to have a positive impact on human like their mood, love and fertility. The moon here is careful and tender and has a soft and caressing effects on the persona as it comforts and consoles him in his gloom.

In "I Remember" Akinyode recalls with nostalgia the communal life of traditional society which strengthens and unifies the people until when the white man came and destabilized the well organised society. Such traditional virtues were oneness, love, morally and respect that enabled them to love and submit to one another and to traditional authority which were highly respected. Then the community came together to celebrate festivities eating and drinking with joy and happiness. The poem is a reminiscence of when the poet was a youth happily sitting and eating "morsels of pounded yam" with bush meat and drink:

I remember the festivals we used to have:  
The dancing and joyous occasions  
The palm wine elders used to drink  
With friends and age-mates alike.

I remember the telling of tales  
When the sun comes down to its home;  
I remember the happiness that reigned  
In that little village of mine (28).

Akinyode's poem is influenced by oral tradition when story telling of primordial was practiced and tales told in order to have fun, entertainment and also to teach morals and educate especially the young ones about African values. The poet is not happy that such activities no longer take place.

In like manner Emokpae regrets that the African environment of today has been destroyed by industrialization and civilization which caused much pollution in the atmosphere. Talking specifically about Enugu he laments that the beautiful gardens and landscape are gone. The weather was very inhabitable and "people girded their loins" and so were not corrupt and worked hard. The poet who lived in the railway quarters of the coal city recalled that they had plenty to eat and drink and lived in an idyllic environment. In contrast all the virtues of the past have been destroyed and replaced with sadness, immorality, armed robbery and kidnapping which is a frequent occurrence:

Behold beauty has become sad  
Filth has taken over the streets  
The gardens thrive on immorality  
The radiant faces, unbridled fanaticism all gone  
The beautiful narrow streets in state of disrepair  
The gutters no more flow  
Ingenuity has waned, existence difficult  
Yielding way to armed robbery  
Experience has taken over from innocence  
*"Is This The End Product of Civilization?"* (27).

Having discussed military writing as an artistic medium of expression, it is observed that this literature lacks craftsmanship with much of it writing looking like prose. The terse, invocation and imagistic style of the civilian authors seen in Okigbo, Soyinka, Achebe and Clarke-Bekederemo among others; seem to be lost in their writing even though much is contained in their writing. They also seem to be too self conscious in the pursuit of military goals and ideals not minding that literature is one expressing one's self and experiences freely.

## CONCLUSION

This discussion demonstrates that from the 1950s to the present day, literature in Nigeria has been functional and effective geared towards socio-cultural, political and economic development. It has also shown that the military has been an important instrument in the history of the nation with its recurrent leadership from 1966 to 1999 becoming a trend in her literature. It also shows the flaw and paradox inherent in the military as an instrument of power, cohesion and deterrence. Africa cannot compete favorably in the New World order without a powerful military and a stable democratic political culture. The over thirty years of military involvement in politics is an

abnormality and not a norm, thus this bitter historical experience will painfully remain in the minds of Nigerians as we hope that the sad experience of the Nigerian Civil War will never happen again in the history of the nation. The Nigerian writers and the populace are optimistic of a better tomorrow irrespective of the decadence and socio-political degradation that characterize political events in Nigeria today. The leadership and the led should not give room for the military to seize political leadership again in Nigeria.

#### WORKS CITED

- Achebe, C. 1966. *The Black Writer's Burden: Presence Africaine*  
\_\_\_\_\_. 1975. *Morning Yet on creation Day* London: Heinemann.  
\_\_\_\_\_. 1964. The "Role of the Writer in a New Nation." *Nigeria Magazine* 81 157-60.
- Anene, L.O.C. Ed. 1993. *Anthology Of Poems* . Fourth Dimension Publishing Co.Ltd. Enugu; Nigeria.
- Clark, J.P. 1966. *Casualties*. London: Longman.  
\_\_\_\_\_. 1981 *The State of the Union*. London; Longman.  
\_\_\_\_\_. 1981. *A Decade of Tongues*. London: Longman
- Daily Times* 1966. The Editorial Column. January, 16.
- Eagleton, T. 1976. *Marxism and literary Criticism*. London: Metuen.
- Emeka-Ogbonna, C. 2002. *Literature In Nigerian Defence Academy: Unpublished M.A. Thesis Department of English, ABU, Zaria*.
- Iyayi, F. 1986. *Heroes*. England: Longman
- Ngugi, W. 1981. *Writers in Politics*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Tse-Tung, Mao. 1985. Ed. Gugelberger. *Marxism and African Literature*. Trenton, NJ. African Word Press.
- Olaniyan, T. And Quayson, A. 2007. *African Literature: an anthology of criticism Theory*. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Eds. Malden: Blackwell
- Olaopa, T. 2013. Ken Saro-Wiwa. The Vision of A Writer And The Praxis of Progress. Sunday 25 August, *Sunday Magazine*, file:///c:/users/Mary/Documents/.
- Ojaide, T. 1989. The Changing Voice of History: Contemporary African Poetry. *Geneva- Africa*. Vol. xxvii, No. 1. 108-122.
- Ojaide, T. 2007. Countering terror in the literary world: the experience of activism. *Ordering the African Imagination: Essays on African Culture and Literature*. Lagos: Malthouse
- Okigbo, Christopher. 2008. *Labyrinths and Paths of Thunder*. LAGOS: Apex Book Limited.
- Okpewho, I. 1976. *The Last Duty*. England: Longman.
- Osundare, N. 2007 *The Writer as Righter*. Ibadan: Hope Publications.
- Rosenblatt, L.M. 1968. *Literature as Exploration* London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Sallah, T. 1995. *New Poets of West Africa*. Lagos: Malthouse.
- Vatsa, M. 1974. *Ufuoma*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension  
----- . 1977. *Reflections on Warminister*.. Scotland: Central Printers LTD.  
----- . (ed). 1978. *Voices from the Trench*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

### CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

**Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

### MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

### IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library , NewJour, Google Scholar

