

area handbook series

Nigeria
a country study



Nigeria

a country study

Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Edited by
Helen Chapin Metz
Research Completed
June 1991



On the cover: Bronze head of an *oni*, or king, of Ife, spiritual head of the Yoruba people

Fifth Edition, First Printing, 1992.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nigeria: a country study / Federal Research Division, Library of Congress ; edited by Helen Chapin Metz. — 5th ed.

p. cm. — (Area handbook series, ISSN 1057-5294) (DA pam ; 550-157)

“Research completed December 1990.”

Includes bibliography (pp. 341-361) and index.

ISBN 0-8444-0738-0

1. Nigeria. I. Metz, Helen Chapin, 1928-. II. Library of Congress. Federal Research Division. III. Series.

DT515.22.N53 1992

92-9026

966.9—dc20

CIP

Headquarters, Department of the Army
DA Pam 550-157

Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies—Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last page of this book lists the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer
Chief
Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals who wrote the 1982 edition of *Nigeria: A Country Study*: Robert Rinehart, Irving Kaplan, Donald P. Whitaker, Jean R. Tartter, and Frederick Ehrenreich. Their work provided the basis of the present volume, as well as substantial portions of the text.

John N. Paden, Robinson Professor of International Studies at George Mason University, made an extremely useful critique of the entire manuscript, helping the authors and the editor to focus their efforts more sharply. Revisions to Chapter 4 were made by Richard Joseph and Amy Poteete.

The authors are grateful to individuals in various government agencies and private institutions who gave their time, research materials, and expertise to the production of this book. These individuals include Ralph K. Benesch, who oversees the Country Studies—Area Handbook program for the Department of the Army. Special thanks are owed to the Embassy of Nigeria, which provided numerous photographs as well as a mounted map of Nigeria with a superimposed head that served as the basis for the cover art of this volume. Graphics support was supplied by Greenhorne and O'Mara; Harriet R. Blood, who prepared the topography and drainage map; Carolyn Dawn Anderson, who designed the illustrations on the title pages of the chapters; and Wayne Horne, who designed the cover.

The authors also wish to thank members of the Federal Research Division who contributed directly to the preparation of the manuscript. These people include Sandra W. Meditz, who reviewed all drafts and graphic material and served as liaison with the sponsoring agency; Tim L. Merrill, who assisted in preparing maps; David P. Cabitto, who provided invaluable graphic assistance and supervised graphics productions; and Marilyn Majeska, who managed editing and production. Also involved in preparing the text were editorial assistants Barbara Edgerton and Izella Watson.

Individual chapters were edited by Barbara Harrison and Vincent Ercolano. Catherine Schwartzstein performed the final prepublication review, and Joan C. Cook compiled the index. Linda Peterson of the Library of Congress Composing Unit prepared the camera-ready copy, under the supervision of Peggy Pixley.

Contents

	Page
Foreword	iii
Acknowledgments	v
Preface	xiii
Country Profile	xv
Introduction	xxiii
Chapter 1. Historical Setting	1
<i>Paul E. Lovejoy</i>	
EARLY HISTORY	4
Early States Before 1500	6
The Savanna States, 1500–1800	13
EUROPEAN SLAVE TRADE IN WEST AFRICA	15
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: REVOLUTION AND RADICAL ADJUSTMENT	19
Usman dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate	19
The Yoruba Wars	22
Abolition of the Slave Trade	22
Commodity Trade	24
Royal Niger Company	26
Influence of the Christian Missions	28
COLONIAL NIGERIA	29
Extension of British Control	29
Lugard and Indirect Rule	31
Unification of Nigeria	34
Further Development of Colonial Policy	37
EMERGENCE OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM	38
INDEPENDENT NIGERIA	47
Politics in the Crisis Years	48
Civil War	57
THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN THE POSTWAR ERA	61
The Gowon Regime	62
The Regime of Murtala Muhammad, 1975–76	68
Preparation for the Return to Civilian Rule	70
The Obasanjo Regime, 1976–79	71
THE SECOND REPUBLIC, 1979–83	73
RETURN TO MILITARY RULE	76

Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment	85
<i>Ronald Cohen and Abe Goldman</i>	
PHYSICAL SETTING	87
Relief and Main Physical Features	87
Climate	90
POPULATION	92
Census History	93
Population Estimates and the Demographic Transition	94
ETHNICITY	96
Regional Groupings	98
Ethnic Relations	107
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	111
Social Structure	112
Women's Roles	118
RELIGION	120
Indigenous Beliefs	121
Islam	123
Christianity	128
URBANIZATION	129
Historical Development of Urban Centers	130
Urbanization since Independence	133
Rural-Urban Linkages	137
EDUCATION	140
HEALTH	144
History of Modern Medical Services	144
Primary Health Care Policies	149
WELFARE	152
Chapter 3. The Economy	155
<i>E. Wayne Nafziger</i>	
THE COLONIAL ECONOMIC LEGACY	158
Early British Imperialism	158
The Colonial Period	158
Development of National Economic Interests to World War II	159
National Economic Interests in the Postwar Period	160
THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT	160
Planning	162
Government Finance	166
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	168
Income Distribution	168

Wages and Prices	170
LABOR	171
Unemployment	172
Labor Unions	172
AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, AND FISHING	174
Land Use, Soils, and Land	
Tenure	176
Crops	178
Irrigation	179
Livestock	180
Forestry	181
Fisheries	182
MANUFACTURING	184
MINING, PETROLEUM, AND ENERGY RESOURCES ..	185
Oil and Gas	185
Electric Power	188
TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS	188
Transportation	188
Communications	193
BANKING, FINANCE, AND OTHER SERVICES	193
FOREIGN TRADE AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS	196
Foreign Trade	196
Balance of Payments	197
The Debt Overhang	198
Structural Adjustment	200
Chapter 4. Government and Politics	203
<i>Eghosa Osaghae</i>	
THE FIRST REPUBLIC	209
MILITARY INTERVENTION AND MILITARY RULE ..	214
The 1966 Coups, Civil War, and Gowon's	
Government	215
The Muhammad-Obasanjo Government	218
The Buhari Regime	220
The Babangida Government	221
POLITICAL TRANSITIONS AND TRANSITION	
PLANNING	225
The Second Republic	225
The Third Republic	229
FEDERALISM AND INTRAGOVERNMENTAL	
RELATIONS	233
THE CIVIL SERVICE	238
INTEREST GROUPS AND NATIONAL POLITICS	241
Professional Associations	241

Trade Unions	241
The Media	242
Student Associations	243
Women's Organizations	243
Other Interest Groups	244
FOREIGN RELATIONS	244
Relations with Neighboring States	246
Relations with the Rest of Africa	247
Relations with Major Powers	248
Relations with International Organizations	250
Chapter 5. National Security	253
<i>Joseph P. Smaldone</i>	
NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS	257
Local and Bilateral Issues	258
African and Regional Issues	264
Global Interests	267
ARMED FORCES	268
Early Development	269
Constitutional and Political Framework	271
Organization, Mission, and Order of Battle	272
Arms Procurement and Defense Industries	283
Recruitment and Conditions of Service	287
Training	290
Military Capabilities	294
Uniforms, Ranks, and Insignia	295
ARMED FORCES AND SOCIETY	295
Attitudes Toward the Military	295
Political Role of the Military	298
Demographic Factors and the Defense Budget	299
Civic Action and Veterans' Groups	301
INTERNAL SECURITY	301
Domestic Security	302
Human Rights	307
Internal Security Forces and Organizations	309
Crime and Punishment	315
Incidence and Trends in Crime	317
Security and Anticrime Measures	319
Appendix. Tables	323
Bibliography	341
Glossary	363

Index 367

List of Figures

1 Administrative Divisions of Nigeria as of August 1991	xxii
2 Yorubaland, Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries	8
3 Principal Trans-Saharan Trade Routes, Ninth to Seventeenth Centuries	12
4 The Sokoto Caliphate, Mid-Nineteenth Century	20
5 British Presence in the Niger Region, 1861–1914	30
6 Unification of Nigeria, 1914	36
7 Administrative Divisions, 1987–August 1991	80
8 Topography and Drainage	88
9 Distribution of Principal Ethnic Groups, 1990	102
10 Transportation System, 1990	190
11 Executive Branch, According to 1989 Constitution	234
12 Legislative and Judicial Branches, According to 1989 Constitution	240
13 Principal Military Installations, 1990	260
14 Organization of the Ministry of Defence and of the Armed Forces, 1990	274
15 National Security and Defense Organization, 1990	276
16 Officer Ranks and Insignia, 1990	296
17 Enlisted Ranks and Insignia, 1990	297

Preface

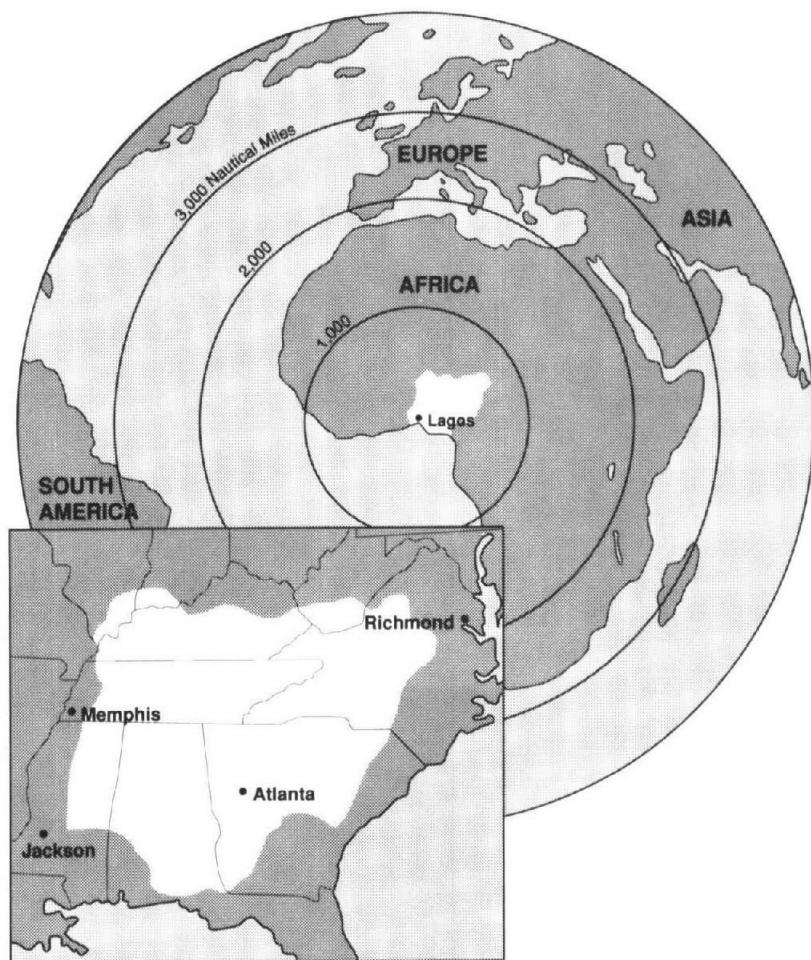
Like its predecessor, this study is an attempt to treat in a concise and objective manner the dominant historical, social, political, economic, and military aspects of contemporary Nigerian society. Sources of information included scholarly journals and monographs, official reports of government and international organizations, newspapers, and numerous periodicals. Chapter bibliographies appear at the end of the book; brief comments on some of the more valuable sources suggested as possible further reading appear at the end of each chapter. Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided to assist those readers who are unfamiliar with metric measurements (see table 1, Appendix). A glossary is also included.

Place-names generally have been spelled in accordance with those established by the United States Board on Geographic Names and the Permanent Committee on Geographic Names for British Official Use, known as the BGN/PCGN system. The spelling of other proper names conforms to the current usage in the country (where the official language is English) or to the most authoritative available sources.

Nigeria created nine more states on August 27, 1991, bringing the total number of states to thirty. The map on the frontispiece reflects the 1991 status, whereas the map at the end of chapter 1 reflects the status of Nigeria from 1987 to August 1991.

The body of the text reflects information available as of December 1990. Certain other portions of the text, however, have been updated. The Introduction discusses significant events that have occurred since the completion of research; the Country Profile includes updated information as available; and the Bibliography lists recently published sources thought to be particularly helpful to the reader.

Country Profile



Country

Formal Name: Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Short Form: Nigeria.

Term for Nationals: Nigerian(s).

Capital: Lagos (projected to complete gradual move to Abuja in Federal Capital Territory in late 1991).

Date of Independence: October 1, 1960.

Geography

Size: 923,768 square kilometers.

Boundaries: Southern limits set by Gulf of Guinea (bights of Benin and Biafra); inland frontiers shared with Cameroon (east), Chad (northeast), Niger (north), and Benin (west). No demarcation reached regarding Nigeria-Chad-Niger-Cameroon boundary in Lake Chad, leading to disputes.

Topography: Five major geographic divisions: low coastal zone along Gulf of Guinea; succeeded northward by hills and low plateaus; Niger-Benue river valley; broad stepped plateau stretching to northern border with highest elevations over 1,200 meters; mountainous zone along eastern border, which includes country's highest point (2,042 meters).

Climate: Tropical with variations governed by interaction of moist southwest monsoon and dry northeast winds. Mean maximum temperatures of 30–32°C (south), 33–35°C (north). High humidity in south February–November, June–September in north; low humidity during dry season. Annual rainfall decreases northward; about 2,000 millimeters in coastal zone (Niger Delta averages over 3,550 millimeters); 500 to 750 millimeters in north.

Society

Population: Population and growth estimates varied widely. World Bank estimated 1990 population at 119 million; however, 1991 preliminary census figures published in 1992 gave population total of 88.5 million. Growth rate in 1990 estimated about 3.3 percent; 28 percent of population urban in 1985.

Ethnic Groups: 250 to 400 or more recognized groups, many divided into subgroups of considerable social and political importance. Most important ethnolinguistic categories: Hausa and Fulani in north, Yoruba in southwest, and Igbo in southeast, all internally subdivided. Next major groups: Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, and Ijaw.

Languages: Number of languages estimated at 350 to 400, many with dialects. Most important: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Hausa major language in north. English official language used in government, large-scale business, mass media, and education beyond primary school. Several other languages also recognized for primary education. Classical Arabic of religious significance in north.

Religion: In last officially accepted census (1963), about 47 percent of population self-identified as Muslims (chiefly adherents of Sunni Islam), nearly 35 percent as Christians, and more than 18 percent as other (almost entirely adherents of indigenous religions). Majority of north Muslim; south mainly non-Muslim, primarily Christian; middle belt mixed faiths. Mission-related Christian churches (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, and others), African independent churches, and Aladura Church present.

Education: Universal primary education (six-year program) responsibility of state and local governments. Great increase in enrollments (about 12 million in government primary schools, additional millions in Muslim and Christian private schools in 1985). Responsibility for secondary education shared by federal and state governments; also some private schools; 3.7 million in government secondary schools in 1985. In 1990 between 150,000 and 200,000 in thirty-five colleges, universities, and higher technical schools.

Health: Major prevalent diseases included cerebrospinal meningitis, yellow fever, Lassa fever, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), malaria, guinea worm, schistosomiasis, onchocerciasis, and malnutrition among young children. Medical establishments owned by federal, state, and local governments and private groups. Shortage of medical facilities and physicians in rural areas. Primary Health Care Plan launched in late 1980s, including expanded immunization campaign.

Economy

Gross National Product (GNP): US\$30.0 billion, 1989; US\$230 per capita, 1990.

Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing: Agriculture represented 39.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1988. In 1990, 34 million hectares, or 42 percent of arable land under cultivation; 18 million hectares of pastureland; 20 million hectares of forests. 1991 drought forced substantial increase in food imports. Cash crops: cocoa, palm oil, rubber, cotton, peanuts. Major food crops: cassava, yams, taro, sweet potatoes, sorghum, millet, corn, rice. Livestock: cattle, goats, sheep, horses, camels, pigs, poultry, representing 2.0 percent of GDP. Forests used extensively, and government engaged in afforestation projects. Fisheries catch did not meet domestic needs; modernization projects underway.

Industry: Constituted 10.0 percent of GDP in 1988. Primary processing industries: palm oil, peanuts, rubber, petroleum, wood,

hides and skins. Manufacturing industries: food products, textiles, cement, building materials, footwear, chemical products, ceramics, small appliances.

Mining, Petroleum, and Energy: Main items mined: coal, tin, columbite for domestic use. Nigeria world's sixth largest oil exporter; domestic consumption 250,000 barrels per day; 11 percent of extracted oil refined domestically. Natural gas constituted more than 20 percent of commercial energy sources in 1990. Emphasis on expanding hydroelectric power (14 percent of energy consumed in 1980s) and oil- and gas-generated electricity.

Exports: Petroleum, cocoa.

Imports: Machinery, transportation equipment, chemicals, manufactured goods, food, live animals.

Major Trading Partners: United States, Britain, other European Economic Community countries, Japan, Canada. Nigeria had negative trade balance.

Currency: Naira (N); 1 naira = 100 kobo; average exchange rate in 1990: N8.04 per US\$1.00.

Transportation and Communications

Roads: In 1990, 108,000 kilometers of roads, of which 30,000 kilometers paved, 25,000 kilometers gravel; rest unimproved earth. Most state capitals and large towns accessible by paved road.

Railroads: In 1990, 3,500 kilometers of narrow-gauge (1.067-meter) track. Nigerian Railway Corporation declared bankruptcy in 1988 and system in serious operational difficulties.

Civil Aviation: Three airports handled international flights: Murtala Muhammad International at Lagos, Aminu Kano International at Kano, and Port Harcourt. Twenty-nine other airports with paved runways. Nigeria Airways parastatal with domestic and international flights.

Ports: Three major complexes: Lagos (including Apapa and Tin Can Island), which handled majority of cargo, Delta (including Warri and Sapele on Niger River), and Rivers (including Port Harcourt); Calabar (on Cross River), major eastern port. Crude oil exported through Bonny, near Port Harcourt, and Burutu, near Warri.

Communications: Telecommunications being expanded in 1990; domestic satellite stem linked all major urban areas; good international

telecommunications system. Also 65 AM radio stations and various television stations.

Government and Politics

Government: Federal republic under strong presidential administration. Became parliamentary democracy at independence; under military rule 1966 to 1979, 1983-. Constitution of 1979 amended February 1984. New constitution promulgated 1989 and scheduled to take effect January 1993; provides for three independent branches of government: executive, legislative, judicial. National Assembly dissolved in 1983, had not been reinstated as of mid-1991. Transition to civilian rule scheduled to be completed January 1993.

Administrative Divisions: Thirty states divided into local councils; Federal Capital Territory of Abuja projected to become operational as national capital in 1991 as federal departments transfer from Lagos.

Judicial System: Legal system based on English common law modified by Nigerian rulings, constitution of 1979, legislative enactments, and decrees of military government in effect. Draft constitution of 1989 to take effect at start of Third Republic. Customary and Muslim sharia law recognized in personal status matters. Federal system included Supreme Court, federal courts of appeal, and federal high courts. Supreme Court had original jurisdiction in constitutional disputes.

Politics: In 1989 two political parties established by government: National Republican Convention, slightly right of center, and Social Democratic Party, slightly left of center. Presidential elections scheduled for December 1992.

Foreign Relations: Nonaligned; active member of United Nations, Organization of African Unity, Commonwealth of Nations, and Economic Community of West African States. Main principles of foreign policy: noninterference in internal affairs and inviolability of national borders in Africa.

National Security

Armed Forces: In 1990 armed forces totaled at least 94,500; components were army, 80,000; navy, 5,000; and air force, 9,500; no organized reserves; service entirely voluntary.

Major Tactical Units: Army had two mechanized infantry divisions, one armored division, and one airborne division; air force

tactical command had three interceptor/strike squadrons, one maritime reconnaissance squadron, and five transport squadrons. Equipment inventory over 260 aircraft. Navy equipped with modern fleet of frigates, corvettes, transports, and patrol craft; defended territorial waters and was developing amphibious warfare capability.

Major Military Suppliers: Diversified military procurement sources included Italy, Germany, Britain, United States, and Eastern Europe. Small but important domestic defense industry.

Military Costs: Between 1977 and 1987, military spending decreased 80 percent to less than 1 percent of GNP; in 1990 defense budget N2.19 billion, or about US\$277 million.

Security Forces: Size of national police (Nigeria Police Force) variously estimated at between 20,000 and 152,000, organized into seven area commands under Nigeria Police Council that included president, chief of staff, minister of internal affairs, and police inspector general. Also Port Security Police (total about 12,000) and Quick Intervention Force (number not known) in each state. Security services reorganized in 1986 into State Security Service for domestic intelligence, National Intelligence Agency for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence, and Defence Intelligence Agency for military intelligence.



Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of Nigeria as of August 1991

Introduction

THE MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY IN AFRICA and the largest in area of the West African states, Nigeria was an early twentieth century colony that became an independent nation in 1960. A country of great diversity because of the many ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups that live within its borders, Nigeria is also a country with a long past. The history of the peoples that constitute the present state dates back more than 2,000 years. The earliest archaeological finds were of the Nok, who inhabited the central Jos Plateau between the Niger and Benue rivers between 300 B.C. and 200 A.D. A number of states or kingdoms with which contemporary ethnic groups can be identified existed before 1500. Of these, the three dominant regional groups were the Hausa in the northern kingdoms of the savanna, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Igbo in the southeast.

The European slave trade that occurred in Africa as early as the late fifteenth century and that crested between the 1650s and the 1850s had a significant impact on Nigeria. Britain declared the slave trade illegal in 1807 and sent its navy to West African waters to enforce the ban. Britain's action led ultimately to British intervention in Nigeria, which had become a major area for the slave trade. Meanwhile, whereas European missionaries were bringing Christianity to the peoples of southern Nigeria, Islam had been introduced along the caravan routes of northern Nigeria. The jihad, or holy war, waged within what became the Sokoto Caliphate between 1804 and 1808, was instrumental in spreading the Muslim faith not only in the north but also into adjacent regions, such as the area that came to be known as the middle belt, running from the Niger River valley in the west to the Cameroon Highlands in the east.

Initially, the slave trade had been the area's primary attraction for the European powers, but other products, including palm oil and cocoa, also played a role. To safeguard trade from the instability resulting from the ongoing Yoruba wars that began in the 1830s, Britain established a colony in Lagos as early as 1861. The Royal Niger Company was chartered for trading purposes in 1886, shortly after the Berlin Conference of 1885 had sought to resolve overlapping European colonial activities on the African continent. Until 1900 British control of the area was limited to the coastal region and Lokoja, at the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers. In that year, Britain named Frederick Lugard high commissioner

of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. His tenure, which lasted until 1918, stressed indirect British control using local rulers. When Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria were united in 1914, Lugard continued as Britain's chief representative. Hugh Clifford, who succeeded him as governor from 1919 to 1925, sought to bring Western economic development, to build on educational progress made in the south, and to introduce new governmental structures such as the 1922 constitution and the Legislative Council.

British rule and economic and educational development produced a rising nationalism that was reflected particularly in the organized labor movement and the creation of various political parties during World War II. Following the war, Nigeria developed under two colonial constitutions, those of 1946 and 1951. They expanded the Legislative Council and introduced the federal principle, combining regional autonomy with federal union and stipulating that civil service personnel and personnel in other public spheres should reflect the various parts of the country. In 1952-53 a census indicated that 54 percent of the population resided in the northern part of the country. Because population was the basis for allocating revenues as well as political representation, census findings always aroused considerable controversy as to their accuracy. The 1962 census was voided, and the 1963 census has become the accepted basis for planning purposes. The 1973 census, which claimed that 64 percent of the population lived in the north, was subsequently disallowed. (The November 1991 census was conducted by restricting movement of the population for two days in 250,000 enumeration areas. In mid-March 1992 the government announced that the overall population was only 88.5 million, considerably less than anticipated.)

Nigeria gained its independence on October 1, 1960, and the First Republic is generally held to have begun then, although the nation actually became a republic on October 1, 1963. The political scene, unfortunately, was clouded by the trial of two leading politicians, who were charged with conspiracy; and widespread political abuses and corruption caused the electorate to become disillusioned. The 1964-65 elections saw very low voter participation, followed by increasing violence that led to the death of as many as 2,000 persons. After an abortive coup attempt in January 1966, the army took over under Major General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo, and a Federal Military Government was formed. Ironsi's tenure was short-lived because northern officers staged a coup in July, in which Ironsi was killed and Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Christian from the middle belt area, took control. Tension increased between the infantry, who were mainly of

northern origin, and the Igbo soldiers in the south. The conflict led to the bloody civil war of 1967-70 (also known as the Biafran War) that took the lives of about 2 million persons.

Gowon, who intended that his be an interim rule preparing for return to civilian government, concentrated on economic development. In the late 1960s, the discovery of petroleum in commercial quantities caused oil to replace cocoa, peanuts, and palm products as Nigeria's major foreign exchange earner; and in 1971 Nigeria became a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The economy suffered, however, from the 1972-74 drought and rising unemployment as farm workers flocked into the cities.

Discontent increased, and in 1975 military forces deposed Gowon in a bloodless coup. They brought in Brigadier Murtala Muhammad, soon to become general, who began demobilizing the military, cutting the civil service, and creating new states (the number of states eventually came to nineteen) in order to weaken regional ethnic ties. Dissatisfaction within the military over these measures led to Murtala Muhammad's assassination in 1976. He was succeeded by his next in command, Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo, who concentrated on preparing the country for civilian rule in accordance with the draft of the constitution, which was promulgated in 1979, and the elections held under it.

The resulting Second Republic lasted from 1979 to 1983 under civilian president Shehu Shagari. The weak political coalition government, the end of the oil boom, the strain of recession, and fraud in the 1983 elections caused the army to step in again at the end of December 1983 under Major General Muhammadu Buhari, who sought to end widespread corruption. The army removed Buhari in August 1985, substituting Major General Ibrahim Babangida and calling the new governing military body the Armed Forces Ruling Council. Babangida also attempted to prepare Nigeria for civilian government, initially through economic measures. He declared a National Economic Emergency in 1986 and undertook Nigeria's own version of a rigorous structural adjustment program (SAP), as a result of which it received aid from the World Bank (see Glossary).

Economic measures designed to raise the overall standard of living of Nigerians had to take into account the pluralistic nature of the society. The country contained between 250 and 400 ethnic groups (depending on the way they were defined), speaking about 400 languages. Of these, the Hausa were the dominant group in the northern area, followed by the Kanuri; the Nupe and Tiv predominated in the middle belt; and the southern area was fragmented: the major

groups being the Yoruba concentrated in the southwest and the Igbo in the southeast. Whereas 80 percent of Nigeria's population in 1990 lived in farming villages, the country experienced perhaps the fastest growing urbanization in the world in the 1970s and had the largest total urban population of any state in sub-Saharan Africa. The search for employment drew males to the cities, leaving most rural areas with a population composed largely of women, children, and the elderly.

Religion also has been pluralist. The far northern areas of Nigeria have commonly been considered Muslim, but the middle belt has a mixture of Muslim and Christian adherents. In the south, traditionally considered Christian and featuring Protestant and Africanized churches, such as the Aladura movement among the Yoruba and Roman Catholicism among the Igbo, there was also a sizeable Muslim population in 1992. In addition, traditional religion, characterized by worship of primordial spirits, dead ancestors, and spirits of places, is practiced, especially in rural areas.

Education, too, has followed a varied pattern. By 1992, Nigeria had a nationwide indigenous system in which English had come to be the language of instruction beyond primary school; traditional Quranic schools, both in the rural and urban areas of the north; and private and parochial schools in the cities, which provided a European-style education (such schools were taken over by the government in the mid-1970s but allowed to resume private operation in 1990).

Health facilities were uneven in quality as of 1992. Babangida launched a Primary Health Care plan in 1987 designed to expand immunization and improve inadequate rural health facilities and the geographic maldistribution of medical facilities. Significant health progress had been made nationally, however, since World War II. One of the most challenging health problems of the early 1990s was the increasing prevalence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). In the spring of 1992, the minister of health announced that about 400,000 Nigerians (nearly 0.5 percent of the population) were carriers of the virus that caused AIDS.

The relatively high percentage of secondary school and university graduates in Nigeria represented both an asset and a liability to the economy. Although an educated work force was useful in promoting technology and the professions, in the recession of the late 1980s, Nigeria had an unemployment rate for secondary school graduates of 35 to 40 percent, a potential source of unrest. Efforts to decrease unemployment were hampered by the dependence of the economy on petroleum. In 1988 oil produced 87 percent of the country's export income and 77 percent of total federal revenues.

This situation made the economy very vulnerable to world oil price fluctuations. For example, the fall in oil prices and output in the latter 1980s caused a drastic decline in Nigeria's gross national product (GNP—see Glossary). GNP went from US\$830 per capita in 1983 to US\$250 per capita in 1989. As a result, in 1989, for the first time, Nigeria was listed by the World Bank as a low-income country. The fall in the price of oil caused Nigeria not only to incur a trade deficit but also to begin foreign borrowing, resulting in 1989 in the largest public debt of any sub-Saharan state.

In addition to petroleum, Nigeria's major exports in the early 1990s continued to be primary products such as cocoa and, to a lesser degree, peanuts, cotton, and palm oil products. (In 1990 a law was passed banning the export of cocoa beans as of January 1991 in order to promote domestic processing. This law caused concern because despite various projects for establishing processing plants, Nigeria was unable to process all the cocoa beans produced.) The United States replaced Britain in the late 1980s as Nigeria's best customer, but Britain remained Nigeria's largest single source of imports.

Babangida's introduction of the SAP in 1986 represented an effort to increase domestic production and to institute financial and import restrictions that would strengthen the economy. Measures taken under the SAP entailed control of the value of the naira (see Glossary) by creating the second-tier foreign exchange market, strict control of the money supply and credits, a budget deficit limited to 4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary), privatization of major state-owned companies together with a new industrial policy, easing of trade restrictions, and debt rescheduling. The SAP was still in place in early 1992; the floating of the naira against international currencies in March 1992 was a bold step but was expected to result in further inflation.

Babangida's SAP was not Nigeria's first attempt at economic planning. Early government planning efforts, beginning in the late 1940s, had limited results; therefore, in 1990 Nigeria adopted a three-year rolling plan system that could readily be modified when changed circumstances required. The major goals were to reduce inflation, which had averaged 20 percent or more annually between 1973 and 1984; to maintain the infrastructure—Nigeria had one of the best-developed transportation systems in Africa but maintenance had been poor; to achieve agricultural self-sufficiency, and to reduce the SAP burden. As with most other developing countries, the share that agriculture contributed to GDP declined. It went from 65.7 percent in fiscal year (see Glossary) 1959 to 39.2

percent in 1988. Moreover, Nigeria's hope of achieving food self-sufficiency was at least temporarily dashed when in early 1991 drought forced Nigeria to increase substantially its food imports. Manufacturing's share in GDP gradually rose from 4.4 percent in fiscal year 1959 to 10.0 percent in 1988. The growth in manufacturing resulted in part from the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion decrees of 1972, 1977, and 1981 that facilitated indigenous majority ownership. These decrees were relaxed in 1985, however, to encourage foreign investment and thus stimulate the economy.

The major goals of economic development were integrating agriculture and industry more closely, including privatization or commercialization of a number of parastatals and government-owned enterprises; improving the infrastructure with particular reference to increasing electric power generation, enlarging and modernizing communications systems, and performing needed maintenance on existing transportation systems; reducing dependence on oil; and creating an effective national planning body. By the end of 1991, privatization measures had taken effect in such areas as agriculture, banking, railroads, and telecommunications. Nigeria, however, for the most part lacked the capital necessary for large-scale development and depended upon foreign loans to implement its programs. For example, it received a 1990 European Economic Community grant for rural development and telecommunications of 3.54 billion naira (for value of the naira—see Glossary) under the Fourth Lomé Convention (see Glossary) and a 1991 British loan of £223.3 million to expand the electric power system. As a result of such borrowing, at the end of 1991 Nigeria owed an estimated US\$34 billion in external debt; 44 percent was owed to members of the Paris Club and 20 percent to foreign commercial banks. Throughout 1990 and 1991, Nigeria engaged in extensive debt rescheduling with Paris Club countries such as Britain, Italy, Japan, and Sweden.

Among other major development projects that Nigeria was pursuing was the large Ajaokuta steelworks, begun with Soviet funding and subsequently funded by the World Bank, due for completion at the end of 1992. On a smaller scale was a European currency unit (ECU) 48 million loan from the European Investment Bank under the Third Lomé Convention for the development of palm oil refining facilities. In addition, despite its efforts to diversify its economy, Nigeria was expanding its oil production. The expansion came, most notably, through the discovery of an offshore field near Akwa Ibom, which was scheduled to increase oil production by one-third by 1994. Expansion also resulted from the renovation of oil refineries at Warri and Kaduna; the development of

petrochemical plants; an oil condensate project at Oso on the Niger Delta coast; and the planned construction, beginning in 1992, of facilities to enable the export of liquefied natural gas from Bonny.

Despite this economic progress, the implementation of the SAP led to decreased spending on social programs in the late 1980s. The decrease caused some domestic dissatisfaction, which was reflected in strikes and student demonstrations. Since achieving independence in 1960, Nigeria has faced a number of incidents reflecting domestic discontent; in many instances the incidents were initiated by the army or its leaders. Such dissension, of which the most serious outbreak was the Biafran civil war, has led to twenty-two years of military rule; democratic government under the First Republic and the Second Republic was limited to ten years. Sources of military dissatisfaction have arisen not only from the personal ambitions of various military leaders but also from general dismay at the corruption, bribery, favoritism, and inefficiency prevalent in the government. Many Nigerians initially saw the army as the most effective body to control the country, but with the understanding that military rule was an interim measure and that plans must go forward for the transition to democratic government. In support of this view, a number of organized interest groups, such as professional associations, trade unions, student associations, women's organizations, and the media have exerted pressures in favor of democratic processes.

The 1989 constitution that Nigeria adopted as the basis for its transition to democratic government was modeled on the United States federal system. It provided for a president; two legislative houses, one based on population and the other on states; and an independent judiciary. A timetable was established for a series of elections at the local government area, state, and national levels. At first, officeholders in any previous government were barred from holding office in an attempt to eliminate corruption and undue political influence; in mid-December 1991 the ban was lifted, making only Babangida ineligible.

In 1989 Babangida also rejected the applications of all political entities to be recognized as political parties and instead in October 1989 created two parties: the Republican National Convention, "a little to the right of center," and the Social Democratic Party, "a little to the left of center." This action, which generated considerable controversy, was designed to create parties that would cross ethnic, religious, regional, and socioeconomic lines. Results of the various elections held in 1991 appeared to indicate that previously cohesive blocs were indeed being eroded. On August 27, 1991, the number of states was increased from twenty-one to thirty (see

fig. 1). Irregularities in the gubernatorial primaries in October 1991 in nine states caused the election results to be canceled in November and new elections to be rescheduled for early December, with the final state gubernatorial and state assembly elections occurring in mid-December. Although by Nigerian standards the elections went relatively smoothly, there was some criticism of the system of open balloting by which voters stood behind a photograph of their chosen candidate and were counted.

Among the difficulties involved in encouraging the democratic process have been ethnic and religious tensions arising among the multitudinous groups in the country. Outbreaks of violence caused by religious tensions resulting in losses of life have occurred in the past and recurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Most recently, in 1991 and 1992 they took place in Bauchi, Benue, Kaduna, Kano, Taraba, and other states. Desire for ethnic self-assertion and for the power and financial wherewithal resulting from statehood have largely constituted the basis for the creation of new states. Nigeria has moved from three regions at independence to four regions in 1963, twelve states in 1967, nineteen states in 1976, twenty-one states in 1987, and thirty states in August 1991. Government leaders including Babangida have endeavored, however, to diversify ethnic representation in a state so as to prevent the dominance of a single group. The move of the federal capital from Lagos to Abuja in December 1991 resulted not only from the tremendous over-crowding and pressure on transportation and other infrastructure facilities in Lagos but also from the desire to locate the capital in a central area that lacked association with a particular ethnic group. Some issues continued to be controversial, such as the impact the move to Abuja would have on Lagos. Moreover, the relationship of states to the federal government, with particular reference to the division of revenues among them, had as of early 1992 not been resolved to general satisfaction, nor had the highly controversial matter of the establishment of Muslim sharia courts of appeal in southern states.

Despite these domestic difficulties, Nigeria has continued to play a prominent role not only in West Africa but also in the world community. Nigeria was a prime organizer of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and of the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) that stemmed from it. ECOMOG provided a peacekeeping force for Liberia to which Nigeria contributed 900 personnel in August 1990 as well as leadership. To reduce the financial burden on Nigeria of participation in African peacekeeping forces, Babangida, at the 27th annual meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), held in Abuja

in June 1991, again raised the matter of a volunteer pan-African defense force, suggesting that such a force be organized on a regional basis.

In 1991-92 Babangida served as president of the OAU, thereby enhancing his mediator role. During this period, he met with the prime ministers of Chad and Niger and the president of Cameroon concerning border problems between Nigeria and these countries. A meeting of the four states in July 1990 had failed to resolve the Lake Chad boundary question, and in the summer of 1991 Cameroon had occupied nine Nigerian border villages or islands. Because it had a higher standard of living than its neighbors, Nigeria was also facing an influx of workers from surrounding countries. In November 1991, in an attempt to deal with the problem, Nigeria announced that it planned to create a frontier force to control illegal immigration. Nigeria's major role in the African continent was particularly highlighted by the visit of South African president Frederick W. de Klerk to Nigeria in early April 1992. The visit laid a foundation for possible future recognition of a transitional South African government by the OAU and other African states.

Nigeria has sought to play a responsible role in OPEC as well as in various United Nations bodies. Nigeria's position toward the Arab-Israeli dispute has been influenced by its domestic religious divisions. Babangida reinstated Nigeria's diplomatic relations with Israel in August 1991, and shortly thereafter invited Palestine Liberation Organization head Yasir Arafat to visit, greeting him with a twenty-one-gun salute reserved for heads of state. The same month Babangida suspended Nigeria's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. He had initiated membership in 1986 without any prior consultation, a move that had created a furore among Nigerian Christians. Because of its position as a former British colony, its membership in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and its position as a world oil producer, Nigeria's national interests have led it to align itself primarily with the West, including the European Economic Community.

Nigeria's role as an African regional leader, peacekeeper, and mediator has emerged at the same time that the country's army was being drastically reduced from approximately 250,000 personnel during the civil war to about 80,000 in 1991. Additional cuts were projected in order to bring the force to approximately 60,000. This process, together with a large-scale restructuring of the armed forces beginning in 1990 and still underway in early 1992, occurred in preparation for the transition to civilian government under the Third Republic.

The size of the armed forces reflected not only Nigeria's expanse but also the domestic instability the country had experienced since achieving independence in 1960. In the period between 1966 and 1985, Nigeria underwent no less than six coups d'état, in addition to several attempted coups. (A serious recent failed coup was that led by Major Gideon Ockar, a middle belt Christian, in April 1991. He advocated the "excising" from Nigeria of the five northern Muslim states—the coup attempt occurred prior to the creation of Nigeria's nine additional states—on the grounds that the true Nigeria was the Christian southern part of the country.)

Economic and social conditions worsened in the 1980s, increasing the discontent resulting from ethnic, sectional, and religious cleavages. To these forces for instability were added such factors as the potential for foreign subversion, caused in part by the large number of illegal workers from other African states; the fluctuation of oil prices and particularly the impact of decreasing oil income on the economy; the pressures of the rising foreign debt; and the growing Islamism, or Islamic activism (sometimes seen as fundamentalism), as well as increasing Christian fundamentalism.

Public disenchantment with the military in the 1980s and 1990s caused increasing demands for democracy, the elimination of military tribunals, and an end to Decree Number 2, passed during the Buhari regime. In 1992 this decree still permitted the jailing of individuals for up to six weeks without charge and set limits on freedom of speech and the press. Pressure groups, such as labor unions, academic, and student groups, and especially the media, agitated for reforms and a greater role in government decision making, particularly in the economic field. Such activity led the government to jail various individuals on a number of occasions. Another public concern was the rising crime rate, especially in urban areas, and the marked increase in drug-related crime and international narcotics trafficking. Numerous jail sentences resulted, leading to overcrowding and causing periodic amnesties to empty penal facilities.

Despite Nigeria's recent history of military domination of politics, in April 1992 Babangida appeared committed to turning over power to a new civilian government in January 1993. Part of Babangida's transition process entailed the demilitarization of the government. Demilitarization was accomplished in part in September 1990 by retiring from military service all cabinet ministers except for Babangida and the minister of defense. The officers continued to serve in a civilian capacity. The post of chief of the General Staff was likewise eliminated; the incumbent, Vice Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, who had also been retired from the military, was named vice president. In addition, numerous state military governors were

retired and replaced by lower-ranking officers; in each state, a civilian deputy governor served under the military governor in order to become familiar with the duties entailed. In December 1991, the newly elected civilian governors took office.

Serious questions remained, however, as to whether or not Babangida's goals for the professionalization of the armed forces and the reeducation of the military concerning their subordinate role in a forthcoming civilian government were attainable. Concurrently, Babangida stressed educating the citizenry about their responsibilities for active, knowledgeable participation in government. The question was also raised as to whether or not democracy could be achieved by a military government that established rules for the transition but that simultaneously imposed strict limits on the democratic process and sought to silence critics both of the domestic political scene and of the government's economic policies, particularly the SAP. The House of Representatives elections and the Senate elections (which will return two senators from each state and one from Abuja to the newly structured sixty-one-member Senate) scheduled for November 1992 and the presidential elections scheduled for December 1992 would be the final test in the transition to the Third Republic slated to occur in January 1993.

April 15, 1992

Helen Chapin Metz

Chapter 1. Historical Setting



Nok terra-cotta head dating from the first millennium B.C.

LIKE SO MANY OTHER MODERN AFRICAN states, Nigeria is the creation of European imperialism. Its very name—after the great Niger River, the country's dominating physical feature—was suggested in the 1890s by British journalist Flora Shaw, who later became the wife of colonial governor Frederick Lugard. The modern history of Nigeria—as a political state encompassing 250 to 400 ethnic groups of widely varied cultures and modes of political organization—dates from the completion of the British conquest in 1903 and the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria into the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria in 1914. The history of the Nigerian people extends backward in time for some three millennia. Archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and written documentation establish the existence of dynamic societies and well-developed political systems whose history had an important influence on colonial rule and has continued to shape independent Nigeria. Nigerian history is fragmented in the sense that it evolved from a variety of traditions, but many of the most outstanding features of modern society reflect the strong influence of the three regionally dominant ethnic groups—the Hausa in the north, the Yoruba in the west, and the Igbo in the east.

There are several dominant themes in Nigerian history that are essential in understanding contemporary Nigerian politics and society. First, the spread of Islam, predominantly in the north but later in southwestern Nigeria as well, began a millennium ago. The creation of the Sokoto Caliphate in the jihad (holy war) of 1804–8 brought most of the northern region and adjacent parts of Niger and Cameroon under a single Islamic government. The great extension of Islam within the area of present-day Nigeria dates from the nineteenth century and the consolidation of the caliphate. This history helps account for the dichotomy between north and south and for the divisions within the north that have been so strong during the colonial and postcolonial eras.

Second, the slave trade, both across the Sahara Desert and the Atlantic Ocean, had a profound influence on virtually all parts of Nigeria. The transatlantic trade in particular accounted for the forced migration of perhaps 3.5 million people between the 1650s and the 1860s, while a steady stream of slaves flowed north across the Sahara for a millennium, ending at the beginning of the twentieth century. Within Nigeria, slavery was widespread, with social implications that are still evident today. The Sokoto Caliphate, for

Nigeria: A Country Study

example, had more slaves than any other modern country, except the United States in 1860. Slaves were also numerous among the Igbo, the Yoruba, and many other ethnic groups. Indeed, many ethnic distinctions, especially in the middle belt—the area between the north and south—were reinforced because of slave raiding and defensive measures that were adopted for protection against enslavement. Conversion to Islam and the spread of Christianity were intricately associated with issues relating to slavery and with efforts to promote political and cultural autonomy.

Third, the colonial era was relatively brief, lasting only six decades or so, depending upon the part of Nigeria, but it unleashed such rapid change that the full impact was still felt in the contemporary period. On the one hand, the expansion of agricultural products as the principal export earner and the corresponding development of infrastructure resulted in severely distorted economic growth that has subsequently collapsed. On the other hand, social dislocation associated with the decline of slavery and the internal movement of population between regions and to the cities necessitated the reassessment of ethnic loyalties, which in turn have been reflected in politics and religion.

In the three decades since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, a period half as long as the colonial era, Nigeria has experienced a number of successful and attempted military coups d'état and a brutal civil war, let corrupt civilian governments siphon off the profits from the oil boom of the 1970s, and faced economic collapse in the 1980s. As the most populous country in Africa, and one of the ten most populous countries in the world, Nigeria has a history that is important in its own right but that also bears scrutiny if for no other reason than to understand how and why this nation became as it is today.

Early History

All evidence suggests the early settlement of Nigeria millennia before the spread of agriculture 3,000 years ago, and one day it probably will be possible to reconstruct the high points of this early history. Although archaeological research has made great strides in identifying some major developments, comparatively little archaeological work has been undertaken. Consequently, it is possible only to outline some of the early history of Nigeria.

The earliest known example of a fossil skeleton with negroid features, perhaps 10,000 years old, was found at Iwo Eleru in western Nigeria and attests to the antiquity of habitation in the region. Stone tools, indicating human settlement, date back another 2,000 years. Microlithic and ceramic industries were developed by pastoralists

in the savanna from at least the fourth millennium B.C. and were continued by grain farmers in the stable agricultural communities that subsequently evolved there. To the south, hunting and gathering gradually gave way to subsistence farming on the fringe of the forest in the first millennium B.C. The cultivation of staple foods, such as yams, later was introduced into forest clearings. The stone ax heads, imported in great quantities from the north and used in opening the forest for agricultural development, were venerated by the Yoruba descendants of Neolithic pioneers as "thunderbolts" hurled to earth by the gods.

The primitive iron-smelting furnaces at Taruga dating from the fourth century B.C. provide the oldest evidence of metalworking in West Africa, while excavations for the Kainji Dam revealed the presence of ironworking there by the second century B.C. The transition from Neolithic times to the Iron Age apparently was achieved without intermediate bronze production. Some scholars speculate that knowledge of the smelting process may have been transmitted from the Mediterranean by Berbers who ventured south. Others suggest that the technology moved westward across the Sudan (see Glossary) from the Nile Valley, although the arrival of the Iron Age in the Niger River valley and the forest region appears to have predated the introduction of metallurgy in the upper savanna by more than 800 years. The usefulness of iron tools was demonstrated in the south for bush cutting and in the north for well digging and the construction of irrigation works, contributing in both regions to the expansion of agriculture.

The earliest culture in Nigeria to be identified by its distinctive artifacts is that of the Nok people. These skilled artisans and iron-workers were associated with Taruga and flourished between the fourth century B.C. and the second century A.D. in a large area above the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers on the Jos Plateau. The Nok achieved a level of material development not repeated in the region for nearly 1,000 years. Their terra-cotta sculpture, abstractly stylized and geometric in conception, is admired both for its artistic expression and for the high technical standards of its production.

Information is lacking from the "silent millennium" (first millennium A.D.) that followed the Nok ascendancy, apart from evidence of iron smelting on Dala Hill in Kano from about 600 to 700 A.D. It is assumed, however, that trade linking the Niger region with North Africa played a key role in the continuing development of the area. Certainly by the beginning of the second millennium A.D., there was an active trade along a north-south axis from North Africa through the Sahara to the forest, with the savanna people acting

Nigeria: A Country Study

as intermediaries in exchanges that involved slaves, ivory, salt, glass beads, coral, cloth, weapons, brass rods, and other goods.

Early States Before 1500

Long before 1500, much of present-day Nigeria was divided into states, which can be identified with the modern ethnic groups that trace their history to the origins of these states. These early states included the Yoruba kingdoms, the Edo kingdom of Benin, the Hausa cities, and Nupe. In addition, numerous small states to the west and south of Lake Chad were absorbed or displaced in the course of the expansion of Kanem, which was centered to the north-east of Lake Chad. Bornu, initially the western province of Kanem, became independent in the late fourteenth century. Other states probably existed as well, but oral traditions and the absence of archaeological data do not permit an accurate dating of their antiquity.

Yoruba Kingdoms and Benin

As far as historical memory extends, the Yoruba have been the dominant group on the west bank of the Niger. Of mixed origin, they were the product of the assimilation of periodic waves of migrants who evolved a common language and culture. The Yoruba were organized in patrilineal descent groups that occupied village communities and subsisted on agriculture, but from about the eleventh century A.D., adjacent village compounds, called *ile*, began to coalesce into a number of territorial city-states in which loyalties to the clan became subordinate to allegiance to a dynastic chieftain. This transition produced an urbanized political and social environment that was accompanied by a high level of artistic achievement, particularly in terra-cotta and ivory sculpture and in the sophisticated metal casting produced at Ife. The brass and bronze used by Yoruba artisans was a significant item of trade, made from copper, tin, and zinc imported either from North Africa or from mines in the Sahara and northern Nigeria.

The Yoruba placated a pantheon headed by an impersonal deity, Olorun, and included lesser deities, some of them formerly mortal, who performed a variety of cosmic and practical tasks. One of them, Oduduwa, was regarded as the creator of the earth and the ancestor of the Yoruba kings. According to a creation myth, Oduduwa founded the city of Ife and dispatched his sons to establish other cities, where they reigned as priest-kings and presided over cult rituals. Formal traditions of this sort have been interpreted as poetic illustrations of the historical process by which Ife's ruling dynasty extended its authority over Yorubaland. The stories

were attempts to legitimize the Yoruba monarchies—after they had supplanted clan loyalties—by claiming divine origin.

Ife was the center of as many as 400 religious cults whose traditions were manipulated to political advantage by the *oni* (king) in the days of the kingdom's greatness. Ife also lay at the center of a trading network with the north. The *oni* supported his court with tolls levied on trade, tribute exacted from dependencies, and tithes due him as a religious leader. One of Ife's greatest legacies to modern Nigeria is its beautiful sculpture associated with this tradition.

The *oni* was chosen on a rotating basis from one of several branches of the ruling dynasty, which was composed of a clan with several thousand members. Once elected, he went into seclusion in the palace compound and was not seen again by his people. Below the *oni* in the state hierarchy were palace officials, town chiefs, and the rulers of outlying dependencies. The palace officials were spokesmen for the *oni* and the rulers of dependencies who had their own subordinate officials. All offices, even that of the *oni*, were elective and depended on broad support within the community. Each official was chosen from among the eligible clan members who had hereditary right to the office. Members of the royal dynasty often were assigned to govern dependencies, while the sons of palace officials assumed lesser roles as functionaries, bodyguards to the *oni*, and judges.

During the fifteenth century, Oyo and Benin surpassed Ife as political and economic powers, although Ife preserved its status as a religious center even after its decline. Respect for the priestly functions of the *oni* of Ife and recognition of the common tradition of origin were crucial factors in the evolution of Yoruba ethnicity. The *oni* of Ife was recognized as the senior political official not only among the Yoruba but also at Benin, and he invested Benin's rulers with the symbols of temporal power.

The Ife model of government was adapted at Oyo, where a member of its ruling dynasty consolidated several smaller city-states under his control. A council of state, the *Oyo Mesi*, eventually assumed responsibility for naming the *alafin* (king) from candidates proposed from the ruling dynasty and acted as a check on his authority. Oyo developed as a constitutional monarchy; actual government was in the hands of the *basorun* (prime minister), who presided over the *Oyo Mesi*. The city was situated 170 kilometers north of Ife and about 100 kilometers north of present-day Oyo. Unlike the forest-bound Yoruba kingdoms, Oyo was in the savanna and drew its military strength from its cavalry forces, which established hegemony over the adjacent Nupe and the Borgu kingdoms and thereby developed trade routes farther to the north (see fig. 2).

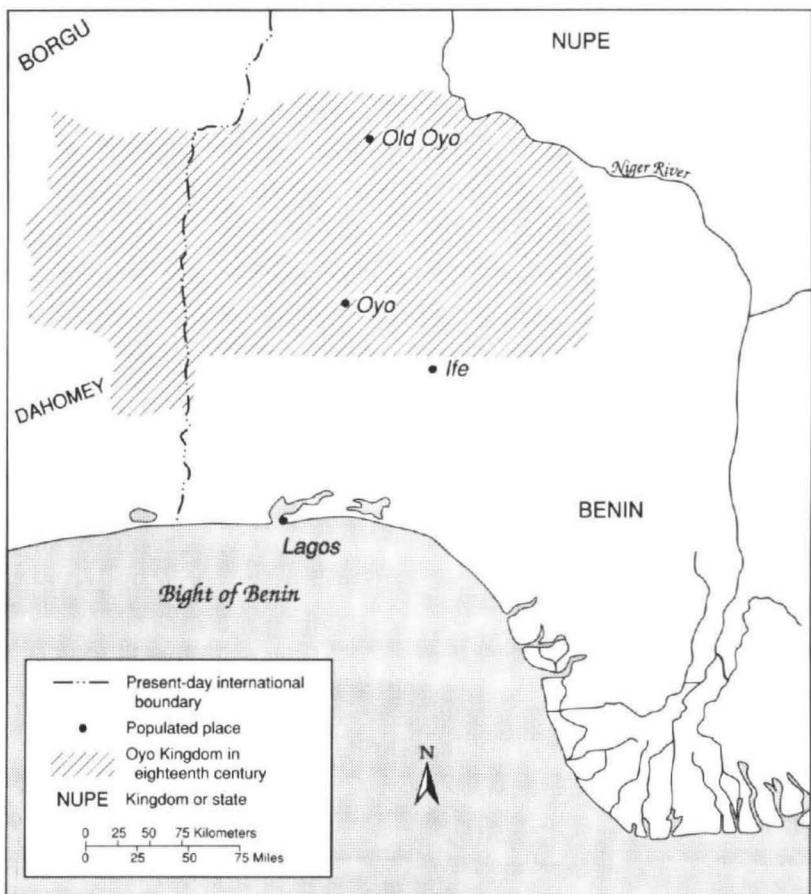


Figure 2. Yorubaland, Eleventh to Nineteenth Centuries

Benin was already a well-established agricultural community in the Edo-speaking area, east of Ife, when it became a dependency of Ife at the beginning of the fourteenth century. By the fifteenth century, it took an independent course and became a major trading power in its own right, blocking Ife's access to the coastal ports as Oyo had cut off the mother city from the savanna. Political power and religious authority resided in the *oba* (king), who according to tradition was descended from the Ife dynasty. The *oba* was advised by a council of six hereditary chiefs, who also nominated his successor. Benin, which may have housed 100,000 inhabitants at its height, spread over twenty-five square kilometers that were enclosed by three concentric rings of earthworks. Responsibility for

administering the urban complex lay with sixty trade guilds, each with its own quarter, whose membership cut across clan affiliations and owed its loyalty directly to the *oba*. At his wooden, steepled palace, the *oba* presided over a large court richly adorned with brass, bronze, and ivory objects. Like Ife and the other Yoruba states, Benin, too, is famous for its sculpture.

Unlike the Yoruba kingdoms, however, Benin developed a centralized regime to oversee the administration of its expanding territories. By the late fifteenth century, Benin was in contact with Portugal (see European Slave Trade in West Africa, this ch.). At its apogee in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Benin even encompassed parts of southeastern Yorubaland and the small Igbo area on the western bank of the Niger. Dependencies were governed by members of the royal family, who were assigned several towns or villages scattered throughout the realm rather than a block of territory that could be used as a base for revolt against the *oba*.

As is evident from this brief survey, Yoruba and Benin history were interconnected. In fact, areas to the west of Nigeria, in the modern Republic of Benin, were also closely associated with this history, both in the period before 1500 and afterward.

The Igbo: A Stateless Society?

Most scholars have argued that Igbo society was “stateless” and that the Igbo region did not evolve centralized political institutions before the colonial period. According to this theory, the relatively egalitarian Igbo lived in small, self-contained groups of villages organized according to a lineage system that did not allow social stratification. An individual’s fitness to govern was determined by his wisdom and his wisdom by his age and experience. Subsistence farming was the dominant economic activity, and yams were the staple crop. Land, obtained through inheritance, was the measure of wealth. Handicrafts and commerce were well developed, and a relatively dense population characterized the region.

Despite the absence of chiefs, some Igbo relied on an order of priests, chosen from outsiders on the northern fringe of Igboland, to ensure impartiality in settling disputes between communities. Igbo gods, like those of the Yoruba, were numerous, but their relationship to one another and to human beings was essentially egalitarian, thereby reflecting Igbo society as a whole. A number of oracles and local cults attracted devotees, while the central deity, the earth mother and fertility figure, Ala, was venerated at shrines throughout Igboland.

The weakness of this theory of statelessness rests on the paucity of historical evidence of precolonial Igbo society. There are huge lacunae between the archaeological finds of Igbo Ukwu, which reveal a rich material culture in the heart of the Igbo region in the eighth century A.D., and the oral traditions of the twentieth century. In particular, the importance of the Nri Kingdom, which appears to have flourished before the seventeenth century, often is overlooked. The Nri Kingdom was relatively small in geographical extent, but it is remembered as the cradle of Igbo culture. Finally, Benin exercised considerable influence on the western Igbo, who adopted many of the political structures familiar to the Yoruba-Benin region.

The Northern Kingdoms of the Savanna

Trade was the key to the emergence of organized communities in the savanna portions of Nigeria. Prehistoric inhabitants, adjusting to the encroaching desert, were widely scattered by the third millennium B.C., when the desiccation of the Sahara began. Trans-Saharan trade routes linked the western Sudan with the Mediterranean from the time of Carthage and with the upper Nile from a much earlier date, also establishing an avenue of communication and cultural influence that remained open until the end of the nineteenth century. By these same routes, Islam made its way south into West Africa after the ninth century A.D.

By then a string of dynastic states, including the earliest Hausa states, stretched across the western and central Sudan. The most powerful of these states were Ghana, Gao, and Kanem, which were not located within the boundaries of present-day Nigeria but which nonetheless had an indirect influence on the history of the Nigerian savanna. Ghana declined in the eleventh century but was succeeded by Mali, which consolidated much of the western Sudan under its imperial rule in the thirteenth century. Songhai emerged as an empire out of the small state of Gao in the fifteenth century. For a century, Songhai paid homage to Mali, but by the last decade of the fifteenth century it attained its independence and brought much of the Malian domains under its imperial sway. Although these western empires had little political influence on the savanna states of Nigeria before 1500, they had a strong cultural and economic impact that became more pronounced in the sixteenth century, especially because these states became associated with the spread of Islam and trade. In the sixteenth century, moreover, much of northern Nigeria paid homage to Songhai in the west or to Borno, a rival empire in the east (see fig. 3).

Borno's history is closely associated with Kanem, which had achieved imperial status in the Lake Chad basin by the thirteenth century. Kanem expanded westward to include the area that became Borno. Its dynasty, the Sayfawa, was descended from pastoralists who had settled in the Lake Chad region in the seventh century. The *mai* (king) of Kanem ruled in conjunction with a council of peers as a constitutional monarch. In the eleventh century, the *mai* and his court accepted Islam, as the western empires also had done. Islam was used to reinforce the political and social structures of the state, although many established customs were maintained. Women, for example, continued to exercise considerable political influence.

The *mai* employed his mounted bodyguard, composed of *abid* (slave-soldiers), and an inchoate army of nobles to extend Kanem's authority into Borno, on the western shore of Lake Chad. By tradition the territory was conferred on the heir to the throne to govern during his apprenticeship. In the fourteenth century, however, dynastic conflict forced the then-ruling group and its followers to relocate in Borno, where as a result the Kanuri emerged as an ethnic group in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The civil war that disrupted Kanem in the second half of the fourteenth century resulted in the independence of Borno.

Borno's prosperity depended on its stake in the trans-Sudanic slave trade and the desert trade in salt and livestock. The need to protect its commercial interests compelled Borno to intervene in Kanem, which continued to be a theater of war throughout the fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries. Despite its relative political weakness in this period, Borno's court and mosques under the patronage of a line of scholarly kings earned fame as centers of Islamic culture and learning.

By the eleventh century, some of the Hausa states—such as those at Kano, Katsina, and Gobir—had developed into walled towns that engaged in trade and serviced caravans as well as manufactured cloth and leather goods. Millet, sorghum, sugarcane, and cotton were produced in the surrounding countryside, which also provided grazing land for cattle. Until the fifteenth century, the small Hausa states were on the periphery of the major empires of the era.

According to tradition, the Hausa rulers descended from a "founding hero" named Bayinjida, supposedly of Middle Eastern origin, who became *sarki* (king) of Daura after subduing a snake and marrying the queen of Daura. Their children founded the other Hausa towns, which traditionally are referred to as the Hausa *bakwai* (Hausa seven). Wedged in among the stronger Sudanic kingdoms,

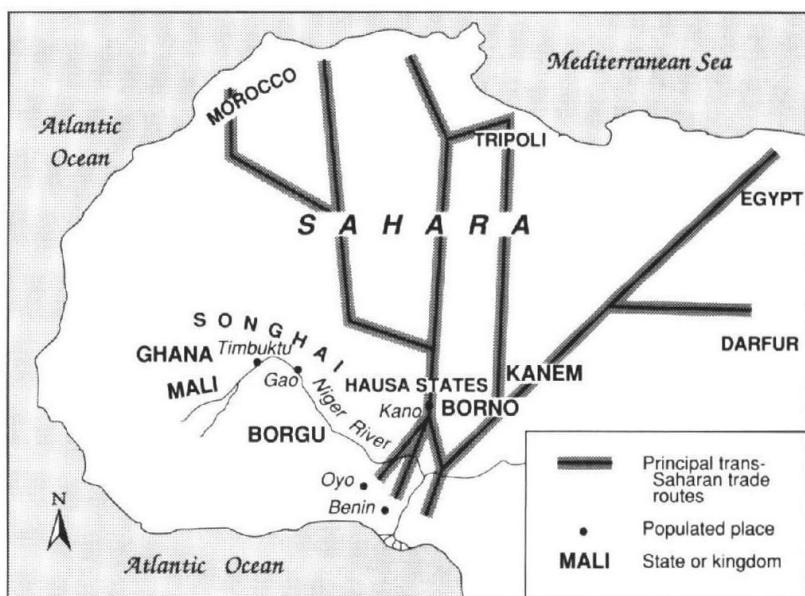


Figure 3. Principal Trans-Saharan Trade Routes, Ninth to Seventeenth Centuries

each of the Hausa states acquired special military, economic, or religious functions. No one state dominated the others, but at various times different states assumed a leading role. They were under constant pressure from Songhai to the west and Kanem-Borno to the east, to which they paid tribute. Armed conflict usually was motivated by economic concerns, as coalitions of Hausa states mounted wars against the Jukun and Nupe in the middle belt to collect slaves, or against one another for control of important trade routes.

Commerce was in the hands of commoners. Within the cities, trades were organized through guilds, each of which was self-regulating and collected taxes from its members to be transmitted to the *sarki* as a pledge of loyalty. In return, the king guaranteed the security of the guild's trade. The surrounding countryside produced grain for local consumption and cotton and hides for processing.

Islam was introduced to Hausaland along the caravan routes. The famous Kano Chronicle records the conversion of Kano's ruling dynasty by clerics from Mali, demonstrating that the imperial influence of Mali extended far to the east. Acceptance of Islam was gradual and was often nominal in the countryside, where folk

religion continued to exert a strong influence. Non-Islamic practices also were retained in the court ceremonies of the Hausa kings. Nonetheless, Kano and Katsina, with their famous mosques and schools, came to participate fully in the cultural and intellectual life of the Islamic world.

Fulbe pastoralists, known in Nigeria as Fulani, began to enter the Hausa country in the thirteenth century, and by the fifteenth century they were tending cattle, sheep, and goats in Borno as well. The Fulani came from the Senegal River valley, where their ancestors had developed a method of livestock management and specialization based on transhumance. The movement of cattle along north-south corridors in pursuit of grazing and water followed the climatic pattern of the rainy and dry seasons. Gradually, the pastoralists moved eastward, first into the centers of the Mali and Songhai empires and eventually into Hausaland and Borno. Some Fulbe converted to Islam in the Senegal region as early as the eleventh century, and one group of Muslim Fulani settled in the cities and mingled freely with the Hausa, from whom they became racially indistinguishable. There, they constituted a devoutly religious, educated elite who made themselves indispensable to the Hausa kings as government advisers, Islamic judges, and teachers. Other Fulani, the lighter-skinned pastoral nomads, remained aloof from the Hausa and in some measure from Islam as well, herding cattle outside the cities and seeking pastures for their herds.

The Savanna States, 1500–1800

The sixteenth century marked a high point in the political history of northern Nigeria. During this period, the Songhai Empire reached its greatest limits, stretching from the Senegal and Gambia rivers in the far west and incorporating part of Hausaland in the east. At the same time, the Sayfawa Dynasty of Borno asserted itself, conquering Kanem and extending its control westward to Hausa cities that were not under Songhai imperial rule. For almost a century, much of northern Nigeria was part of one or the other of these empires, and after the 1590s Borno dominated the region for 200 years.

Songhai's sway over western Hausaland included the subordination of Kebbi, whose *kanta* (king) controlled the territory along the Sokoto River. Katsina and Gobir also paid tribute to Songhai, while Songhai merchants dominated the trade of the Hausa towns. It was at this time that the overland trade in kola nuts from the Akan forests of modern Ghana was initiated. Largely because of Songhai's influence, there was a remarkable blossoming of Islamic learning and culture.

The influence of Songhai collapsed abruptly in 1591, when an army from Morocco crossed the Sahara and conquered the capital city of Gao and the commercial center of Timbuktu. Morocco was not able to control the whole empire, and the various provinces, including the Hausa states, became independent. The collapse undermined Songhai's commercial and religious hegemony over the Hausa states and abruptly altered the course of history in the region.

Borno reached its apogee under *mai* Idris Aloma (ca. 1569–1600), during whose reign Kanem was reconquered. As a result of his campaigns, several Hausa cities, including Kano and Katsina, became tributaries. The destruction of Songhai left Borno uncontested as an imperial force, and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Borno continued to dominate the political history of northern Nigeria. Now Borno became the center of Islamic learning and trade. Its capital at Birni Gazargamu, on the Komadugu Yobe River that flows eastward into Lake Chad, was well situated in the midst of a prosperous agricultural district. Textile production was a mainstay of its economy. Borno also controlled extensive salt deposits, which supplied its most important export to the west and south. These reserves were located at Bilma and Fachi in the Sahara, in the districts of Mangari and Muniyo adjacent to Birni Gazargamu, and on the northeastern shores of Lake Chad.

Despite Borno's hegemony, the Hausa states wrestled for ascendancy among themselves for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gobir, Katsina, Zamfara, Kano, Kebbi, and Zaria formed various alliances, but only Zamfara ceased to exist as an autonomous state, falling to Gobir in the eighteenth century. Borno collected tribute from Kano and Katsina, and its merchants dominated the trade routes that passed through Hausaland. Gradually, however, Borno's position began to weaken. Its inability to check the political rivalries of the competing Hausa cities was one example of this decline. Another factor was the military threat of the Tuareg, whose warriors, centered at Agades in the center of present-day Nigeria, penetrated the northern districts of Borno. They even diverted the salt trade of Bilma and Fachi from Birni Gazargamu. Tuareg military superiority depended upon camels, which also were used to transport salt and dates to the savanna.

The major cause of Borno's decline was a severe drought and famine that struck the whole Sahel (see Glossary) and savanna from Senegal to Ethiopia in the middle of the eighteenth century. There had been periodic droughts before; two serious droughts, one of seven years' duration, hit Borno in the seventeenth century. But the great drought of the 1740s and 1750s probably caused the most severe famine that the Sahel has known over the past several

hundred years, including that of the 1970s. As a consequence of the mid-eighteenth century drought, Borno lost control of much of its northern territories to the Tuareg, whose mobility allowed them the flexibility to deal with famine conditions through war and plunder. Borno regained some of its former might in the succeeding decades, but another drought occurred in the 1790s, again weakening the state.

The ecological and political instability of the eighteenth century provided the background for the momentous events of the first decade of the nineteenth century, when the jihad of Usman dan Fodio revolutionized the whole of northern Nigeria. The military rivalries of the Hausa states and the political weakness of Borno put a severe strain on the economic resources of the region, just at a time when drought and famine undermined the prosperity of farmers and herders. Many Fulani moved into Hausaland and Borno at this time to escape areas where drought conditions were even worse, and their arrival increased tensions because they had no loyalty to the political authorities, who saw them as a source of increased taxation. By the end of the eighteenth century, some Muslim clerics began to articulate the grievances of the common people. Political efforts to eliminate or control these clerics only heightened the tensions. The stage was set for jihad (see Usman dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate, this ch.).

European Slave Trade in West Africa

A desire for glory and profit from trade, missionary zeal, and considerations of global strategy brought Portuguese navigators to the West African coast in the late fifteenth century. Locked in a seemingly interminable crusading war with Muslim Morocco, the Portuguese conceived of a plan whereby maritime expansion might bypass the Islamic world and open new markets that would result in commercial gain. They hoped to tap the fabled Saharan gold trade, establish a sea route around Africa to India, and link up with the mysterious Christian kingdom of Prester John. The Portuguese achieved all these goals. They obtained access to the gold trade by trading along the Gulf of Guinea, establishing a base at Elmina ("the mine") on the Gold Coast (Ghana), and they made their way into the Indian Ocean, militarily securing a monopoly of the spice trade. Even the Christian kingdom turned out to be real—it was Ethiopia; Portuguese adventures there, however, turned sour very quickly. Portugal's lasting legacy for Nigeria, in the end, was its initiation of the transatlantic slave trade.

By 1471 Portuguese ships had reconnoitered the West African coast south as far as the Niger Delta, although they did not know

that it was the delta, and in 1481 emissaries from the king of Portugal visited the court of the *oba* of Benin. For a time, Portugal and Benin maintained close relations. Portuguese soldiers aided Benin in its wars; Portuguese even came to be spoken at the *oba*'s court. Gwatto, the port of Benin, became the depot to handle the peppers, ivory, and increasing numbers of slaves offered by the *oba* in exchange for coral beads; textile imports from India; European-manufactured articles, including tools and weapons; and *manillas* (brass and bronze bracelets that were used as currency and also were melted down for objets d'art). Portugal also may have been the first European power to import cowrie shells, which were the currency of the far interior.

Benin profited from its close ties with the Portuguese and exploited the firearms bought from them to tighten its hold on the lower Niger area. Two factors checked the spread of Portuguese influence and the continued expansion of Benin, however. First, Portugal stopped buying pepper because of the availability of other spices in the Indian Ocean region. Second, Benin placed an embargo on the export of slaves, thereby isolating itself from the growth of what was to become the major export from the Nigerian coast for 300 years. Benin continued to capture slaves and to employ them in its domestic economy, but the Edo state remained unique among Nigerian polities in refusing to participate in the transatlantic trade. In the long run, Benin remained relatively isolated from the major changes along the Nigerian coast.

The Portuguese initially bought slaves for resale on the Gold Coast, where slaves were traded for gold. For this reason, the southwestern coast of Nigeria and neighboring parts of the present-day Republic of Benin (not to be confused with the kingdom of Benin) became known as the "slave coast." When the African coast began to supply slaves to the Americas in the last third of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese continued to look to the Bight of Benin as one of its sources of supply. By then they were concentrating activities on the Angolan coast, which supplied roughly 40 percent of all slaves shipped to the Americas throughout the duration of the transatlantic trade, but they always maintained a presence on the Nigerian coast.

The Portuguese monopoly on West African trade was broken at the end of the sixteenth century, when Portugal's influence was challenged by the rising naval power of the Netherlands. The Dutch took over Portuguese trading stations on the coast that were the source of slaves for the Americas. French and English competition later undermined the Dutch position. Although slave ports from Lagos to Calabar would see the flags of many other European

maritime countries (including Denmark, Sweden, and Brandenburg) and the North American colonies, Britain became the dominant slaving power in the eighteenth century. Its ships handled two-fifths of the transatlantic traffic during the century. The Portuguese and French were responsible for another two-fifths.

Nigeria kept its important position in the slave trade throughout the great expansion of the transatlantic trade after the middle of the seventeenth century. Slightly more slaves came from the Nigerian coast than from Angola in the eighteenth century, whereas in the nineteenth century perhaps 30 percent of all slaves sent across the Atlantic came from Nigeria. Over the period of the whole trade, more than 3.5 million slaves were shipped from Nigeria to the Americas. Most of these slaves were Igbo and Yoruba, with significant concentrations of Hausa, Ibibio, and other ethnic groups. In the eighteenth century, two polities—Oyo and the Aro confederacy—were responsible for most of the slaves exported from Nigeria. The Aro confederacy continued to export slaves through the 1830s, but most slaves in the nineteenth century were a product of the Yoruba civil wars that followed the collapse of Oyo in the 1820s.

The expansion of Oyo after the middle of the sixteenth century was closely associated with the growth of slave exports across the Atlantic. Oyo's cavalry pushed southward along a natural break in the forests (known as the Benin Gap, that is, the opening in the forest where the savanna stretched to the Bight of Benin), and thereby gained access to the coastal ports.

Oyo experienced a series of power struggles and constitutional crises in the eighteenth century that directly related to its success as a major slave exporter. The powerful Oyo Mesi, the council of warlords that checked the king, forced a number of kings to commit suicide. In 1754 the head of the Oyo Mesi, *basorun* Gaha, seized power, retaining a series of kings as puppets. The rule of this military oligarchy was overcome in 1789, when King Abiodun successfully staged a coup and forced the suicide of Gaha. Abiodun and his successors maintained the supremacy of the monarchy until the second decade of the nineteenth century, primarily because of the reliance of the king on a cavalry force that was independent of the Oyo Mesi. This force was recruited largely from Muslim slaves, especially Hausa, from farther north.

The other major slave-exporting state was a loose confederation under the leadership of the Aro, an Igbo clan of mixed Igbo and Ibibio origins, whose home was on the escarpment between the central Igbo districts and the Cross River. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, the Aro built a complex network of alliances and treaties with many of the Igbo clans. They served as arbiters

in villages throughout Igboland, and their famous oracle at Arochukwu, located in a thickly wooded gorge, was widely regarded as a court of appeal for many kinds of disputes. By custom the Aro were sacrosanct and were allowed to travel anywhere with their goods without fear of attack. Alliances with certain Igbo clans who acted as mercenaries for the Aro guaranteed their safety. As oracle priests, they also received slaves in payment of fines or dedicated to the gods by their masters as scapegoats for their own transgressions. These slaves thereby became the property of the Aro priests, who were at liberty to sell them.

Besides their religious influence, the Aro established their ascendancy through a combination of commercial acumen and diplomatic skill. Their commercial empire was based on a set of twenty-four-day fairs and periodic markets that dotted the interior. Resident Aro dominated these markets and collected slaves for export. They had a virtual monopoly of the slave trade after the collapse of Oyo in the 1820s. Villages suspected of violating treaties with the Aro were subject to devastating raids that not only produced slaves for export but also maintained Aro influence. The Aro had treaties with the coastal ports—especially Calabar, Bonny, and Elem Kalabari—from which slaves were exported. The people of Calabar were Efik, a subsection of Ibibio, whereas Bonny and Elem Kalabari were Ijaw towns.

The Ijaw, who occupied the tidal area in proximity to the Igbo, had wrested a frugal living from the sale of dried fish and sea salt to the inland communities for centuries before the rise of the slave trade. Traditionally, they had lived in federated groups of villages with the head of the ranking village presiding over general assemblies attended by all the males. During the heyday of the slave trade in the eighteenth century, the major Ijaw villages grew into cities of 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants ruled by local strongmen allied with the Aro. Their economies were based on the facilities they offered to slave traders. They were entrepreneurial communities, receiving slaves from the Aro for resale to European agents. Personal wealth rather than status within a lineage group was the basis for political power and social status. Government typically was conducted by councils composed of leading merchants and headed by an *amanyanabo* (chief executive), an office that in time became hereditary.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the area that was to become Nigeria was far from a unified country. Furthermore, the orientation of the north and the south was entirely different. The savanna states of Hausaland and Borno had experienced a difficult century of political insecurity and ecological disaster but otherwise

continued in a centuries-long tradition of slow political and economic change that was similar to other parts of the savanna. The southern areas near the coast, by contrast, had been swept up in the transatlantic slave trade. Political and economic change had been rapid and dramatic. By 1800 Oyo governed much of southwestern Nigeria and neighboring parts of the modern Republic of Benin, whereas the Aro had consolidated southeastern Nigeria into a confederation that dominated that region. The Oyo and the Aro confederations were major trading partners of the slave traders from Europe and North America.

The Nineteenth Century: Revolution and Radical Adjustment

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, two unrelated developments that were to have a major influence on virtually all of the area that is now Nigeria ushered in a period of radical change. First, between 1804 and 1808, the Islamic holy war of Usman dan Fodio established the Sokoto Caliphate, which not only expanded to become the largest empire in Africa since the fall of Songhai but also had a profound influence on much of Muslim Africa to the west and to the east (see fig. 4). Second, in 1807 Britain declared the transatlantic slave trade to be illegal, an action that occurred at a time when Britain was responsible for shipping more slaves to the Americas than any other country. Although the transatlantic slave trade did not end until the 1860s, it was gradually replaced by other commodities, especially palm oil; the shift in trade had serious economic and political consequences in the interior, which led to increasing British intervention in the affairs of Yorubaland and the Niger Delta. The rise of the Sokoto Caliphate and the economic and political adjustment in the south strongly shaped the course of the colonial conquest at the end of the nineteenth century.

Usman dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate

By the late eighteenth century, many Muslim scholars and teachers had become disenchanted with the insecurity that characterized the Hausa states and Borno. Some clerics (*mallams*) continued to reside at the courts of the Hausa states and Borno, but others, who joined the Qadiriyyah brotherhood, began to think about a revolution that would overthrow existing authorities. Prominent among these radical *mallams* was Usman dan Fodio, who, with his brother and son, attracted a following among the clerical class. Many of his supporters were Fulani, and because of his ethnicity he was able to appeal to all Fulani, particularly the clan leaders and wealthy cattle owners whose clients and dependents provided

Nigeria: A Country Study

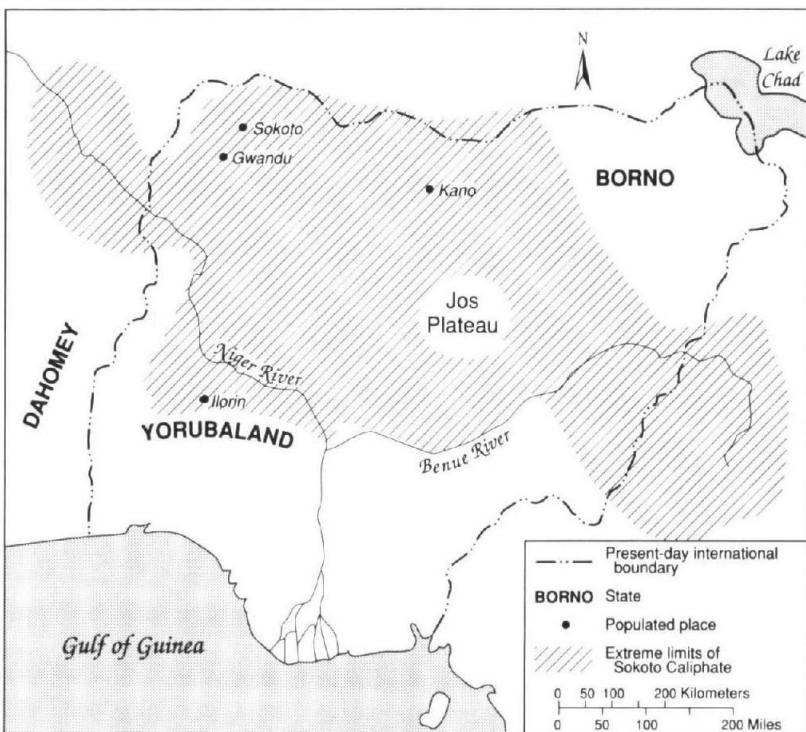


Figure 4. The Sokoto Caliphate, Mid-Nineteenth Century

most of the troops in the jihad that began in Gobir in 1804. Not all *mallams* were Fulani, however. The cleric whose actions actually started the jihad, Abd as Salam, was Hausa; Jibril, one of Usman dan Fodio's teachers and the first cleric to issue a call for jihad two decades earlier, was Tuareg. Nonetheless, by the time the Hausa states were overthrown in 1808, the prominent leaders were all Fulani.

Simultaneous uprisings confirmed the existence of a vast underground of Muslim revolutionaries throughout the Hausa states and Borno. By 1808 the Hausa states had been conquered, although the ruling dynasties retreated to the frontiers and built walled cities that remained independent. The more important of these independent cities included Abuja, where the ousted Zaria Dynasty fled; Argungu in the north, the new home of the Kebbi rulers; and Maradi in present-day Niger, the retreat of the Katsina Dynasty. Although the Borno *mai* was overthrown and Birni Gazargamu destroyed, Borno did not succumb. The reason, primarily, was that

another cleric, Al Kanemi, fashioned a strong resistance that eventually forced those Fulani in Borno to retreat west and south. In the end, Al Kanemi overthrew the centuries-old Sayfawa Dynasty of Borno and established his own lineage as the new ruling house.

The new state that arose during Usman dan Fodio's jihad came to be known as the Sokoto Caliphate, named after his capital at Sokoto, founded in 1809. The caliphate was a loose confederation of emirates that recognized the suzerainty of the commander of the faithful, the sultan. When Usman dan Fodio died in 1817, he was succeeded by his son, Muhammad Bello. A dispute between Bello and his uncle, Abdullahi, resulted in a nominal division of the caliphate into eastern and western divisions, although the supreme authority of Bello as caliph was upheld. The division was institutionalized through the creation of a twin capital at Gwandu, which was responsible for the western emirates as far as modern Burkina Faso—formerly Upper Volta—and initially as far west as Massina in modern Mali. As events turned out, the eastern emirates were more numerous and larger than the western ones, which reinforced the primacy of the caliph at Sokoto.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, there were thirty emirates and the capital district of Sokoto, which itself was a large and populous territory although not technically an emirate. All the important Hausa emirates, including Kano, the wealthiest and most populous, were directly under Sokoto. Adamawa, which was established by Fulani forced to evacuate Borno, was geographically the biggest, stretching far to the south and east of its capital at Yola into modern Cameroon. Ilorin, which became part of the caliphate in the 1830s, was initially the headquarters of the Oyo cavalry that had provided the backbone of the king's power. An attempted coup d'état by the general of the cavalry in 1817 backfired when the cavalry itself revolted and pledged its allegiance to the Sokoto Caliphate. The cavalry was largely composed of Muslim slaves from farther north, and they saw in the jihad a justification for rebellion. In the 1820s, Oyo had been torn asunder, and the defeated king and the warlords of the Oyo Mesi retreated south to form new cities, including Ibadan, where they carried on their resistance to the caliphate and fought among themselves as well.

Usman dan Fodio's jihad created the largest empire in Africa since the fall of Songhai in 1591. By the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Sokoto Caliphate was at its greatest extent, it stretched 1,500 kilometers from Dori in modern Burkina Faso to southern Adamawa in Cameroon and included Nupe lands, Ilorin in northern Yorubaland, and much of the Benue River valley. In addition, Usman dan Fodio's jihad provided the inspiration for

a series of related holy wars in other parts of the savanna and Sahel far beyond Nigeria's borders that led to the foundation of Islamic states in Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central African Republic, and Sudan. An analogy has been drawn between Usman dan Fodio's jihad and the French Revolution in terms of its widespread impact. Just as the French Revolution affected the course of European history in the nineteenth century, the Sokoto jihad affected the course of history throughout the savanna from Senegal to the Red Sea.

The Yoruba Wars

Oyo, the great exporter of slaves in the eighteenth century, collapsed in a civil war after 1817, and by the middle of the 1830s the whole of Yorubaland was swept up in these civil wars. New centers of power—Ibadan, Abeokuta, Owo, and Warri—contested control of the trade routes and sought access to fresh supplies of slaves, which were important to repopulate the turbulent countryside. At this time, the British withdrew from the slave trade and began to blockade the coast (see Abolition of the Slave Trade, this ch.). The blockade required some adjustments in the slave trade along the lagoons that stretched outward from Lagos, whereas the domestic market for slaves to be used as farm laborers and as porters to carry commodities to market easily absorbed the many captives that were a product of these wars.

War and slave raiding were complementary exercises among the Yoruba, who needed capital to buy the firearms with which they fought in a vicious cycle of war and enslavement. Military leaders were well aware of the connection between guns and enslavement.

Some of the emerging Yoruba states started as war camps during the period of chaos in which Oyo broke up and the Muslim revolutionaries who were allied to the caliphate conquered northern Yorubaland. Ibadan, which became the largest city in black Africa during the nineteenth century, owed its growth to the role it played in the Oyo civil wars. Ibadan's *omuogun* (war boys) raided far afield for slaves and held off the advance of the Fulani. They also took advantage of Benin's isolation to seize the roads leading to the flourishing slave port at Lagos. The threat that Ibadan would dominate Yorubaland alarmed its rivals and inspired a military alliance led by the Egba city of Abeokuta. Dahomey, to the west, further contributed to the insecurity by raiding deep into Yorubaland, the direction of raids depending upon its current alliances.

Abolition of the Slave Trade

In 1807 the Houses of Parliament in London enacted legislation

prohibiting British subjects from participating in the slave trade. Indirectly, this legislation was one of the reasons for the collapse of Oyo. Britain withdrew from the slave trade while it was the major transporter of slaves to the Americas. Furthermore, the French had been knocked out of the trade during the French Revolution beginning in 1789 and by the Napoleonic wars of the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century. Between them, the French and the British had purchased a majority of the slaves sold from the ports of Oyo. The commercial uncertainty that followed the disappearance of the major purchasers of slaves unsettled the economy of Oyo. Ironically, the political troubles in Oyo came to a head after 1817, when the transatlantic market for slaves once again boomed. Rather than supplying slaves from other areas, however, Oyo itself became the source of slaves.

British legislation forbade ships under British registry to engage in the slave trade, but the restriction was applied generally to all flags and was intended to shut down all traffic in slaves coming out of West African ports. Other countries more or less hesitantly followed the British lead. The United States, for example, also prohibited the slave trade in 1807 (Denmark actually was the first country to declare the trade illegal in 1792). Attitudes changed slowly, however, and not all countries cooperated in controlling the activity of their merchant ships. American ships, for instance, were notorious for evading the prohibition and going unpunished under United States law. It should be noted, moreover, that the abolition movement concentrated on the transatlantic trade for more than five decades before eventually turning to a full-fledged attack on slave trading within Africa itself.

The Royal Navy maintained a prevention squadron to blockade the coast, and a permanent station was established at the Spanish colony of Fernando Po, off the Nigerian coast, and given responsibility for patrolling the West African coast. For several decades, as many as one-sixth of all British warships were assigned to this mission, and a squadron was maintained at Fernando Po from 1827 until 1844. Slaves rescued at sea were usually taken to Sierra Leone, where they were released. British naval crews were permitted to divide prize money from the sale of captured slave ships. Apprehended slave runners were tried by naval courts and were liable to capital punishment if found guilty.

Still, a lively slave trade to the Americas continued into the 1860s. The demands of Cuba and Brazil were met by a flood of captives taken in wars among the Yoruba and shipped from Lagos, and the Aro continued to supply the delta ports with slave exports through the 1830s. Despite the British blockade, almost 1 million

slaves were exported from Nigeria in the nineteenth century. The risk involved in running the British blockade obviously made profits all the greater on delivery.

The campaign to eradicate the slave trade and substitute for it trade in other commodities increasingly resulted in British intervention in the internal affairs of the Nigerian region during the nineteenth century and ultimately led to the decision to assume jurisdiction over the coastal area. Suppression of the slave trade and issues related to slavery remained at the forefront of British dealings with local states and societies for the rest of the nineteenth century and even into the twentieth century.

Lagos, where the British concentrated activities after 1851, had been founded as a colony of Benin in about 1700. A long dynastic struggle, which became entwined with the struggle against the slave trade, resulted in the overthrow of the reigning *oba* and the renunciation of a treaty with Britain to curtail the slave trade. Britain was determined to halt the traffic in slaves fed by the Yoruba wars and responded to this frustration by annexing the port of Lagos in 1861. Thereafter, Britain gradually extended its control along the coast. British intervention became more insistent in the 1870s and 1880s as a result of pressure from missionaries and liberated slaves returning from Sierra Leone. There was also the necessity of protecting commerce disrupted by the fighting. The method of dealing with these problems was to dictate treaties that inevitably led to further annexations.

Commodity Trade

The development of "legitimate" trade was the final phase of private and official British efforts to find a positive alternative to the traffic in slaves. Earlier aspects of such constructive interest had included the founding of the colony at Sierra Leone in 1787 as a refuge for liberated slaves, the missionary movement designed to bring Christianity to the region, and programs of exploration sponsored by learned societies and scientific groups, such as the London-based African Association.

The principal commodities of legitimate trade were palm oil and palm kernels, which were used in Europe to make soap and as lubricants for machinery before petroleum products were developed for that purpose. Although this trade grew to significant proportions—palm oil exports alone were worth £21 million a year by 1840—it was concentrated near the coast, where palm trees grew in abundance. Gradually, however, the trade forced major economic and social changes in the interior, although it failed to undermine slavery

and the slave trade. Quite the contrary, the incidence of slavery in local societies actually increased.

Initially most palm oil (and later kernels) came from Igboland, where palm trees formed a canopy over the densely inhabited areas of the Ngwa, Nri, Awka, and other Igbo peoples. Palm oil was used locally for cooking, the kernels were a source for food, trees were tapped for palm wine, and the fronds were used for building material. It was a relatively simple adjustment for many Igbo families to transport the oil to rivers and streams that led to the Niger Delta for sale to European merchants. The rapid expansion in exports, especially after 1830, occurred precisely at the time slave exports collapsed. Instead, slaves were redirected into the domestic economy, especially to grow the staple food crop, yams, in northern Igboland for marketing throughout the palm-tree belt. As before, Aro merchants dominated trade, including the sale of slaves within Igboland as well as palm products to the coast. They maintained their central role in the confederation that governed the region.

The Niger Delta and Calabar, which once had been known for the export of slaves, now became famous for the export of palm oil, so much so that the delta streams were given the name the "oil rivers." The basic economic units in each town were "houses," family-operated entities that were also the focus of loyalty for those employed in them. A "house" included the extended family of the trader, both his retainers and slaves. As its head, the master trader taxed other traders who were members of his "house" and was obligated to maintain a war vessel, which was a large dugout canoe that could hold several tons of cargo and dozens of crew, for the defense of the harbor. Whenever a trader could afford to keep a war canoe, he was expected to form his own "house." Economic competition among these "houses" was so fierce that trade often erupted into armed battle between the large canoes.

Because of the hazards of climate and disease for Europeans and the absence of any authority responsive to their interests on the mainland, European merchants ordinarily moored their ships outside harbors or in the delta and used the ships as trading stations and warehouses. In time, however, they built depots onshore and eventually moved up the Niger River to stations established in the interior, like that at Onitsha, where they could bargain with local suppliers and purchase products likely to turn a profit. Some European traders switched to legitimate business only when the commerce in slaves became too hazardous. Disreputable as many of the traders had been, they often suffered from the precariousness of their position and were at the mercy of what they considered

to be unpredictable coastal rulers. Accordingly, as the volume of trade increased, the British government responded to repeated requests of merchants to appoint a consul to cover the region. Consequently in 1849, John Beecroft was accredited as consul for the bights of Benin and Biafra, a jurisdiction stretching from Dahomey to Cameroon. Beecroft was the British representative to Fernando Po, where the British navy's prevention squadron was stationed.

Exploration of the Niger Basin had a commercial as well as scientific motivation, but curiosity about the course and destination of the river also played a part. The delta masked the mouth of the great river, and for centuries Nigerians chose not to tell Europeans the secrets of the interior, initially probably because no one thought to ask but by the nineteenth century because of the commercial implications. In 1794 the African Association commissioned Mungo Park, an intrepid Scottish physician and naturalist, to search for the headwaters of the Niger and follow the river downstream. Park reached the upper Niger the next year by traveling inland from the Gambia River. Although he reported on the eastward flow of the Niger, he was forced to turn back when his equipment was lost to Muslim slave traders. In 1805 he set out on a second expedition, sponsored by the British government, to follow the Niger to the sea. His mission failed, but Park and his party covered more than 1,500 kilometers, passing through the western portions of the Sokoto Caliphate, before being drowned in rapids near Bussa.

On a subsequent expedition to the Sokoto Caliphate, Hugh Clapperton learned where the Niger River flowed to the sea, but Clapperton also died before he could substantiate his information. It was his servant, Richard Lander, and Lander's brother, John, who actually demonstrated that the Niger flowed into the delta. The Lander brothers were seized by slave traders in the interior and sold down the river to a waiting European ship.

Initial attempts to open trade with the interior by way of the Niger could not overcome climate and disease, which took the lives of a third of a British riverine expedition in 1842. Use of quinine to combat malaria on similar expeditions in the 1850s enabled a Liverpool merchant, Macgregor Laird, to open the river. Laird's efforts were stimulated by the detailed reports of a pioneer German explorer, Heinrich Barth, who traveled through much of Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate and recorded information about the region's geography, economy, and inhabitants.

Royal Niger Company

The legitimate trade in commodities attracted a number of rough-hewn British merchants to the Niger River, as well as some men

who formerly had been engaged in the slave trade but who had changed their line of wares. The large companies that subsequently opened depots in the delta cities and in Lagos were as ruthlessly competitive as the delta towns themselves and frequently used force to compel potential suppliers to agree to contracts and to meet their demands. The most important of these trading companies, whose activities had far-reaching consequences for Nigeria, was the United Africa Company, founded by George Goldie in 1879. In 1886 Goldie's consortium was chartered by the British government as the Royal Niger Company and granted broad concessionary powers in "all the territory of the basin of the Niger." Needless to say, these concessions emanated from Britain, not from any authority in Nigeria.

The terms of the charter specified that trade should be free in the region—a principle systematically violated as the company strengthened its monopoly to forestall French and German trade interests. The company also was supposed to respect local customs "except so far as may be necessary in the interests of humanity." The qualifying clause was aimed at slavery and other activities categorized as "barbarous practices" by British authorities, and it foreshadowed the qualifications applied to noninterference as a guide to official policy when Britain assumed formal colonial responsibility in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, the Royal Niger Company established its headquarters far inland at Lokoja, from where it pretended to assume responsibility for the administration of areas along the Niger and Benue rivers where it maintained depots. The company interfered in the territory along the Niger and the Benue, sometimes becoming embroiled in serious conflicts when its British-led native constabulary intercepted slave raids or attempted to protect trade routes. The company negotiated treaties with Sokoto, Gwandum, and Nupe that were interpreted as guaranteeing exclusive access to trade in return for the payment of annual tribute. Officials of the Sokoto Caliphate considered these treaties quite differently; from their perspective, the British were granted only extraterritorial rights that did not prevent similar arrangements with the Germans and the French and certainly did not surrender sovereignty.

Under Goldie's direction, the Royal Niger Company was instrumental in depriving France and Germany of access to the region. Consequently, he may well deserve the epithet "father of Nigeria," which imperialists accorded him. He definitely laid the basis for British claims.

Influence of the Christian Missions

Christianity was introduced at Benin in the fifteenth century by Portuguese Roman Catholic priests who accompanied traders and officials to the West African coast. Several churches were built to serve the Portuguese community and a small number of African converts. When direct Portuguese contacts in the region were withdrawn, however, the influence of the Catholic missionaries waned and by the eighteenth century had disappeared.

Although churchmen in Britain had been influential in the drive to abolish the slave trade, significant missionary activity was renewed only in the 1840s and was confined for some time to the area between Lagos and Ibadan. The first missions there were opened by the Church of England's Church Missionary Society (CMS). They were followed by other Protestant denominations from Britain, Canada, and the United States and in the 1860s by Roman Catholic religious orders. Protestant missionaries tended to divide the country into spheres of activity to avoid competition with each other, and Catholic missions similarly avoided duplication of effort among the several religious orders working there. Catholic missionaries were particularly active among the Igbo, the CMS among the Yoruba.

The CMS initially promoted Africans to responsible positions in the mission field, an outstanding example being the appointment of Samuel Adjai Crowther as the first Anglican bishop of the Niger. Crowther, a liberated Yoruba slave, had been educated in Sierra Leone and in Britain, where he was ordained before returning to his homeland with the first group of missionaries sent there by the CMS. This was part of a conscious "native church" policy pursued by the Anglicans and others to create indigenous ecclesiastical institutions that eventually would be independent of European tutelage. The effort failed, however, in part because church authorities came to think that religious discipline had grown too lax during Crowther's episcopate but especially because of the rise of prejudice. Crowther was succeeded as bishop by a British cleric. Nevertheless, the acceptance of Christianity by large numbers of Nigerians depended finally on the various denominations coming to terms with local conditions and involved the participation of an increasingly high proportion of African clergy in the missions.

In large measure, European missionaries were convinced of the value of colonial rule, thereby reinforcing colonial policy. In reaction some African Christian communities formed their own independent churches.

Colonial Nigeria

Prodded by the instability created by the Yoruba wars and by the activities of other European powers, Britain moved cautiously but inexorably toward colonial domination of the lower Niger Basin. In the decades that followed Britain's abolition of the slave trade, British diplomacy wove a fabric of treaties with kings and chieftains whose cooperation was sought in suppressing the traffic. British interests also dictated occasional armed intervention by the Royal Navy and by the Royal Niger Company Constabulary to staunch the flow of slaves to the coast, to protect legitimate commerce, and to maintain peace. Moreover, the missionaries cried out for protection and assistance in stamping out slavery and other "barbarous practices" associated with indigenous religions. Finally, the posting of consular officials by the Foreign Office to service the increasing amount of trade in the ports of the bights of Benin and Biafra helped project British influence inland.

For many years, official hesitation about adding tropical dependencies to the British Empire outweighed these factors. The prevailing sentiment, even after Lagos became a colony in 1861, was expressed in a parliamentary report in 1865 urging withdrawal from West Africa. Colonies were regarded as expensive liabilities, especially where trading concessions could be exercised without resorting to annexation. Attitudes changed, however, as rival European powers, especially France and Germany, scurried to develop overseas markets and annexed territory (see fig. 5).

Inevitably, imperial ambitions clashed when the intentions of the various European countries became obvious. In 1885 at the Berlin Conference, the European powers attempted to resolve their conflicts of interest by allotting areas of exploitation. The conferees also enunciated the principle, known as the dual mandate, that the best interests of Europe and Africa would be served by maintaining free access to the continent for trade and by providing Africa with the benefits of Europe's civilizing mission. Britain's claims to a sphere of influence in the Niger Basin were acknowledged formally, but it was stipulated here as elsewhere that only effective occupation would secure full international recognition. In the end, pressure in the region from France and Germany hastened the establishment of effective British occupation.

Extension of British Control

British expansion accelerated in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The early history of Lagos Colony was one of repeated attempts to end the Yoruba wars. In the face of threats to the divided

Nigeria: A Country Study

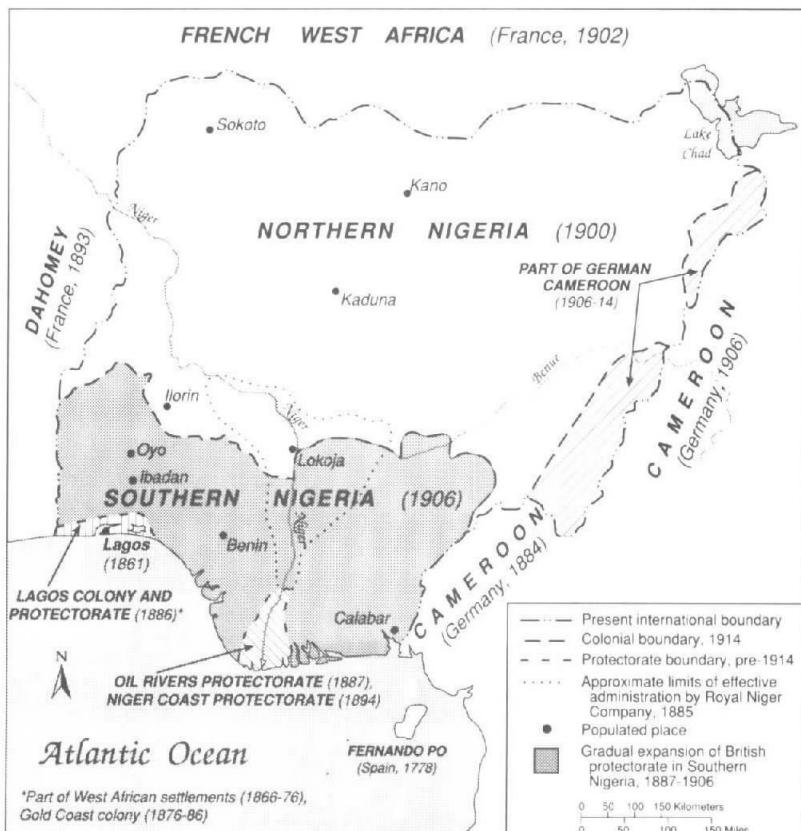


Figure 5. British Presence in the Niger Region, 1861-1914

Yoruba states from Dahomey and the Sokoto Caliphate, as represented by the emirate of Ilorin, the British governor—assisted by the CMS—succeeded in imposing peace settlements on the interior.

Colonial Lagos was a busy, cosmopolitan port, reflecting Victorian and distinctively Brazilian architecture and the varied backgrounds of a black elite, composed of English-speakers from Sierra Leone and of emancipated slaves repatriated from Brazil and Cuba. Its residents were employed in official capacities and were active in business. Africans also were represented on the Lagos Legislative Council, a largely appointed assembly.

After the Berlin Conference, Britain announced formation of the Oil Rivers Protectorate, which included the Niger Delta and extended eastward to Calabar, where the British consulate general was relocated from Fernando Po. The essential purpose of the protectorate

was to control trade coming down the Niger. Vice consuls were assigned to ports that already had concluded treaties of cooperation with the Foreign Office. Local rulers continued to administer their territories, but consular authorities assumed jurisdiction for the equity courts established earlier by the foreign mercantile communities. A constabulary force was raised and used to pacify the coastal area. In 1894 the territory was redesignated the Niger Coast Protectorate and was expanded to include the region from Calabar to Lagos Colony and Protectorate, including the hinterland, and northward up the Niger River as far as Lokoja, the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company. As a protectorate, it did not have the status of a colony but remained under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Office.

Continued expansion of the protectorate was accomplished largely by diplomatic means, although military force was employed to bring Ijebu, Oyo, and Benin into compliance with dictated treaty obligations. The conquest of Benin in 1897 completed the British occupation of southwestern Nigeria. The incident that sparked the expedition was the massacre of a British consul and his party, who were on their way to investigate reports of ritual human sacrifice in the city of Benin. In reprisal a marine detachment promptly stormed the city and destroyed the *oba*'s palace. The reigning *oba* was sent into exile, and Benin was administered indirectly under the protectorate through a council of chiefs.

Although treaties were signed with rulers as far north as Sokoto by 1885, actual British control was confined to the coastal area and the immediate vicinity of Lokoja until 1900. The Royal Niger Company had access to the territory from Lokoja extending along the Niger and Benue rivers above their confluence, but there was no effective control, even after punitive expeditions against Bida and Ilorin in 1897. The clear intent was to occupy the Sokoto Caliphate, but for that purpose the Royal Niger Company was not deemed to be a sufficient instrument of imperialism. Consequently, on December 31, 1899, Britain terminated the charter of the company, providing compensation and retention of valuable mineral rights.

Lugard and Indirect Rule

Frederick Lugard, who assumed the position of high commissioner of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1900, often has been regarded as the model British colonial administrator. Trained as an army officer, he had served in India, Egypt, and East Africa, where he expelled Arab slave traders from Nyasaland and established the British presence in Uganda. Joining the Royal Niger Company in 1894, Lugard was sent to Borgu to counter inroads

made by the French, and in 1897 he was made responsible for raising the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) from local levies to serve under British officers.

During his six-year tenure as high commissioner, Lugard was occupied with transforming the commercial sphere of influence inherited from the Royal Niger Company into a viable territorial unit under effective British political control. His objective was to conquer the entire region and to obtain recognition of the British protectorate by its indigenous rulers, especially the Fulani emirs of the Sokoto Caliphate. Lugard's campaign systematically subdued local resistance, using armed force when diplomatic measures failed. Borno capitulated without a fight, but in 1903 Lugard's RWAFF mounted assaults on Kano and Sokoto. From Lugard's point of view, clear-cut military victories were necessary because their surrenders weakened resistance elsewhere.

Lugard's success in northern Nigeria has been attributed to his policy of indirect rule, which called for governing the protectorate through the rulers who had been defeated. If the emirs accepted British authority, abandoned the slave trade, and cooperated with British officials in modernizing their administrations, the colonial power was willing to confirm them in office. The emirs retained their caliphate titles but were responsible to British district officers, who had final authority. The British high commissioner could depose emirs and other officials if necessary. Lugard reduced sharply the number of titled fief holders in the emirates, weakening the rulers' patronage. Under indirect rule, caliphate officials were transformed into salaried district heads and became, in effect, agents of the British authorities, responsible for peacekeeping and tax collection. The old chain of command merely was capped with a new overlord, the British high commissioner.

The protectorate required only a limited number of colonial officers scattered throughout the territory as overseers. Depending on local conditions, they exercised discretion in advising the emirs and local officials, but all orders from the high commissioner were transmitted through the emir. Although the high commissioner possessed unlimited executive and legislative powers in the protectorate, most of the activities of government were undertaken by the emirs and their local administrations, subject to British approval. A dual system of law functioned—the sharia (Islamic law) court continued to deal with matters affecting the personal status of Muslims, including land disputes, divorce, debt, and slave emancipation. As a consequence of indirect rule, Hausa-Fulani domination was confirmed—and in some instances imposed—on diverse ethnic groups, some of them non-Muslim, in the so-called middle belt.

The accomplishments of Lugard and his successors in economic development were limited by the revenues available to the colonial government. One of Lugard's initial acts was to separate the general treasury of each emirate from the emir's privy purse. From taxes collected by local officials, first one-quarter and later one-half was taken to support services of the colonial regime, which were meager because of the protectorate's lack of public resources. In the south, missionaries made up for the lack of government expenditure on services; in the north, Lugard and his successors limited the activities of missionaries in order to maintain Muslim domination. Consequently, educational and medical services in the north lagged behind those in the south. Progress was made in economic development, however, as railroad lines were constructed to transport tin from Jos Plateau and northern-grown peanuts and cotton to ports on the coast.

Efforts to apply indirect rule to the south, which was formally a protectorate from 1906, in emulation of Lugard's successful policy in the north set off a search for legitimate indigenous authorities through whom the policy could be implemented. The task proved relatively easy in Yorubaland, where the governments and boundaries of traditional kingdoms were retained or, in some instances, revived. In the southeast, where Aro hegemony had been crushed, the search for acceptable local administrators met with frustration. As a result, the tasks of government initially were left in the hands of colonial officials, who antagonized many Igbo. The Igbo therefore stressed traditional egalitarian principles as a justification for their early opposition to colonial rule; in Yorubaland and in the north, the devolution of administrative duties to the indigenous ruling elites contained much of the early opposition. Resistance to colonial rule was mitigated to the extent that local authorities and courts were able to manage affairs.

The British prohibited the enslavement of free persons and suppressed slave trading. All children in the north who were born to persons in bondage on or after April 1, 1900, were declared free. The relations between existing slaves and their owners, however, were allowed to continue indefinitely, on the assumption that wholesale liberation would cause more harm than good by disrupting the agricultural economy. As a consequence, at least several hundred thousand slaves deserted their masters in the early years of colonial rule. In 1906 a radical, allegedly Mahdist, Muslim uprising that received the support of many fugitive slaves was brutally crushed. In the south, slaves legally could be forced to return to their owners until 1914. In the north, vagrancy laws and the enforcement of proprietary rights to land were used to try to check

the flight of slaves. Slaves in the northern emirates could secure their freedom upon application to an Islamic court, but comparatively few used this option. Throughout the colonial period in the Muslim north, many slaves and their descendants continued to work for their masters or former masters and often received periodic payments leading to emancipation.

Unification of Nigeria

After having been assigned for six years as governor of Hong Kong, Lugard returned to Nigeria in 1912 to set in motion the merger of the northern and southern protectorates. The task of unification was achieved two years later on the eve of World War I. The principle of indirect rule administered by traditional rulers was applied throughout Nigeria, and colonial officers were instructed to interfere as little as possible with the existing order. In 1916 Lugard formed the Nigerian Council, a consultative body that brought together six traditional leaders—including the sultan of Sokoto, the emir of Kano, and the king of Oyo—to represent all parts of the colony. The council was promoted as a device for allowing the expression of opinions that could instruct the governor. In practice Lugard used the annual sessions to inform the traditional leaders of British policy, leaving them with no functions at the council's meetings except to listen and to assent.

Unification meant only the loose affiliation of three distinct regional administrations into which Nigeria was subdivided—northern, western, and eastern regions (see fig. 6). Each was under a lieutenant governor and provided independent government services. The governor was, in effect, the coordinator for virtually autonomous entities that had overlapping economic interests but little in common politically or socially. In the Northern Region, the colonial government took careful account of Islam and avoided any appearance of a challenge to traditional values that might incite resistance to British rule. This system, in which the structure of authority focused on the emir to whom obedience was a mark of religious devotion, did not welcome change. As the emirs settled more and more into their role as reliable agents of indirect rule, colonial authorities were content to maintain the status quo, particularly in religious matters. Christian missionaries were barred, and the limited government efforts in education were harmonized with Islamic institutions.

In the south, by contrast, traditional leaders were employed as vehicles of indirect rule in Yorubaland, but Christianity and Western education undermined their sacerdotal functions. In some instances, however, a double allegiance—to the idea of sacred

monarchy for its symbolic value and to modern concepts of law and administration—was maintained. Out of reverence for traditional kingship, for instance, the *oni* of Ife, whose office was closely identified with Yoruba religion, was accepted as the sponsor of a Yoruba political movement. In the Eastern Region, appointed officials, who were given “warrants” and hence called warrant chiefs, were vehemently resisted because they had no claims on tradition.

In practice, however, British administrative procedures under indirect rule entailed constant interaction between colonial authorities and local rulers—the system was modified to fit the needs of each region. In the north, for instance, legislation took the form of a decree cosigned by the governor and the emir, whereas in the south, the governor sought the approval of the Legislative Council. Hausa was recognized as an official language in the north, and knowledge of it was expected of colonial officers serving there, whereas only English had official status in the south. Regional administrations also varied widely in the quality of local personnel and in the scope of the operations they were willing to undertake. British staffs in each region continued to operate according to procedures developed before unification. Economic links among the regions increased, but indirect rule tended to discourage political interchange. There was virtually no pressure for fuller unity until the end of World War II.

Public works, such as harbor dredging and road and railroad construction, opened Nigeria to economic development. British soap and cosmetics manufacturers tried to obtain land concessions for growing oil palms, but these were refused. Instead, the companies had to be content with a monopoly of the export trade in these products. Other commercial crops such as cocoa and rubber also were encouraged, and tin was mined on the Jos Plateau. The only significant interruption in economic development arose from natural disaster—the great drought of 1913–14. Recovery came quickly, however, and improvements in port facilities and the transportation infrastructure during World War I furthered economic development. Nigerian recruits participated in the war effort as laborers and soldiers. The Nigeria Regiment of the RW AFF, integrating troops from the north and south, saw action against German colonial forces in Cameroon and in German East Africa. During the war, the colonial government earmarked a large portion of the Nigerian budget as a contribution to imperial defense. To raise additional revenues, Lugard took steps to institute a uniform tax structure patterned on the traditional system that he had adopted in the north during his tenure there. Taxes became a source

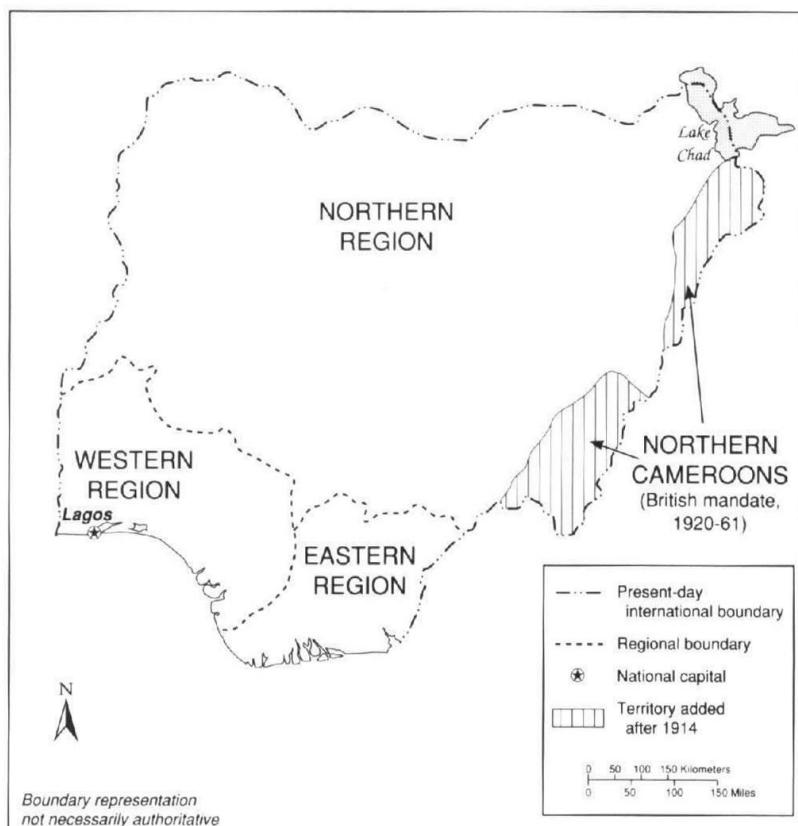


Figure 6. Unification of Nigeria, 1914

of discontent in the south, however, and contributed to disturbances protesting British policy. In 1920 portions of former German Cameroon were mandated to Britain by the League of Nations and were administered as part of Nigeria.

Until he stepped down as governor general in 1918, Lugard was primarily concerned with consolidating British sovereignty and with assuring local administration through traditional leaders. He was contemptuous of the educated and Westernized African elite, and he even recommended transferring the capital from Lagos, the cosmopolitan city where the influence of these people was most pronounced, to Kaduna in the north. Although the capital was not moved, Lugard's bias in favor of the Muslim north was clear at the time. Nevertheless, Lugard was able to bequeath to his successor a prosperous colony when his term as governor general expired.

Further Development of Colonial Policy

Lugard's immediate successor, Hugh Clifford (1919-25), was an aristocratic professional administrator with liberal instincts who had won recognition for his enlightened governorship of the Gold Coast. The approaches of the two governors to colonial development were diametrically opposed. In contrast to Lugard, Clifford argued that it was the primary responsibility of colonial government to introduce as quickly as practical the benefits of Western experience. He was aware that the Muslim north would present problems, but he evinced great hopes for progress along the lines that he laid down in the south, where he anticipated "general emancipation" leading to a more representative form of government. Clifford emphasized economic development, encouraging enterprises by immigrant southerners in the north while restricting European participation to capital-intensive activity.

Uneasy with the amount of latitude allowed traditional leaders under indirect rule, Clifford opposed further extension of the judicial authority held by the northern emirs, stating bluntly that he did "not consider that their past traditions and their present backward cultural conditions afford to any such experiment a reasonable chance of success." He did not apply this rationale in the south, however, where he saw the possibility of building an elite educated in schools modeled on a European method. These schools would teach "the basic principles that would and should regulate character and conduct." In line with this attitude, he rejected Lugard's proposal for moving the capital from Lagos, the stronghold of the elite in whom he placed so much confidence for the future.

Clifford also believed that indirect rule encouraged centripetal tendencies, and he argued that the division into two separate colonies was advisable unless a stronger central government could bind Nigeria into more than just an administrative convenience for the three regions. Whereas Lugard had applied lessons learned in the north to the administration of the south, Clifford was prepared to extend to the north practices that had been successful in the south. The Colonial Office, where Lugard was still held in high regard, accepted that changes might be due in the south, but it forbade fundamental alteration of procedures in the north. A.J. Harding, director of Nigerian affairs at the Colonial Office, defined the official position of the British government in its continued support of indirect rule when he commented that "direct government by impartial and honest men of alien race . . . never yet satisfied a

nation long and . . . under such a form of government, as wealth and education increase, so do political discontent and sedition."

Clifford's recommendations, as modified by the Colonial Office, were embodied in the 1922 constitution (known as the Clifford Constitution). Whereas administration in the north was left untouched, a new legislative council was established in common for the two southern regions, replacing the Lagos Legislative Council and the moribund Nigerian Council. For the first time, direct elections took place outside Lagos, although only four of the council's forty-six members were elected. Moreover, the introduction of the legislative principle encouraged the emergence of political parties and ultimately the growth of nationalism in Nigeria. By 1931 strong sentiments had emerged in the north in reaction to Clifford's reforms.

Emergence of Nigerian Nationalism

British colonialism created Nigeria, joining diverse peoples and regions in an artificial political entity. It was not unusual that the nationalism that became a political factor in Nigeria during the interwar period derived both from an older political particularism and broad pan-Africanism rather than from any sense of a common Nigerian nationality. Its goal initially was not self-determination, but rather increased participation in the governmental process on a regional level. Inconsistencies in British policy reinforced cleavages based on regional animosities by attempting simultaneously to preserve the indigenous cultures of each area and to introduce modern technology and Western political and social concepts. In the north, appeals to Islamic legitimacy upheld the rule of the emirs, so that nationalist sentiments there were decidedly anti-Western. Modern nationalists in the south, whose thinking was shaped by European ideas, opposed indirect rule, which had entrenched what was considered to be an anachronistic ruling class in power and shut out the Westernized elite.

The ideological inspiration for southern nationalists came from a variety of sources, including prominent United States-based activists such as Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois. Nigerian students abroad joined those from other colonies in pan-African groups, such as the West African Students Union, founded in London in 1925. Early nationalists tended to ignore Nigeria as the focus of patriotism; rather, the common denominator was based on a newly assertive ethnic consciousness, particularly Yoruba and Igbo. Despite their acceptance of European and North American influences, the nationalists were critical of colonialism for its failure to appreciate the antiquity of indigenous cultures. They wanted self-government,

charging that only colonial rule prevented the unshackling of progressive forces in Africa.

Political opposition to colonial rule often assumed religious dimensions. Independent Christian churches had emerged at the end of the nineteenth century because many European missionaries were racist and blocked the advancement of a Nigerian clergy. European interpretations of Christian orthodoxy also refused to allow the incorporation of local customs and practices, even though the various mission denominations themselves interpreted Christianity very differently. It was acceptable for the established missions to differ, but most Europeans were surprised and shocked that Nigerians would develop new denominations independent of European control. Christianity long had experienced "protestant" schisms; the emergence of independent Christian churches in Nigeria was another phase of this history. The pulpits of the independent congregations provided one of the few available avenues for the free expression of attitudes critical of colonial rule.

In the 1920s, there were several types of associations that were ostensibly nonpolitical. One group consisted of professional and business associations, such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers, which provided trained leadership for political groups; the Nigerian Law Association, which brought together lawyers, many of whom had been educated in Britain; and the Nigerian Produce Traders' Association, led by Obafemi Awolowo.

Ethnic and kinship organizations that often took the form of a tribal union also emerged in the 1920s. These organizations were primarily urban phenomena that arose after large numbers of rural migrants moved to the cities. Alienated by the anonymity of the urban environment and drawn together by ties to their ethnic homelands—as well as by the need for mutual aid—the new city dwellers formed local clubs that later expanded into federations covering whole regions. By the mid-1940s, the major ethnic groups had formed such associations as the Igbo Federal Union and the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa), a Yoruba cultural movement, in which Awolowo played a leading role.

A third type of organization that was more pointedly political was the youth or student group, which became the vehicle of intellectuals and professionals. They were the most politically conscious segment of the population and stood in the vanguard of the nationalist movement. Newspapers, some of which were published before World War I, provided coverage of nationalist views.

The opportunity afforded by the 1922 constitution to elect a handful of representatives to the Legislative Council gave politically

Nigeria: A Country Study

conscious Nigerians something concrete to work on. The principal figure in the political activity that ensued was Herbert Macauley, often referred to as the father of Nigerian nationalism. He aroused political awareness through his newspaper, the Lagos *Daily News*, while leading the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which dominated elections in Lagos from its founding in 1922 until the ascendancy of the National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938. His political platform called for economic and educational development, Africanization of the civil service, and self-government for Lagos. Significantly, however, Macauley's NNDP remained almost entirely a Lagos party, popular only in the area with experience in elective politics.

The NYM first used nationalist rhetoric to agitate for improvements in education. The movement brought to public notice a long list of future leaders, including H.O. Davies and Nnamdi Azikiwe. Although Azikiwe later came to be recognized as the leading spokesman for national unity, his orientation on return from university training in the United States was pan-African rather than nationalist, emphasizing the common African struggle against European colonialism. He betrayed much less consciousness of purely Nigerian goals than Davies, a student of Harold Laski at the London School of Economics, whose political orientation was considered left-wing.

By 1938 the NYM was agitating for dominion status within the British Commonwealth of Nations, so that Nigeria would have the same status as Canada and Australia. In elections that year, the NYM ended the domination of the NNDP in the Legislative Council and moved to establish a genuinely national network of affiliates. This promising start was stopped short three years later by internal divisions in which ethnic loyalties emerged triumphant. The departure of Azikiwe and other Igbo members of the NYM left the organization in Yoruba hands; during World War II, it was reorganized into a predominantly Yoruba political party, the Action Group, by Awolowo. Yoruba-Igbo rivalry had become a major factor in Nigerian politics (see Ethnic Relations, ch. 2).

During World War II, three battalions of the Nigeria Regiment fought in the Ethiopian campaign. Nigerian units also contributed to two divisions serving with British forces in Palestine, Morocco, Sicily, and Burma, where they won many honors. Wartime experiences provided a new frame of reference for many soldiers, who interacted across ethnic boundaries in ways that were unusual in Nigeria. The war also made the British reappraise Nigeria's political future. The war years, moreover, witnessed a polarization

between the older, more parochial leaders inclined toward gradualism and the younger intellectuals, who thought in more immediate terms.

The rapid growth of organized labor in the 1940s also brought new political forces into play. During the war, union membership increased sixfold to 30,000. The proliferation of labor organizations, however, fragmented the movement, and potential leaders lacked the experience and skill to draw workers together.

In the postwar period, party lines were sharply drawn on the basis of ethnicity and regionalism. After the demise of the NYM, the nationalist movement splintered into the Hausa- and Fulani-backed Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Yoruba-supported Action Group, and the Igbo-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC, later the National Council of Nigerian Citizens). These parties negotiated with the British government over constitutional changes, but cooperation among them was the result of expediency rather than an emerging sense of national identity. Because of the essentially regional political alignments of the parties, the British government decided to impose a political solution for Nigeria based on a federally structured constitution.

The first political party in Nigeria to have nationwide appeal was the NCNC, founded in 1944 when Azikiwe encouraged activists in the National Youth Movement to call a conference in Lagos of all major Nigerian organizations to "weld the heterogeneous masses of Nigeria into one solid bloc." The aged Macauley was elected president of the new group, and Azikiwe became its secretary general. The party platform renewed the National Youth Movement's appeal for Nigerian self-government within the Commonwealth under a democratic constitution.

At its inception, party membership was based on affiliated organizations that included labor unions, social groups, political clubs, professional associations, and more than 100 ethnic organizations. These bodies afforded unusual opportunities for political education in existing constituencies, but the NYM, which was fading out, was absent from the list of NCNC affiliates. Leadership of the NCNC rested firmly with Azikiwe, in large part because of his commanding personality but also because of the string of newspapers he operated and through which he argued the nationalist cause. In the late 1940s, the NCNC captured a majority of the votes in the predominantly Yoruba Western Region, but increasingly it came to rely on Igbo support, supplemented by alliances with minority parties in the Northern Region. The NCNC backed the creation of new regions, where minorities would be

ensured a larger voice, as a step toward the formation of a strong unitary national government.

The Action Group arose in 1951 as a response to Igbo control of the NCNC and as a vehicle for Yoruba regionalism that resisted the concept of unitary government. The party was structured democratically and benefited from political spadework done by the NCNC in the Western Region in the late 1940s. As a movement designed essentially to exploit the federal arrangement to attain regional power, however, the Action Group became the NCNC's competitor for votes in the south at the national level and at the local level in the Western Region.

The Action Group was largely the creation of Awolowo, general secretary of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and leader of the Nigerian Produce Traders' Association. The Action Group was thus the heir of a generation of flourishing cultural consciousness among the Yoruba and also had valuable connections with commercial interests that were representative of the comparative economic advancement of the Western Region. Awolowo had little difficulty in appealing to broad segments of the Yoruba population, but he strove to prevent the Action Group from being stigmatized as a "tribal" group. Despite his somewhat successful efforts to enlist non-Yoruba support, the regionalist sentiment that had stimulated the party initially could hardly be concealed.

Another obstacle to the development of the Action Group was the animosity between segments of the Yoruba community—for example, many people in Ibadan opposed Awolowo on personal grounds because of his identification with the Ijebu Yoruba. Despite these difficulties, the Action Group rapidly built an effective organization. Its program reflected greater planning and was more ideologically oriented than that of the NCNC. Although he did not have Azikiwe's compelling personality, Awolowo was a formidable debater as well as a vigorous and tenacious political campaigner. He used for the first time in Nigeria modern, sometimes flamboyant, electioneering techniques. Among his leading lieutenants were Samuel Akintola of Ibadan and the *oni* of Ife.

The Action Group was a consistent supporter of minority-group demands for autonomous states within a federal structure, and it even supported the severance of a midwest state from the Western Region. This move assumed that comparable alterations would be made elsewhere, an attitude that won the party minority voting support in the other regions. It also backed Yoruba irredentism in the Fulani-ruled emirate of Ilorin in the Northern Region and separatist movements among non-Igbo in the Eastern Region.

The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was organized in the late 1940s by a small group of Western-educated northern Muslims who obtained the assent of the emirs to form a political party capable of counterbalancing the activities of the southern-based parties. It represented a substantial element of reformism in the Muslim north. The most powerful figure in the party was Ahmadu Bello, the *sardauna* (war leader) of Sokoto, a controversial figure who aspired to become the sultan of Sokoto, still the most important political and religious position in the north. Often described by opponents as a "feudal" conservative, Bello had a consuming interest in the protection of northern social and political institutions from southern influence. He also insisted on maintaining the territorial integrity of the Northern Region, including those areas with non-Muslim populations. He was prepared to introduce educational and economic changes to strengthen the north. Although his own ambitions were limited to the Northern Region, Bello backed the NPC's successful efforts to mobilize the north's large voting strength so as to win control of the national government.

The NPC platform emphasized the integrity of the north, its traditions, religion, and social order. Support for broad Nigerian concerns occupied a clear second place. A lack of interest in extending the NPC beyond the Northern Region corresponded to this strictly regional orientation. Its activist membership was drawn from local government and emirate officials who had access to means of communication and to repressive traditional authority that could keep the opposition in line.

The small contingent of northerners who had been educated abroad—a group that included Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Aminu Kano—was allied with British-backed efforts to introduce gradual change to the emirates. The support given by the emirs to limited modernization was motivated largely by fear of the unsettling presence of southerners in the north and by the equally unsettling example of improving conditions in the south. Those northern leaders who were committed to modernization were firmly connected to the traditional power structure. Most internal problems within the north—peasant disaffection or rivalry among Muslim factions—were concealed, and open opposition to the domination of the Muslim aristocracy was not tolerated. Critics, including representatives of the middle belt who plainly resented Muslim domination, were relegated to small, peripheral parties or to inconsequential separatist movements.

In 1950 Aminu Kano, who had been instrumental in founding the NPC, broke away to form one such party, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), in protest against the NPC's

limited objectives and what he regarded as a vain hope that traditional rulers would accept modernization. NEPU formed a parliamentary alliance with the NCNC.

The NPC continued to represent the interests of the traditional order in the preindependence deliberations. After the defection of Kano, the only significant disagreement within the NPC related to the awareness of moderates, such as Balewa, that only by overcoming political and economic backwardness could the NPC protect the foundations of traditional northern authority against the influence of the more advanced south.

In all three regions, minority parties represented the special interests of ethnic groups, especially as they were affected by the majority. The size of their legislative delegations, when successful in electing anyone to the regional assemblies, was never large enough to be effective, but they served as a means of public expression for minority concerns. They received attention from major parties before elections, at which time either a dominant party from another region or the opposition party in their region sought their alliance.

The political parties jockeyed for positions of power in anticipation of the independence of Nigeria. Three constitutions were enacted from 1946 to 1954 that were subjects of considerable political controversy in themselves but inevitably moved the country toward greater internal autonomy, with an increasing role for the political parties. The trend was toward the establishment of a parliamentary system of government, with regional assemblies and a federal House of Representatives.

In 1946 a new constitution was approved by the British Parliament and promulgated in Nigeria. Although it reserved effective power in the hands of the governor and his appointed executive council, the so-called Richards Constitution (after Governor Arthur Richards, who was responsible for its formulation) provided for an expanded Legislative Council empowered to deliberate on matters affecting the whole country. Separate legislative bodies, the houses of assembly, were established in each of the three regions to consider local questions and to advise the lieutenant governors. The introduction of the federal principle, with deliberative authority devolved on the regions, signaled recognition of the country's diversity. Although realistic in its assessment of the situation in Nigeria, the Richards Constitution undoubtedly intensified regionalism as an alternative to political unification.

The pace of constitutional change accelerated after the promulgation of the Richards Constitution, which was suspended in 1950. The call for greater autonomy resulted in an interparliamentary

conference at Ibadan in 1950, when the terms of a new constitution were drafted. The so-called Macpherson Constitution, after the incumbent governor, went into effect the following year.

The most important innovations in the new charter reinforced the dual course of constitutional evolution, allowing for both regional autonomy and federal union. By extending the elective principle and by providing for a central government with a Council of Ministers, the Macpherson Constitution gave renewed impetus to party activity and to political participation at the national level. But by providing for comparable regional governments exercising broad legislative powers, which could not be overridden by the newly established 185-seat federal House of Representatives, the Macpherson Constitution also gave a significant boost to regionalism. Subsequent revisions contained in a new constitution, the Lyttleton Constitution, enacted in 1954, firmly established the federal principle and paved the way for independence.

In 1957 the Western and the Eastern regions became formally self-governing under the parliamentary system. Similar status was acquired by the Northern Region two years later. There were numerous differences of detail among the regional systems, but all adhered to parliamentary forms and were equally autonomous in relation to the federal government at Lagos. The federal government retained specified powers, including responsibility for banking, currency, external affairs, defense, shipping and navigation, and communications, but real political power was centered in the regions. Significantly, the regional governments controlled public expenditures derived from revenues raised within each region.

Ethnic cleavages intensified in the 1950s. Political activists in the southern areas spoke of self-government in terms of educational opportunities and economic development. Because of the spread of mission schools and wealth derived from export crops, the southern parties were committed to policies that would benefit the south of the country. In the north, the emirs intended to maintain firm control on economic and political change. Any activity in the north that might include participation by the federal government (and consequently by southern civil servants) was regarded as a challenge to the primacy of the emirates. Broadening political participation and expanding educational opportunities and other social services also were viewed as threats to the status quo. Already there was an extensive immigrant population of southerners, especially Igbo, in the north; they dominated clerical positions and were active in many trades.

The cleavage between the Yoruba and the Igbo was accentuated by their competition for control of the political machinery. The

receding British presence enabled local officials and politicians to gain access to patronage over government jobs, funds for local development, market permits, trade licenses, government contracts, and even scholarships for higher education. In an economy with many qualified applicants for every post, great resentment was generated by any favoritism authorities showed to members of their own ethnic group.

In the immediate post-World War II period, Nigeria benefited from a favorable trade balance. The principal exports were agricultural commodities—peanuts and cotton from the Northern Region, palm products from the Eastern Region, and cocoa from the Western Region. Marketing boards, again regionally based, were established to handle these exports and to react to price fluctuations on the world market. During the 1950s, the marketing boards accumulated considerable surpluses. Initially, imports lagged behind exports, although by the mid-1950s imports began to catch up with exports, and the surpluses decreased. Expansion in the nonagricultural sectors required large imports of machinery, transport equipment and, eventually, intermediate materials for industry. In time there also were increased administrative costs to be met. Although per capita income in the country as a whole remained low by international standards, rising incomes among salaried personnel and burgeoning urbanization expanded consumer demand for imported goods.

In the meantime, public sector spending increased even more dramatically than export earnings. It was supported not only by the income from huge agricultural surpluses but also by a new range of direct and indirect taxes imposed during the 1950s. The transfer of responsibility for budgetary management from the central to the regional governments in 1954 accelerated the pace of public spending on services and on development projects. Total revenues of central and regional governments nearly doubled in relation to the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) during the decade.

The most dramatic event, having a long-term effect on Nigeria's economic development, was the discovery and exploitation of petroleum deposits. The search for oil, begun in 1908 and abandoned a few years later, was revived in 1937 by Shell and British Petroleum. Exploration was intensified in 1946, but the first commercial discovery did not occur until 1956, at Olobiri in the Niger Delta. In 1958 exportation of Nigerian oil was initiated at facilities constructed at Port Harcourt. Oil income was still marginal, but the prospects for continued economic expansion appeared bright and further accentuated political rivalries on the eve of independence.

The election of the House of Representatives after the adoption of the 1954 constitution gave the NPC a total of seventy-nine seats, all from the Northern Region. Among the other major parties, the NCNC took fifty-six seats, winning a majority in both the Eastern and the Western regions, while the Action Group captured only twenty-seven seats. The NPC was called on to form a government, but the NCNC received six of the ten ministerial posts. Three of these posts were assigned to representatives from each region, and one was reserved for a delegate from the Northern Cameroons.

As a further step toward independence, the governor's Executive Council was merged with the Council of Ministers in 1957 to form the all-Nigerian Federal Executive Council. NPC federal parliamentary leader Balewa was appointed prime minister. Balewa formed a coalition government that included the Action Group as well as the NCNC to prepare the country for the final British withdrawal. His government guided the country for the next three years, operating with almost complete autonomy in internal affairs.

The preparation of a new federal constitution for an independent Nigeria was carried out at conferences held at Lancaster House in London in 1957 and 1958 and presided over by the British colonial secretary. Nigerian delegates were selected to represent each region and to reflect various shades of opinion. The delegation was led by Balewa of the NPC and included party leaders Awolowo of the Action Group, Azikiwe of the NCNC, and Bello of the NPC; they were also the premiers of the Western, Eastern, and Northern regions, respectively. Independence was achieved on October 1, 1960.

Elections were held for a new and greatly enlarged House of Representatives in December 1959; 174 of the 312 seats were allocated to the Northern Region on the basis of its larger population. The NPC, entering candidates only in the Northern Region, confined campaigning largely to local issues but opposed the addition of new regions. The NCNC backed creation of a midwest state and proposed federal control of education and health services. The Action Group, which staged a lively campaign, favored stronger government and the establishment of three new states, while advocating creation of a West Africa Federation that would unite Nigeria with Ghana and Sierra Leone. The NPC captured 142 seats in the new legislature. Balewa was called on to head a NPC-NCNC coalition government, and Awolowo became official leader of the opposition.

Independent Nigeria

By an act of the British Parliament, Nigeria became an independent country within the Commonwealth on October 1, 1960. Azikiwe

was installed as governor general of the federation and Balewa continued to serve as head of a democratically elected parliamentary, but now completely sovereign, government. The governor general represented the British monarch as head of state and was appointed by the crown on the advice of the Nigerian prime minister in consultation with the regional premiers. The governor general, in turn, was responsible for appointing the prime minister and for choosing a candidate from among contending leaders when there was no parliamentary majority. Otherwise, the governor general's office was essentially ceremonial.

The government was responsible to a parliament composed of the popularly elected 312-member House of Representatives and the 44-member Senate, chosen by the regional legislatures.

In general, the regional constitutions followed the federal model, both structurally and functionally. The most striking departure was in the Northern Region, where special provisions brought the regional constitution into consonance with Islamic law and custom. The similarity between the federal and regional constitutions was deceptive, however, and the conduct of public affairs reflected wide differences among the regions.

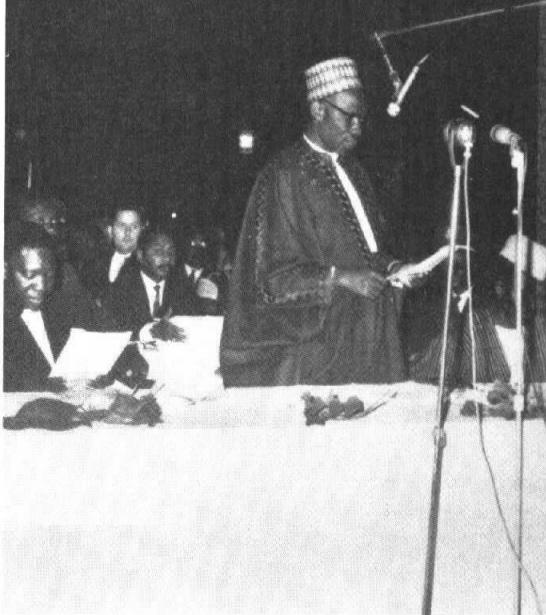
In February 1961, a plebiscite was conducted to determine the disposition of the Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons, which were administered by Britain as United Nations Trust Territories. By an overwhelming majority, voters in the Southern Cameroons opted to join formerly French-administered Cameroon over integration with Nigeria as a separate federated region. In the Northern Cameroons, however, the largely Muslim electorate chose to merge with Nigeria's Northern Region.

Politics in the Crisis Years

During the first three years after independence, the federal government was an NPC-NCNC coalition, despite the conflicting natures of the two partners. The former was regionalist, Muslim, and aristocratic; the latter was nationalist, Christian, and populist. Moreover, the NCNC supported opponents of the NPC in regional elections in the Northern Region. Although a more natural ideological alignment of the Action Group and the NCNC was called for by some Action Group leaders, it held no attraction for the NCNC as long as the NPC was assured of a parliamentary majority.

Domination of the Northern Region by the NPC and NCNC control of the Eastern Region were assured. Action Group control of the Western Region, however, was weakened and then collapsed because of divisions within the party that reflected cleavages within

*Abubakar Tafawa Balewa,
first prime minister
(1960-66), speaking at
Organization of African Unity
meeting in Addis Ababa
Courtesy Embassy of Nigeria,
Washington*



Yoruba society. This loss of stability in one region gradually undermined the political structure of the whole country.

The leadership of the Action Group, which formed the official opposition in the federal parliament, split in 1962 as a result of a rift between Awolowo and Akintola, prime minister of the Western Region. Awolowo favored the adoption of democratic socialism as party policy, following the lead of Kwame Nkrumah's regime in Ghana. The radical ideology that Awolowo expressed was at variance with his earlier positions, however, and was seen as a bid to make the Action Group an interregional party that drew support across the country from educated younger voters, whose expectations were frustrated by unemployment and the rising cost of living. Akintola, in reaction, attempted to retain the support of conservative party elements who were disturbed by Awolowo's rhetoric. He called for better relations with the NPC and an all-party federal coalition that would remove the Action Group from opposition and give its leaders greater access to power.

Awolowo's radical majority staged the expulsion of Akintola from the party. The governor of the Western Region demanded Akintola's resignation as prime minister (although he had not lost a vote of confidence in the regional legislature) and named a successor recommended by the Action Group to head the government. Akintola immediately organized a new party, the United People's Party,

which pursued a policy of collaboration with the NPC-NCNC government in the federal parliament.

Akintola's resignation in May 1962 sparked bloody rioting in the Western Region and brought effective government to an end as rival legislators, following the example in the streets, introduced violence to the floor of the regional legislature. The federal government declared a state of emergency, dissolved the legislature, and named a federal administrator for the Western Region. One of his first acts was to place many Action Group leaders under house arrest.

Investigations by the federal administrator led to accusations of criminal misuse of public funds against Awolowo and other Action Group leaders. A special commission found that Awolowo had funneled several million pounds from public development corporations to the Action Group through a private investment corporation when he was prime minister of the Western Region in the 1950s. The regional government seized the corporation's assets and pressed legal claims against the Action Group.

In the course of the financial investigation, police uncovered evidence linking Awolowo with a conspiracy to overthrow the government. With a number of other Action Group leaders, he was arrested and put on trial for treason. Authorities charged that 200 activists had received military training in Ghana and had smuggled arms into Nigeria in preparation for a coup d'état. Awolowo was found guilty, along with seventeen others, and was sentenced to ten years in prison. Anthony Enahoro, Awolowo's chief lieutenant who had been abroad at the time of the coup, was extradited from Britain and also was convicted of treason and imprisoned.

In the meantime, the state of emergency was lifted and Balewa, determining that Akintola had been improperly dismissed, obtained his reinstatement as prime minister of the Western Region at the head of a coalition between the NCNC and the United People's Party. The Action Group successfully contested the legality of this action in the courts, but a retroactive amendment to the Western Region's constitution that validated Akintola's reappointment was quickly enacted. As Balewa told parliament, the legalities of the case "had been overtaken by events."

Later in 1963, Nigeria became a republic within the Commonwealth. The change in status called for no practical alteration of the constitutional system. The president, elected to a five-year term by a joint session of the parliament, replaced the crown as the symbol of national sovereignty and the British monarchy as head of state. Azikiwe, who had been governor general, became the republic's first president.

New State Movements

After independence the attitudes of the major parties toward the formation of new states that could accommodate minority aspirations varied widely. The NCNC espoused self-determination for ethnic minorities but only in accordance with its advocacy of a unitary state. The Action Group also supported such movements, including the restoration of the northern Yoruba area (Ilorin) to the Western Region, but as part of a multistate, federal Nigeria. The NPC steadfastly opposed separatism in the Northern Region and attempted with some success to win over disaffected minorities in the middle belt.

Proposals were introduced for the creation of three states as a means of restructuring the regions along ethnic lines. The most extensive revision sought the separation of the middle belt from the Northern Region, a move the United Middle Belt Congress promoted. Serious riots in Tivland in 1960 and 1964 were related to this agitation. Another plan was put forward by the Edo and western Igbo to create the Midwestern Region by separating the whole tract adjacent to the Niger River from the Yoruba-dominated Western Region. At the same time, Ijaw and Efik-Ibibio ethnic groups proposed that the coast between the Niger Delta and Calabar become a new region in order to end Igbo dominance in that area. At this time, however, only the Midwestern Region achieved formal approval, despite opposition of the Action Group. The creation of the region was confirmed by plebiscite in 1963.

The creation of the Midwestern Region reopened the question of the internal restructuring of Nigeria. One motive for a more drastic restructuring was the desire to break up the Northern Region. That region, having more than half the country's population, controlled a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. There was also the fear that the Igbo-dominated NCNC would gain control of the Midwestern legislature and thereby become even more powerful. A new political coalition, the Midwest Democratic Front (MDF), was formed by leaders of the Action Group and the United People's Party to contest the Midwestern Region election with the NCNC. During the campaign, the conservative United People's Party accepted support from the NPC, a fact that NCNC candidates stressed in their call to keep northern influence out of the region. Many Action Group workers withdrew support from the MDF in protest, and some allied themselves with the NCNC. In the 1964 elections, the NCNC won by a landslide.

The Census Controversy

Because seats in the House of Representatives were apportioned on the basis of population, the constitutionally mandated decennial census had important political implications (see Population, ch. 2; The First Republic, ch. 4). The Northern Region's political strength, marshaled by the NPC, had arisen in large measure from the results of the 1952-53 census, which had identified 54 percent of the country's population in that area. A national campaign early in 1962 addressed the significance of the forthcoming census. Politicians stressed the connection between the census and parliamentary representation on the one hand, and the amount of financial support for regional development on the other. The 1962 census was taken by head count, but there was evidence that many enumerators obtained their figures from heads of families, and many persons managed to be counted more than once.

Southern hopes for a favorable reapportionment of legislative seats were buoyed by preliminary results, which gave the south a clear majority. A supplementary count was immediately taken in the Northern Region that turned up an additional 9 million persons reportedly missed in the first count. Charges of falsification were voiced on all sides and led to an agreement among federal and regional governments to nullify the count and to conduct a new census.

The second nationwide census reported a population of 60.5 million, which census officials considered impossibly high. A scaled-down figure of 55.6 million, including 29.8 million in the Northern Region, finally was submitted and adopted by the federal government, leaving legislative apportionment virtually unchanged.

Demographers generally rejected the results of the 1963 census as inflated, arguing that the actual figure was as much as 10 million lower. Controversy over the census remained a lively political issue. NCNC leaders publicly charged the Northern Region's government with fraud, a claim that was denied by Balewa and by Bello, the regional prime minister.

Popular Disillusionment and Political Realignment

The conspiracy trials that led to the conviction of two of the country's most dynamic politicians, Awolowo and Enahoro, severely weakened public confidence in the political and judicial systems. Abuses were widespread, including intimidation of opponents by threats of criminal investigation, manipulation of the constitution and the courts, diversion of public funds to party and private use, rigging of elections, and corruption of public officials whose political

patrons expected them to put party interests ahead of their legal responsibilities. Popular disillusion also intensified because politicians failed to produce benefits commensurate with expectations of constituents.

The volatile political scene leading up to elections in 1964 was ominous. The Action Group virtually disappeared from the federal parliament as a result of the Awolowo affair, thereby fundamentally altering political alignments at the national level. By early 1964, therefore, the federal parliament no longer had a recognized opposition. Akintola's party, which was renamed the Nigerian National Democratic Party in an effort to attract more support, now dominated the Western Region. The federal government nominally consisted of a consensus of the ruling parties of all four regions, but it was a fragile alliance at best and had emerged as a result of heavy-handed tactics. The NCNC had strengthened its position by gaining firm control of the Midwestern Region, so that it dominated two of the four regions. Akintola managed to undermine the NCNC in the Western Region, even though nationally he was pledged to an alliance with the NCNC. For its part, the NCNC denounced Akintola's party as a "tool of the NPC" and allied itself with remnants of the Action Group.

Political realignment was deceptive, however, because the basic divisions within the country remained unaltered. The NPC was reasonably secure in the Northern Region, despite the presence of minor parties, but it could not govern Nigeria alone, and alliances with any of the southern parties were ideologically incompatible and very tenuous. The NPC continued its dominance because of the inability of the other parties to find common ground among themselves and with northern progressives. Awolowo's pointed remarks in 1963 that democracy could be secured only if the Action Group and the NCNC could reach an accommodation that would remove the deadweight of the NPC from power fueled NPC concerns. The detention of Awolowo prevented that alliance from maturing, but it did not result in greater political stability. Indeed the alliance between the NPC and NCNC, which had dominated federal politics and destroyed the Action Group, now fell apart.

The 1964-65 Elections

The federal parliamentary election campaign in December 1964—the first since independence—was contested by two political alliances incorporating all the major parties. The Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) was composed of the NPC, Akintola's Western-based Nigerian National Democratic Party, and opposition parties

representing ethnic minorities in the Midwestern and Eastern regions. It was opposed by the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), which joined the NCNC and the remnants of the Action Group with two minority-based northern allies, the Northern Elements Progressive Union and the United Middle Belt Congress.

Not surprisingly, the NNA adopted a platform that reflected the views of the northern political elite and, hence, was an attempt by the NPC to gain firmer control of federal politics through an alliance with the Western Region. Its appeal to voters outside the north was based essentially on the advantages to be gained from associating with the party in power. The NNA preyed on Yoruba fears of Igbo domination of the federal government. The UPGA was employed in an attempt by the NCNC to use the two regional governments that it controlled as a springboard to domination of the federal government. Strategically it offered a reformist program, combining a planned economy that endorsed increased public spending while also encouraging private enterprise. The UPGA proposed to divide the country into states that reflected ethnicity. Its proposals were intended to undermine the existing regional basis of political power by creating a sufficient number of states in each region so that none of the major ethnic groups—Hausa, Yoruba, or Igbo—could dominate a region. The UPGA presented itself as an alternative to northern and, more specifically, to Hausa-Fulani domination of the federal government. Convinced that it would win if the election were held in an atmosphere free from interference by ruling parties in the Northern Region and the Western Region, the UPGA spent most of its efforts denouncing what it regarded as NNA intentions to rig the election in those regions.

The election was postponed for several weeks because of discrepancies between the number of names on voting rolls and on census returns. Even then the UPGA was not satisfied and called on its supporters to boycott the election. The boycott was effective in the Eastern Region, where polling places did not open in fifty-one constituencies that had more than one candidate running for office. In other constituencies in the region, UPGA candidates ran unopposed. Nationwide, only 4 million voters cast ballots, out of 15 million who were eligible. The NNA elected 198 candidates, of whom 162 represented the NPC, from the 261 constituencies returning results. After an embarrassing delay, President Azikiwe agreed to ask Balewa to form a government with the NNA majority. The boycott had failed to stop the election, and in March 1965 supplementary elections were held in those areas in the Eastern Region and in Lagos where the boycott had been honored. UPGA candidates were elected in all these constituencies, bringing the



Third session of the Enugu Provincial Assembly in the early 1960s
Courtesy Embassy of Nigeria, Washington

NCNC-dominated coalition a total of 108 seats in the House of Representatives. The UPGA became the official opposition.

After this decisive defeat, the UPGA prepared for the November 1965 legislative election in the Western Region in an attempt to gain control of the three southern regions and the Federal Territory of Lagos, the region surrounding the capital. If successful, the NPC-dominated NNA still would have controlled the House of Representatives, but it would have given the predominantly southern UPGA a majority in the Senate, whose members were chosen by the regional legislatures.

Once more NCNC strategy failed. Amid widespread charges of voting irregularities, Akintola's NNDP, supported by its NPC ally, scored an impressive victory in November. There were extensive protests, including considerable grumbling among senior army officials, at the apparent perversion of the democratic process. In the six months after the election, an estimated 2,000 people died in violence that erupted in the Western Region. In the face of the disorders, the beleaguered Balewa delegated extraordinary powers to the regional governments to deal with the situation. By this time, Azikiwe and the prime minister were scarcely on speaking terms, and there were suggestions that Nigeria's armed forces should restore order.

In January 1966, army officers attempted to seize power. In a well-coordinated action, the conspirators, most of whom were Igbo, assassinated Balewa in Lagos, Akintola in Ibadan, and Bello in Kaduna, as well as senior officers of northern origin. In a public proclamation, the coup leaders pledged to establish a strong and efficient government committed to a progressive program and eventually to new elections. They vowed to stamp out corruption and to suppress violence. Despite the bloody and calculated character of the coup, these sentiments appealed directly to younger, educated Nigerians in all parts of the country.

The army's commander in chief, Major General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi, quickly intervened to restore discipline within the army. In the absence of Azikiwe, who was undergoing treatment in a London hospital, Balewa's shaken cabinet resigned, leaving the reins of authority to the armed forces. Ironsi, also an Igbo, suspended the constitution, dissolved all legislative bodies, banned political parties, and as an interim measure formed a Federal Military Government (FMG) to prepare the country for a return to civilian rule at an unspecified date. He appointed military governors in each region and assigned officers to ministerial positions, instructing them to implement sweeping institutional reforms.

Ironsi and his advisers favored a unitary form of government, which they thought would eliminate the intransigent regionalism that had been the stumbling block to political and economic progress. A decree issued in March abolished the federation and unified the federal and regional civil services. Civilian experts, largely Igbo, set to work on a new constitution that would provide for a centralized unitary government such as the NCNC had favored since the 1950s.

Although the decree contained a number of concessions to regional interests, including protection of northerners from southern competition in the civil service, Ironsi's action showed dangerous disregard for the nuances of regional politics and badly misjudged the intensity of ethnic sensitivities in the aftermath of the bloody coup. The failure of the military government to prosecute Igbo officers responsible for murdering northern leaders stirred animosities further. Igbo civil servants and merchants residing in the north made the situation even worse through their triumphant support for the coup. Furthermore, Ironsi was vulnerable to accusations of favoritism toward the Igbo. The coup was perceived not so much as an effort to impose a unitary government as a plot by the Igbo to dominate Nigeria. Likewise, many Muslims saw the military decrees as Christian-inspired attempts to undermine emirate government.

Troops of northern origin, who made up the bulk of the infantry, became increasingly restive. Fighting broke out between them and Igbo soldiers in garrisons in the south. In June mobs in the northern cities, abetted by local officials, carried out a pogrom against resident Igbo, massacring several hundred people and destroying Igbo-owned property. Some northern leaders spoke seriously of secession. Many northerners feared that Ironsi intended to deprive them of power and to consolidate further an Igbo-dominated centralized state.

In July northern officers and army units staged a coup, during which Ironsi and a number of other Igbo officers were killed. The Muslim officers named thirty-one-year-old Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Yakubu "Jack" Gowon, a Christian from a small ethnic group (the Anga) in the middle belt, as a compromise candidate to head the FMG. A young and relatively obscure officer serving as army chief of staff, Gowon had not been involved in the coup, but he enjoyed wide support among northern troops who subsequently insisted that he be given a position in the ruling body. His first act was to repeal the Ironsi decree and to restore federalism, a step followed by the release of Awolowo and Enahoro from prison.

Civil War

Throughout the remainder of 1966 and into 1967, the FMG sought to convene a constituent assembly for revision of the constitution that might enable an early return to civilian rule. Nonetheless, the tempo of violence increased. In September attacks on Igbo in the north were renewed with unprecedented ferocity, stirred up by Muslim traditionalists with the connivance, Eastern Region leaders believed, of northern political leaders. The army was sharply divided along regional lines. Reports circulated that troops from the Northern Region had participated in the mayhem. The estimated number of deaths ranged as high as 30,000, although the figure was probably closer to 8,000 to 10,000. More than 1 million Igbo returned to the Eastern Region. In retaliation, some northerners were massacred in Port Harcourt and other eastern cities, and a counterexodus of non-Igbo was under way.

The Eastern Region's military governor, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, was under pressure from Igbo officers to assert greater independence from the FMG. Indeed, the eastern military government refused to recognize Gowon's legitimacy on the ground that he was not the most senior officer in the chain of command. Some of Ojukwu's colleagues questioned whether the country could be reunited amicably after the outrages committed

against the Igbo in the Northern Region. Ironically, many responsible easterners who had advocated a unitary state now called for looser ties with the other regions.

The military commanders and governors, including Ojukwu, met in Lagos to consider solutions to the regional strife. But they failed to reach a settlement, despite concessions offered by the northerners, because it proved impossible to guarantee the security of Igbo outside the Eastern Region. The military conferees reached a consensus only in the contempt they expressed for civilian politicians. Fearing for his safety, Ojukwu refused invitations to attend subsequent meetings in Lagos.

In January 1967, the military leaders and senior police officials met at Aburi, Ghana, at the invitation of the Ghanaian military government. By now the Eastern Region was threatening secession. In a last-minute effort to hold Nigeria together, the military reached an accord that provided for a loose confederation of regions. The federal civil service vigorously opposed the Aburi Agreement, however. Awolowo, regrouping his supporters, demanded the removal of all northern troops garrisoned in the Western Region and warned that if the Eastern Region left the federation, the Western Region would follow. The FMG agreed to the troop withdrawal.

In May Gowon issued a decree implementing the Aburi Agreement. Even the Northern Region leaders, who had been the first to threaten secession, now favored the formation of a multistate federation. Meanwhile, the military governor of the Midwestern Region announced that his region must be considered neutral in the event of civil war.

The Ojukwu government rejected the plan for reconciliation and made known its intention to retain all revenues collected in the Eastern Region in reparation for the cost of resettling Igbo refugees. The eastern leaders had reached the point of rupture in their relations with Lagos and the rest of Nigeria. Despite offers made by the FMG that met many of Ojukwu's demands, the Eastern Region Consultative Assembly voted May 26 to secede from Nigeria. In Lagos, Gowon proclaimed a state of emergency and unveiled plans for abolition of the regions and for redision of the country into twelve states. This provision broke up the Northern Region, undermining the possibility of continued northern domination and offering a major concession to the Eastern Region. It was also a strategic move, which won over eastern minorities and deprived the rebellious Igbo heartland of its control over the oil fields and access to the sea. Gowon also appointed prominent civilians, including

Awolowo, as commissioners in the federal and new state governments, thus broadening his political support.

On May 30, Ojukwu answered the federal decree with the proclamation of the independent Republic of Biafra, named after the Bight of Biafra. He cited as the principal cause for this action the Nigerian government's inability to protect the lives of easterners and suggested its culpability in genocide, depicting secession as a measure taken reluctantly after all efforts to safeguard the Igbo people in other regions had failed.

Initially, the FMG launched "police measures" to restore the authority of Lagos in the Eastern Region. Army units attempted to advance into secessionist territory in July, but rebel troops easily stopped them. The Biafrans retaliated with a surprise thrust into the Midwestern Region, where they seized strategic points. However, effective control of the delta region remained under federal control despite several rebel attempts to take the non-Igbo area. The federal government began to mobilize large numbers of recruits to supplement its 10,000-member army.

By the end of 1967, federal forces had regained the Midwestern Region and secured the delta region, which was reorganized as the Rivers State and the Southeastern State, cutting off Biafra from direct access to the sea. But a proposed invasion of the rebel-held territory, now confined to the Igbo heartland, stalled along the stiffened Biafran defense perimeter.

A stalemate developed as federal attacks on key towns broke down in the face of stubborn Biafran resistance. Ill-armed and trained under fire, rebel troops nonetheless had the benefit of superior leadership and superb morale. Although vastly outnumbered and outgunned, the Biafrans probed weak points in the federal lines, making lightning tactical gains, cutting off and encircling advancing columns, and launching commando raids behind federal lines. Biafran strikes across the Niger managed to pin down large concentrations of federal troops on the west bank.

In September 1968, Owerri was captured by federal troops advancing from the south, and early in 1969 the federal army, expanded to nearly 250,000 men, opened three fronts in what Gowon touted as the "final offensive." Although federal forces flanked the rebels by crossing the Niger at Onitsha, they failed to break through. The Biafrans subsequently retook Owerri in fierce fighting and threatened to push on to Port Harcourt until thwarted by a renewed federal offensive in the south. That offensive tightened the noose around the rebel enclave without choking it into submission.

Biafran propaganda, which stressed the threat of genocide to the Igbo people, was extremely effective abroad in winning sympathy

for the secessionist movement. Food and medical supplies were scarce in Biafra. Humanitarian aid, as well as arms and munitions, reached the embattled region from international relief organizations and from private and religious groups in the United States and Western Europe by way of nighttime airlifts over the war zone. The bulk of Biafra's military supplies was purchased on the international arms market, with unofficial assistance provided by France through former West African colonies. In one of the most dramatic episodes of the civil war, Carl Gustav von Rosen, a Swedish count who at one time commanded the Ethiopian air force, and several other Swedish pilots flew five jet trainers modified for combat in successful strikes against Nigerian military installations.

Biafra's independence was recognized by Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon, and the Ivory Coast, but it was compromised in the eyes of most African states by the approval of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, and Portugal. Britain extended diplomatic support and limited military assistance to the federal government. The Soviet Union became an important source of military equipment for Nigeria. Modern Soviet-built warplanes, flown by Egyptian and British pilots, interdicted supply flights and inflicted heavy casualties during raids on Biafran urban centers. In line with its policy of noninvolvement, the United States prohibited the sale of military goods to either side while continuing to recognize the FMG.

In October 1969, Ojukwu appealed for United Nations (UN) mediation for a cease-fire as a prelude to peace negotiations. But the federal government insisted on Biafra's surrender, and Gowon observed that "rebel leaders had made it clear that this is a fight to the finish and that no concession will ever satisfy them." In December federal forces opened a four-pronged offensive, involving 120,000 troops, that sliced Biafra in half. When Owerri fell on January 6, 1970, Biafran resistance collapsed. Ojukwu fled to the Ivory Coast, leaving his chief of staff, Philip Effiong, behind as "officer administering the government." Effiong called for an immediate, unconditional cease-fire January 12 and submitted to the authority of the federal government at ceremonies in Lagos.

Estimates in the former Eastern Region of the number of dead from hostilities, disease, and starvation during the thirty-month civil war are estimated at between 1 million and 3 million. The end of the fighting found more than 3 million Igbo refugees crowded into a 2,500-square-kilometer enclave. Prospects for the survival of many of them and for the future of the region were dim. There were severe shortages of food, medicine, clothing, and housing. The economy of the region was shattered. Cities were in ruins; schools, hospitals, utilities, and transportation facilities were destroyed or

inoperative. Overseas groups instituted a major relief effort, but the FMG insisted on directing all assistance and recovery operations and barred some agencies that had supplied aid to Biafra.

Because charges of genocide had fueled international sympathy for Biafra, the FMG allowed a team of international experts to observe the surrender and to look for evidence. Subsequently, the observers testified that they found no evidence of genocide or systematic destruction of property, although there was considerable evidence of famine and death as a result of the war. Furthermore, under Gowon's close supervision, the federal government ensured that Igbo civilians would not be treated as defeated enemies. A program was launched to reintegrate the Biafran rebels into a unified Nigeria. A number of public officials who had "actively counselled, aided, or abetted" secession were dismissed, but a clear distinction was made between them and those who had simply carried out their duties. Igbo personnel soon were being reenlisted in the federal armed forces. There were no trials and few people were imprisoned. Ojukwu, in exile, was made the scapegoat, but efforts to have him extradited failed.

An Igbo official, Ukapi "Tony" Asika, was named administrator of the new East Central State, comprising the Igbo heartland. Asika had remained loyal to the federal government during the civil war, but as a further act of conciliation, his all-Igbo cabinet included members who had served under the secessionist regime. Asika was unpopular with many Igbo, who considered him a traitor, and his administration was characterized as inept and corrupt. In three years under his direction, however, the state government achieved the rehabilitation of 70 percent of the industry incapacitated during the war. The federal government granted funds to cover the state's operating expenses for an interim period, and much of the war damage was repaired. Social services and public utilities were slowly reinstated, although not to the prewar levels.

The Federal Military Government in the Postwar Era

In the postwar period, all significant political power remained concentrated in the FMG. None of the three major ethnic groups had a powerful voice in its executive element, which was disproportionately composed of representatives of middle belt minorities and to a lesser extent of Muslim Yoruba and of Ijaw and Ibibio from the Eastern Region. The Northern Region had been divided into six states in 1967, which left the area without its former power base in the federation. The decision was accepted by northerners in part because of the military government's relative strength in comparison with earlier civilian governments. Acceptance also was motivated

by the fact that northerners were less fearful of the Igbo or a southern coalition. Only the Yoruba power base in the west retained its prewar characteristics. The 1967 administrative structure also made national unity attractive to the westerners because, with the creation of a Yoruba state (Kwara) in the north, their position seemed stronger relative to the northerners. Remaining points of conflict included the number of civil service posts to be allotted to each ethnic group and the assignment of civil servants from former regional services to states other than their own.

The Gowon Regime

Gowon's influence depended upon his position as chairman of the Supreme Military Council, which had come into existence in March 1967. The council included top-ranking staff officers, service and police heads, state military governors, and the civilian administrator of the East Central State. Gowon also chaired the Federal Executive Council, the cabinet of ministers composed of military officers and civilian technocrats. The regime ruled by decree, although the concurrence of state military governors was sought before decrees were issued.

In October 1970, Gowon announced his intention to stay in power until 1976, which was set as the target year for completion of the military's political program and the return to an elected civilian government. Gowon outlined a nine-point program that would enable the military to relinquish control. Included in the package were reorganization of the armed forces; implementation of a national economic development plan, including reconstruction of war-damaged areas; eradication of corruption; establishment of more states; adoption of a new constitution; introduction of a formula for allocating revenue; completion of a national census; organization of national political parties; and elections at federal and state levels. Criticism of the six-year plan was widespread because the agenda was so broad. Many Nigerians feared that the military planned to retain power indefinitely. The reaction of civilian politicians was particularly negative. Muslim traditionalists also expressed concerns that military rule, with its modernizing tendencies, would erode the authority of the emirates.

Foreign Policy

Gowon reaffirmed the priorities in foreign policy established at independence. These included active participation in the UN, advocacy of pan-African solidarity through the Organization of African Unity (OAU), regional cooperation, support for anti-colonial and liberation movements—particularly those in southern



Railroad construction project in 1963 to open market for agricultural produce in northeastern Nigeria
Courtesy World Bank

Africa—and nonalignment in the East-West conflict. The role of Nigeria in world affairs, outside its African concerns, was insignificant, however.

Nigeria was admitted to the UN within a week of independence in 1960. It was represented on the committees of specialized agencies and took its turn as a nonpermanent member of the Security Council. One of Nigeria's earliest and most significant contributions to the UN was to furnish troops for the peacekeeping operation in Zaire in the early 1960s. By 1964 Nigerian army units, under Ironsi's command, formed the backbone of the UN force. The FMG was committed to eliminating white-minority rule in Africa, and it channeled financial and military aid to liberation movements through the OAU.

Although there was considerable African criticism of Nigeria during the civil war, the military government resisted this pressure as interference in the country's internal affairs. An OAU statement in 1967 backing the federal position on national unity assuaged Nigerian feelings to some extent, but Lagos protested subsequent OAU efforts to bring about a cease-fire. When the war ended, Nigeria's participation in OAU activities returned to normal.

There were minor problems relating to border demarcations with neighboring countries, but these were resolved to the satisfaction of the parties involved. Relations also were mended with African states that had recognized Biafra. Particularly close ties were developed with the military regime in Ghana, which gave full support to the federal government during the civil war. In 1975 Nigeria joined other West African countries in creating the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), whose mandate was the reduction of trade barriers among countries in the region. Sponsored by Gowon, the agreement was indicative of the government's concern with improving intraregional economic ties.

Nigeria played an active role in the Commonwealth, which linked Nigeria to developing countries outside Africa and complemented regional ties through ECOWAS and the OAU. Financial and technical assistance was channeled to Nigeria through the Commonwealth. The aid came from Britain, Canada, and Australia, with which Nigeria had advantageous trade relations. Nigeria's interaction with Britain continued to be cooperative, although the renewal of arms sales to South Africa, permitted by the Conservative British government in the early 1970s, caused some strain in Nigeria. Relations cooled even more because of Nigeria's apprehension over Britain's application for entry into the European Economic Community (EEC). Nigeria feared that it would suffer economically as a result of British membership in the EEC.

The FMG was committed to the principle of nonalignment, a policy initially established in the early years of independence. Acceptance of Western aid—including US\$225 million from the United States in the early years of independence—tended to undermine this position. Nigeria had begun to move toward a more autonomous position in 1962, when the Anglo-Nigerian Defense Pact was abrogated. With this step, Nigeria affirmed its independence of British foreign policy to which it had adhered since achieving nationhood. The abrogation of the pact was a clear message of nonalignment. During the war, the federal government accepted assistance from both East and West. Aircraft and heavy equipment were purchased from the Soviet Union, for example, because Britain and the United States refused to supply heavy armaments. Nigeria's relations with the United States were good, largely because the United States provided financial aid and recognized the FMG during the civil war. United States ties with South Africa and Portugal caused some friction on the official level, and there was considerable criticism in the Nigerian press. The Nigerian version of nonalignment had a slightly pro-Western tilt.

Economic Development

After the civil war, the FMG moved to resurrect the six-year development plan inaugurated in 1962. The First National Development Plan charted Nigeria's transition from an essentially agricultural economy to a mixed economy based on agricultural expansion and limited industrial growth. Government was heavily involved in the economy because locally generated private investment was unable to generate sufficient capital for development. New development plans were instituted in 1970 and 1975, but the goals set in all three plans proved unrealistic (see *Planning*, ch. 3).

By the late 1960s, oil had replaced cocoa, peanuts, and palm products as the country's biggest foreign exchange earner. In 1971 Nigeria—by then the world's seventh-largest petroleum producer—became a member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The dramatic rise in world oil prices in 1974 caused a sudden flood of wealth that can be described as "dynamic chaos." Much of the revenue was intended for investment to diversify the economy, but it also spurred inflation and, coming in the midst of widespread unemployment, underscored inequities in distribution. In 1975 production fell sharply as a result of the sudden decrease in world demand, and prices moved downward until late in the year when OPEC intervened to raise prices. Nigeria fully supported OPEC policies.

In 1972 the government issued an indigenization decree, the first of a number of Nigerian Enterprises Promotion decrees that barred aliens from investing in specified enterprises and reserved participation in certain trades to Nigerians. At the time, about 70 percent of commercial firms operating in Nigeria were foreign-owned. In 1975 the federal government bought 60 percent of the equity in the marketing operations of the major oil companies in Nigeria, but full nationalization was rejected as a means of furthering its program of indigenization.

Unemployment constituted an increasingly serious problem. Large numbers of farm workers who had gone to urban areas in search of higher wages remained in the cities even if they failed to find jobs, while school graduates and dropouts flooded the labor market at a rate of 600,000 a year in the mid-1970s. Unemployment reached its highest levels in the crowded Igbo areas in the east, where the economy still was recovering from the effects of the war. Skilled workers were reluctant to leave the east in search of work, although eventually the shortage of skilled workers in other parts of the country began to have its effect in overcoming Igbo fears. The dangers involved in discharging large numbers of soldiers

who had no job prospects made demobilization of the costly military establishment undesirable. Substantial increases in public-sector employment promised to absorb some of the soldiers, but they lacked training. These economic problems assumed an imposing political dimension. To some extent, they reflected a pattern in the world economic situation, but the popular imagination blamed corruption and mismanagement and held the Gowon regime responsible.

The regime also had to deal with a severe drought that struck the northern states between 1972 and 1974. The drought was the most serious since that of 1913–14. The drought and resulting famine affected the Sahel countries to the west, north, and east far more than Nigeria, but considerable numbers of refugees poured into Nigeria from Niger. Famine conditions also prevailed in some parts of the north of Nigeria. In the long run, however, Nigerian agriculture benefited from the rise in prices that resulted from crop failures in other parts of the Sahel. In the short run, the drought influenced policy decisions about the necessity of promoting irrigation schemes and reforestation.

Crime, Corruption, and Political Turbulence

In 1972 Gowon partially lifted the ban on political activity that had been in force since 1966 in order to permit a discussion of a new constitution that would prepare the way for civilian rule. The debate that followed was ideologically charged. Awolowo's call for a transition to "democratic socialism" made the military particularly nervous. The press, trade unions, and universities demanded a quick return to the democratic process. The call for new states was loud, but there was no agreement over how many there should be. Gowon abruptly ended public discussion, explaining that "peace is more important than politics."

The decennial census was scheduled for 1973. Under the banner "Prepare to be Counted," the military government conducted a public campaign that emphasized the technical rather than political dimensions of the exercise. The procedure was to be supervised by a committee whose members were selected carefully for geographical and ethnic balance, and computers were to be used for processing the returns. Despite measures taken to ensure a more accurate count than had been possible before, the results once again confounded demographers: the census found that Nigeria's population had increased by nearly 44 percent in 10 years, a rate of growth unprecedented in any developing country. According to the returns submitted, the north contained 64 percent of the total population, compared with 53.7 percent in 1963, a figure even then

believed to be exaggerated. The 1973 census, on which representation in a new, elected parliament would be based, revived fears that one ethnic group would permanently dominate the others. It also meant that a considerable share of oil revenues would flow to the northern states under the existing system of allocation. The government failed in its efforts to sell the census as a technical exercise because the political implications were widely understood and hotly debated, despite the ban on political discussion.

The Gowon regime came under fire because of widespread and obvious corruption at every level of national life. Graft, bribery, and nepotism were an integral part of a complex system of patronage and "gift" giving through which influence and authority were asserted. Although the military had pledged to rid the government of corruption, the public became increasingly aware of abuses, primarily because of daily exposés in the press. In 1973 the federal government established a special anticorruption police force—the "X-Squad"—whose subsequent investigations revealed ingenious forms of extortion and fraud—not only in government and public corporations but also in private business and in the professions.

A major scandal that had international implications and reached the highest levels of government and the business community took place in the mid-1970s; it involved the purchase abroad of construction materials by state agents at prices well above market values. Rake-offs were pocketed by public officials and private contractors. Other scandals in hospitals and orphanages shocked the populace, and corruption in importing medical drugs whose effective dates long since had expired revealed that even the health of Nigerians was at risk.

Inefficiencies compounded the impact of corruption. In mid-1975, 400 cargo ships—250 of them carrying 1.5 million tons of cement—clogged the harbor of Lagos, which had been paralyzed for fifteen months with vessels waiting to be unloaded. To compound the error, spoiled and inferior-grade cement was concealed by mixing it with acceptable material for use in public building projects. Later, buildings collapsed or had to be dismantled because of the inferior product. New roads washed away because of bad construction and inadequate controls. In these scandals, as in others, the culprits were a combination of Nigerian businessmen, government officials, and foreign companies. Few people and few projects seemed exempt from the scourge.

Crime posed a threat to internal security and had a seriously negative impact on efforts to bring about economic development. Armed gangs, often composed of former soldiers, roamed the countryside engaging in robbery, extortion, and kidnapping. The gangs

sometimes operated with the connivance of the police or included moonlighting soldiers. Pirates raided cargo ships awaiting entry to ports or unloaded them at the piers ahead of the stevedores. Drug trafficking and smuggling were prevalent. Punishment was meted out to large batches of convicted and suspected criminals, who were dispatched by firing squads in public executions meant to impress spectators with the seriousness of the offenses and with the government's concern to curb crime. These measures had no noticeable effect on the crime rate, however, but seemed rather to provoke a callous public attitude toward violence.

In January 1975, Gowon revamped the membership of the Federal Executive Council, increasing the number of military ministers. He depended more and more on a small group of advisers and became increasingly inaccessible to his military colleagues. Without broad consultation, he backed off from the 1976 date set for a return to civilian rule, explaining that to adhere rigidly to it would "amount to a betrayal of a trust" and "certainly throw the nation back into confusion." Public employees staged protest strikes in May and June that brought essential services to a standstill. The government responded by granting retroactive wage increases that averaged 30 percent; the action fed inflation and led to industrial strikes as union members demanded parallel raises.

The political atmosphere deteriorated to the point that Gowon was deposed in a bloodless coup d'état July 29, 1975—the ninth anniversary of the revolt that had brought him to power. At the time, Gowon was at an OAU summit meeting in Kampala, Uganda. The perpetrators of the coup included many of the officers who had participated in the July 1966 coup. Even the officers responsible for Gowon's security were involved. Gowon pledged his full loyalty to the new regime and left for exile in Britain, where he received a pension from the Nigerian government.

The Regime of Murtala Muhammad, 1975-76

The armed forces chose thirty-eight-year-old Brigadier (later General) Murtala Ramat Muhammad, a Muslim northerner, to succeed Gowon. A Hausa, trained at the British military academy at Sandhurst, Murtala Muhammad had command of federal field forces in the final phase of the civil war, including being responsible for the abortive efforts to cross the Niger River. He was not directly involved in the coup d'état that brought him to power, but he had played a prominent role in rallying northern officers behind the July 1966 coup that felled Ironsi. In a short time, Murtala Muhammad's policies won him broad popular support, and his decisiveness elevated him to the status of a national hero.

One of his first acts was to scrap the 1973 census, which was weighted in favor of the north, and to revert to the 1963 count for official purposes. Murtala Muhammad removed top federal and state officials to break links with the Gowon regime and to restore public confidence in the federal government. More than 10,000 public officials and employees were dismissed without benefits, on account of age, health, incompetence, or malpractice. The purge affected the civil service, judiciary, police and armed forces, diplomatic service, public corporations, and universities. Some officials were brought to trial on charges of corruption, and one former military state governor was executed for gross misconduct in office. Murtala Muhammad also began the demobilization of 100,000 troops from the swollen ranks of the armed forces.

Twelve of the twenty-five ministerial posts on the new Federal Executive Council went to civilians, but the cabinet was secondary to the executive Supreme Military Council. Murtala Muhammad imposed the authority of the federal government in areas formerly reserved for the states, restricting the latitude exercised by state governments and their governors in determining and executing policy. Newly appointed military governors of the states were not given seats on the Supreme Military Coucil, but instead were expected to administer federal policies handed down by Murtala Muhammad through the military coucil. The federal government took over the operation of the country's two largest newspapers, made broadcasting a federal monopoly, and brought remaining state-run universities under federal control.

Murtala Muhammad initiated a comprehensive review of the Third National Development Plan. Singling out inflation as the greatest danger to the economy, he was determined to reduce the money supply that had been swollen by government expenditures on public works. Murtala Muhammad also announced that his government would encourage the rapid expansion of the private sector into areas dominated by public corporations. He reappraised foreign policy, stressing a "Nigeria first" orientation in line with OPEC price guidelines that was to the disadvantage of other African countries. Nigeria became "neutral" rather than "nonaligned" in international affairs. The shift in orientation became apparent with respect to Angola. Nigeria had worked with the OAU to bring about a negotiated reconciliation of the warring factions in the former Portuguese colony, but late in 1975 Murtala Muhammad announced Nigeria's support for the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola—MPLA), citing South Africa's armed intervention on the side of the rival National Union for the Total Independence of

Angola (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola—UNITA). The realignment strained relations with the United States, which argued for the withdrawal of Cuban troops and Soviet advisers from Angola. In October the Nigerian air force took delivery of Soviet-built aircraft that had been ordered under Gowon.

Preparation for the Return to Civilian Rule

Murtala Muhammad set in motion the stalled machinery of devolution to civilian rule with a commitment to hand over power to a democratically elected government by October 1979. The transition, as outlined by Murtala Muhammad, would take place in successive stages. In August 1975, he appointed a five-member panel to study Gowon's plan for a nineteen-state federation that would "help to erase memories of past political ties and emotional attachments." The plan, reaffirmed by the panel, assaulted ethnic power by recommending that the predominantly Yoruba Western State be divided into three states, the Igbo East Central State into two, and the six states of the north into nine states, only three of which would be predominantly Hausa-Fulani. Murtala Muhammad claimed that he wanted to avoid the "proliferation of states" that would highlight the problems of minorities and warned petitioners that no further demands for new states would be tolerated. In the end, seven more states were created. In 1976 Nigeria came to have nineteen states.

In October 1975, Murtala Muhammad named a blue-ribbon committee, drawn from business, the professions, universities, and the civil service, as well as from prominent civilian political leaders, to draft a constitution that would be put before a constituent assembly for approval. Awolowo, the spokesman for the Nigerian left, was excluded from the committee. Murtala Muhammad cautioned the drafting committee against opening old wounds. He favored consensus politics that avoided the institutionalized opposition of the former constitution. Rather than a British parliamentary system, he wanted executive and legislative functions clearly defined, preferring a strong executive on the United States model. In his instructions to the committee, Murtala Muhammad said he preferred the elimination of all political parties, and failing that, he suggested that parties be limited in number to those with a genuinely national constituency.

Murtala Muhammad was assassinated during an unsuccessful coup d'état in February 1976, and the country went into deep mourning. In less than a year, this man had captured the hearts of many Nigerians. The political shake-up and the decisive leadership in the midst of rapid economic growth seemed to promise a

bright future. In fact, there was considerable opposition to Murtala Muhammad that would have become more pronounced in the succeeding months, but this opposition was stifled under the outpouring of national loss.

The attempted coup reflected dissatisfaction within the military that was unconnected with the larger currents of opposition in the country. Two groups of conspirators were involved in the coup. The first, composed of middle-grade officers, was led by Lieutenant Colonel Bukar Dimka, who was related to Gowon by marriage. Dimka's opposition to Murtala Muhammad was both professional and political. Dimka's group protested demobilization and alleged that the FMG was "going communist." A group of colonels answering to Major General I.D. Bisalla, the minister of defense, waited in the wings for Dimka's group to overthrow the government, and then planned to seize power. Dimka, Bisalla, and thirty-eight other conspirators were convicted after a secret trial before a military tribunal and were executed publicly by a firing squad. Evidence published by the FMG implied that both groups of conspirators had been in communication with Gowon, who was accused of complicity in the plot against Murtala Muhammad. The British government refused to accede to Nigerian demands for Gowon's extradition, however, and protests against the decision forced Britain to recall its high commissioner from Lagos.

The Obasanjo Regime, 1976–79

Lieutenant General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba, succeeded Murtala Muhammad. As chief of staff of Supreme Headquarters, Obasanjo was Murtala Muhammad's deputy and had the support of the military. He had commanded the federal division that took Owerri, effectively bringing an end to the civil war. Keeping the chain of command established by Murtala Muhammad in place, Obasanjo pledged to continue the program for the restoration of civilian government in 1979 and to carry forward the reform program to improve the quality of public service.

The draft constitution was published in October 1976, anticipating the seating of a constituent assembly in 1977. Debates during sessions of the drafting committee were frequently ideological in nature, but divisive proposals, such as the attempt to define Nigeria as a "socialist" state, were decisively rejected. Committee members discarded Murtala Muhammad's recommendations for a non-party system, but they insisted that parties applying for registration had to have national objectives and executive boards whose members represented at least two-thirds of the states. The model for the constitution, which was adopted in 1979, was based on the

Constitution of the United States, with provision for a president, Senate, and House of Representatives. The country was now ready for local elections, to be followed by national elections, that would return Nigeria to civilian rule.

The military regimes of Murtala Muhammad and Obasanjo benefited from a tremendous influx of oil revenue that increased 350 percent between 1973 and 1974, when oil prices skyrocketed, to 1979, when the military stepped down. Increased revenues permitted massive spending that, unfortunately, was poorly planned and concentrated in urban areas. The oil boom was marred by a minor recession in 1978-79, but revenues rebounded until mid-1981. The increase in revenues made possible a rapid rise in income, especially for the urban middle class. There was a corresponding inflation, particularly in the price of food, that promoted both industrialization and the expansion of agricultural production. As a result of the shift to food crops, the traditional export earners—peanuts, cotton, cocoa, and palm products—declined in significance and then ceased to be important at all. Nigeria's exports became dominated by oil.

Industrialization, which had grown slowly after World War II through the civil war, boomed in the 1970s, despite many infrastructure constraints. Growth was particularly pronounced in the production and assembly of consumer goods, including vehicle assembly and the manufacture of soap and detergents, soft drinks, pharmaceuticals, beer, paint, and building materials. Furthermore, there was extensive investment in infrastructure from 1975 to 1980, and the number of parastatals—jointly government- and privately owned companies—proliferated. The Nigerian Enterprises Promotion decrees of 1972 and 1977 further encouraged the growth of an indigenous middle class.

Plans were undertaken for the movement of the federal capital from Lagos to a more central location in the interior at Abuja. Such a step was seen as a means of encouraging the spread of industrial development inland and of relieving the congestion that threatened to choke Lagos. Abuja also was chosen because it was not identified with any particular ethnic group.

Heavy investment was planned in steel production. With Soviet assistance, a steel mill was developed at Ajaokuta in Kwara State, not far from Abuja. The most significant negative sign was the decline of industry associated with agriculture, but large-scale irrigation projects were launched in the states of Borno, Kano, Sokoto, and Bauchi under World Bank (see Glossary) auspices.

Education also expanded rapidly. At the start of the civil war, there were only five universities, but by 1975 the number had

*General Olusegun Obasanjo,
president 1976-79,
at Obasanjo Farms,
Ogun State, 1989*
Courtesy Orlando E. Pacheco



increased to thirteen, with seven more established over the next several years. In 1975 there were 53,000 university students. There were similar advances in primary and secondary school education, particularly in those northern states that had lagged behind.

The Second Republic, 1979-83

The first elections under the 1979 constitution were held on schedule in July and August 1979, and the FMG handed over power to a new civilian government under President Shehu Shagari on October 1, 1979. Nigeria's Second Republic was born amid great expectations. Oil prices were high, and revenues were on the increase. It appeared that unlimited development was possible. Unfortunately, the euphoria was short-lived, and the Second Republic did not survive its infancy.

Five major parties competed for power in the first elections in 1979. As might be expected, there was some continuity between the old parties of the First Republic and the new parties of the Second Republic. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN), for example, inherited the mantle of the Northern People's Congress, although the NPN differed from the NPC in that it obtained significant support in the non-Igbo states of southeastern Nigeria. The United Party of Nigeria (UPN) was the successor to the Action Group, with Awolowo as its head. Its support was almost entirely in the Yoruba states. The Nigerian People's Party (NPP), the

successor to the NCNC, was predominantly Igbo and had Azikiwe as its leader. An attempt to forge an alliance with non-Hausa-Fulani northern elements collapsed in the end, and a breakaway party with strong support in parts of the north emerged from the failed alliance. This northern party was known as the Great Nigerian People's Party under the leadership of Waziri Ibrahim of Borno. Finally, the People's Redemption Party was the successor to the Northern Elements Progressive Union and had Aminu Kano as its head.

Just as the NPC dominated the First Republic, its successor, the NPN, dominated the Second Republic. Shagari won the presidency, defeating Azikiwe in a close and controversial vote. The NPN also took 36 of 95 Senate seats, 165 of 443 House of Representatives seats and won control of seven states (Sokoto, Niger, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Kwara, and Rivers). The NPN lost the governorship of Kaduna State but secured control of the Kaduna legislature. The NPN failed to take Kano and lacked a majority in either the Senate or House of Representatives. It was forced to form a shaky coalition with the NPP, the successor of the NCNC, the old coalition partner of the NPC. The NPP took three states (Anambra, Imo, and Plateau), sixteen Senate seats and seventy-eight House of Representatives seats, so that in combination with the NPN the coalition had a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Nonetheless, the interests of the two parties were often in conflict; hence the NPN was forced to operate alone in most situations. Even though the presidential form of constitution was intended to create a stronger central government, the weakness of the coalition undermined effective central authority.

The UPN came in with the second largest number of seats and effectively formed the official opposition, just as the Action Group had done in the First Republic. The UPN took five states (Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, and Bendel), 28 Senate seats, and 111 House seats. Awolowo continued as spokesman for the left of center. The Great Nigerian People's Party managed to win two states (Borno and Gongola), eight Senate seats, and forty-three House of Representatives seats. The People's Redemption Party, which was the most radical of the parties, won Kano and the governorship of Kaduna, seven Senate seats, and forty-nine House of Representatives seats.

A number of weaknesses beset the Second Republic. First, the coalition that dominated federal politics was not strong, and in effect the NPN governed as a minority because no coalition formed to challenge its supremacy. Second, there was lack of cooperation

between the NPN-dominated federal government and the twelve states controlled by opposition parties. Third, and perhaps most important, the oil boom ended in mid-1981, precisely when expectations of continuous growth and prosperity were at a height.

There were many signs of tension in the country. The Bakalori Project, an irrigation scheme in Sokoto, for example, became the focus of serious unrest in the late 1970s when thousands of farmers protested the loss of their land, and police retaliated by burning villages and killing or wounding hundreds of people. Widespread dissatisfaction became apparent with the Maitatsine, or Yan Tat-sine (followers of the Maitatsine), a quasi-Muslim fringe group that sparked religious riots in Kano in 1980 and Kaduna and Maiduguri in 1982 after police tried to control their activities (see Islam, ch. 2). The disturbance in Kano alone resulted in the deaths of 4,177 people between December 18 and 29, 1980. In 1981 teachers staged a strike because they had not been paid. As the political situation deteriorated, the federal government looked for scapegoats and found them in the large number of foreign workers who had come to Nigeria in response to the jobs created by the oil boom. In the crackdown on illegal immigration, an estimated 2 million foreigners were expelled in January and February 1983, of whom 1 million were from Ghana and 150,000 to 200,000 from Niger.

The recession that set in with the fall in oil prices after the middle of 1981 put severe strains on the Second Republic. For political reasons, government spending continued to accelerate, and the frictions among the political parties and between the federal government and the states only reinforced financial irresponsibility. Nigeria's foreign debt increased from N3.3 billion (for value of the naira—see Glossary) in 1978 to N14.7 billion in 1982. By 1983 the nineteen state governments had run up a combined debt of N13.3 billion. Heavy investment in economic development continued unabated. A steel mill at Ajaokuta in Kwara State was finished, for example, and a second plant opened at Aladje, near Warri, in 1982. Steel rolling mills also were built at Jos, Oshogbo, and Katsina—sites chosen for political reasons. By 1987 N5 billion had been spent on the steel industry alone, most of this committed under the Second Republic, even though the economics of steel development were questionable.

Corruption once again was rampant under the Second Republic. It had been a serious problem since the civil war, when wartime contracts often were awarded under dubious circumstances. Corruption became more serious after the war, most notably in connection with the cement scandal of the early 1970s, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC)

in Lagos, and the development of Abuja as the new federal capital. Corruption under the Second Republic was even greater. Major scandals involved the Federal Housing Scheme, the National Youth Service Corps, the Nigerian External Telecommunications, the Federal Mortgage Bank, the Federal Capital Territory Administration, the Central Bank of Nigeria, and the Nigerian National Supply Company. In addition, the halfhearted attempts to license imports and to control inflation encouraged smuggling, which became a major crime that went virtually unchecked. Umaru Dikko came to the attention of the international community because of an abortive plot to kidnap him in London and return him to Nigeria to stand trial for corruption. British authorities found him in a shipping crate on a runway moments before he was to be sent to Nigeria. Dikko was involved in many scandals, including the issuance of licenses to import rice—rice imports had risen from 50,000 tons in 1976 to 651,000 tons in 1982.

As elections approached in August 1983, an economic decline that reflected low oil prices, widespread corruption, and continued government spending at record levels was proof to many that the Second Republic was in sad shape. The lack of confidence was evident in the massive flight of capital—estimated at US\$14 billion between 1979 and 1983. The second elections under the Second Republic were to be its last. When the results were tallied in 1983, it was clear that there had been fraud (see *The Second Republic*, ch. 4). The NPN increased its control of states from seven to twelve, including Kano and Kaduna. Shagari was reelected president, and the NPN gained 61 of 95 Senate seats and 307 of 450 House of Representatives seats. Not even the supporters of the NPN expected such results. Considering the state of the economy and the public outcry over the rigged election, the Shagari government stayed in power for a surprisingly long time.

Return to Military Rule

On December 31, 1983, the military seized power once again, primarily because there was virtually no confidence in the civilian regime. The fraudulent election was used as an excuse for the takeover, although the military was in fact closely associated with the ousted government. More serious still, the economy was in chaos. The true cost of the failure to use earlier revenues and foreign reserves to good effect now became apparent.

The leader of the coup d'état was Major General Muhammadu Buhari of Katsina, whose background and political loyalties tied him closely to the Muslim north and the deposed government. Buhari had been director of supply and services in the early 1970s,

military governor of Northeast State at the time it was divided into three states, and federal commissioner for petroleum and mines (1976–78) during the height of the oil boom. At the time of the coup, he was commander of the Third Armored Division in Jos.

Buhari tried to restore public accountability and to reestablish a dynamic economy without altering the basic power structure of the country. The military had become impatient with the civilian government. Corruption in particular was out of control, and the fraudulent election had been too obvious. Because the civilians in the NPN could not control the situation, the military would try its hand. Nonetheless, Buhari's political and economic aims were almost identical to those of the NPN (see *The Buhari Regime*, ch. 4).

The military regime conducted tribunals to curb corruption, and many scandals were revealed. Once again the civil service was cleansed, although on a smaller scale than in the purge of 1975. This time, however, the military tried to achieve two aims. First, it attempted to secure public support by reducing the level of corruption; second, it demonstrated its commitment to austerity by trimming the federal budget. As a further attempt to mobilize the country, Buhari launched a War Against Indiscipline in the spring of 1984. This national campaign, which lasted fifteen months, preached the work ethic, emphasized patriotism, decried corruption, and promoted environmental sanitation.

The campaign was a military program for reform and mobilization that achieved few of its aims. Unemployment was on the rise as the recession worsened, so that speeches about working hard seemed out of place. The appeal to Nigerian nationalism had the negative effect of restricting the flexibility of the government in international negotiations over the debt. The campaign was enforced haphazardly; some people were executed or given long jail terms while others were allowed off if they were well-connected. Environmental sanitation meant that the state capitals had to be cleaned up, and the principal target was the petty bourgeoisie who eked a living out of selling services or retailing commodities on a small scale. Their "illegal structures"—market stalls and workshops along the streets—were destroyed, and as a consequence there was widespread resentment among the small traders, repairmen, and others in the self-employed service sector.

The regime attempted to stifle criticism. Journalists were harassed, and many critics were arrested. Symbolically, the arrest of the popular musician, Fela Ransome-Kuti, personified the crackdown. Ransome-Kuti's lyrics sharply mocked the government's inability to deal with national problems. The National Security Organisation (NSO) became the principal instrument of repression.

The NSO, created in 1976, had played only a marginal role in Nigerian politics until the Buhari regime. Buhari appointed Rafindadi, a civilian, as head of the NSO, and under Rafindadi, Nigeria experienced the harassment and insecurity of a secret police force for the first time. Fortunately, the NSO proved to be inefficient, and subsequent reaction to its operations led to its reorganization.

Buhari's biggest problem was Nigeria's foreign debt. Negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) dragged on, and in the end efforts to reschedule the debt failed (see *The Debt Overhang*, ch. 3). Although Buhari was committed to austerity, the IMF insisted on even more drastic measures to cut spending, devalue the currency, and otherwise restructure the economy than most Nigerians were willing to accept. Buhari had to accede to the strong and vocal opposition to the IMF terms. Nigerian nationalism won out over economic necessity, at least in the short run. Furthermore, by the end of 1985 there was considerable frustration within the army. The army had been reduced in size steadily since the end of the civil war, from a total of about 275,000 in 1969 to about 80,000 by the end of the 1980s (see *Demographic Factors and the Defense Budget*, ch. 5). The economic crisis, the campaign against corruption, and civilian criticism of the military undermined Buhari's position, and in August 1985 a group of officers under Major General Ibrahim Babangida removed Buhari from power.

The officers who staged the coup were mostly from the north, but unlike Buhari (of Hausa origin), they were mostly from minority ethnic groups. Babangida, for example, was of Gwari origin from Niger State. He was a member of the Supreme Military Council under the Murtala Muhammad, Obasanjo, and Buhari regimes and had been involved in the 1975 and 1984 coups. Lieutenant General Domkat Bali became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Armed Forces Ruling Council (which succeeded the Supreme Military Council) was dominated by minority groups from the north. Some radicals and technocrats were appointed to ministerial positions.

The new regime was committed to a return to civilian rule and supported the 1979 constitution. Babangida assumed the title of president, which he justified in terms of the constitution. Furthermore, he tried to assuage the unrest in the country by correcting the excesses of the Buhari regime. The NSO was abolished in 1986, and its duties were reassigned to less threatening bodies. The freewheeling press was allowed fuller rein again, although there was still occasional harassment. Trials of former politicians were ended, and many former officials who had been convicted were



Figure 7. Administrative Divisions, 1987-August 1991

Historical Setting

released from jail. In 1987 the regime decreed that all politicians who had held office since 1960 and who had been convicted of criminal offenses were banned from politics.

The Babangida regime had a rocky start. A countercoup in December 1985 failed but made it clear that not everyone in the military sided with the Armed Forces Ruling Council. The most serious opposition centered in the labor movement and on the university campuses. In May 1986, students at Ahmadu Bello University and Kaduna Polytechnic staged demonstrations that led to military occupation of those campuses and to the deaths of a number of students. The student movement had considerable support at other universities. On June 4, 1986, the Nigerian Labour Congress in alliance with students and university teachers organized a national day of sympathy, which led to the arrest of many union leaders. There was also considerable controversy over Nigeria's entry into the Organization of the Islamic Conference, an international body of Muslim states, in 1986. Buhari's regime had made the application, which Babangida allowed to stand. The strong reaction among many Christians, led by the Christian Association of Nigeria (formed in 1976), proved to be an embarrassment to the regime.

Babangida addressed the worsening recession through the structural adjustment program of 1986. By 1986, 44 percent of export earnings was being used to service the foreign debt. Austerity was not enough; rescheduling the foreign debt was essential, but public opinion was against an IMF loan. The government already was committed to many of the conditions for the IMF loan, including even more austere measures. However, it resisted pressures to reduce the petroleum subsidy, to allow trade liberalization, and to devalue the naira. Although negotiations with the IMF were suspended, the federal budget of 1986 still imposed many of the IMF conditions. On October 1, 1986, the government declared a National Economic Emergency, which lasted for fifteen months. Under the emergency, the government de-emphasized large-scale agricultural projects and introduced salary and wage reductions for armed forces and for public- and private-sector employees. Import restrictions were intensified, including a 30-percent surcharge on imports. Officially, the government now encouraged foreign investment and promoted privatization. Finally, the petroleum subsidy was cut back. Despite these drastic moves, efforts to reschedule the foreign debt without an IMF loan failed, and a drop in world oil prices further compounded Nigeria's situation.

Eventually the World Bank stepped into the breach and provided US\$4.2 billion over three years to support the structural adjustment program. The eligible debt finally was rescheduled in early

1988. There was heavy devaluation of the naira in 1986, followed by even more drastic reductions in 1989 and early 1990. As a result of the recession, there was a drop in real income, especially for urban dwellers, and unemployment rose steadily from a low in 1980 to almost 12 percent in 1986. The situation in the second half of the 1980s was even worse, with per capita income falling below US\$300 in 1988.

The Babangida regime appointed a new body, the Political Bureau, in January 1986 to make recommendations on the return to civilian rule. Its report, submitted in March 1987, was decidedly at odds with the government's structural adjustment program. The Political Bureau, composed of academics and civil servants, wanted to maintain a strong state presence in the economy, whereas the military regime was steadily moving away from that position. The bureau also favored creation of a two-party political system that would be broadly social democratic in ideology, as a means of escaping from the ethnic-based political parties of the past. The Political Bureau also recommended creation of at least two new states, Katsina and Akwa Ibom; this was accomplished in 1987. Although the Babangida regime did not like many of the Political Bureau's recommendations, a Constitution Review Committee was formed in September 1987.

This process of review and discussion convinced the military regime that the transition to civilian rule should be gradual. The perceived mistakes of 1979 and the creation of the Second Republic would not be repeated, it was hoped. The military would stay in power through 1989 to oversee the transition. The first stage was local elections, held in December 1987. No political parties were allowed, and in many districts, especially in Lagos, the results were overturned and new elections held. In 1990 the military continued in power but still promised a return to civilian rule.

* * *

The best introductions to Nigeria are Obaro Ikime's *Groundwork of Nigerian History* and the relevant chapters in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder's *History of West Africa*. For the impact of slavery and the slave trade on Nigeria, see Paul E. Lovejoy's *Transformations in Slavery*. Regional studies include Elizabeth Isichei's *A History of the Igbo People*; A. Afigbo's *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History and Culture*; Robert S. Smith's *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*; Yusufu Bala Usman's *Studies in the History of the Sokoto Caliphate*; and Michael Watts's *Silent Violence: Food, Famine and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria*. John Flint's *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* provides

Historical Setting

a readable and excellent introduction to British imperialism along the Niger River. For recent history, see Toyin Falola and J.O. Ihonvbere's *The Rise and Fall of Nigeria's Second Republic, 1979-1984* and Thomas Forrest's *Politics, Policy, and Capitalist Development in Nigeria, 1970-1990*. (For further information and complete citations, see *Bibliography*.)

