

CHAPTER 9

NIGERIA'S FIRST REPUBLIC (1960-1966)

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- give account of the political condition of Nigeria from independence to her attainment of a Republican status;
- point out the reasons for the 1963 National Census controversy;
- identify the factors responsible for the 1964 General election and 1965 western election crises;
- access the economic activities and development in the First Republic Nigeria.
- explain the social environment prevalent in Nigeria within the period.
- articulate the major thrusts of the Tafawa Balewa's foreign policies.
- account for the fall of the First Republic.



Fig. 9.1: Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe – Governor General of Nigeria

Nigeria attained independence on 1st October, 1960. The last Governor-general, Sir James Robertson handed ruling power over to Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who continued as a Governor-General but of indigenous extraction. For the period of six years, Nigeria operated two constitutions, namely; the 1960 Independence constitution and the 1963 Republican constitution. Much of these years were enmeshed in crises, ethnic chauvinism, mutual suspicion, political instability and high level insincerity and corruption which eventually led to the sack of the First Republic in 1966.

9.1 Political Development

The political structure laid in Nigeria on the eve of her attainment of independence oriented towards the practice of the West Minister Parliamentary system of government. As a result, this still left the British monarch, the Queen, as sovereign head of state of the newly – independent Nigeria. By some

political arrangements, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who was the Senate President, was made the Governor-General.



Fig. 9.2: Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa – Prime Minister of Nigeria

In this capacity, Dr. Azikiwe was made the Head of State while his Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, became the Head of Government invested with executive powers. On the advice of the Governor-General, the Prime Minister appointed his cabinet ministers. This implied that Dr. Azikiwe was a figure-head exercising mainly ceremonial functions such as: receiving ambassadors or High commissioners on behalf of the Queen; opening parliamentary sessions with “Speech from the Throne; dissolving or extending the life of the parliament on the Prime Minister’s advice; signing passed legislative bills; exercising the “prerogative of mercy”; and other state functions.

Nigeria operated a bicameral legislature. The Prime Minister, by this token, was the majority leader of the party with the highest number of parliamentary seats. On this premise, Northern people’s congress (NPC) produced Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as the Prime Minister. He then appointed his ministers from the floor of the House of representatives. Together with the ministers, he carried out the main duties of government. The N.P.C, due to its failure to capture the majority of seats in the lower chamber, formed an alliance with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in order to form a coalition government.

On the judicial front, court sessions still ran its affairs on behalf of the British Queen. The Appeal Court was all that was granted Nigerian judiciary. The Supreme Court still remained the Privy Council in London. The three regions: Northern Region, Western Region and Easter Region, were granted socio-economic autonomy with the effect that each region sourced its resources and sent some dedicated percentage to the Federal Government. At the helm of affairs were the Regional Governors

who, like the Governor-General, were ceremonial leaders. They had their Premiers acting as Regional Prime Ministers being majority leaders of political parties that got the highest number of seats in the House. They also selected their regional ministers from the House membership. Also, the regional legislature operated a bicameral system money; the House of Assembly and House of Chiefs. The House of Chiefs, being made up of powerful traditional rulers and notable warrant chiefs called first-class-chiefs, acted as a buffer House and on an advisory capacity. In the North, there were the Sharia courts headed by the Khadi and grand Khadi (for the appellate Sharia courts) while in the South, there were Customary courts headed by the magistrates and senior magistrates (for the Customary court of appeal). These operated together with the conventional court system in Nigeria. The conventional court judges could only be removed through the judicial committee of the Privy Council in London. This could only be on the recommendation of a Tribunal of Judges.

The 1960 Independence constitution had some vital provisions. It maintained the federal concept and practice. Among its other provisions were:

- i. Its enactment by the British parliament on July 29, 1960 with the effective date of commencement on October 1, 1960.
- ii. The indigenous Governor-General was made an agent of the British monarch who reigned in London.
- iii. The Governor-General acted only on the advice of the Prime Minister who he, in turn, advised. This relationship was replicated between the Regional Governors and their Premiers.
- iv. Power of government were shared between the federal and regional governments. There was the Exclusive list containing matters both the federal and regional governments could legislate on with the proviso that in case of any conflict, the federal legislation prevails. There was also the residual powers where only the regional government had sole legislative authority.
- v. Supreme court judges were to be appointed based on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission but could only be dismissed by the committee of the Privy Council on the recommendation of a Tribunal of Judges.
- vi. Constitutional amendment required two-third of both the lower and upper chambers, and two-third of the federating units.

However by 1963, Nigeria became a Federal Republic. The idea was ratified in a constitutional conference held in Lagos from 25th to 26th July 1963. The Federal parliament passed it into law on October 1, 1963.

The 1963 Republican Constitution was a mere modification of the 1960 Independence Constitution. In the new constitution, the Queen ceased to be the sovereign head of the independent Nigeria. The Governor-General was made the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. He carried out all his functions no longer as a surrogate or Queen's representative. The

constitution provided for an elected president. It abolished the Judicial Service Commission while empowering the President to appoint Supreme and Federal High Court judges on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. It made the Supreme Court the highest and final appellate court in the land. The Privy Council in London was jettisoned.

Again, the constitution conferred the power to declare state of emergency in any part of the federation on the Federal Government. The Supreme Court received the power of judicial review in respect of any law made in Nigeria which contravened the Nigerian constitution. The constitution guaranteed Fundamental Human Rights to all Nigerians. Again, the constitution provided for the process of creating new regions, the alteration of regional boundaries, modus of revenue allocation to be executed by the Federal Government on the principles of balanced development, national interest and needs.

On the side of partisan politics, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) was empowered to certify and register political parties and make sure they had national spread. Before independence, Nigeria had three dominant political parties representing the three dominant tribes of Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo. The oldest among them was the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) formed on August 24, 1944 by Herbert Macaulay. The party later in 1961 became known as National Convention of Nigerian citizens (NCNC). By December 1949, the Northern People's Congress was formed by Sir Ahmadu Bello while by March 1951, Chief Obafemi Awolowo founded the Action group from a cultural organization called Egbe Omo Oduduwa. These three parties became the standard bearers of the prevalent ethnic groups with the effect that between 1960 and 1964, other political parties with tap roots from the minority tribes metamorphosed. Between 1944 to 1960, the NCNC came close to be a truly national party. Following the wind of ethncism blowing in Nigeria after independence, the party gradually became an Igbo party controlling the South-east and Mid-west regions created in 1964. It formed the coalition government with the Northern people's congress at the federal level making the Action Group the federal opposition party. In the Western Regional House of Assembly, the NCNC was made an opposition party after its members cross-carpeted to Action Group (AG).



Fig. 9.3: Sir Ahmad Bello – Founder of Northern People's Congress



Fig. 9.4: Chief Obafemi Awolowo – Founder of Action Group

The Action Group formed by Awolowo and Adeyemo Alakija rested on strong sentiments against the Igbo dominance. Chief Obafemi Awolowo accused Dr. Azikiwe of playing tribal politics and wanting to make the Igbo a master race. He received the blessing of Yoruba chiefs and elite. The party could not go beyond the Western Region between 1959 to 1966. Despite Awolowo's efforts and huge expenditure, the Hausa/Fulani and Igbos unitedly rebuffed the Action Group.

The formation of the Northern People's Congress rested on its motto "One North, One people, irrespective of religion, rank and tribe". Its ideals were propagated by village heads, district heads and native authorities headed by the Emirs. Because of the geographical size in the North, the NPC led by

Sir Ahmadu Bello captured majority of seats in the federal parliament. Because it could not gain national spread, it opted for a coalition with the NCNC which dominated the Eastern region.

There were other parties founded by minority elements who felt dominated and overshadowed by the big three dominant parties and tribes. They were branded as radicals, progressives or ethnic chauvinists seeking for relevance in the Nigerian polity. In 1950, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) which was founded in Kano and led by Malam Aminu Kano was founded. The party captured the heartbeats of the Talakawa (ordinary people) in the North as it rejected the ostentatious and elitist nature of the NPC. It had alliance with the NCNC. There were also the Benin-Delta people's party of 1953, the National Independence Party (NIP) of 1953 from the East, the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers State Movement (COR) of 1954, The United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) of 1955 and the United People's Party (UPP) of 1963 in the West which in 1964 became the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Chief S.L. Akintola.

The coalition between NPC and NCNC was shortlived. This was because the coalition was very conservative as both parties paid more allegiance to their ethnic roots than forge a national union. The NCNC accused the NPC of running the government as it pleased and masterminding the carpet-crossing of its members in the House of Representative from the North to the NPC. The party was displeased with the refusal of the Balewa government to allow the building of about 30 million pounds iron and steel industry in the East as captured in the first National Development Plan of 1962-1968. The relocation of this project to the North and the financing of other heavy projects sited in the North with resources from the East attracted the ire of the NCNC.

While the Action Group (AG) strategized to emerge as a national party, Chief S.L. Akintola, a factional leader of AG made a secret pact with Sir Ahmadu Bello without the knowledge of his party. There was a rift between Chief Awolowo, the AG leader, and Chief Akintola; the factional leader and the Premier of the Western Region. This led to the sacking of Chief S.L Akintola from the AG on the allegations of gross indiscipline, maladministration and anti-party activities on May 20, 1962.

On May 21, 1962 the Regional Governor, Sir Adesoji Aderemi exercised his powers under Section 33 of the Western Nigeria Region constitution and removed Akintola from office as the Premier on the grounds of having lost the people's confidence and that of the party. Alhaji D.S. Adegbenro, a minister in Akintola's cabinet was appointed to the post of Premier to replace Akintola. Chief Akintola went to court to challenge the Governor's action and refused to vacate office. He also announced the removal of Sir Adesoji Aderemi as the Governor and replaced him with Chief J.O. Fadahunsi. This left the Western Region with two governors and two premiers.

On May 25, 1962, the House convened to pass a vote of confidence on the new premier – Alhaji Adegbenro but the supporters of Chief Akintola upturned the stage which culminated in a mayhem. Another attempt to have Chief Adegbenro confirmed by the House of Chiefs met with stiff opposition. On May 29, 1962, the federal government under the power granted it in Section 65 of the Republican Constitution declared a state of emergency in the Western Region. Dr. Moses Majekodunmi was appointed Administrator of Western Region from May till December, 1962.

On assumption of duty, he suspended all forms of political activities and the offices of the two premiers and two governors. On June 20, 1962, the Federal Government instituted a commission of inquiry on the Western government. When the report was made public on December 31, 1962, the governor, Aderemi was alleged to have diverted public funds to assist the Action Group, Chief Awolowo and his supporters were condemned whereas Chief S.L. Akintola was completely exonerated from all the allegations made against him, perhaps, owing to the fact that NPC – led Federal Government was by his side.

The Federal Supreme Court ruling of July 7, 1962 was also in favour of Akintola. By January 1963, Akintola was reinstated as Premier with Chief J.O. Fadahunsi as Governor. This was despite the appeal instituted at the Privy Council in London by Alhaji D.D. Adegbenro against the judgment of the Federal Supreme Court. When on May 27, 1963, the Privy Council in London ruled in favour of Alhaji Adegbenro, the Akintola government amended the Western Regional Constitution to nullify the points of the ruling putting its retrospective effective date on October 2, 1960. In order to have this done, his new party called the United People’s Party (UPP) made a coalition agreement with the NCNC thus, giving Akintola a sweeping majority in the House.

This apparent conspiracy between the NPC – led Federal Government and Chief S.L. Akintola to stifle the Action Group and ridicule Awolowo embittered him and his supporters so much that they plotted to topple the federal government. When their plan leaked, Chief Awolowo and his supporters were convicted and imprisoned on charges of treasonable felony. However, as the AG crisis of 1962-1963 was getting over, the NPC and NCNC moved into unprecedented census controversy of 1963, general election crisis of 1964 and a log-jam of Western Nigeria election crisis of 1965.

The 1963 National Census Controversy

In May, 1962, the country embarked on a head-count. The result when made public showed distortions and inflations of regional figures. This was because the various ethnic groups believed that the census could help give them social and political relevance such as delineation of constituencies and the benefits of federal allocation. On February 10, 1963, the Prime Minister met with the regional premiers and resolved to cancel the 1962 census and to hold a fresh census exercise in November, 1963, with measures to check irregularities.

The official figures published on August 29, 1964 put the country’s population to 55.6 million. The figure when summarized on regional basis presented the population strength of each region as follows:

Region	Census Figure
Northern Nigeria	29,758,875
Eastern Nigeria	12,394,462
Western Nigeria	10,265,846

Mid-Western Nigeria	2,535,839
Lagos (FCT)	0,665,246

While the North, West and federal government accepted the census figures, the East, Mid-Western Region and the Action Group rejected it alleging manipulations skewed to favour northern domination. The Mid-Western Nigeria was cowed into accepting the figures by the federal government which threatened its subsidy removal. The Eastern Region instituted a case in the Supreme Court and challenged the census outcome skewed in favour of the North. The court dismissed the suit on the grounds that it lack jurisdiction to entertain the case. This widened the rift between the NPC and the NCNC as each accused the other of tribal sentiments and corruption and this greatly led to the breaking of the NPC-NCNC coalition government. Once more the political climate of the nation became tensed up and foggy.

The 1964 General Election Crisis

The census of 1963 was used to delineate constituencies where the North had 167 seats leaving the South with 145 seats. The breakdown was as follows:

Region	Seat Allocation in the House
Northern Nigeria	167 seats
a) Eastern Region	70 seats
b) Western Region	57 seats
c) Mid-Western Region	14 seats
d) Lagos (FCT)	4 seats

The North by this controlled more than half population in the federal legislature. In the West, Chief Akintola on March 10, 1964 dissolved the UPP and formed a new party which he called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) which was made up of NCNC members who deflated to the party, and former members of the UPP. With this, he made a pact with the Northern People's Congress which yielded to an alliance called the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). He discarded his Alliance with NCNC which kept him in power. To reciprocate this gesture, Alhaji Tafawa Balawa appointed two prominent NNDP chieftains to the federal cabinet.

The NCNC having felt rejected by the NPC, and NNDP forced into alliance with the opposition parties in the North and the AG which resulted in the formation of the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) in June, 1964. Thus, the NNA controlled the Northern and Western regions while the UPGA dominated the Eastern and Mid-western region. NNDP had an uphill task contending with the Action Group in the West. It resorted to using any means possible to upstage the AG.

The electioneering campaigns which kicked off on October 10, 1964 witnessed lawlessness and irregularities particularly in the West. As much as 88 NPC members were nominated unopposed

in the North, a handful of the NNDP were also returned unopposed in the West while about 15 NCNC members in the East were nominated unopposed. The president advised the Prime Minister to postpone the elections but the Prime Minister refused. Sequel to this, the UPGA decided to boycott the federal election which gave NNDP a move sweeping victory in the West and Lagos. UPGA boycotted the elections in the East as well. However, the NCNC leadership in the Mid-west participated in the election and won.

The federal electoral commission declared NNA victorious. The president rather than reappoint Balewa as Prime Minister, asked him to resign and advised that the election be cancelled. This brought Nigeria to a deadlock. On the intervention of Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, Nigeria's Chief judge and Sir Louis Mbanefo, the impasse was settled and the president reappointed Sir Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister going by the result of the election which FEDECO refused to annul.

Sir Balewa conceded to form a government of national unity made up of 76 ministers from NPC, NNDP and NCNC leaving out AG and NEPU. Election was later held in the East, and the NCNC emerged victorious. The results of the seats clinged by the parties were thus: minority parties 9, NNDP 36, AG 21, NCNC 84 and NPC 162. The compromise made by the politicians and the tolerance of Chief Obafemi Awolowo kept Nigeria from imminent collapse.

The 1965 Election Crisis of Western Nigeria

October 11, 1965 was chosen as the Western House of Assembly election, the governor having prorogued the House on September, 18, 1965. Parading over 6 million eligible voters, the Western Region was divided into 94 electoral constituencies. NNA and UPGA were the two major contenders.

The NPC leader, Sir Ahmadu Bello arrived Ibadan on September 26, 1965 to flag off the NNA electioneering campaigns even when NPC was not in contention of any seat. Akintola's NNDP banned other parties from organizing rallies, campaigns and processions. They masterminded the kidnapping of some FEDECO officials, unleashed threats on opposition parties and harassed nominees from other parties. This made some 16 NNDP candidates to be returned unopposed. Western High Court rejected law suits from aggrieved parties and persons.

On the day of election, the NNDP thugs shot and killed two polling agents and two electoral officers, snatched some ballot boxes from the police and assaulted their opponents. Despite this affront on the people, they went ahead and announced through the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation that NNDP captured 71 seats, NCNC, 2 and Action Group, 16. A counter announcement by UPGA's rival radio station claimed that UPGA got 68 out of the 94 seats.

Under this stalemate, the governor reappointed Chief Ladoke Akintola as the Premier. This was however countered by the FEDECO chairman, Mr. E.E. Esua who alleged mass rigging, fraud and intimidation by NNDP. The masses, provoked beyond limits went on rampage. The federal government could not invoke state of emergency against its favoured ally, Chief Akintola. What it did, was to send the military and the police to restore normalcy. This proved abortive as lives and property were lost until the turbulence gradually subsided.

9.2 Economic Development in the First Republic

At independence in 1960, Nigeria joined the United Nations Organization (UNO) as the 99th member country. She was also admitted as a member of the Commonwealth and Organization of African Unity (OAU) which she helped to establish at Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia in May, 1963. The reason was to stabilize her political independence and develop her economic potentials.

The first indigenous National Development Plan of 1962-1968 focused on economic development. Decisions on the use of resources to enhance production and economic profitability remained the cardinal objective of the plan. It placed much emphasis on economic growth. The envisaged capital expenditure was N2.2 billion. From this, 67.8% went to the economic sector while social and regional development received 24.4%. This was a radical departure from the colonial development plan of 1946-1960 which emphasized direct delivery of welfare. It focused on providing facilities for effective colonial administration. These facilities included transportation system from the hinterland to the coastal areas, clinics, schools, water and electricity.

In the First Republic, Nigeria appeared virile and rife in economic exploitation. As a capitalist economy, it allowed individual and corporate investments in all areas of the economy. The encouragement by government of private participation in economic ventures enhanced youth empowerment, employment and physical development. As a new nation, the government itself provided incentives to businessmen and business technologists who ventured into needed or vital areas of the economy. These included tax holiday, granting of loans, subsidy, donation of land and granting of patency. The government on its own embarked on massive provision of infrastructure and social services which include: healthcare, education, electricity, asphalted roads, construction of railway lines, bridges, airports, sea ports, public utilities and establishment of large scale industries. This shows that Nigeria adopted the practice of mixed economy where government and private individuals are free to own the means of production, distribution and exchange or even jointly co-operate to fasttrack development.

Diversification of the economy kept our economy robust even amidst political instability. Although Shell, D'arch, Chevron and other multinational corporations had started oil prospecting in commercial quantity in the East and exploration of solid minerals all over Nigeria, the country never adopted a monocultural economy. Agriculture remained the mainstay of the economy. In the East was the palm trees with their economic attractions. Palm oil and kernel earned Nigeria huge foreign currency. From the West and Mid-west were cocoa and latex from rubber trees which were sources of foreign exchange. The North had the groundnut pyramid. Nigeria exported groundnuts to earn foreign currency.

Reliance on agriculture made each region autonomous. Each developed according to its resources and internally generated revenue. The country boasted of vast arable land with abundance of grains, cash crops, timber, aquatic animals and domestic and wild lives. With the installation of the

Kainji dam and other dams, generation of electricity to power most of these economic activities became possible. As a result, vocational technical and specialized skills were provided for the teeming youths.



Fig 9.5: The groundnut pyramids in Kano



Fig 9.6: A cocoa plantation in Western Nigeria



Fig. 9.7: A palm plantation in South-East Nigeria

9.3 Social Development in First Republic Nigeria

While Nigeria enjoyed economic buoyancy in the First Republic despite the challenges encountered after independence, although she could have done far better, her social development can be pictured with mixed grill. With over 250 ethnic groups, over 55 million people and with good soil, Nigeria had the opportunity to maximize the benefits of the resources offered by the socio-cultural diversities.

As early as 1953, the Hausa/ Fulani rioted in Kano in protest of Yoruba-Igbo stand on achieving independence earlier than 1960. The North-South divide was so apparent that politics followed the same trend. After the death of Herbert Macaulay in 1946, political parties and movements of ethnic origin sprouted. Apart from the National Council of Nigeria and Camerouns which later became National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which had national spread and interest, other parties emerged from tribal socio-cultural organizations.

This ethnic colour of politics as at the time delayed Nigeria's independence for up to seven years. The country was polarized into ethnic groups. The minority tribes were the most hurt. Hence, the mutual suspicion and mistrust between major tribes and their endogamous minority tribes. The rift between the West and its suffragan tribes led to the creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1964, a development masterminded by the NPC – led Federal Government to undermine the influence of Chief Awolowo and politicians from the West.

The North had its own ethnic rifts pronounced in the Tiv disturbances. In the East the Okrika people in the rivers area protested vehemently against ill-treatment. The minority tribes were used to fan the embers of disunity within the enclave of the major tribes they belong. The social and political benefits accruing to them as a result of their espionage and sabotage deepened ethnic divide and the practice of nepotism.

The Federal Supreme Court and regional high courts played the “pipers game”, They took sides with their political over-lords and the “government in power”. There was travesty of justice and most aggrieved people resorted to self-help, self-defence and political rascality. There was a near total break down of law and order. Nigeria drifted toward loss of national cohesion. The Islamic-Christianity religion dichotomy between the North and the South-East heightened the mutual distrust and hostility.

However, on social services and infrastructure, there was an appreciable improvement compared with what were on ground on the attainment of independence. The Federal Government established what is now known as first generation universities which are: University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Amadu Bello University, Zaria and University of Lagos which complemented the already existing university College Ibadan established in July 1947 as an affiliate of Oxford University London. Yaba Higher College had been established in 1932 by the colonial government.

In the regions, various governments embarked on massive construction of primary and government secondary schools to encourage literacy and national consciousness. The Western and Eastern regions offered free education to their citizens. Regional governments also embarked on building of hospitals, construction of roads and bridges and other social amenities for the take-off of

economic development. Cities such as Ibadan, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Benin City, Kaduna, Onitsha and Aba sprang up. Improvement in transportation and telecommunication was equally recorded.

However, there was large scale corruption. The political class amassed wealth and lived ostentiously. There was high level insecurity. Elections were converted into theatres of war fought with thuggery, rigging, harassment, snatching of ballot boxes, killing arson and disturbances. While the rich got richer, the poor wallowed in abject poverty amidst a robust and promising economy. This kept Nigeria on the precipice.

9.4 The First Republic and External Relations

At independence, Nigeria was welcomed as a member of the comity of states. Being recognized as a sovereign state, it was admitted into the United Nations Organization (UNO) and the commonwealth of nations as a former British colony. Its standing as a capitalist state opened up relations with the Western bloc and its economy.

These environment determined her international relations and foreign policy. Nigeria never had much to do with the communist countries even after they had offered to help in developing her economy. Because of the peaceful way she got her independence from Britain, its external relations with Britain was formidable culminating in the Anglo-Nigeria military pact of 1962. However, the pact came under severe criticism by Nigerian undergraduates at home and in the diaspora, and by the opposition parties, thus forcing Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to retract the pact. This never diminished Nigeria-British relations.

Britain gave to Nigeria technical aids, grants and military support. Its corporate and individual nationals assisted in the development of the oil sector, manufacturing industries, trade and commerce. This was a period Nigeria enjoyed social and economic good will with Britain. This extended to the United States of America being a British ally. She opened her consulate and foreign missions with all the member states of the UNO and the commonwealth. Her wealth, population and prospects attracted her to a flourishing external relations with other countries of the world.

In the First Republic Nigeria, her foreign policy was entirely formulated by Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister between 1960 and 1961, Balewa himself managed the portfolio of External Affairs Ministry, by 1961 Jaja Wachukwu was made the External Affairs and Commonwealth Minister; he was transferred to Aviation Minister by 1964 leaving Balewa with the portfolio until the military struck in January 15, 1966. At the floor of the House of Representatives on August 20, 1960, the Prime Minister outlined in vivid terms what constituted the post-independence Nigerian foreign policy as:

- i. Pursuance of Nigeria's national interest in line with the constitution.
- ii. Pursuance of world peace.
- iii. Pursuance of neutrality and non-alignment policy.
- iv. Promotion of friendship and co-operation among countries of the world.
- v. Respect of equality of nations.

- vi. Maintenance of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other nations.
- vii. Promotion of unimpeded decolonization of African states.
- viii. Maintenance of low profile style in pursuance of Nigeria's foreign policy.
- ix. Giving support to democratic principles across the globe.
- x. Promotion and support of inter-African cooperation.
- xi. To respect existing borders at independence.

These high points were re-iterated on October 7, 1960 at the UNO General Assembly on occasion that marked Nigeria's admission into the world body.

The Balewa foreign policy has remained the basis of Nigeria's external relation. It was based on this that Nigeria supported the formation of the organization of African Unity (OAU) on May 25 1963, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by 32 independent African countries. The borders of Nigeria was opened for international businesses with both old and new friend countries. Nigeria had it as a policy to make new friends, cooperate with all nations, expected to be reciprocated but remained committed to her old friends i.e the Western nations.

In the First Republic era, the nation never recorded any diplomatic row. She never initiated any international aggression but continued in her peace keeping mission around Africa and the world. She devoted her resources and time to fighting for the liberation of Angola, other colonized states of Africa and more especially against the apartheid regime in Rhodesia and South Africa. This earned her the nickname "the mouth piece of Africa". She devoted more resources to the African course even to the detriment of her citizens' welfare.

9.5 The Fall of the First Republic

From 1962, political events in Nigeria showed failure in political will and leadership. The imbalance in the federal structure which left the North alone with more than half of the seats in the Federal House of Representatives and in appointed offices became obviously disturbing. The NPC-led Federal Government played out Machiavellian politics against the South-east and South-West. Political leaders as at the time fanned few embers of ethnicism. Politics was ethnicized, brute force was unleashed on law – abiding citizens. The Federal Government benefitted from the regional and inter-tribal balkanization episodes while the regional governments exploited the masses intelligence and tribal sympathy to breach the law and public trust. Caution, restraints and national interest were thrown to the dust.

These political orgy gave vent to the Action Group crises of 1962, census controversy of 1963, the general election crisis which engulfed the South-West and South-East in 1964, and the Western election debacle of 1965 which claimed properties and lives under the watchful eye of the Federal Government.

Some scholars have refused to see the First Republic as a democracy or even as a civilian administration since in practice it negated all the basic principles of civil rule. There were high scale corruption among political class and top government officials; judicial morbidity which aided political

intrigues and commercialization of justice, Kangaroo elections which attained its zenith in 1964 general and 1965 Western elections; brazen display of ethnicism and chilling partiality of the police and the Electoral commission.

Because the Republic lost focus, it lacked positive values needed for nation building. Quest for political power for selfish ends dominated the Nigerian socio-political domain. There was utter neglect of the provisions of the national constitution and Nigeria drifted either towards a confederacy or dissolution of the federation. In order to arrest the catastrophic doom that loomed large, the Nigerian Army led by young military officers namely: Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major Anuforo Okafor, Major Chukwuka and Major Ademola Ademoyega struck on January 15, 1966 and overthrew the Balewa led government in a bloody coup d'état. The coup claimed the lives of major political actors in the republic which included Sir Amadu Bello, premier of the Northern Region, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister, Chief Okotie Ebo, Federal Minister, Chief Osadebey, Mid-Western Region premier, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, the premier of the Western Region, among others. However, the political gladiators in the South-East were surprisingly spared as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces was allowed to travel abroad for medical check before the coup plotters struck.

Summary

- The political situation at independence showcased the desire of the major tribes in Nigeria to control the reins of power, perpetually dominate the minority tribes, and the formation of political parties without ideologies except to acquire power for its benefits.
- The 1962-63 National Census was politicalised and skewed in favour of the North to give it more dominance of its control of the Federal Government without consideration to other factors.
- The role of Chief S. L. Akintola in destabilizing the AG, breaking alliance with NCNC and playing out the script of NPC was the main cause of the 1964 to 1966 political crises in Nigeria.
- The economy of the first Republic was strong and promising. The oil and agricultural sectors were adequately correlated with the regions enjoying some measures of economic autonomy.
- Nigeria's social environment reflected one of mutual suspicion, ethnic divide, alienation of the minorities and clannish conflicts which gave impetus of the hostile political climate.
- On the international front, Nigeria held on to British Legacies, made Africa its centre piece of its foreign policy, worked towards the formation of OAU, dismantling of colonization and apartheid in Africa.
- In order not to allow Nigeria drift away or disintegrate due to political crises and corruptive tendencies of the political class, the Nigerian Army toppled the government of Tafawa Balewa six years after independence.
- The political happenings in the First Republic was horrifying and shameful. Rather than embark on the arduous task of building a united, virile and wealthy nation, the leaders both at the federal

and regional levels engaged in political vendetta, self-aggrandizement and embezzlement of public funds. To cover this, they played out ethnic sentiments clamping down on opposition parties and perceived tribal enemies. They flouted the provisions of the constitution to rig and manipulate elections to their favour. Political parties were carefully designed and structured to serve ethnic purpose and to bargain for alliances and coalition government to out-do other parties. The ripple effects were arson, thuggery, disturbances and threat to national existence culminated in the Nigerian Army overthrowing the republic in order to give Nigeria a national face and sense of direction.

Revision Questions

Objectives

1. The last British Governor-General in Nigeria was _____.
 - A. Sir Herbert Macaulay
 - B. Dr. Hugh Davics
 - C. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe
 - D. Sir James Robertson
2. In the West Minister System, the President is _____.
 - A. the Head of Government
 - B. always the Queen's agent
 - C. a figure head
 - D. a monarch
3. Before First Republic the highest court of the land was _____.
 - A. the Federal Supreme Court
 - B. the Privy Council
 - C. the Federal High Court
 - D. the House of Chiefs
4. One of the distinctive features of the First Republic was that _____.
 - A. the federal and regional governments operated bicameral legislative
 - B. political parties were ethnically based
 - C. Nigeria thowed the non-aligned policy
 - D. There was large scale rigging of votes
5. The NCNC was originally founded by _____.
 - A. Marcus Garvey
 - B. Malcom X
 - C. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe
 - D. Sir Herbert Macaulay
6. Nigerian independence was decided in London on _____.
 - A. October 1, 1960

- B. October 1, 1959
 - C. January 20, 19959
 - D. July 29, 1960
7. Sir Balewa was persuaded to terminate the Anglo-Nigeria military pact signed in 1962 by _____.
- A. students and elite protests
 - B. the president
 - C. the 1963 Republican constitution
 - D. NPC/NCNC alliance.
8. NEPU interest was basically on _____.
- A. the coalition with the NCNC
 - B. dominating the Northern politics
 - C. giving opportunities to the Middle Belt
 - D. taking care of the poor masses' interest
9. To a large extent, _____ dominated the Western politics in Yorubaland.
- A. Dr. Moses Majekodunmi
 - B. Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola
 - C. Chief Obafemi Awolowo
 - D. Alhaji D.S. Adegbenro
10. The first indigenous National Development Plan sited the steel mill at _____.
- A. Enugu in the South-East
 - B. Oron in the South-South
 - C. Ajeokuta in the North
 - D. Ibadan in the South-West

Essay Questions

1. Examine the role played by the NPC – led Federal Government in the 1965 Western election crisis.
2. How would you account for the social development of Nigeria in the First Republic?
3. Nigerian foreign policy in the First Republic was very ambitious and broad based. Discuss.
4. Assess in strict terms the economic achievements of the First Republic.
5. Account for the collapse of the First Republic with reference to military incursion.