

A HISTORY AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF  
SOUTHWEST TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

BY

MARGARET C. OKORIE

MAY 1984

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
LIST OF TABLES	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	v
<u>CHAPTER</u>	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
A. Organizational Framework	7
II. TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA	11
A. Historical Background	11
B. Nigeria As a Tribal-Communal Society	14
C. Who Rules and How in the "Tribal" Communities?	15
III. MODERN POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA	26
A. British Colonial Policies	26
B. Socio-political Problems During the Colonial Administration	30
C. The Period Before Independence	34
D. Nigeria After Independence	39
E. Military Rule	41
F. Return to Civilian Rule	47

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
IV. NIGERIA'S POLITICAL CULTURE AND VOTING BEHAVIOR	55
A. Nigeria's Political Orientations	57
B. Elements Characterizing Nigeria's Political Culture	59
C. Comparative Analysis of Voting Trends	63
V. THE MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS FACING NIGERIA	68
A. Corruption	70
B. Tribalism	75
C. Over-Population	79
VI. CONCLUSION	83
A. The Future of Politics and Government in Nigeria	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY	94

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
III-1	The State of Religion in Nigeria, 1952-53	28
III-2	Estimated Number of Nigerians in Key Occupational Groups in Early 1920's and early 1950's	33
IV-1	Comparison of Votes and Seats by Party and Region	60

## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The writer wishes to express sincere appreciation to the members of her thesis committee, Dr. Munther S. Dajani, Dr. Mitchell F. Rice, and Dr. Alvin P. Short, for their suggestions, criticisms, and unfailing guidance.

The greatest debt of gratitude is due the writer's mother, Mercy N. Okorie, for most graciously sharing her immense knowledge and for her invaluable assistance, encouragement, and inspiration. No greater compliment can the writer pay than to dedicate this contribution to her late father, Mr. Emmanuel Ndukwe Okorie, for all his efforts.

The writer is most grateful to her two children, Mercedes C. and Christian C. Nwabuko, without whose encouragement this study could not have been undertaken.

In addition, the writer wishes to acknowledge Mr. S.O. Utah, Mr. Francis Okorie, Mr. and Mrs. Stan. Murphy, Dr. Lamar Kevin, Ms. Kofo Bakare and Ms. Ifeyinwa Anyadiegwu, who unknowingly inspired and influenced this study.

Margaret Chinonyerem Okorie

San Marcos, Texas

May, 1984

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
I-I	Nigeria: Chief Tribes	13
IV-I	Nigeria: Minerals	62
IV-II	Nigeria: Industries	63

The map displays the following details:

- Regions and Districts:** Sokoto, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Bauchi, Katsina, Kogi, Kwana, Plateau, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Abia, Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Benue, Niger, Sokoto, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Bauchi, Katsina, Kogi, Kwana, Plateau, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Abia, Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Benue, Niger.
- Cities:** Sokoto, Kano, Zaria, Kaduna, Bauchi, Katsina, Kogi, Kwana, Plateau, Rivers, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Abia, Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Benue, Niger, Lagos, Ibadan, Oyo, Ogbomoso, Ilorin, Abeokuta, Idoro, Benin City, Warri, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Buea, Victoria, Fernando.
- Geographical Features:** Niger River, Benue River, Lake Chad, Gulf of Guinea, Bight of Benue, Bight of Biafra.
- Legend:**
  - International Boundary (dashed line)
  - Regional Boundary (dotted line)
  - Colony (solid line)
  - Trusteeship Boundary (dash-dot line)
  - Railway (line with cross-ticks)
  - Main Road (solid line)
  - International Airport (circle with a dot)
  - Land over 1000 feet (shaded area)
- Scale:** 0 to 100 miles.
- North Arrow:** Indicated by a circle with an 'N'.

1992 01 01 00 00 00

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major developments in the field of comparative government since the second World War has been the shift in emphasis from the Western political systems of North America, Europe and the Commonwealth nations to the newly emergent nations in Asia, and Africa as well as to the political systems of Latin America. This shift was generated by the greatly increased visibility and importance of these systems during their struggles for independence and by their failures to establish effective democratic structures and processes.<sup>1</sup>

It is inevitable that any study of Nigerian politics would be extensively involved in the politics of the present time. This study is no exception. However, when one considers that, the traditional political system has played a part in shaping the modern political system even before the state's independence years, it is apparent that few attempts have been made to study the political role of the traditional elements within the modern system. The most common mode of analysis introduces the traditional



system only after discussion of the modern system of administration. This segmented analysis reveals the nature and structure of the traditional system and its conflict with the modern political system.

During the "traditional" political system, the question of who rules and how is not a democratic issue, but a chieftaincy and council of elders affair. Traditional political system meant, the system of administration before Colonial administration, in other words, the non-Western mold of political administration. Traditional system is non-participant--it delays people by kinship into communities isolated from each other and from a centre; without an urban-rural division of labor, it develops few needs requiring economic interdependence. Lacking in bonds of interdependence, peoples' horizons are limited by locale, and their decisions involve only other known people in known situations. Hence, there is no need for a trans-personal common doctrine formulated in terms of shared secondary symbols--a national "ideology" which enables persons unknown to each other to engage in political controversy or achieve "consensus" by comparing their opinion.<sup>2</sup>

The intent of this study is to attempt a systematic examination of the modern political system, providing dis-

cussion of its organizational and political problems, its policy assumptions, its successes, failures and the changing conditions confronting the system. At one level, analysis will be directed at the modern system as an evolving institution that is subject to both internal problems and to external influences. With the imposition of Colonial rules and the incorporation of the various groups into the new politico-administrative framework that became Nigeria, a new sense of identity was gradually formed amongst linked groups.<sup>3</sup> But, analysis needs to penetrate beyond the organization to a more fundamental understanding of the dynamics of Nigerian politics. Primordial identities have extreme importance in Nigeria with many scholars adhering to the view that as Nigeria develops, communal sentiments were strengthened at the expense of broader political loyalties.

To understand modern political behavior, it is necessary to relate traditional based politics in terms of its impact on modern organizational development and in terms of the problems it created for the modern government. Consequently examination cannot arbitrarily limit itself to a discussion commencing with the military coups. Such an

approach would divorce the analysis from the political problem.

Robert Pinkney suggests that it is instrumental to view military leaders and military regimes in comparison to the actual talent available, rather than in terms of an "ideal politician." Similarly, instead of:

Looking at 'military government' as a distinctive form of government, it would be more useful to examine the possible range of similarities and differences between civilian and military regime.<sup>4</sup>

Both military and political leaders are confronted by the same fundamental political problems and must operate within the same general resource base.

A military regime is ostensibly different from a civilian one because of its style and its pursuit of policies that a civilian government would be unlikely to attempt. The pursuit of national unity, efficiency, and eradication of corruption suggest the importance of the military organizational model, at least in terms of the initial perception of the political problems and remedies. But, these attributes are not likely to condition the long-term operation of a military regime.

However, the student of the African scene suffers from the ever-changing nature of the regimes, governments, and political institutions in general with such rapidity

that no sooner has one succeeded in describing a given situation, event or institution than that description becomes outdated: a military coup has occurred, a head of state or a leading politician has been assassinated, or a ruling coalition has fragmented and what was thought to be the case, immediately ceases to be so.<sup>5</sup>

Nigeria is black Africa's richest nation, and its estimated 90 million people represent one in every four Africans, but the country is clearly one of the toughest to rule. Nigeria has been closely watched as a democratic model for other developing countries, but recent history shows that all but one of six regimes in Nigeria's 24 years of independence have ended in chaos, coups or assassinations.<sup>6</sup>

For several decades, social inequality in education, jobs, political power and social honor, prevailed in Nigeria. Those in a position to know and amend the situation pleaded ignorance. Ethnic chauvinism blinded political leaders from acting as national leaders rather than tribal chiefs. That is, these early leaders in Nigeria were more concerned with how much resources and wealth they could transfer from the national political system to their tribal enclaves.

In Nigeria, ethnic movement took the form of armed confrontation--especially between the Ibos and the Hausas. This confrontation resulted in a traumatic series of events which culminated in a bloody Civil War. Just as in the United States, minority movements took the forms of internal unrest--riots, protests--as well as increased litigation to enforce the constitutional right of all Americans.

The prevalence of conflict in modern nations is a threat to political stability. Statesmen do not seem to have an answer to this troublesome phenomena, yet the existence of their nations depend upon peaceful solution or minimization of ethnic conflict. The solution to ethnic conflict exists. Other social problems such as corruption and over-population tend to put stresses on Nigeria's stability.

Throughout the world, the desire to continue life together, rather than primordial homogeneity, is the essential ingredient of modern nations. This concept is applicable both to the oldest nations, such as Great Britain and France, and the newest nations, such as Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The nation as it exists today is no longer equivalent to the tribal groups which the Athenians

referred to as nation-states. Today's nations are more extensive communities, sometimes with two or more tribes within each nation, yet they effectively command men's loyalties, overriding the claims of the lesser communities within.<sup>7</sup>

However, it is only natural that whenever people with different histories, languages and values live together, as they do in all corners of the globe, discord and trouble are the almost inevitable result. It is the likelihood of this discord, and not actual discord itself that creates the need for a mechanism for integrating these ethnic groups within modern nation-states.

It is enough that Britain has taught Nigeria the fundamentals of democracy and provided her with a course in training in self-rule. But Nigeria's application to the fundamentals of democracy has lead to the instability of its government. However, no nation is ever completely developed, and all nations may experience institutional or political decay.

### Organizational Framework

This introductory chapter is followed by Chapter Two which provides a background for the consideration of

political development in Nigeria by describing the basic social, and the different tribal political systems of administration. The importance of this second chapter is that it shows how traditional norms can contribute to the early stages of political development in new nations.

Chapter Three will provide an historical treatment of modern political development in Nigeria, its successes and its failures. The importance of this chapter is that it shows how modern political leaders seem to assume leadership of their nation without adequate preparation and understanding of the nature and character of contemporary nations. As a result of this misunderstanding about the nature of the modern nation, some of the social problems which confront modern leaders seem to have arisen because of inappropriate mechanism of government. Also Chapter Three shows that conflict among discrete groups arose in Nigeria because of struggle for control over scarce resources, including political power.

Chapter Four will consider the Nigerian political culture and voting behavior from the standpoint of popular identification with the State. This chapter reveals the new political orientations in Nigeria.

An intensive treatment of particularistic aspects of Nigerian political problems and their relation to Nigeria's political development will be undertaken in Chapter Five. The importance of this chapter is that it shows how the existence of these social problems have posed serious threats to Nigeria's political system. The concluding chapter will discuss the future of politics and government in Nigeria.



## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE

- <sup>1</sup>Dankwart A. Ruston, "New Horizons for Comparative Politics," World Politics, vol. ix (July, 1957), pp. 530-49.
- <sup>2</sup>Billy Dudley, An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics, (Bloomington, Indiana, University Press, 1982) p. 13.
- <sup>3</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup>Robert Pinkney, "The Theory and Practice of Military Government," Political Studies, 21 (June, 1973), pp. 152-166.
- <sup>5</sup>Billy Dudley. An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics. Op. Cit. p. 17.
- <sup>6</sup>Martin Igbozurike. Problem-Generating Structures in Nigeria's Rural Development. (Sweden: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976) p. 42.
- <sup>7</sup>Charles E. Lindblom. Politics and Market. (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1977) p. 248.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE NIGERIAN POLITICS IN THE PRE-COLONIAL ERA

#### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

There is a social phenomenon in every human society, considering the fact that "man is a political animal," wrote Aristotle. It is this social characteristic of the term that makes it a universal concept. Every political system is part of a larger environment. Therefore to understand the operation of a political system, it is important also, to look beyond the border of political institutions to a broader context of historical, social, ideological and psychological features of its setting. Every political system is a product of a peculiar history, tradition, location or experience. For instance, although all English-speaking nations share certain political attitudes, their political ethics still differ. The political ethics of Ireland and New Zealand are not necessarily identical.<sup>1</sup> India, Germany, and America practice Federalism, nevertheless, it has neither the same features nor consequences. Political culture describes this aspect of every individual in political realms. A state's history

for example, especially the quality of its nationhood is shaped in various ways by various factors. Some countries are political reflections of long histories, for example, Greece, Spain, Japan, to mention a few, while some are artificial creations and the consequences of colonial administrative convenience, for example, Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, to mention a few. Political culture is inevitable in a society, because political environment does not exist in isolation.

Nigeria is a society with a distinct political setting. "The diversity of Nigeria is well known."<sup>2</sup> It is a tribal society with ecological and cultural diversities. As a distinct society with peculiar custom, tradition, people, and experience, it consists of multiple languages and dialects. There have been various myths about the origin of the individual tribes in the Nigerian society, however, the nation emerged as a compromise among the three principal regions created by the colonialists. The various tribes are distinguished by language, custom, names and dress. Within the three larger tribes which dominate the nation, several dialects are spoken but the differences between them are not great. Figure I on the following page shows the three principal tribes in Nigeria.



FIG. 1 Nigeria: Chief Tribes

Geographically, Nigeria is located in West Africa. It covers an "area of 356,660 square miles."<sup>3</sup> It is surrounded by the Gulf of Guinea from the south, the Niger Republic by the North, the Republic of Benin by the West and in the East by the Cameroon Republic. Its vegetation varies from one region to another. It is wholly within the tropics and temperatures are high, while rainfall is seasonal. Ecologically, the land is blessed with agricultural crops and minerals. According to the 1982 population census, Nigeria has a population of "ninety (90) million" people.<sup>4</sup> As regards to occupation, Nigerians before the

colonial intervention were predominantly farmers and traders. Their chief products were cocoa, groundnut, palm-oil and cotton. The term of trade was "barter." This simply means the exchange of one good for another, because that was the only medium of exchange.

#### B. NIGERIA AS A TRIBAL-COMMUNAL SOCIETY

As a "communal society," each tribe in Nigeria lived as one community and practiced communal life. That is, every individual within the tribe worked for the whole. Work was done collectively and there was no personal urge for wealth or power. However, the binding force behind this idea of life was their religion. Most Nigerians before the colonial intervention were idol worshippers, except the Hausa-tribe who are predominantly Moslems. There was a strong tie between the people and their "gods" and they hold their respect and loyalty to it. Also during this period, most persons spent their lives within the confines of their immediate group thereby strengthening the extended family system that developed into tribes. All these attest that there is a sense in which one can rightly speak of a Nigerian traditional culture. These cultures had existed as autonomous political entities. Some of them had achieved the status of kingdoms, chiefdoms or city

states, the Hausa-Fulani emirates and the Oyo kingdoms each had the status of a sovereign state whose head had the power of life and death, conducted war and concluded peace and engaged in international diplomacy with remarkable skill and ingenuity.

C. WHOLE RULES AND HOW IN THE "TRIBAL" COMMUNITIES?

The Nigerian political system during the pre-Colonial era was not a democracy but a chieftaincy and council of elders affairs. In other words, the non-Western mold of political administration. It does not require any written constitution or involve public participation, but the very few who are said to have the right to rule simply because of their birth, wealth or power.<sup>5</sup> The three principal tribes: namely, Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa, operate different political systems of administration. Each has a distinct political system. However, there was no central authority which governs the whole country. The exercise of power was entirely at the local level.<sup>6</sup> Among the Yoruba tribe, political institutions are for the "royal families." That is, people with royal background or lineages. These families are by "birth-right" members of the political institutions and every member of the family is given a chance to rule. Among the Ibo-tribe, political institutions are

formed by council of elders who are by wealth and hard work have a say in the running of their community. Political institution among the Hausa tribe is formed on the basis of "might."<sup>7</sup> Because their rulers are supposed to be great warriors.

In pre-Colonial times, there was "no political super-structure, such as federation, a confederation, or state existed."<sup>8</sup> In terms of authority and government, the Yoruba-tribe is the most centralized. The "OYO-kingdom" provided the political leadership over a wide area occupied by the Yorubas. It is like a central authority to all the sub-tribes within this larger tribe. Various sub-tribes exist and they all have their ruler called "Oba" (king). The kingship is hereditary and hierarchial. Only those who belong to the royal families have the right to the throne; no democracy is involved, but "birth-right." The royal families are the founding fathers of each community, and every ruler belongs to a particular lineage in the community. However, for fear of dictatorship or complete possession of power, several chieftaincy families exist. The king is appointed from a royal family by the council of chiefs who are male members of each royal lineage. The king rules in accordance with the procedures of the council

of chiefs and their forefathers. There is no stipulated constitution or term of office. The kingship is rotated among the royal lineages. Comparatively, the Yoruba kings rule more constitutionally and less by divine right than rulers of the Ibo and Hausa tribes. The members of the council of chiefs are the community administrators and policy makers. Although the government is not everyone's affair, cooperation and loyalty is required. At some point every adult has a say in the government but not the right to rule. In other words, the choice of leadership is not left to the majority to decide.

The situation is different among the Ibo-tribe. They are decentralized. The system of administration is hierarchial but not hereditary. A council of elders is formed and the rulers of the society are appointed from the council. They are usually members of a secret cult. This group of men makes political decisions and discuss the needs of their community. They hold public meetings and the outcome of their meeting reflects their political decisions on any issue. Within the groups there is a leader, who is appointed by the members. The choice of leadership and form of government is not on a majority basis. All other members of the council are administrators in the com-



munity. Each of them has a public office and participates in running the community. No term of office is involved. The government is based on the public's cooperation and loyalty, not on a constitution or on democracy.

Furthermore, the traditional political system among the Hausa-tribe is quite different from the Yoruba and Ibo tribes. It has what is known as the emirate system, and it is operated by the descendants of Usuman da Fodio who was a Fulani warrior and regarded as a great leader. The system is relatively well organized, efficient, and easily understood. The emir is the head of the emirate. He possesses almost absolute power. Rule is hereditary, though the emir's successor is not necessarily his eldest son but could be chosen in a variety of ways from a single royal dynasty, or even from a number of royal dynasties in succession.<sup>9</sup> Under the emir are selected officials of aristocratic birth, some of these officials have specific functions at the emirate center and others with general supervision of the districts.

The emir appoints the alkali (Hausa word that means "judge")<sup>10</sup> who presides in courts. However, the political system of the Hausa-tribe is based on the Islamic laws which are written in the Arabic language. Women in the

Islamic religion are excluded from formal political roles. There is a fully developed system of taxation that is accepted by the people. The emir collect taxes upon cattle and other stock, upon arable land, upon irrigated crops, and upon those who acceded to office. They impose tolls upon the movement of merchandise and license fees upon handicrafts and trades; and they were the beneficiaries of the koranic right to a tithe.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, from the analysis of the types of political systems during the pre-Colonial period, one would observe the tribal basis of political administration in Nigeria. Each tribe has a peculiar tradition, setting and origin. Citizens hold civic responsibility and loyalty to their rulers, and would, therefore, resist any form of external interference.

The scope of "tribalism" is very wide in the country as a whole and it has been the basis for politics in government. In Nigeria, as in any country composed of several tribes, there is conflict between the desire to overcome tribal hostility and the desire to retain the culture of the various tribes. The tribal factor in Nigerian politics however, has been the major concern of many scholars and writers. Tribal conflicts which have become

serious threats to the survival of modern nations according to Charles Lindblom (1977) occur because of differences regarding the nature of tribal cooperation, the purpose of that cooperation, the national resources that are insufficient for all or inequitably distributed, and political authority that cannot be granted to everyone or every group.<sup>12</sup> Conflict of this kind is commonplace in most pluralistic societies, such as Nigeria.

However, from the analysis of the pre-Colonial political system, the political process and system operate on tribal basis. It is neither a question of democracy nor any written constitution. In fact, the political setting does not permit democracy and does not even reflect any of its features. But there was peace and a political environment that was usually stable. Public figures were not corrupt because the communal system was the system of administration and there was no personal urge for wealth or power. The majority accepted the system and its rulers. Hence, the process and system of administration worked with the civic loyalty and cooperation of every individual in the society.

Three forces from outside have disrupted Nigeria's traditional societies. The first is Islam and the second

Christianity. The third is secular Western civilization, brought by Europeans beginning with the Portuguese in the fifteenth century and by British colonial administrators beginning in the nineteenth century. Islam and Christianity are universal religions. Both have brought with them tools and skills necessary to widen man's horizons beyond his tribe. They are, for example, responsible for writing in Nigeria. With Islam came the Arabic script to the North; Christian missionaries in the South first put the Southern languages into writing and taught English as well. With the Western influences came a more sophisticated cash economy and a belief in individual liberty, both of which reduced the hold of the traditional society.

But while those forces have reduced ethnic differences in some ways, they have reinforced them in others. Their differential impact has also created a wide divergence between North and South which, while it cuts across ethnic lines, is nonetheless weakening the stability of the Nigerian nation.

As Islam is a high social and political religion, it dominates the Northern way of life, in contrast to the more secularized South. Also, Western secular civilization

has affected Nigeria's ethnic groups and since modern power depends largely upon acquisition of the skills of the West, new tensions have been thereby created. For instance, the Yoruba often regard themselves as superior to other Nigerian groups because the effects of Western education have spread widest and deepest among them. The Ibo, starting later, have almost caught up, but their aggressive efforts to do so have made the Yoruba jealous and angry.

Human beings are not by nature evil. By the same token, ethnic groups do not antagonize each other for the mere reason that they differ in certain immutable characteristics, such as color, history, language, and so on. However, it is commonplace that whenever two or more individuals or groups are put together, there is likely to be conflict of interests. Conflicts among ethnic groups within a given polity are related to how the resources, including political power, in that political system are distributed.

Today, as in the past, there are hardly any homogeneous communities. Every country in a modern world is a nest of ethnic groups. This state of affairs is the by-product of colonialism. In the Americas, colonialism led to the extermination of the homogeneous Indian natives who

were replaced by indentured servants and slaves. The discovery and colonization of the New World also opened the gate for inflow of immigrants from Europe.

In Africa and Asia, colonialism fostered the emergence of nations made up of hostile tribes. Every African country is a congeries of stocks and tribes, forced to compromise their cultures and identities by the colonialists. These countries achieve independence without a single national political culture.

In modern African nations, nation-building (the process of ethnic unification) began a few decades ago when the colonial regimes imposed unity upon disparate and often hostile groups. These nations may well be referred to as "nations of nations," because the different groups forced into one territorial boundaries are still conscious of their differences. By contrast, in the classic British and French nations, even though ethnic conflict existed, the welding together of peoples took place over a longer period of time.

Today, it would be an idle boast for the British or the French to assume that their "nations" are any different from those of the New World or Afro-Asia. For example, different ethnic groups (nations) in England that were

welded together in the Middle Ages, such as the Scots, Irish, and Welsh, are now re-asserting their ethnicity. Influenced by their cultural and religious differences the Irish have been engaged in what appears to be a war of liberation from the English imperialism.

The next chapter will provide an historical treatment of modern political development in Nigeria. The importance of this chapter is that modern political leaders seem to assume leadership without adequate preparation and understanding of the nature and character of contemporary nations. As a result of this misunderstanding about the nature of modern nations, some of the social problems which confront modern leaders seems to have arisen because of inappropriate mechanisms of government.

Also Chapter III shows that conflict among discrete groups arose in Nigeria because of struggle for control over scarce resources, including political power.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER TWO

- <sup>1</sup>Gabriel A. Almond, and Sidney Verba, The Civic Culture.  
(Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. 14.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup>Obafeni Awolowo, Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution.  
(London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 23.
- <sup>4</sup>Paxton, J., The Statesman's Year Book, 119th ed., 1982-83,  
p. 30.
- <sup>5</sup>Walter A. Perkins, and James Stembridge, Nigeria.  
(London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 1.
- <sup>6</sup>Billy Dudley, An Introduction to Nigerian Government and  
Politics. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,  
1982), p. 36.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup>Op. Cit., p. 2.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup>Guy Arnold, Modern Nigeria. (London: Longman Group  
Press, 1977), p. 15.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>Charles E. Lindblom, Politics and Market. (New York:  
Basic Books Inc., 1977), p. 80.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA

#### A. BRITISH COLONIAL POLICIES

The "modern" political system is another trend in Nigerian political history. It refers to the trend away from the traditional hierarchial government, towards a Western system of administration.

From the outset it must be born in mind that Nigeria is an artificial country born out of the womb of international conferences and opinion.<sup>1</sup> It is an artificial country in terms of the fact that its present structures and independence from alien rule were discussed and debated overseas and the decision imposed upon the natives of this African region.

The present structure of Nigeria reflects the British victory over the tribal chiefs who fought unsuccessfully to retain their kingdoms and territories against the invading British conquerors. In 1850, the British government successfully conquered several tribal groups and established its suzerainty over them. By 1914 the unification of these discrete tribal groups was complete and the

name Nigeria (derived from the River Niger) was suggested by the wife of the British-born first Governor-General of this new British territory, Mrs. Frederick Lugard.<sup>2</sup>

From the outset, it could be argued that the annexation of discrete and sometimes hostile tribal groups was the first blunder which Great Britain made. It was probably the first seed of distegration and social distress which present day Nigeria has not been able to overcome. One reason for this contention is that prior to the arrival of British forces of annexation, these discrete groups were not in contact with each other. As Chapter Two of this study shows, they were autonomous tribal kingdoms, independent of each other. These tribal groups made more contact with outside world--Europe and the Arab world--than they did among themselves.<sup>3</sup>

For example, the Hausa (the major tribal group in the North) through the trans-Saharan caravan trade had been in contact with the Egyptians and other Arab nations as far back as the Tenth Century. The tribal groups of the Southern hemisphere had been in contact with the Europeans as far back as 1486 when the Portuguese began their sea-route to India and visited the Bight of Benin and penetrated inland into the heart of the ancient kingdoms of the South.<sup>4</sup>

This early contact with Europe and the Arab nations is an important fact because it opened the floodgate to cultural imperialism. This contact also signalled the then unknown fact that the north and the Southern Nigerians were different culturally and were going to remain so for a very long period of time, if not forever. As we shall see below, contemporary social and ethnic problems in Nigeria have a great deal to do with this early contact.

Because Northern Nigerians first contact was with the Moslem Arabs of the Mediterranean Coast, Mohammadanism was embraced and imported into the region since 1400.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, the proliferation of Christianity in Southern Nigeria since the 1800s when the British missionaries arrived cannot be explained otherwise than their early contact with the Europeans. The impact of this early contact on the religious belief in Nigeria is shown on Table III-1.

TABLE III-1

## THE STATE OF RELIGION IN NIGERIA, 1952-53

Region	Population	Number of Christians	Number of Moslems
North	16,840,000	550,000	11,661,000
East	7,218,000	3,612,000	23,000
West*	6,088,000	2,201,000	1,971,000
Lagos*	272,000	146,000	112,000

\*Federal Capital territory.

The second blunder which the British government committed was to fail to separate religion from politics. The British government forces were followed by a stream of missionaries who had only one objective--conversion of Africans to Christianity. Ancestor worship, traditional African religion, and Islamism were to be stamped out. Guided by this ambition, the missionaries' first attack was directed against local cultures including, native songs and dances, folklore, art, native names and customs, religion and marriage rituals.<sup>6</sup> Christianity was considered not just a religion, but a better way of life which Nigerians must accept if they were to be saved.<sup>7</sup>

The British religious "conversion drive" was a partial success. Among the Southern Nigerians, it was easy for the British missionaries to convince them to accept Christianity because of their long-standing association and contact with Europeans.<sup>8</sup> The test of the British might was to be in the predominantly Moslem North. Can the missionaries convert the Moslems to Christianity? The British attempt to convert the Northerners to Christianity failed. Northern Nigerians remained, since their first contact with the Mediterranean Arabs early in the Tenth Century, predominantly Moslems. How were the British government and

its imperial missionaries to react to this apparent non-  
recognition of the British authority?

This question is a rhetorical question, asked to  
pave the way for the examination of the British policies  
toward the North. It was the subsequent British policies  
toward the North that seemed to have established discord  
among the Nigerian tribal groups and especially between the  
North and the South in terms of regional interests. Never-  
theless, it would be difficult to understand current ethnic  
conflicts without a proper appreciation of the British  
colonial policies, which, for the purpose of this study are  
viewed as major seed of disintegration.

#### SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS DURING THE COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

Socio-political problems, especially those associ-  
ated with ethnic relations are related to the British  
Colonial policies. While today's problems in Nigeria are  
self-inflicted.

The failure by the British missionaries to convert  
Northerners to Christianity was a setback to their goals.  
More frustrating to the missionaries was the fact that  
Islam was fast penetrating to the South. Acting like a  
father who rewards his child for obedience and hard work,

the British missionaries embarked upon the policy of rewarding the Southern Nigerians for their Christian faith, and punishing Northerners for non-conformity to the Christian doctrine.<sup>9</sup>

These missionaries who were also educators, denied the Northerners educational facilities on the ground of their religious faith.<sup>10</sup> In the 1800s, such a policy did not hurt the Northerners who, probably, did not want Western alliance of any kind. Thus, Western education was to the Northerners incompatible with the wishes of the Emirs who felt that koranic laws ought to be taught to the young. In fact, instead of accepting Christianity in exchange for Western education, Northerners began to train their own teachers, so that ". . . A section of them acted as instructors to the sons of traditional rulers, another section organized mass primary education in the vernacular and also taught native crafts."<sup>11</sup>

The British recognized the importance of education as an instrument of cultural imperialism. In the word of a British Education Officer:

. . . .The conception of the aim of education was that it should make useful citizens, and when we say useful citizens we mean literally citizens who would be of use to us. . .<sup>12</sup>

Thus, there was much concern with the teaching of English, history, literature, and the political system. Those who benefitted from the British educational programs were the Southern Nigerians. Educational facilities were concentrated in the Southern regions (Eastern and Western regions). Concentration of educational infra-structural facilities in the South was strictly a reward for the conformist southerners. As would be seen later, this divergent and discriminatory policy relating to the provision of educational facilities in Nigeria has had a serious destabilizing effect to Nigeria's internal security. This imbalance in educational facilities between the North and the South continued after independence.

In sum, the British seemed to have achieved their objective, that is to use educational facilities as a weapon against the North. Thus, the dominant role of the Yorubas and the Ibos and their monopolization of educational facilities in Nigeria should be considered as critical factors that provoked ethnic discontent in the 1960s. Education as we know, gives the possessor access to political, economic and social power. In Nigeria, political, economic and social power automatically fell into the hands of the Ibos and the Yorubas. The Hausas, although numeri-

cally superior, were dominated by these two Southern tribes.

The control of educational facilities means that the Ibos and the Yorubas were most likely to possess technical skills required by foreign corporations and the British oriented government structures.

TABLE III-2  
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF NIGERIANS IN KEY OCCUPATIONAL  
GROUPS IN EARLY 1920s AND EARLY 1950s

Occupation	Early 1920s			Early 1950s		
Barrister	15	12	Yorubas	150*		
		3	Native foreigners			
Physicians	12	8	Yorubas	160	76	Yorubas
		4	Native foreigners		49	Ibos
					1	Hausa-Fulani
					34	Others
Teachers and Clerk		21,000			70,000	
Artisans and skilled laborers		8,000			80,000	

\*Ethnic breakdown not available

Source: James S. Coleman. Nigeria: Background to  
Nationalism. Op. Cit. p. 142.

Table III-2 further shows how access to educational facilities paved the way for the Ibos and the Yorubas to acquire professional skills far above all other tribes. They were also to dominate "decent" jobs--jobs that are not manual



but the workers enjoy higher income as well. Jobs open to most Hausas and the other minority groups in the South were to function as janitors, messengers, gardeners, cooks, porters, gatemen and other risky functions requiring manual dexterity. This situation is not different from the experience of the nonwhite groups in the United States.

Another type of job that the Ibos and the Yorubas unconsciously rejected, except as an officer, was the military. The military was regarded as manual and incompatible with education. As a result, the Hausas and members of the minority tribes in the South dominated infantry divisions of the Nigerian army, then and today.<sup>13</sup>

So far the effort has been to try to relate the pre-independence discrimination in the provision of educational facilities in Nigeria to other social problems, such as unemployment and illiteracy. It would appear that the Ibos and the Yorubas were successful as long as the British imperial rule existed. Once the British government left, the post-independence ethnic relations became antagonistic.

#### C. THE PERIOD BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

Nationalist agitation began to grow in the 1930s and was given a tremendous boost by the events of the Second World War.<sup>14</sup> From the mid-1940s came a series of

constitutions that took steps towards self-government and then independence, and this process dominated the last fifteen years of British rule. In the period 1945 to 1960, five constitutions were enacted, leading first to self-government and then to independence. During the 1950's some of the wide divergences of outlook between the North and South emerged; because of the apparent sign that the Ibos and the Yorubas were to control the central government after independence, the Hausas were lukewarm about political freedom and participated less in the anti-imperialism led by southern politicians. There were many reasons why the Hausas did not want independence, and this was not unconnected with their feeling of deprivation. During a meeting of the West African Students Union in London in 1943, Mallam Abubakar Imam (a Northerner), told students that the average educated Northerner thought:

. . .the South is proud of Western knowledge and culture;. . .to tell you the truth, the common people of the North put more confidence in the white man than in either their black southern brothers. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Abubakar Imam further pointed out why the Northerners held grievances against the Southerners. He said:

". . . .the Southern press ridiculed the Hausas and made disrespectful attacks on the Emirs, and that the Southern clerks in the north discriminated against northerners in government offices, in railroad ticket offices, and in commercial firms."

he summed up the fear of the Northerners that:

. . .in a self-governing Nigeria, the north would in effect be a backward protectorate governed by Southern.<sup>16</sup>

The fear of Southern domination was widespread in the North. In 1948, while addressing the Legislative Council, Tafawa Balewa, a prominent Northern politician and later the first Prime Minister of Nigeria after independence, remarked that:

. . . .The Southern tribes who are now pouring into the North in every increasing numbers and are more or less domiciled here do not mix with the Northern people. . .and we in the North look upon them as invaders.<sup>17</sup>

Balewa's remark reflected the fact that throughout the history of Nigeria, the North had been colonized by the Southerners. This colonization was facilitated by the fact that the Southerners possessed a weapon which the Northerners lacked--education and technical skill.

As Balewa correctly remarked, the Southerners did not mix with the Northerners because the former looked upon themselves as superior to the latter. This attitude on the part of the Southerners raised further speculation as to what the role of the Northerners would be in event of independence. This feeling was expressed in an editorial com-

ment on February 18, 1950 by the editor of Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo, a bi-weekly paper published in the North. He said:

. . .I believe that. . .Southerners will take the places of the Europeans in the North. What is there to stop them? They look and see it is thus at the present time. There are Europeans but, undoubtedly, it is the Southerner who has the power in the North. They have control of the railway stations; of the post office, of government, hospitals; of the canteens; the majority employed in the Kaduna Secretariat and in the Public Work Departments of government it is the Southerner who has the power.<sup>18</sup>

There are probably very few Nigerians today who would dispute this editorial comment. Northern Nigeria has long been colonized by the Southerners. The vulnerability, perceived or actual, of the Hausa vis-a-vis the Ibos and the Yorubas of the South in economic and political affairs of Nigeria before and after independence accounts a great deal to the social conflict that became more serious in the 1960s. As John Hatch has pointed out, the problems that have confronted Nigeria before and after independence:

. . .represent the logical consequence of the failure by either the British or the Nigerians to make a firm choice between separate communal statehood and strong centralized government; it was aggravated also by the deliberate insulation of the Northerners from modernization until a wide gap had appeared between them and Southern Nigerians. . . .<sup>19</sup>

However, the society that was formerly a diverse communal-grouping under separate administrations was on the first of October, 1954, pronounced a Federation, under a

Governor-General. Thus, another "alien" notion was introduced to the Nigerian political setting. In 1957 a prime minister was appointed to head the council and upper chamber, the Senate, was created.

And in spite of the tribal differences between the North and South, between the Yorubas and the Ibos, and between the Ibos and the non-Ibos of Eastern region, Nigerians celebrated their freedom from colonial rule on October 1, 1960. This period is another significant period in Nigeria's political history. It is a period of transition from colonial rule to self government with a western system of administration. What a post-independence Nigeria would look like was left to individual imagination. The only person who seemed to have had a clear picture of post-independence politics in Nigeria was Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, who emphasized the need for a strong federal government to offset the "power of tribalism in the regions which might undermine all attempts to produce a unified country."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Nigerian leaders accepted independence from Great Britain without any national bond among the leaders themselves and the mass. Independence became a tribal issue.

#### D. NIGERIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Although the basic political structure of an independent Nigeria had been established, the new political system was incomplete or immature at the time of election in the first self-government. The British-style parliamentary system was incompatible with the political style of many Nigerians, but some of the educated elites were too anxious to implement the western notions. Political parties were formed, even though it was on tribal basis, and there were campaigns and political rallies. The electoral process was in operation even though the majority were still parochial and uneducated. The first self-government was characterized by corrupt and bad administration. Politicians were corrupt, the government was mismanaged, and the unity of Nigeria was threatened. For instance, in the Western region, the deep rift between the leader of the Action Group (A Yoruba-tribe political party), Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his deputy and successor as Premier of the West, Chief Akintola, over the new ideological stance of the party, threatened by 1962 to split the region. An attempt to dismiss Akintola as premier of the West and replace him with another party leader, led to

disturbances in the Western House of Assembly and the Federal government declared a state of emergency.<sup>21</sup>

The unity of Nigeria was no less fractured by the chauvinistic attitudes of the Southern political leaders. In the South, the two dominant tribal groups were to struggle against each other for leadership of the country. It was not until 1963 when the Hausas used their numerical strength to defeat Southern politicians over the disputed census figures, that it was clear that not only were the Hausas attempting to challenge the dominant role of the Ibos and the Yorubas, but that the Hausas were no longer to be taken for a ride. The Southern's reaction to Hausas' assertiveness was a successful coup d'etat in 1966 which gave the Ibos total control of the federal bureaucracies and the central government at Lagos, having assassinated Tafawa Balewa (the Prime Minister) and the Northern and Western Premiers. In this coup no Ibo politician was killed. Again, this was an open exhibition of tribal chauvinism. Later on in this study we shall encounter the Northern's reaction.

Another major problem that threatened the internal security of Nigeria was a successful general strike in 1964 which forced the Federal government to accept higher wage

levels than it had previously been willing to concede. Thus, the analysis of Nigeria's first self-government throws light into the difficulties encountered in operating a democratic governmental system in a setting where democratic values are alien and not yet firmly established. And it is ironic that, while the West has developed through innovation in science, technology, and social organization, providing new responses to new challenges, the West expects that the non-Western world should only imitate or adapt Western institutions.<sup>22</sup>

National leadership demands probity, public honesty, and social justice. It was the absence of these values in the struggle among the dominant tribal groups in Nigeria that created an environment for the 1966 military takeover, with the stated aim of eradicating corruption and mismanagement, and to ensure peace and security.

#### MILITARY RULE

This period is very significant in the study of political system in Nigeria. It refers to the transition to a military system of government. It is the trend away from civilian administration. The army gained control of the government because of chaotic political atmosphere in the country. Their stated primary aim was to clear the



"mess" of the greedy and over-ambitious politicians. At this time, Nigerians were under a dictatorial government. The military ruled by "orders" and "decrees." Politics and political issues were military affairs, and there were several changes in the political structure. The Army Commander, Major-General Aqiyi Ironsi, then became temporary Head of State. But his attempts to replace the federal framework with a more unified and centralized political system angered the Northerners (Hausa-tribe) who were convinced that the coup that led him to power was a politically inspired attempt by the Ibo tribe to reverse the hegemony of the North.<sup>23</sup> This was followed by the first massacres of Ibos in the North at the end of May 1966.

In July 1966, came the second military coup that overthrew Ironsi. Major-General Yakubu Gowon a Northerner, then became the Supreme Commander and effectively Head of State on July 29, 1966, a position he was to hold for exactly nine years. There were many changes in the political structure, the creation of nineteen states out of the four regions of Nigeria, fragmented regional strengths. State creation weakened the possibility of any region large enough to attempt a unilateral declaration of independence in the future. The minority groups throughout the country

also received what they had clamored for over fifteen years. Public offices or the civil service created by the colonialist remained intact except for the fact that military officers were heads of each department or ministry.

There was the outbreak of a second and much more terrible massacre of the Ibos in the North. The September-October 1966 massacre was a traumatic event in Nigerian history. It destroyed the illusion that tribal rivalries could be dismissed as growing pains in a new nation and laid the foundations for the secessionist feeling that was to become an irresistible force in the East. This second massacre of the Ibos in the North can be attributed to the socio-economic problems arising when an alien minority dominates trade and technology. This situation is not unique to Northern Nigeria. Other examples are the Indians in East Africa, the Jews in Central Europe.<sup>24</sup>

In the East the demand for secession became overwhelming and, on May 30, 1966, Ojukwu, then the Governor of Eastern Nigeria, declared his region an independent sovereign state of the name and title, The Republic of Biafra.<sup>25</sup> War was inevitable. On July 6, Federal troops advanced into Biafra on two fronts, at Nsukka and at Ogoja. Unfortunately, after three coups and two massacres,

Nigeria was at war with itself. The civil war between Nigeria and Biafra was both bitter and bloody. It ended in the collapse of Biafra and total federal victory in January 1970. Then followed the reconciliation and rehabilitation policies in the early 1970s and the second phase of Nigeria's independence.

Thus 1975 was a key year for Nigeria. It marked the fifteenth year of Nigeria's independence. The military regime developed Nigeria industrially with the huge new oil wealth.<sup>26</sup> However, although the aim of the military government was to ensure peace and security, Nigerians witnessed various coups and counter-coups during this period, because of the ethnic composition of the Nigerian army. As a result of industrial development and economic progress brought by the oil crisis of the seventies, the Nigerian military government became more corrupt than its predecessor. For example, throughout July 1975, the Nigerian press had been carrying mounting criticisms of Gowon government's failure to tackle a whole lot of problems: corruption, port congestion, traffic chaos in Lagos, petrol distribution, the broken promise to change his corrupt state governors, and above all Gowon's failure to hand over the government to the civilians.<sup>27</sup>

The country yearned for a change and on July 29, 1975, there came the third coup that brought to an end nine years of the Gowon regime and the beginning of the new reforming government of Brigadier Mohammed.<sup>28</sup> An important feature of the public reaction to the coup was one of self-congratulation accompanying the relief that the coup had been bloodless compared with the previous ones. From all over the country came expressions of support for the new government from trade unions, students and other groups. At this early post-coup stage the general attitude was one of accepting that the change had been inevitable and of a resigned 'wait and see' what performance would be.<sup>29</sup>

The immediate sacking and replacement of the 12 former governors helped set the tone of the new regime, coupled with their public demonstrations to stamp out corruption and crush indiscipline. However, Nigeria like other developing countries has to face enormous problems of how to overcome shortages of manpower, how to put universal primary education into operation, how, when and in what fashion to return to civil rule after ten years of military rule. These are, and must remain, daunting to even the most able governments, wrote one analyst.<sup>30</sup>

The coming to power of Mohammed raised the fear in the South that there had been too great a shift towards northern predominance. But the speed of initial actions and the problems, such as the appointment of Brigadiers Obasanjo (a westerner) and Danjuma (from the Middle belt), to the two of the top posts; and the cancellation of the 1973 census helped to reassure the public about the new regime's intention of tackling tasks in the right order. Unfortunately the transition from Gowon to Mohammed was not all the bloodless coup it had appeared to be at the beginning. On February 1976, there was a counter-coup led by Lieutenant-Colonel Dimka in which the Head of State, General Murtala Mohammed was killed. But loyal troops were able to seize control of the broadcasting station and the rest of the country. The plotters were on the run. On March 11, less than a month after the attempt, 32 people were sentenced to death and the following day they were executed. However, the new Head of State and Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo, broadcast to the nation his intention to continue with the policy laid down by the Supreme Military Council under the leadership of the late General Muhammed.<sup>31</sup>

### THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE

The Lieutenant-General Olusegun Obasanjo's government certainly faced enough urgent problems. Top of the list was the question of a return to civilian rule. In the Head of State's address to the Constitution Drafting Committee, he said, "we cannot build a future for this country on a rigid political ideology. . . ."<sup>32</sup> Although the last political system had a House, Senate and operated as a constitutional liberal democracy, like the United States which it seemed to copy, its implementation of them was quite different. For instance, unlike the first Republic, the 1979 constitution did not allow separate constitution for the states but only a Federal constitution which provided for its own supremacy and was binding over the entire nation.<sup>33</sup> Nigeria's implementation of federalism and democracy was said to be in operation, and elections were held at all levels of government, the fact still remains that its implementations differ. For example, voting, which is an important political resource in a democracy was based on tribal sentiments and economic gains. "The democracy of the Second Republic was. . . tied

to the democracy of the grass roots. The Second Republic was perhaps only on trial," wrote an analyst.<sup>34</sup>

The operation of the political system was based mainly on the prescribed functions of the three arms of the government, with the president as the overall head. Each arm of the government was separated from one another but sometimes they interacted due to inter-governmental relations which existed among them. Sometimes there were conflicts and cohesion, but there were checks and balances. Although the president had veto powers, his decisions can be overturned by a two-third majority of votes in the House or Senate. All the members of the House and Senate were elected by the majority and they were responsible to them. Likewise, the governors of the nineteen states. Even though these states were created so as to operate a federal system, the fact still remains that they were not independent states. They had no separate constitution. The federal government determined their power. The governors and other administrators within the state were responsible to their party and the people. What was significant was that Nigeria had been given a second chance of democracy. However, the Second Republic collapsed on December 1983,

when the military took over as usual because of corrupt practices and mismanagement by the civilian administration.

From the analysis of military rule in Nigeria, the Civil War and the creation of nineteen states did great harm to Nigerian ethnic relations. Nigerians had never seen war before, except those who were engaged in foreign wars on behalf of the British Colonial government. The Civil War reminded most Nigerians that the world was not a very enjoyable place. Because of the Civil War, inter-group hatred seemed to have heightened and relations between or among groups loosened.

In the same way, the creation of states came to mean the creation of nineteen confederate states. Groups that were minorities before the creation of states, became the majority in their own states. Nigerians that were working in different parts of the country began to return to their states of origin to claim the "son of the soil" rights. The desire to stay outside one's birth place was no longer present, partly as a result of fear of tribal genocide and partly because of "home sweet home."

This movement back to homeland affected some states seriously. The Northern states were those that suffered most because only a very small proportion of Northerners



(as we have seen already), were educated due to a lack of educational facilities and institutional discrimination. The educated Southerners fled the North in large numbers for reasons associated with ethnic distrust, fear and hatred.

The Civil War ended in January 1970, but the military leaders were to be confronted with even more serious difficult task than the war of unity. The 1970s were a decade for reconstruction, by this it is meant rebuilding what had been destroyed during the Civil War in terms of material, economic infra-structures, and above all, ethnic relations. Nigeria seemed to have been permanently divided in the 1970s. Reunification of the diverse ethnic groups was, in the military slogan "a task that must be done." How was this to be done? Certainly not through the barrels of the gun. Can Nigerians be integrated after the bloody Civil War? Perhaps, or certainly. An integrated citizen would be found to exhibit the following attitudinal dimensions:

- (a) a de-emphasis of particularistic elements within a given country e.g. language, color, religion, and so on;
- (b) a de-emphasis of the role of ethnicity, e.g. Ibo, Yoruba, or Hausa.

- (c) a willingness to resettle, reside, and work in any national or regional constituents;
- (d) a feeling of faith and confidence in the diverse ethnic groups making up the country;
- (e) an orientation attaching importance to and supporting national policies aimed at stabilizing national political system.<sup>35</sup>

This list is inexhaustive. Again, attitudes of this nature must be found among citizens if any program is to be successful.

In the 1970s, it was important that Nigerians exhibited integrative behaviors and have a sense of belonging inculcated in them. How this was to be done preoccupied the attention of the military leaders. What the Federal Military Government thought fit was the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) which was to serve as a unifying mechanism.

The next chapter will be concerned with the political culture and voting behavior of Nigerians from the standpoint of the development of public support for the political system.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER THREE

- <sup>1</sup>Robert Collis. Nigeria in Conflict. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1970), p. 24.
- <sup>2</sup>Wale Ademoyega. The Federation of Nigeria: From Earliest Times to Independence. (London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 108.
- <sup>3</sup>Thomas Hodgkin. Nigerian Perspective: An Historical Anthology. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 2.
- <sup>4</sup>Raph Uwechue. Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War. (New York: Africana Publishing Corporation, 1971), p. 2.
- <sup>5</sup>Alan C. Burns. History of Nigeria. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1972) p. 265.
- <sup>6</sup>O. Nduka. Western Education and the Nigerian Cultural Background. (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1965. see also Ayo Agunsheye, "Nigeria" in James S. Coleman (ed) Education and Political Development. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 130.
- <sup>7</sup>Ayo Agunsheye. "Nigeria" in James S. Coleman (ed), Op. Cit. p. 130.
- <sup>8</sup>David B. Abernathy. The Political Dilemma of Popular Education: An African Case. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), pp. 48-49, 56-60.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup>Wale Ademoyega. The Federal of Nigeria from Earliest Times to Independence. Op. Cit. p. 121.
- <sup>12</sup>Alan Peshkin. Kanuri Schoolchildren: Education and Social Mobilization in Nigeria. (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1972), pp. 1-45.
- <sup>13</sup>Wale Ademoyega, Op. Cit. p. 121.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup>Thomas Hodgkin. Nigerian Perspective. Op. Cit. p. 19.

- <sup>16</sup> John Hatch. Nigeria: The Seeds of Disaster. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1970), p. 267.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 283.
- <sup>18</sup> James S. Coleman. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 360.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 283.
- <sup>20</sup> James S. Coleman. Nigeria: Background to Nationalism. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 360.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 361.
- <sup>22</sup> Guy Arnold, Modern Nigeria. (London: Longman Group Press, 1977), p. 20.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 24.
- <sup>25</sup> Guy Arnold, Modern Nigeria. Op. Cit. p. 25.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>30</sup> Burns, J.M., Peltgson, J.W. Cronin, T.E., Government by the People. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 40.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 45.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.

- <sup>35</sup>Gary K. Bertsch. Nation-Building in Yugoslavia: A Study of Political Integration and Attitudinal Consensus.  
(Beverly Hill: Sage Publications, 1971), p. 9.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POLITICAL CULTURE AND VOTING BEHAVIOR OF NIGERIANS

The term "political culture" cannot be defined precisely, but it has been used as a general description of ways of behaving in the political realm. Specifically, it includes the distinctive habits, customs, skills and attitudes which individuals learn or cultivate as to the shared experiences of their political system. Every human society has a peculiar culture which is usually a reflection of tradition, history, geographical location or experiences. The relativity in societies makes the various types of political culture inevitable in any democracy. In other words, things are perceived by individuals differently. Political features and processes are relative to individual society, hence different types of political culture are found in societies and even within a society or nation. The recurring regularities in the pattern of behavior of citizens are adequate in molding the institutions of each society. Usually, a wide diversity of traits is observable within any nation. The individual attitude towards the political structure and process, and his view of his own

relationship to it, gives a distinctive style to the political culture found in that society. In some societies, popular attitude reflects high sense of civic loyalty and responsibilities. Most people take part in politics and believe that they can be affected by its outcome. Hence, their perception or view of politics and political features will be more positive. In other nations, popular attitude reflects apathy, alienation and feelings of no civic responsibilities. A negative view of politics and political process is reflected among such groups of people, therefore, the level of participation has been observed to be low.

However, political scientist like Elazer in his study on political culture, has been able to give vivid illustrations and classifications of the term. According to Elazer, "political culture is the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is embedded."<sup>2</sup> This means that people look at political process and the structure and react to them differently. Other writers have expressed great concern about the importance of the term, and particularly as a source of such differences in habits, perspectives and attitudes that exist to influence political life of various countries.

People are inducted into political culture just as they are socialized into social systems. Various factors are responsible for any type of political culture, however, political culture is empirically testifiable in a democracy, because it is the fundamental determinant of voting behavior.

#### A. NIGERIANS POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS

Various concerns about how people look at politics, political process and moreover, why people cast their votes in certain ways, have been the main focus of some contemporary literature. Nigeria's political culture, like any other nation, is a reflection of her tradition, political-setting, geographical location and experiences. Once a larger community of various tribes, now a nation inherited from colonial administration, however, the three principal tribes still dominate the political life of the country. In recent years, it has been observed that Nigerians have developed a new orientation towards politics, political process and government. The political culture of Nigerians simply refers to how Nigerians perceive politics, politicians, political process, environment and government. Obviously, Nigeria during her second chance of democracy, exercised the right to vote, and this



has been considered a vital political resource hence what determines the leaders and form of government is the vote. The majority participated and chose their leaders through the election process.

However, finding out the main reasons underlying electoral behavior is a fundamental problem in any political system.<sup>3</sup> There have been various efforts to explain how citizens perceive politics, political process and system, and also, why voters cast their votes in certain patterns in Nigeria. This is particularly important because the electoral system is relatively "foreign." According to recent surveys, Nigerians have a new political orientation, unlike the past.<sup>4</sup> However, most Nigerians are still uneducated and ignorant, therefore remain parochial and traditionalistic in their views<sup>5</sup>. According to Almond and Verba, "the remote tribesmen in Nigeria or Ghana may be aware in a dim sort of way, of the existence of a central political regime."<sup>6</sup> This simply illustrates a trend away from predominantly parochialism or a reduction in the level of parochialism. Even if there has been no observation of complete awareness in the whole country, what is significant is the fact that there is a new orientation which has resulted in high political participation.

B. ELEMENTS CHARACTERIZING NIGERIA'S  
POLITICAL CULTURE

The political culture of Nigeria is characterized by two elements: the traditionalistic and individualistic elements. According to Elazer (1972), the traditionalistic political culture refers to those who associate politics, political inputs and outputs with their existing social order. They are conservative and want little or no interference with their social order. In the Nigerian context, this type of political culture exists among the few illiterates, villagers and farmers who want to maintain their existing "tribal-communal" social order and also have witnessed the various forms of political systems and viewed it as an interference with their normal life pattern. They have seen the political environment as unruly, politicians as corrupt and government as an all purposeful organ, hence their perception of political culture has been shaped by their experiences. Usually, their attitude towards politics is negative. They are not active in politics and they seldom vote. For example, out of the 35,000,000 people in Nigeria according to the 1952 population census, only 7,189,797 people voted during the 1959 presidential election, out of approximately 20,000,000 eligible voters.

However, party formation was on tribal basis, and likewise voting. Table-IV-I below illustrates this pattern.

TABLE-IV (Comparison of Votes and Seats by Party and Region)										
	North		West		East		Lagos		Totals	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
NPC	1,988,901	134	3089	-	-	-	189	-	1,992,179	134
NCNC NEPU	527,735 <sup>(i)</sup>	8	758,246	21	1,246,988	58 <sup>(ii)</sup>	61,608	2	2,594,577	89 <sup>(iii)</sup>
ACTION GROUP	565,915	25	933,618	33	445,594	14	48,137	1	1,992,364	73
OTHERS	188,625	7	184,288	8	237,625 <sup>(iii)</sup>	1	138	-	610,677	16
TOTALS	3,270,276	174	1,879,241	62	1,930,208	73	110,072	3	7,189,797	312

(i) Candidates standing under the NEPU Symbol  
(ii) Including one uncontested seat  
(iii) DPNC got 56,726 of these

The NPC was an Hausa-tribe political party, the NCNC was an Ibo-tribe political party, while the Action Group was a Yoruba-tribe political party. Each of the parties had large votes in their regions. The relationship between those people who manifests the traditionalistic political culture and their government is very poor. They alienate themselves from political activities but on the whole, they wish that both the central and local government could improve the economic condition of the people by either providing job or education. For this reason, they vote but on a very small scale. They are religious people or villagers. According to survey, very low voters turn-outs have been observed in areas with this typology. In the 1979 presidential and states elections, it was observed

that the UPN party attracted high voter turnout in some areas because of the education program which it included in its objectives. During the campaign the leader of the party, Chief Obafeni Awolowo, emphasized that the party would provide free education for all and that the 'party recognizes the indispensable role of the teachers. . .'"<sup>7</sup>

The second type of political culture which is found in Nigeria is the individualistic political culture. This type was reflected in the 1979 presidential and state elections but it has been observed to be prominent among the Ibo-tribe. With this type, Nigerian political culture may have changed from predominantly parochialism. One might say, that since the economic development started by the British colonialists and the industrial development of the seventies, Nigerians' orientation toward politics and their government has taken a new dimension. Nigeria is rich in minerals and this made her one of the leading producers of oil in the world. Figure IV-I on the next page shows the mineral deposits in Nigeria.

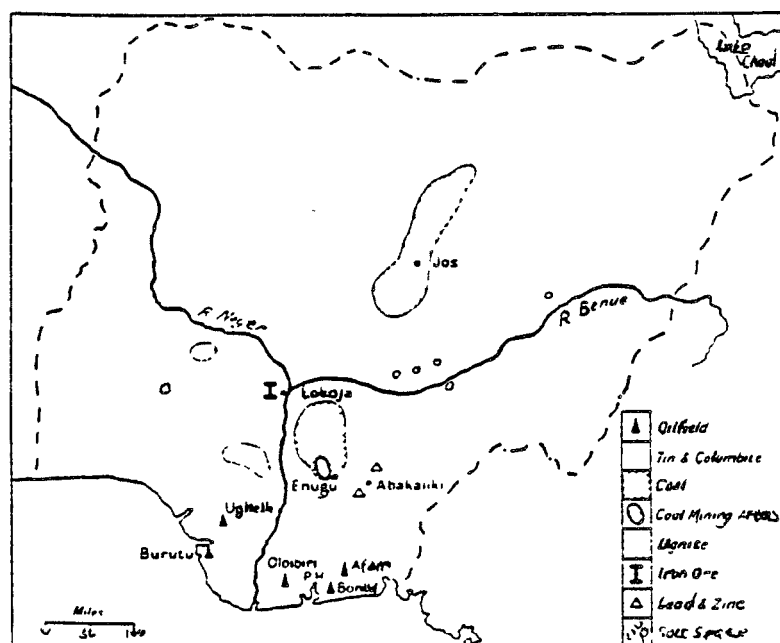


FIG. IV-I. Nigeria: Minerals

Invariably, the revenue accrued from the oil led to various developments in the country and the people in government appeared to be very rich. This tended to change the views of many Nigerians, and they perceived politics as a source of wealth and the government as more or less a marketplace where individuals pursue their interests. This view of politics and the political system, however, influence the people's political participation and value system. Hence, considering the address made by the former chief of staff in 1977, he acknowledged the fact and said that "the movement from a predominantly agrarian to an industrial society (in Nigeria) is bound to affect people's values,



Furthermore, high votes were also recorded among people with large private businesses and people with above average incomes, while low participation was observed in areas with no big businesses or residents with high income. In terms of party affiliation, many cities with big industries and private businesses were observed to vote for the ruling party, NPN, because it is regarded as a party for the "rich," and its main objective is industrial and technological developments. People in such areas have perceived the government as a marketplace and by voting for the party during election, made them view politics and political process as a game. They are active simply because of their own economic interest which they want to pursue. They view politics as a source of achieving their goals. During the 1979 presidential election, former President Shehu Shagari had the highest number of votes, because of the main objective of his party; which was to promote industrial and technological development. High votes were recorded for his party, especially in big cities with industries, and large population. At the state level, similar observations were made of states which have within their boundaries big cities, towns and businesses, while low vote turnout was recorded in villages and small towns with few or no busi-

nesses at all. Generally, however, higher voter turnout was observed during the presidential election, compared to states and local elections.

Nevertheless, considering the outcome of the 1979 Presidential and states elections one would observe the new political orientation in Nigeria, although various factors account for this. The pattern of voting reflects the typology of political culture the citizens manifest, while the level of participation reflects the new orientation. And from the analysis of Nigeria's political process and environment, one would realize that the relevance of political culture to voting behavior can be emphasized. The study of political culture is very significant to the voting pattern in any democracy. It is the way people look at politics, political process and system that will influence their political involvement and most especially their voting behavior. In other words, voting patterns in any democracy reflect the political culture manifested by the citizens. In the case of Nigeria, popular views of politics, and political process changed from the former predominant parochial view to a more positive view, hence higher political participation was observed in the 1979 general elections, and voter turnout were considerably



higher compared to past similar elections. "The outcome of these elections. . . .says a Nigeria, bore clearly unity. . . .at least when compared with similar elections in 1959 to 1964."<sup>9</sup>

Political culture is, however, empirically testable in any democracy, if the voters turnout are taken into consideration. It is a major determinant of voting behavior in a democracy and it is, therefore, unavoidable in such political environment where vote is regarded as a significant political resource. Therefore, how and to whom the citizens cast their votes will depend on their perception at that period of time. In sum, why they cast their votes in a certain way or why the voting pattern reflects a particular trend during a certain election depends on their political culture. Political culture, therefore can be regarded as a significant determinant of electoral behavior. Since the fundamental problem of any political system is to find out the main reasons underlying the electoral behavior, the study of political culture has offered a great insight into the problem.

The next chapter is an intensive treatment of particularistic aspects of Nigerian political problems and their relation to Nigeria's political development.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

- <sup>1</sup>D.J. Elazer. American Federalism. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co. Inc., 1972), p. 84.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup>Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. The Civic Culture. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 14-15.
- <sup>4</sup>Binder, Leonard, et. al. Crisis and Sequences in Political Development. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 243.
- <sup>5</sup>Dawson, Richard E. et. al. Political Socialization: An Analytical Study. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1977), p. 146.
- <sup>6</sup>Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba, Op. Cit., p. 21.
- <sup>7</sup>West Africa, No. 3419, (February 21, 1983) p. 468.
- <sup>8</sup>African Affairs. Vol. 82, No. 326, (January 1983), p. 28.
- <sup>9</sup>African Report, Vol. 27, No. 1, (Jan-Feb. 1982), p. 4.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE MAJOR POLITICAL PROBLEMS FACING NIGERIA

Before discussing the possible future organization of Nigeria, it is wise to consider the basic causes which led the apparently most stable African country into a crisis which is destroying its democracy. As we have seen earlier in this study, that socio-political problems, especially those associated with ethnic relations are related to British colonial policies. However, today's problems in Nigeria are also self-inflicted, that is, some problems have been created by Nigerians themselves.

Nigeria appeared on independence in 1960 to possess a splendid future as a new nation. She had her future in the hands of her own people. Nigeria had resources which, if developed, could raise the standard of living of her people to that of a developed country. She had an elite of leaders who appeared able to hold their own anywhere in the world. But when an outsider looked deeper, he was bound to find three basic dangers that hinder the proper working of a modern government-democracy. Behind the scenes are corruption, tribalism and a lack of understanding of biology

which was already leading to an uncontrolled population explosion.

National character is defined by Inkeles and Levinson as ". . .relatively enduring personal characteristics and patterns that are modal among adults members of a society."<sup>1</sup> The national character of Nigeria is frequently stereotyped among its young intellectuals as being associated with corruption, tribalism, and conspicuous consumption. Nigerians did not conceal their perception of the national leaders whom they accused of indiscriminate and reckless display of affluence and a general indiscipline in the social fabric of the nation. Professor Adamu Baikie of Ahmadu Bello University, remarked during the inter-university workshop on the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC):

. . .Our youths have been exposed to situations whereby they have either been eyewitnesses to misdemeanor by our elders or they have themselves fallen victims to unkept promises. . .<sup>2</sup>

The lack of faith on the leaders certainly contributed to Nigeria's instability. For the purpose of this study, the basis of social problems in Nigeria today may be divided into three: (A) Corruption, (B) Tribalism and (C) Over-population.

## A. CORRUPTION

Whenever a discussion took place in Nigeria before the coups on the development of the country, be it health, economic development or, more generally, politics, the subjects invariably led to the problem of corruption.

### CAUSES AND EFFECTS

During the traditional political system, the gift, or 'dash,' is part of the tradition of the people. For instance, in the old days if you visited a village chief you gave him a present, and he gave you one. This has become simply good manners. Another form of manners is traditional hospitality, where all members of one's family, and this includes all the friends and relations which a polygamous society produces, have free access to one's house and food. All these traditions make for harmony during the traditional system of government, but when transformed into modern urban surrounding, they may become a menace. Thus the traditional gift becomes a bribe, hospitality to one's relations a threat--a Nigerian civil servant's home in the town can be invaded by his extended families from his home village, who would come and take it for granted that they would be housed even if this merely meant a mat on the floor. Relations of this sort increase

expenses and are one of the reasons why almost no Nigerian can live on his salary without augmentation, whether he is poor or rich.<sup>3</sup>

Young Nigerians are being ruined by the pressures within their tradition. This sort of pressure is given in Chinua Achebe's novel, No Longer at Ease. In the end the unfortunate young man is led into embezzlement in his attempt to meet these traditional demands. Tradition is so strong that to break the rules of family help is very much worse than to cheat 'the authorities' or even steal.

Nigeria, like Ireland, had a long period during which it was patriotic to be 'agin the government.' In Ireland it took the people years after obtaining independence to realize that they had their own government and it was themselves they were now 'agin.'<sup>4</sup> So it is in Nigeria today and will be for some time to come until the people realize the development of their own society and that it is they themselves who suffers and nobody else.

Another pressure of the tradition is the value placed on material success which has a wide-ranging of connotation. Though during the traditional system, success, in whatever endeavor, to be really appreciated, has to be seen to be something painstakingly and slowly earned, but

with the modernization of the society, success has come to be taken as its own justification. Thus, the successful person is simply that individual capable of exercising the Machiavaellian quality of virtue, the ability ceaselessly and ruthlessly to exploit every opportunity as it arises.

Insecurity is guarded against not just by safeguarding the present but also by insuring against the future, which in practice means the use of one's office to enrich oneself, the widespread practice of corruption and abuse of office, a practice which has been commented upon by almost all observers of the Nigerian political scene.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the public servant who has misappropriated public funds may be condemned in one respect and commended in another. So may the public servant who in that capacity is bribed to give contracts at government loss. This is understandable when one considers that the concept of the nation is rather vague, and ethnic sentiment more clearly defined than national commitment. Some Nigerian public servants still see the nation as an object of plunder, and the government as a legitimate instrument for conducting the plunder. According to Martin Igbozurike (1976), an outstanding Nigerian scholar and politician is known to have said before the Shomolu Tribunal that he had no qualms

about the funds he had misappropriated during his political career, considering that they enabled him to assist his own people by establishing modern amenities.

It is contended here that some of the internal political problems that plague Nigeria is as a result of ignorance on the part of the leaders about what a nation is. In the same way, most Nigerian citizens are equally ignorant about the ingredients of nationhood, their role, and their relationship with the government. A stable political system is untenable unless the leaders and citizens fully appreciate and understand what a nation in contemporary thought is.

Nigeria has not had the time to be converted into a working system for modern society hence the young, educated Nigerians have no traditions to guide them in the modern world in which they live. However, it is known that every country has passed through such a period in its development when nepotism, bribery and all forms of corruption were the order of the day. Just over a hundred years ago in the 1865 general election in England there was said to have been 'more profuse and corrupt expenditure than was ever known before.' It took England the whole of the nineteenth century to break loose from hereditary privilege battled



with new-found wealth, the latter winning in the end through the power of money. Indeed everything from the 'dash' given to the nurse by the patient for his bedpan to the sale of high office can be paralleled in recent British history.<sup>6</sup>

Poverty among the uneducated is one of the greatest causes of dishonesty. If you live on a meager salary all the time and have nothing to subsidize for an emergency, you are forced to make something on the side if you can. In Nigeria about 90 percent of the population are small farmers on a subsistence wage and about 3 percent are very wealthy. Very few of the rich and powerful have reached their present position simply by hard, honest work or inheritance. Many fortunes have been made outside the law. In short, all the coups carried out by the Nigerian military have been as a result of dishonesty among the politicians, businessmen and among the uneducated poor. But the most shocking aspect of it is the military's engagement in corrupt practices after it has taken over. For example the multiplicity of state government due to the creation of states by the military helped ruin the country. Every governor of a state and his cabinet are V.I.P.'s (very important people) and this goes with an inflated expense ac-

count, travel abroad and opportunities to enrich themselves. Only a few Nigerians had enough insight to see the danger. Fewer people were so dedicated as to be able to resist the temptations of a society where fortunes were easy to win if the conscience was stilled.

Hence the scene in Nigeria after independence was not reassuring, for corruption was accepted as normal. But no country can run an efficient civil service or make plans for the future in an atmosphere full of corruption and nepotism. Dishonesty leads to inefficiency and slowing up of progress and this could be found in every field in Nigeria. Widespread corruption may also induce some of the best civil servants to leave the country for assignments in international organization. Among the administrators who remain, corruption causes apathy.

Tricks, bribes, and corruption were the order of the day and it was the same in every region and in the federal government in Lagos. But now that the military has taken over again, is Nigeria going to learn from its experiences of the past?

#### B. TRIBALISM

The major political problem facing Nigeria, and most other new nations, is and will continue to be the

problem of ensuring national unity. With differing degrees of enthusiasm, the elite from all ethnic groups are generally speaking, committed to unity, but for the great mass of the people today the choice between tribe and nation is not even relevant. The tribe or subtribe is paramount, the nation, is secondary.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the British contribution to political instability in Nigeria, Nigeria has not been blessed with a leader who is above tribal sentiment. Most Nigerian leaders since the time of colonial administration, were concerned with the welfare of their tribal group although they proclaimed to be nationalists. When people grow up under this condition, they are most likely to practice what the leaders themselves are practicing.

Let us examine how tribalism found its root in Nigeria. Historically, man's first security comes from his family, then the binding of families together into tribes and then the different tribes into nations. Nigerians have hardly passed out of the family phase and to them a man's obligations towards his own family still surpass those he should feel for society. He is ready to make fortunes by any method so as to be able to help his family. The relations of a successful man have the right by tradition to

receive his hospitality. But it is becoming a menace to young educated Nigerians to handle. With such close family relationships, it is not surprising that the formation of tribes is so rampant. Another reason is that the forest belt of East and West leaves little access for the interaction between one area and another. This led to the isolation of the different communities or tribes who had to stick closely together within themselves for security.

The slave drive in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries when human beings, particularly black human beings, were regarded as merchandise, gave rise to the insecurity of every West African village, for the Arabs and the Westerners used the tribal Africans to betray and sell each other so that fear was driven deep into them, and this increased their group togetherness.

However, there have been rapid changes in Nigeria during this century due to modern science and two world wars. The Nigerian independence is one of those rapid changes--the right to self-government. But, Nigerian leaders are still family men with obligations to their tribes or sub-tribes. Only very few have passed this stage and think of Nigeria as a nation. It is obvious that the

Ibos in the East are much more dedicated to Nigeria than the Yoruba in the West or the Hausa in the North.

In Nigeria, social upheavals were not so much the result of poverty as it was in the United States. Nigerians were relatively poorer than Americans in the 1960s, but the Civil War of the 1960s cannot be attributed to poverty. The seed of disunity was sown by the British before they terminated their suzerainty in Nigeria. Uneven development, denial of the Northerners access to educational facilities and the deliberate transfer of political and economic powers to Ibos and the Yorubas, were premonitions, unfortunately unappreciated, that an independent Nigeria would be a chaotic Nigeria. The misuse of their socio-economic powers by the Ibos and the Yorubas was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Minority uprising and the Hausa insurgency seem to have stripped the Ibos and the Yorubas of part of their powers. However, the most serious effect of these uprisings is the threat it has posed to Nigeria as an independent nation. Tribalism deserves arrest if Nigeria is to survive.

However, the government of Nigeria seems bent on protecting the sovereignty of their nation. This does not simply mean ability to ward off external aggressors. It

also entails ability to maintain internal peace. Internal peace in Nigeria would depend upon the different groups' willingness to assist each other, and respect each other's ethnic origin and be willing to work together as members of the same political system.

### C. OVER-POPULATION

Over-population is another basic course of Nigerian crisis. The recent census in Nigeria revealed that there are 90 million people. And the population is increasing at not less than 3 percent per annum.<sup>6</sup> The death rate among children dying before they grow up is often as high as 50 percent.<sup>7</sup> It is very high in the North because the women play a very minor role in society and the majority are illiterate. There is a remarkable difference between the children of the educated and medically protected members of the society and those of the poor.<sup>8</sup> The former live on incomes comparable to their counterparts in developed countries, the latter at a subsistence level and have no real medical cover. The development of the children differ in the South. However, the children of the poor are retarded as compared with those of the rich.

Nigeria will always have increase in population due to its history, the North with its Moslem polygamy and

pagan polygamy elsewhere and the South with its Catholicism as the largest Christian denomination. In Nigeria, it is a misfortune for a housewife to be infertile. How can a society that is child conscious feed, clothe and educate all its people? Unemployment, poverty, and crimes are very high in Nigeria. And unless the society does something to solve the problems, there will always be tensions that will hinder the proper working of a modern political system.

The majority of Nigerians consider their children as their insurance during old age and childless old people find themselves alone and destitute. This is why birth control does not appeal to these people. On the other hand, you cannot tell a Moslem in the North not to have many wives because it is not against his religion. Proper birth control cannot yet be accepted by an average family. If they are religious they often find that contraception is against the teaching of their church (Roman Catholics). And some Nigerian men who live in the moment, prefer to go on as their fathers have done before them by having many children and giving little regard to the consequences.

Population explosion can be checked through the different birth control methods but the society is paying little or no attention. The underlying fact is that it

breeds corruption. The Nigerian extended family system is so large that the few successful members of such families have to make a lot of money to keep the family going while the poorer ones will resolve to dubious means to be able to live. If any sort of peaceful development is to be achieved by the Nigerian leaders this problem of population must be tackled. However, there is hope since there are increased numbers of educated people in Nigeria to help educate the illiterate ones on the burdens of over-population.



## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

- <sup>1</sup> Alex Inkeles and Daniel Levinson. "National Character" The Study of Modal Personality and Sociocultural Systems," in Vol. II of Handbook of Social Psychology, edited by (Gardiner Lindzey Reading: Addison-Wesley, Inc., 1954), p. 983.
- <sup>2</sup> West Africa. April 2, 1973, p. 441.
- <sup>3</sup> Billy Dudley. An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 101.
- <sup>4</sup> Robert Collis. Nigeria in Conflict. (London: Tinling and Company Limited, 1970), p. 185.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 187.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 189.
- <sup>7</sup> Sayre P. Schatz. Nigerian Capitalism. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 247.
- <sup>8</sup> Martin Igbozurike. Problem-Generating Structures in Nigeria's Rural Development. (Sweden: Bohuslaningens AB, Uddevalla 1976), p. 86.
- <sup>9</sup> Chinua Achebe. No Longer at Ease (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 182.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The analysis of the Nigerian experience strongly suggests that traditional norms can contribute to the early stages of political development in new nations:

. . .these cultures (at once diverse and similar) had existed in pre-colonial times as autonomous political entities. . .at the turn of the twentieth century, the final stroke of the British royal pen brought all these empires, kingdoms, chiefdoms, city-states and the surrounding societies under the name of "British Nigeria."<sup>1</sup>

These findings therefore support the conclusions of several major studies in the political development literature. The traditional authoritarian values provide an important means of reducing the strain on newly independent governments by decreasing demands on the political system. They predispose the public to accept the decisions and policies of legitimate authority which in Nigeria meant accepting the decisions of native political leaders.

Colonism according to Wayne Nafziger (1983) interfered with internal political and economic development, especially by affecting the shape of national boundaries, social structure, and resource allocation within them, con-

tributed to post-colonial instability.<sup>2</sup> By providing overriding opportunity structure within which competition was to operate, Colonial rule influenced the development of nationalism and communalism.

However, unevenness in social change and modernization among various regions and communities can be attributed to Britain's penetration of Nigeria. The failure by the British missionaries to convert Northerners to Christianity helped create unevenness because these missionaries who were also educators, denied the Northerners educational facilities on the ground of their religious faith.<sup>3</sup> While those who benefitted from the British educational programs were Southern Nigerians. Concentration of educational infra-structural facilities in the South was strictly a reward for the conformist Southerners. But this divergent and discriminatory policy relating to the provision of educational facilities in Nigeria has had a serious destabilizing effect to Nigeria's internal security. This imbalance in educational facilities between the North and the South continued after independence.

In sum, the British seemed to have achieved their objective, that is to use educational facilities as a weapon against the North. Thus, the dominant role of the

Yorubas and the Ibos and their monopolization of educational facilities in Nigeria should be considered as critical factors that provoked ethnic discontent in the 1960s. Education as we know, gives the possessor access to political, economic and social power automatically fell into the hands of the Ibos and the Yorubas. The Hausas, although numerically superior, were dominated by these two Southern tribes.

The control of educational facilities means that the Ibos and the Yorubas were most likely to possess technical skills required by foreign corporations and the British oriented government structures. And this helped increase ethnicity.

Nigerians have been portrayed by Coleman as simultaneously manifesting five levels of nationalism. . . "African," "Nigerian," "Regional," "Group," and "Cultural."<sup>4</sup> The development of competing levels of loyalty is indicative of political modernization in Nigeria, with the varying salience suggesting the continued importance of the basic unit of social identification--the traditional community.

Nevertheless, communal groups are experiencing the process of modernization as they are joined into common

political framework. This helps to explain why the political community is often redefined to conform with the new levels of identification. For example, the cultural-political concept of the Yoruba and the Ibo were in response to the introduction of a broader political framework. Thus, communal grouping is beginning to adapt to a higher level of political framework. Another issue is the shifting and competitive situation that has placed ethnic groups against each other and has seriously affected the development of loyalties over the primordial level.

Relationships among the various ethnic groups existed primarily at the regional level, and interaction can be defined in terms of aggressive ethnicity. O'Connell describes it as:

A phenomena of elite groups, particularly in bureaucratic elite groups in developing countries who are competing for posts and promotions, and who mobilize the support of their ethnic groups in the struggle.<sup>5</sup>

Nigerian political parties were mobilized for the purpose of advancing the limited interests of ethnic elites in the modern system, this indicates that competition resulting from social mobilization was viewed in communal terms. Aggressive ethnicity characterizes an intense state of ethnic rivalry that occurs normally under conditions of acute social stress, cultural breakdown, and limited

resources. Ethnic solidarity heightens, reflecting the following pattern of interaction.

Competition becomes bitter, and as a result of rapid social change, a competitor may possess few precedents within his own experience that can reassure him. The insecurity causes the participant to identify with his own group, and traditional distrust widens into hostility. At some point, communication between groups break down, and it is easy to envisage groups as stereotypes and less than human. Under these conditions, a twofold social morality developed; law held only for relations within the group; outside the group only power relations existed.<sup>6</sup>

The failure of Nigerian civil government has its roots in aggressive ethnicity, for the intensity of group conflict as we have observed earlier in this study was too great for the existing system to sustain. However, apart from group conflict, there are other complicating factors such as: unemployment, economic stagnation, overpopulation and rapid mobilization played a significant role. Nigeria became independent with an inbuilt, structured basis for conflict among its constituent groups. Nigeria political boundaries bore little relation to its ethnic composition, and little consideration was given to

future possibility of tribal antagonisms. The British assumed that the "rules of the game" necessary for democratic government would be followed here.

However, with the departure of the British after Nigerian independence, the inadequacies of the system became apparent. The British presence had falsified the power struggle, for so long as the British had the final say, conflict between the tribal groups could be controlled. The void created by their departure left contending groups trying to resolve their interests in open competition without application being made to higher authority. An equilibrium of forces had not been attained, and this became quite clear as the North became dominant in the federal government. This imbalance had far-reaching consequences as each group became more conscious of its position and of the importance of controlling the federal government.

A second major source of instability was the economic condition of the country. Nigeria had a booming economy by African standards. Yet, the demands of development versus available resources required delicate management under almost impossible conditions. The availability of mobilized manpower exceeded that of modern jobs, and

limited resources had to be shared. The politicians allocating them had to choose between where the resources were really needed, as opposed to appeasing opinion leaders in one's region. However, the danger was twofold as the focus on allocation becomes strictly political. The use of resources with political power placed emphasis on politics and access to the political control of resources. This also served to intensify tribalism.

Another serious problem was the political acculturation of the leadership. The leaders found themselves working within an essentially British political structure premised on certain modes of British political behavior. These restraints were viewed as artificial, unrealistic, and imposed from without, having no basis in Nigerian experience.<sup>5</sup> Post-independence politics saw the abandonment of these norms in favor of the aggressive use of power to maintain or to better one's position. Previous experience in dealing with other regions had contributed little to engender trust between them. The weakness of one's position and distrust of other contenders caused the fundamental "rules of the game" never to be accepted. The period 1961-1966 was the continuous history of falsified elections, rigged censuses, thuggery, and the undermining



of an opponent's support. The conception of politics in terms of power and the failure to abide by the rules was a major source of instability.

Political integration was a failure along both the vertical and horizontal dimensions. The horizontal political community was more remote in 1966 than it was in 1960. The intense competition among ethnic groups through the machinery of government offered little possibility of engendering trust and a mutuality of interests that are necessary to form a common political community. Vertical integration seeks a primary identification with the national level of government that overrides other levels of identification. In Nigeria, the federal level was seen as a ground for competition among contending groups, rather than an entity to be valued in itself. The existence of groups with sufficient independence that could seek to propagate a national identity was impossible. Political symbols, if they can be termed such, were ethnic in content. Ideology never had a chance to develop. Nor were there any personalities of the necessary stature and independence that could rise above the conflict. The effective level of vertical integration stopped at the regional level.

There are factors that served to build a national community though they were obscured by the predominant trends. The growth of interregional trade was one cross current that was growing throughout the period. Vested interests in other regions and increased communication between different elements of Nigerian society helped to promote national integration. Important, too, were the individuals among all elite groups who identified with the Nigerian state. They were particularly notable in the civil service, universities and military. Many had a vested interest in the continuation of a greater Nigeria. Others, through sentimental attachment, had a strong identification with it. Many minority groups believed, in a negative sense, that the best interests of their particular group lay in a national federation. Even for the major groups, thoughts of secession were tempered by the economic and political consequences of abandoning the system.

The failure of civilian governments can be seen in the context of the failure of an administrative-traditional system of rule to be adequate for Nigerian needs. Edward Feit points to the colonial regime, indicating that,

The colonial regime was based on the working of an administrative-traditional system, a regime poorly adapted to the integrating Africans outside of their own tribal environment. . . Resting as it did on the

continued authority of the ruler, the system was to be confronted with the need for increased participation of men when this authority was eroding.<sup>7</sup>

The essential weakness was the lack of mechanisms to articulate and aggregate popular interests as determined by socially mobilized sector. The civilian government did differ vastly from this tradition. It did not seek mass accountability and support, and through patronage and corruption, weakened the machinery of government that the British left. Nigerian politics was government by contending political machines, depending on particular patronage that could not sustain itself in the context of mass change and rise of new groups.

In sum, from the analysis of the features of Nigeria's politics, political environment, process and system, it is quite obvious that future politics and government in Nigeria will be a replica of the past.

## FOOTNOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Igbozurike. Problem-Generating Structures in Nigeria's Rural Development. (Sweden: Bohnslaningers AB, Uddewalla 1976), p. 15.
- <sup>2</sup> Wayne Natziger. The Economics of Political Instability. (Colorado: Boulder West View Press, 1983), p. 30.
- <sup>3</sup> James S. Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 419.
- <sup>4</sup> James O'Connell, "Authority and Community in Nigeria," in Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism, ed. by James Melson and Howard Wolpe. (Grand Rapids: Michigan State University Press, 1971), p. 631.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> Robert Collis. Nigeria in Conflict (London: Secker and Warburg, 1970), p. 174.
- <sup>7</sup> Edward Feit, "Military Coups and Political Development: Some Lessons from Ghana and Nigeria," World Politics, 20 (January, 1968), p. 382.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abernethy, David B. The Political Dilemma of Popular Education An African Case. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969.
- Adams, Nina S. and Alfred W. McCoy. Laos: War and Revolution. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.
- Agunbiade, Solomon Ajiboye. The National Youth Service Corps: A Challenge to Government, the Youths and Nigerian Society. Ibadan: The Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1973.
- Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. The Civic Culture. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Almond, Gabriel and Sidney Verba. The Civic Culture, Revisited. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.
- Almond, Gabriel and Pollwell, Bingham G., Comparative Politics. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978.
- Almond, Gabriel and Pollwell, Bingham G. Comparative Politics Today: A World View. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980.
- Awolowo, Obafemi. Path to Nigeria's Greatness. Lagos: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., 1981.
- Bertsch, Gray K. Nation-Building in Yugoslavia: A Study of Political Integration and Attitudinal Consensus. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1971.
- Bill, James A., and Hardgrave Robert L., Jr. Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory. Washington: University Press of America, 1981.
- Binder, Leonard; Coleman, James S.; LaPalembara; Pye, Lucien W.; Verba, Sidney; and Weiner, Myron. Crises and Sequences in Political Development. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

- Bolaji, Labanji. Anatomy of Corruption in Nigeria. Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1970.
- Bradley, R. Schiller. The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.
- Burns, J.M.; Cronin, T.E.; Peltgson, J.W. Government by the People. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978.
- Clark, Kenneth B. and Jeanette Hopkins. A Relevant War Against Poverty. A Study of Community Action Programs and Observable Social Change. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1969.
- Cohen, Ronald and John Middleton. From Tribe to Nation in Africa. Scranton: Chandler Publishing Co., 1970.
- Coleman, James S. Education and Political Development. Princeton University Press, 1965.
- Coleman, James S. and Carl Rosberg. Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.
- Collis, Robert. Nigeria in Conflict. London: Secker and Warburg, 1970.
- Coser, Lewis A. "Conflict: Social Aspect." in David Sills (ed). Integrational Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences. New York: MacMillam and Co., 1968.
- Curle, Adam. Educational Problems of Development Societies. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973.
- Curtis, Michael. Comparative Government and Politics. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1978.
- Damachi, V.G. Nigerian Modernization: A Colonial Legacy. Ibadan: Joseph Okpaky Publishing Co., Inc. 1972.
- Dawson, Richard E. et al. Political Socialization: An Analytic Study. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1977.
- Deutsch, Karl W. Nationalism and Social Communication, Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1972.

- Dudley, B.J. An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Elazer, D.J., America Federalism. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., Inc., 1972.
- Emerson, Rupert. From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asia and African People. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Final Report of the National Voluntary Service Advisory Council. 1975 Annual Report to the President.
- First, Ruth. Power in Africa. New York: Penguin Press, 1971.
- Foster, George M. Culture and Conquest. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967.
- Galbraith, John Kenneth. The Affluent Society. London: Andre Deutsh, 1977.
- Garner, Robert E. The Developing Nations. Kansas: University of Missouri, 1982.
- Geertz, Clifford (ed). Old Societies and New States. New York: Free Press, 1963.
- Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan (eds). Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Gorman, Robert F. Political Conflict on the Horn of Africa. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981.
- Hatch, John. Nigeria: The Seeds of Disaster. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1970.
- Holt, Robert T. and John, Turner E. The Methodology Comparative Research. New York: The Free Press, 1976.
- Kirk-Greene, Anthony and Douglas Rimmer, Nigeria Since 1970: A Political and Economic Outline. New York: Holmes and Meier Inc., 1981.

- Madiebo, A.A., The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War, Lagos: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co., Ltd. Nigeria, 1980.
- McLennan, Barbara N. Comparative Political Systems. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975.
- McLennan, Barbara N. Comparative Politics and Public Policy. Massachusetts: Duxbury Press, 1980.
- Melson, R., Wolpe, H., Nigeria. Modernization and the Politics of Communalism. Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1971.
- Natziger, Wayne. The Economics of Political Instability. Colorado: Boulder West View Press, 1983.
- Nicholson, I.F., The Administration of Nigeria: 1900-1960. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Paxton, J., The Stateman's Year-book, 119th ed., New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982-83.
- Schwarz, Walter. Nigeria. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1968.



