CHAPTER 13

POLITICS IN NIGERIA

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Country Bio

NIGERIA

Population
151 million

Territory
356,668 square miles

Year of Independence
1960

Year of Current Constitution
1999 Constitution, based on the 1979 Constitution (including revisions drafted in 1995)

Head of State
President Goodluck Jonathan

Head of Government
President Goodluck Jonathan

Languages
English (official), Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and 250 other ethnic groups

Religions
Muslim 50%, Christian 40%, indigenous beliefs 10%

In the African context, Nigeria is a megastate. Even on a world scale, Nigeria is a major country. Larger than France or Britain, it claims over one-fifth of the people in Africa and has the world's largest black population. Its petroleum and its substantial standing military force guarantee its prominence in international relations, and with 104 universities, Nigeria contains a large proportion of Africa's centers of learning and research.

For these reasons alone, one should know about Nigeria. But learning about Nigeria is also an efficient approach to learning about Africa, because Nigeria embodies much of the variety of African political experience within its borders. Its traditions include the large-scale emirates of the North and the small kingdoms and village-level republics of the South. Although both were administered by Britain, the North and South of Nigeria experienced different versions of colonial rule. Its culture is divided by ethnicity and by religion, especially between Christians and Muslims. Its history since independence includes coups, countercoups, and civil war; recently, along with many other Africans, Nigerians have been groping toward a renewal of democracy. The problems and prospects of many African ministates are found in Nigeria, but at a more daunting scale and level of complexity. To know Nigeria is not necessarily to know Africa, but to one who is well-acquainted with the Nigerian experience, there will be little that is surprising in politics elsewhere on the continent.

Nigeria's prominent place in the world is more potential than real, however, because in recent years, Nigeria has been a *sick* giant. Its economy is in shambles and the provision of public services has broken down. This chapter examines the causes of this illness and assesses the democratic government's remedies to it.

CURRENT POLICY CHALLENGES

Nigeria is now enjoying the longest period of civilian rule in its history, but it faces failures of governance and ongoing challenges to constitutional authority that keep democracy in a precarious state. The country's ethnic, regional, and religious divisions have intensified in recent years. Leading political elites and some violent groups argue for breaking up the country

into a weak federation or even completely independent states if political power and economic resources are not distributed more justly. The declining quality of elections, persistent inequalities, and failures of government performance all contribute to popular skepticism about democracy.

The transition to democracy in 1999 began hopefully with the election of **Olusegun Obasanjo** as president and then a new democratic legislature a few weeks later. In 2003, President Obasanjo was reelected in a landslide, and his party also captured most other important political offices. A new president, **Umar Musa Yar'Adua**, was elected in 2007, but only after a failed attempt by Obasanjo's supporters to change the constitution to extend his stay in office another term. The constitution faced a fresh test when President Yar'Adua disappeared from public view after falling seriously ill in November 2009. After months of inaction, the National Assembly voted to appoint the vice president as acting president—even though it lacked explicit constitutional authority to do so. When Yar'Adua passed away in April 2010, Nigeria seemed to survive another transition when Vice President **Goodluck Jonathan** was officially sworn in as president.

Beyond these political tests, Nigerians remain frustrated with the failure of democracy to harness their country's wealth to provide basic human needs, education, potable water, reliable transportation, and communications. Power generation has actually declined since 1999, creating an expensive and difficult climate for private investment into the expanding economy. Income levels per capita are barely a tenth of income in the United States or Western Europe; in 2009, the UN ranked Nigeria 158th among the 182 nations in its Human Development Index. This is a slight improvement over recent years, moving the country into the bottom of the "medium human development" group. The failure to prosecute rampant corruption impairs economic development, and the country's ranking in the Corruption Perceptions Index, developed by Transparency International, declined in 2009. Nigeria now ranks 130th out of 180 countries due to inaction on dozens of major cases.

The current regime has thus far avoided the fate of previous attempts at democracy. But with poor government performance, persistent sectarian tensions along ethnic, regional, and religious lines, and struggling democratic institutions, the allure of authoritarianism has not entirely faded. In the discussion that follows, the reader should consider the historic and structural roots of the country's challenges as well as the evolving social values that inform political behavior. Whether the country consolidates democracy or reverts back to familiar and destructive political patterns depends upon some combination of principled leadership, civic activism, and sound institutions that inspire the confidence of citizens and investors.

Political Violence Reaches Abuja

Until recently, political and religious violence generally took place outside the capitol. This changed in 2010, when MEND blew up the cars pictured here during a celebration on the anniversary of Nigeria's independence.

AP Images

THE EFFECTS OF HISTORY

More than forty years ago, anthropologist Clifford Geertz titled an essay on the developing nations "Old Societies and New States."[1] This title is an apt characterization of Nigeria, for although the concept of Nigeria dates only to 1914, and the independent state only to 1960, the cultures that compose it have ancient roots.

In one sense, then, there are many Nigerias. That is, there are distinct political cultures with precolonial origins, and there are the varied colonial experiences of North, East, and West. We will consider these causes of variety separately.

The Enduring Effects of Precolonial Events

Our images of precolonial Africa have been plagued by misunderstandings, sometimes in the form of simple ignorance but often the result of prejudice. Many in the industrial world still view traditional Africa as "primitive," composed of a series of "tribes."[2] As we shall see from the case of Nigeria, even early civilizations organized at the village level developed complex systems of political limitations on their rulers. All these peoples interacted in trade, cultural diffusion, and war for many centuries before the creation of today's nation-states, and their belief systems were as complex and nuanced as any in the world. To reiterate, there was no single Nigeria a century ago. The **Hausa** people began forming city-states in northern Nigeria between 1000 and 1200 C.E., and came under the influence of Islam no later than the fifteenth century. By the next century, mosques and Koranic schools were flourishing, and Hausa princes were international rivals of Morocco and the Ottoman Empire. The fortunes of these systems waxed and waned through the centuries, but they were decisively changed when non-Hausa court officials rose against them early in the nineteenth century. These officials were **Fulani,** a people with their origins in western Sudan who had entered into the Hausa lands as herders and, more important, as teachers, traders, and eventually court advisors. A Fulani scholar and preacher, Usman dan Fodio, inspired a religious and political revolt against the Hausa kings. A Fulani-dominated caliphate was established in Sokoto, now northern Nigeria. This Fulani Empire controlled most of the North until the British defeated it in 1903. Sokoto retains its role as the Muslim religious capital of Nigeria to this day. The Hausa and Fulani cultures have become so intertwined, with extensive intermarriage and with Hausa the primary language of both, that the dominant culture of the North is usually referred to as **Hausa-Fulani.** The descendants of the rulers of the Hausa-Fulani kingdoms, identified by the Islamic title *emir,* continue to hold court in the major cities of northern Nigeria.

In the forest region of the Southwest, the **Yoruba** and Bini peoples began forming kingdoms between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries at Oyo, Ife, and Benin. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the kingdom of Oyo subdued its rivals and extended its control over the entire southwestern part of Nigeria. These political systems developed intricate methods of limiting the powers of their rulers. For example, the ruler of Oyo, the Alafin, was chosen by a council of chiefs. Historians believe that if the council felt the Alafin had exceeded his powers, they could compel him to commit suicide. To ensure that the council did not abuse this authority, one of their members had to die with the Alafin.[3] Other peoples inhabiting the land that now constitutes Nigeria organized themselves without kingdoms or states. For example, the **Igbo** communities in the Southeast governed at the village or extended family level. "The political system is conciliar and competitive," explains one anthropological study. "Leadership is democratic in character, and the village government gives much latitude to the youth. It is *ability* rather than *age* that qualifies for leadership."[4] The Yoruba and the Igbo examples illustrate how accountability and limited government come in a variety of forms.

Because Nigeria was defined through the colonial experience, we must ask how and why the eventual British domination occurred. The immediate cause for British interest in West Africa was trade, and the first such international trade of any importance was in slaves. Coastal groups began exchanging captives for goods with European trading ships as early as the sixteenth century. Wars among the various kingdoms ensured a plentiful supply of captives, particularly in southwestern Nigeria. For the next 300 years, this trade was sustained: Benin, Lagos, Bonny, and Calabar thrived as slave trade centers, exporting upward of 20,000 persons per year to the Americas.

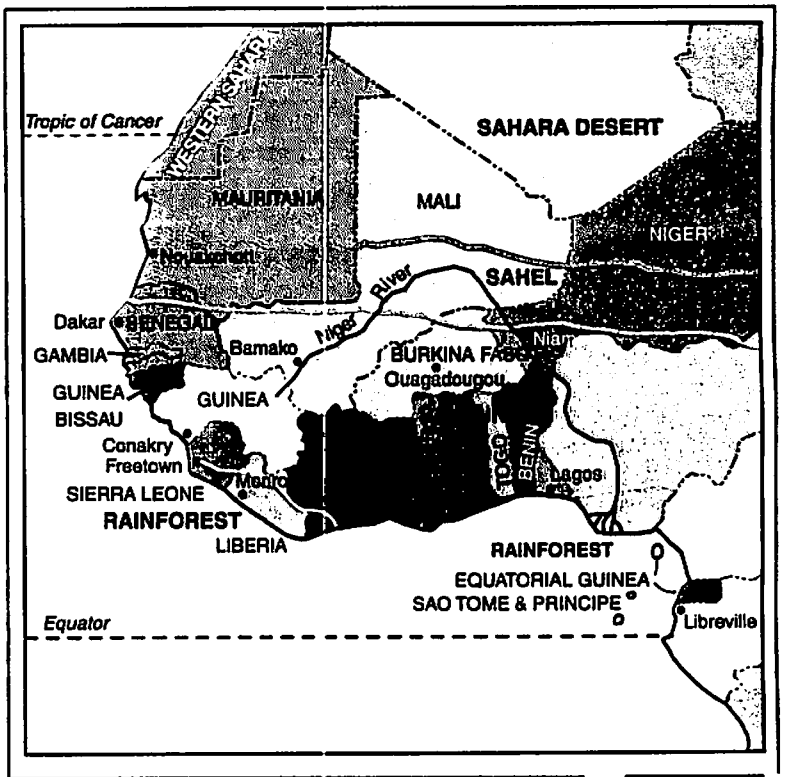
In 1807, the British Parliament outlawed the slave trade. In a remarkable turnabout, the British navy replaced British slave ships and began patrolling the West African coast to cut off the trade, which was not completely eliminated until about 1850. The established slave-trading patterns were gradually converted to other goods. British consuls established themselves on the coast and began to intervene in local politics, favoring those candidates for ruling positions who would give them commercial advantages over other European traders. The British succeeded in obtaining treaties of British protection and trade along the coast. These were treaties between unequals, increasingly favorable to the British as they established first commercial and then political control.

The Colonial Interlude (1900–1960)

In order to avoid war resulting from the competition for colonies, the great European powers met as the Conference of Berlin in 1884 and 1885 and divided Africa into spheres of influence. In effect, the European powers decided to seize control of the continent rather than merely trading with its rulers and merchants. In a wave of negotiations, imperialist wars, and conquests, their efforts were successful, and by the beginning of World War I in 1914, maps of Africa showed clearly drawn lines with areas color-coded according to the European power claiming control. Thus, in 1886, the Royal Niger Company was granted a royal charter to control Nigerian trade. That charter was replaced in 1900 by the creation of the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria. Like most Africans, Nigerians remain sensitive to this history of external interference. Indeed, the name "Nigeria" itself was coined by an Englishwoman who later married Sir Frederick Lugard, the architect of colonial Nigeria.

There was an unfortunate interaction between the colonial penetration and West Africa's natural environment: Cultures tend to be affected by climate and ecology, as people adapt differently to life in the rainforest, grasslands, or desert. In West Africa, the prevailing climate and ecological zones run east and west (see Figure 13.1). However, the colonial thrust was from the coast of the Gulf of Guinea inland, and colonial boundaries were established on the coast and then extended northward, intersecting the climate zones. This virtually guaranteed that the colonies thus established would be composed of peoples coming from vastly different cultures.

Nigeria first became an entity in 1914, when the Northern and Southern Protectorates and Lagos were brought under a single colonial administration. This unifying action was largely symbolic, however, as its two parts continued to be governed separately. The Northern and Southern Provinces replaced the Protectorates, each under a lieutenant governor. Northern Nigeria remained apart as such political structures as a legislative council evolved in the South. Northerners did not sit on the Nigerian Legislative Council until 1947. Indeed, the



Political Boundaries in Tropical West Africa **FIGURE 13.1**

The unification of Northern and Southern Protectorates into what is today Nigeria brought together peoples from vastly different climates, cultures, and histories.

North proved to be the perfect setting for the "indirect rule" elaborated by the governor, Lord Lugard: The British administration would not intervene directly into everyday life in its colonies but would support the rule of traditional leaders, such as the Fulani emirs. This, Lugard argued, was the most efficient means of controlling the colonies. As part of the understanding, the British also prohibited Christian missionaries from proselytizing in the North, a largely Muslim region. In southern Nigeria, Western-educated elites challenged the authority of the traditional rulers where they existed (as among the Yoruba); this complicated the strategy of indirect rule. In southeastern Nigeria, among the Igbo and other peoples, there really were no traditional kings or chiefs. Attempts to create village chiefs where the concept was unknown produced results that were sometimes comical and often tragic. As a result of these different traditions, the applicability of indirect rule served to distinguish further the political experiences of the regions.

The British colonial administration also faced the problem of incompatible objectives. In order to make the colony self-sustaining, Britain needed an export economy. However, the conversion of peasant societies from subsistence to a market orientation eroded the foundations of traditional rule. Except in the North, chiefs and kings had no traditional right to collect taxes, yet this became a central duty in the colonial system. Also, the development of a modern system of transportation and communication, necessary to stimulate commerce, encouraged the movement of people from the countryside to cities and from one part of the country to another, all under the protection of the colonial authorities. Urbanized populations and immigrants from other cultures could scarcely be expected to show deference to traditional rulers, nor did they see any good reason for paying taxes.

Along with commerce and administration, the British brought missionaries and education. Missionaries of many denominations—Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics, Baptists, Adventists, and others—brought the Gospels to Nigeria, although only to the South; the Northern emirates had an understanding with the British that Christian proselytizing would not be permitted in their domains. Christianity spread especially rapidly in the Southeast and somewhat less so in the Southwest; with it went formal schooling. As Nigerian children learned the English language and customs, they acquired the tools with which to challenge colonial rule on the rulers' own terms. However, the Western-educated elite that emerged came largely from the South. Thus, the culture is divided North and South along religious lines, but the difference has to do with much more than religion.

Modern constitutional development began within a few years of the creation of Nigeria as a single colony, with elective office first provided in 1922. An early nationalist leader, Herbert Macaulay, established a political party soon thereafter. As a Nigerian-centered political life grew up among the formally educated, other organizations arose, and the British colonial administration was pressed with demands for participation.

From then on, constitutions promulgated by various governors (and named after them) were always somewhat behind the expectations of Nigerian political activists. What Southern politicians judged conservative, however, was usually seen as radical by the conservative elites in the North. These differences of opinion among Nigerians resulted in 1954 in the creation of a federal system of three regions: Northern, Eastern, and Western. A single ethnic group dominated each region: the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the East, and the Yoruba in the West. Under pressure from their leaders, the Eastern and Western Regions received self-government in 1957; the North became self-governing in 1959, a few months before national independence.

Nigerian Independence

As Nigeria approached independence, there was a general consensus that the nation should come to independence as a single country. Independent Nigeria was born on October 1, 1960. Nigeria's independent governments at the federal and state levels experienced a very short "honeymoon." Within two years, conflict had torn apart the ruling coalition in the Western Region. The next year, suspicions about the national census (as we will see later) destroyed what little trust there was among the regions. Finally, in 1965, law and order broke down in the Western Region over election-related fraud and violence, and the military ended the First Republic in a January 1966 coup.

ENVIRONMENTAL POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS

Nigeria has made great economic progress in recent years, pointing to a new wellspring of optimism. Controlling for PPP, per capita GDP was $1, 940 in

2008, up from $1,130 in 2000. Its GDP in 2008 was $212.1 billion, recording an impressive 5.3 percent growth rate. (We will discuss Nigeria's GDP later in this chapter; see Table 13.4 and accompanying text.) This constitutes a vast improvement over an earlier era, when per capita GNP actually declined by 1.7 percent annually between 1980 and 1991. At the aggregate level, these figures appear to suggest that Nigeria may be climbing out of the UN classification for "low-income countries."

Yet these statistics translate into very limited concrete improvements in the daily lives of average citizens, and whether we can attribute progress to political reform and better policy decisions remains an open question. Policy options remain limited, in part due to the colonial legacy of uneven development within the country, and the Nigerian economy is highly dependent on a single commodity—oil. The country thus weathered the recession of 2008 to 2009 reasonably well, partly out of sheer luck that world oil prices remained so high. The economic diversification necessary to stabilize these gains requires overcoming a difficult physical environment and complex socioeconomic challenges.

Conditions Affecting Agricultural Production and the Sale of Primary Commodities

Colonial policies not only retarded Nigeria's political development but also had profound, if mixed, effects on its economy. Since early in the colonial period, Southern Nigerians have been producing cocoa, palm oil, timber, and rubber. The timber, sold mostly as tropical hardwoods for use in furniture and construction, came from the now-dwindling rainforests in the South. In the North, the principal market products were cattle, hides and skins, cotton, and peanuts.

The growth of trade in these commodities was not entirely spontaneous. The British interest in Nigeria was primarily commercial, with its origins in the United Africa Company (UAC). When the UAC was granted a charter as the Royal Niger Company in 1886, it was given police and judicial power, and it was authorized to collect taxes and to oversee commerce. Not surprisingly, its policies aimed at developing the Nigerian economy to be compatible with British needs. Also, public sentiment in Britain never solidly favored creating a colonial empire, and powerful voices in Parliament favored keeping the costs of the empire to a minimum. Colonial administrations were under heavy pressure to be self-sufficient—to develop local sources of revenue to cover their costs of administration. As a result, colonial administrators pressured peasant farmers away from subsistence agriculture and into commercial farming, particularly of export crops. Furthermore, cost-efficient marketing meant emphasis on just a few of the most needed products; in Nigeria (and elsewhere in West Africa), these turned out to be palm oil, cocoa, peanuts, and cotton. Thus, British raw material priorities and the need to provide a self-sufficient colonial administration distorted African economies toward dependence on the sale of a small number of primarily agricultural commodities.

The combination of population growth and the commercialization of agriculture strained relationships between agricultural techniques and the ecology that had been in place for centuries. Colonial officials sometimes assumed that productivity could be greatly increased in tropical regions with the introduction of "modern" methods, without recognizing the different ecological conditions of production in a tropical setting. Lush tropical rainforest could not simply be replaced by plantations. Rainfall, temperature, and soil conditions meant that farming techniques effective in England or North America would be unsuccessful or even disastrous in Nigeria. Only gradually, and much later, were the efforts of agronomists applied to maximizing agricultural production in the tropics, especially to food production for local consumption.

Nigeria broke with some colonial economic development policies, especially the need to diversify production, because it offered a large, ecologically diverse environment. But the need for foreign exchange meant that agriculture continued to emphasize exportable commodities, even as investment capital was largely directed toward industrialization. Economists in both the industrial and Third World countries associated industry with prosperity, and agriculture was seen as the "cash cow" from which to extract savings for investment in other areas. Also, Nigerian government officials, trained in the need to balance budgets, balanced appropriations bills with overly optimistic estimations of "expected revenue." When these fell short, the difference was made up from cash reserves accumulated by the Central Produce Marketing Board, a government agency that purchased all the goods from farmers. However, "since those reserves were derived from the price differential between what was paid to the farmer and what the

Board earned in export earnings . . . for close to a decade, Nigeria existed only through the exploitation of her farmers."[5]

In addition to keeping agricultural prices low to provide such reserves, Nigerian governments also tried to satisfy urban demands for cheap food by holding down the price paid to farmers in the domestic market. This action contributed to the unattractiveness of agricultural work and enhanced the lure of the cities.

Disease

Physical illness is a part of the human condition, and the higher disease rates of poorer nations are largely explained by the lack of resources to acquire medicines, medical facilities, and personnel. But environment contributes as well; some of the most common human diseases, including malaria, can survive only in tropical climates. In tropical Africa, virtually every long-term resident carries the malaria virus, and large proportions of the population are affected by it. It is usually not fatal, but it is extremely debilitating, and it has a documented effect on labor productivity. Various river-borne diseases also account for long-term illness and fatalities, contributing especially to the high mortality rate among children. As with agricultural problems, research can attack these diseases, yet a vastly disproportionate share of the world's resources applied to health problems is focused on ailments more common to the industrialized world. In recent times, AIDS has topped the list of the most dreadful diseases in Africa. The Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS reported in 2008 that 3.1 percent of all Nigerians between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine were infected. Incredibly, this constitutes an improvement over recent years, which is attributable to a massive influx of external assistance, as well as a serious commitment from President Obasanjo's administration. In many African countries, the AIDS epidemic slows down national productivity and especially agricultural productivity because it requires so much labor effort.

Population Growth

Nothing is more striking to a visitor to Nigeria than the youth of the population; everywhere there are multitudes of children. About 45 percent of the Nigerian population is less than fifteen years of age.[6] Children are considered a valuable resource in labor-intensive agricultural societies, and in a country with high infant mortality rates and no social security system, parents would be imprudent not to have enough children so that some would grow up to provide for them in their old age. This behavior becomes dysfunctional at the societal level, of course, as increasing populations struggle to survive on a limited physical environment. Figure 13.2 illustrates the projected population growth through 2020. Between 1975 and 2000, the population of Nigeria grew an average of 2.9 percent annually. Even with a high economic growth rate of 6.6 percent since 2000, rapid population growth brings the figure down to only 4 percent in per capita terms. In this environment of rapid population growth and urbanization, children become economic liabilities. Thus, the "dependency ratio" (the proportion of the nonworking population to the working population) has steadily risen since the early 1960s, placing a great strain on the country's underdeveloped facilities for social welfare and education.[7]

Counting the population in Nigeria has always been controversial because of its implications for the distribution of resources and political districting. There has not been a widely accepted census since 1963. Protests and some violence followed the most recent government census in March 2006. The National Population Commission released results a

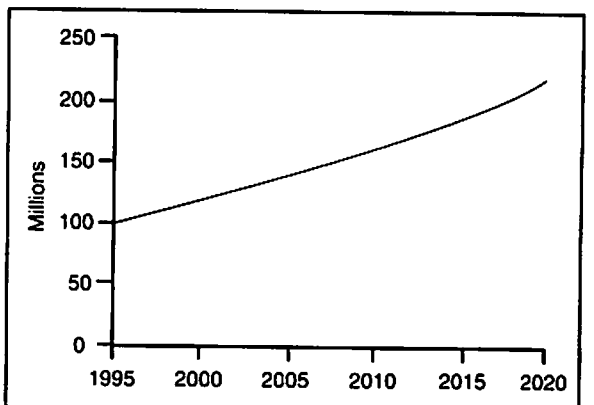


FIGURE 13.2 Nigeria's Projected Population Growth, 1995–2020

Nigeria has one of the most rapidly growing populations in the world, creating major development challenges.

year later, and they were forwarded to the president in November 2008. They remain so controversial that they still have not been formally approved.

Urbanization

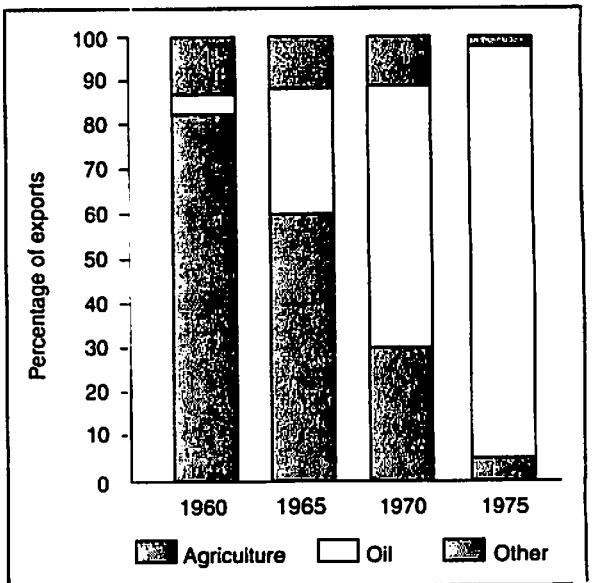
Nigeria shares a pattern of urbanization common in Africa: Although the country is still primarily rural, it is urbanizing rapidly. Between 1970 and 1995, the share of Nigeria's urban population increased from 20 to 39 percent. By 2000, 42 percent of the population lived in urban areas, a figure that now stands at 48 percent. Due to internal migration, the need for urban infrastructure adds to the long list of demands on government. For example, the government ministry in charge of **Abuja**, the federal capital, announced in 2002 that the population of the city had exceeded 4 million, whereas city planners had estimated that the population would be only about 1.5 million at this stage of development.[8] In an effort to discourage additional migration, the federal minister in charge of Abuja implemented oftentimes harsh policies, including the destruction of informal housing. Nigeria's largest city is **Lagos**, within the state by the same name. Lagos State recently reversed years of decline after increasing tax enforcement, attracting new foreign investment, and investing in infrastructure. Since it is one of the few states run by a governor belonging to the country's opposition party, many people are watching to see if good governance will have a spillover effect into other states.[9]

The population shift means that a smaller proportion of the labor force is available for agricultural work. That is a normal pattern of modernization, of course, but unless the productivity of agricultural workers increases, it means a drop in food production per capita. Urbanization also has political consequences, since dense living arrangements are conducive to organizing; this was in fact one reason for the military's decision to create Abuja as a new capital in an area with low population density.

Petroleum

Like the countries discussed in Chapter 7, Nigeria is a rentier state. The magnitude of Nigeria's petroleum reserves became apparent in the 1950s, with the first shipload of crude exported in 1958. Nigeria was engulfed in a bloody civil war from 1967 to 1970, which brought a halt to oil exports. At war's end, however, Nigerian petroleum production began to boom, and it grew at a dramatic rate through the 1970s. Although such a valuable mineral resource is an asset to any country, its effects on Nigeria were not all beneficial. The country's economy became distorted by the great disparity of value between petroleum and the traditional agricultural products; soon, young workers were abandoning their farms and villages, and flocking to the cities and the oil fields. Figure 13.3 shows that the source of Nigeria's hard currency shifted dramatically from agricultural products to petroleum in the early 1970s.

Oil revenues hit a peak in 1979. World demand for oil decreased each year from 1979 to 1983. At the same time, oil production in countries that were not part of OPEC, especially Mexico, Norway, and the United Kingdom, grew substantially. Nigeria's planners were slow to realize the implications of rising supply and stagnant demand. The glory days of seemingly limitless oil revenues ended abruptly in April 1982,



Composition of Nigerian Exports **FIGURE 13.3**

With the decline of agriculture and the rise of oil exports, Nigeria's economy has become less diversified and in some ways more vulnerable.

Source: Peter O. Olayivola, *Petroleum and Structural Change in a Developing Country* (New York: Praeger, 1987).

when production of crude oil in Nigeria dropped from 2.1 million to 0.9 million barrels per day; oil export revenues fell correspondingly, from $1.35 billion to $0.7 billion per month. In the preceding decade, Nigeria had become dependent on oil revenues for imports and large-scale development projects. As was commonly the case in the Third World, Nigeria fell behind in its debt payments, which forced the government to impose unpleasant austerity measures. A further fall in oil prices in 1986 pushed the country into a severe recession.

Over time, Nigeria's economic fortune became even more closely tied to oil revenues. Today, petroleum accounts for over 90 percent of export earnings. After world oil prices increased due to the Iraq War that began in 2003, Nigeria again began earning huge revenues. It applied this windfall toward its foreign debt, which has helped insulate the country from the effects of the global recession since 2008.

The Geographic Distribution of Natural Resources: Political Effects

Nigeria's oil fields are found in the Niger Delta basin, an area of 43,500 square miles, or 8 percent of the country. As a natural resource that is both geographically concentrated and far more valuable than any other, Nigerian petroleum presents a classic problem for distributive justice. Its potential value was an important motivation behind the Eastern Region's declaration of independence as **Biafra** in 1967, and oil certainly helps explain why the rest of the country was so obstinately determined to keep the region within Nigeria. But had Biafra maintained its independence, the question of oil-field ownership would not have gone away, for the people who traditionally inhabited that area were minorities in Igbo-dominated Biafra. And even though the federal government won the civil war, local peoples continue to protest the spread of oil wealth over the whole country while their land pays the price of environmental degradation from the oil operations. The underdevelopment in the oil-producing region generates widespread resentment, and the current regime has struggled to accommodate the region's grievances through democratic channels.

As a result, bitter and violent combat has broken out among various youth organizations in the Delta. Protests organized by groups such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are testing Nigeria's commitment to democratic freedoms by resurrecting memories of the civil war. If these groups feel impeded from expressing themselves, though, they may become more militant. This seems to be the case with the **Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)**, which has taken dozens of foreigners hostage in protest over conditions in the oil-producing areas. Militant groups and numerous criminal gangs seeking profit engage in oil theft known as "bunkering," which has cost the government at least $100 billion between 2003 and 2008. As many as 300,000 barrels a day are lost to "blood oil" being used either to finance the rebellion or to line the pockets of complicit government officials.[10]

The International Environment

Nigeria, like most African countries, has been profoundly affected by its birth at the height of the Cold War, and by the sudden end of the bipolar war with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, new nations were pressured to choose sides. The West and East granted foreign aid to developing nations as a reward for loyalty. Nigeria at independence was considered to be conservative and "pro-Western."

Many Nigerian intellectuals equated the West's capitalism with colonialism, however, which they contended continued after independence through **neocolonial** economic ties. Political discourse through the first thirty years of Nigerian independence was often based on the ideological poles of capitalism and socialism, and relationships with the major powers involved staking a position between the two camps. In the civil war that resulted from the Eastern Region's declaration of independence as Biafra in 1967, the Soviet Union sided with the Nigerian federal government, while the U.S. government attempted to maintain a neutral position, even though the Biafran cause was widely supported by Americans. Economics finally dictated Nigeria's international position: The West was best-equipped to prospect for Nigeria's oil fields, and only the West had the technology to extract and market this natural resource. Thus, a close relationship developed between the Nigerian federal government and some of the world's major oil companies.

The end of the Cold War brought a new era to the relations between Nigeria (and other poorer nations) and the industrial world. The West's fear of the spread of communism had caused it to pay some attention to

Public Education to Encourage Farming

As the oil boom drained the rural workforce, signs urged Nigerians to return to agriculture.

Bruno Barbey/Magnum Photos, Inc.

even the smallest and least-endowed countries. In the colonial period, Britain had provided virtually all foreign aid to Nigeria. In the Cold War environment at independence, Nigeria adopted a deliberate policy of diversification that diluted British influence and brought aid from the United States, Canada, the European Common Market (now the EU), Japan, and Sweden. By the 1990s, however, those Third World countries without significant resources or with serious developmental problems were simply less interesting to the developed world; it is commonly perceived that Africa particularly has been "marginalized." The first decade of the twenty-first century suggests that the situation may be turning around, especially among democratic countries where good governance is stimulating economic growth.

Nigeria shared in a common Third World experience following the oil crisis of 1973 as it accumulated massive international debts. A sudden boom in oil prices resulted in huge new deposits in the world's banks, which made credit plentiful. The military governments of the decade failed to invest sustainably in infrastructure, and an overvalued currency led to inflation as elites bought imports that were now inexpensive. Borrowing to spend seemed to make sense to all sides until commodity prices collapsed. Third World debt mushroomed in the 1980s, and several governments defaulted. Nigeria's indebtedness grew from $8.9 billion in 1980 to $34.5 billion in 1991; by 1995, it represented 274.5 percent of the annual value of the country's exports and 140.5 percent of GNP. After the transition to democracy in 1999, President Obasanjo made debt reduction a high priority for his administration, and in 2000, Nigeria rescheduled $20 billion of its debt. In 2006, thanks in large part to earnings from the high price of oil, Nigeria became the first African country to pay off its Paris Club debt, reducing its total debt by $30 billion. It still owes money to the World Bank and some private lenders.

A final aspect of Nigeria's international environment is its regional context—West Africa. As an accident of colonial rule, Nigeria is entirely surrounded by former French colonies: Benin (formerly Dahomey), Niger, and Cameroon. France and the French-speaking West African countries have been suspicious of Nigeria's intentions and have developed close economic ties among themselves. Nigeria is increasingly a regional leader, though, due to its strength, size, and influence in Africa's regional organizations.

POLITICAL CULTURE AND SUBCULTURES

The political culture of Nigeria is extremely heterogeneous and complex. Analysis of it must take into account a Western value system overlaid on those of

its various precolonial traditions; it must assess the impact of a variety of religious beliefs and of the continuing effects of Christian and Muslim proselytizing efforts. Since the colonial experience have come new divisions based on social class and on the different experiences of urban and rural dwellers. The whole range of modern political ideologies is found among the belief systems of the politically active population. Here we will give greatest attention to the political implications of ethnic identity, religious beliefs, social and economic status, contact with urban life, and civil society.

Ethnic Identity

Because of the geographic separation of ethnic groups, Nigerians can be easily identified based on language and cultural traits. These groups vary tremendously in size, and only three of them—the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba—are particularly numerous and influential in the country's politics. The influence of these three major groups is a cause of great concern to the remaining minority groups. Because there has been a high degree of geographical separation of ethnic groups in Nigeria (a result of the country's policies during and since the colonial period), Nigerians can easily identify the origins of their fellow citizens by observing their dialect (or accent in English), their manner of dress (if it is traditional), and in some cases "tribal marks," patterned facial scars that formerly were created as part of rites of passage to indicate ethnic identity. There are also differences in wealth and political awareness.

In the absence of a widely accepted census, the size of Nigerian ethnic groups can only be approximated. Approximately one-half of the country's population is in the North and about one-fourth each in the Southeast and Southwest. The Hausa represent about two-thirds of the North's total population, the Igbo about two-thirds in the East, and the Yoruba about two-thirds in the West. Thus, other groups represent about one-third in each region and one-third overall. Here we will briefly consider the three largest groups.

The Hausa-Fulani people live mostly in the northern half of the country. As noted earlier, this hyphenated identity came from the imposition of Fulani rule over the Hausa population in the nineteenth century. The two cultures became intricately intertwined, although they have never become completely homogenized. Thus, the term "Hausa" is often used as a short form of "Hausa-Fulani." "Hausaland" actually straddles the border between Nigeria and Niger to the north, a former French colony, and the people in these two countries maintain many cultural and commercial ties. A greater proportion of Hausas engage in subsistence agriculture and live in rural villages than is true of Southern Nigerians. There are sizable Hausa communities in cities all over Nigeria, where they carry on trade and commercial activities while maintaining kin and client relationships with their home region. The vast majority of Hausas are Muslim. The Hausa heartland is itself still organized as a series of emirates: Each of the major cities in Northern Nigeria is the seat of an emir, one of the kings through whom the British applied their indirect rule. There is no official role for the emirs in modern Nigeria, and their unofficial role is hotly disputed, even in the North. Yet they retain great influence in their localities and, through Hausa prominence in national politics, in the rest of the country as well.

The Igbo (also spelled *Ibo*) occupy the southeastern part of the country, from the banks of the Niger River east. Most of the region is developed for market agriculture, with Igbo farmers growing palm products, rice, and yams. The Igbo people lived in politically independent, socially endogamous villages, usually no larger than 8,000 people, and did not have a sense of common Igbo identity until the colonial period.

The Igbo are known for the fervor with which they adopted Western culture. Although the encounter with British colonialism was a wrenching shock forcefully described in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo responded enthusiastically to Western education and the missionaries who brought it. They used new skills and knowledge to seek advancement in modern commerce and civil service. Igbo people also emigrated widely throughout the country and seem less concerned than other groups with maintaining separate communities where they are "strangers." (In Nigeria, the term "stranger" refers specifically to a person living outside his or her "home" community.) They are employed on the basis of their education and modern skills in all parts of the country, including the North.

Igbo officers led the first military coup in 1966, and thousands of Igbos living in Northern cities were attacked and killed in reaction to that coup. The Igbos

retreated to their home region. The next year, they followed the call of one of their own, Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu, in the secession from Nigeria of Igbo-dominated Biafra. The three-year civil war that ended in the defeat of Biafra in 1970 caused great hardship, but within a few years, Igbos were again active in commerce (they were by then generally barred from government work in other localities) across the land. Nevertheless, the Biafran experience and the civil war left long-term mistrust between the Igbos and other Nigerians.

Yoruba The Yoruba live mostly in the southwestern part of Nigeria, including the sprawling metropolitan area of Lagos, the former federal capital. Traditionally subsistence farmers, rural Yoruba people began growing cocoa and palm products for export in the colonial period. Although they share a common language, traditional religion, and myths of origin, the precolonial Yoruba were divided into a number of independent and warring kingdoms that give them separate identities today. The Yoruba have a long tradition of commerce, and both men and women are prominent in trade networks and markets throughout West Africa.

The Yoruba kingdoms were marked by complicated institutions that balanced power between an *oba* (king) and lineage chiefs. In their effort to impose indirect rule, the British upset these structures by supporting the obas against all challengers. In the process, the obas frequently became autocratic and lost much of their legitimacy with their own people; their influence in contemporary politics varies greatly but is generally much less than that of the Northern emirs.

Because the Yoruba had, on the one hand, a highly stratified society complete with kings, but were, on the other hand, quite receptive to missionaries and their schools, they are often seen as being in an intermediate position between the stratified and change-resistant Hausa and the egalitarian and innovative Igbo. In their sometimes strident assertion of their identity and interests, they also have provoked their share of mistrust among other Nigerians, as their candidates have generally been shut out of national leadership positions.

Given the ethnic-based strife so common in the world today, it should not come as a surprise that group identities are deeply rooted and emotionally charged in Nigeria as well. Ethnic rivalries often have their roots in precolonial warfare and are frequently refreshed by economic rivalries. While nationalism may serve as a cement where the feeling is shared by a country's entire population, the same feeling at a subnational level can destroy a political system.

Because the major ethnic groups are regionally based, political issues affecting such groups are often defined geographically, and Nigeria has preserved a sense of permanent attachment between a people and its "traditional" homeland to the degree that it is more difficult to become a "citizen" of another state in Nigeria than it would be for a Nigerian to acquire citizenship in many foreign countries. Discrimination against "non-indigenes," referring to people who may have migrated into a given state decades ago, has been regularly linked to tensions and sometimes serious violence even during the current democratic regime.[11]

Multiple ethnic identities even at the local level have had a fragmenting effect on political structure. Particularly since 1976, there have been numerous disputes over the site of local government headquarters, with the "loser" often petitioning to the state and federal governments for a division of the local government area. The conflict between the Ife and Modakeke in Oranmiyan local government (see Box 13.1) is but one of many examples that could be cited. Local ethnic conflict affects policy outputs as well, where local governments build health centers or markets that are not used by some ethnic groups, thus throwing off planners' projections.

Religion

Each of the groups identified in the previous section had traditional religious institutions and beliefs in place long before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. In some cases, these earlier beliefs have maintained their vigor, especially among many Yoruba. However, the missionaries brought their religion with formal education in the Southern regions; most major Christian churches are well-established in the South, and indigenous Christian sects have split off from them in a myriad of denominations. Not surprisingly, the Christian denominations themselves tend to be geographically and ethnically concentrated, with a higher proportion of Roman Catholics among the Igbo, a Baptist concentration among the Yoruba of Ogbomoso, the Evangelical Church of West Africa predominant in Igbomina and Kwara State, and so on. A significant proportion of Yoruba—perhaps half—are Muslim. Under the agreement between the

BOX 13.1

Early in the nineteenth century, Yorubas from Old Oyo were driven south by a Fulani invasion, and some settled in and around Ile-Ife. They were at first well-received by Ile-Ife's traditional ruler, the Ooni, but soon got into a violent quarrel with the local population. The Oyo refugees were then reduced to servitude, and some were sold into slavery. Later, however, in an internal dispute, they sided with the ruler, who rewarded them with a settlement of their own, Modakeke. Strife continued between the two groups, and in an 1882 battle, the Modakeke burned down the sacred city of Ife. Throughout the colonial period, the Ooni often used their conflict to play one group against the other. As independence neared, Modakeke sought a local government independent of Ife. Also, the Ife leaders supported the Action Group (party), while Modakeke supported the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC).

After independence, Ife and Modakeke were in the same local government (Oranmiyan), but they fought constantly until Oranmiyan was split in 1989. There was peace until August 1997, when the government moved one local government from an Ife to a Modakeke location and then to supposedly neutral ground. Violent conflict broke out among young men of each side. Whole villages were burned, and hundreds of lives were lost. In January 1999, the Osun state administrator invited the two communities to an open meeting, at which both groups agreed to a ceasefire. The Ooni stated that he had in fact requested General Abacha to create a new state and that Abacha had declined but had given him the new local government as a consolation prize. The traditional leader's request and the government's response inadvertently rekindled historic animosities, with tragic results. In April 2002, the federal government mandated Osun State to create an Area Office for Modakeke as part of a peace process. The Area Office was created without delay, and it is yielding some positive results within the Modakeke community.

colonial administration and the Northern emirates, Christian proselytizing was barred from the North; except for the "strangers" living there, almost the entire population is at least nominally Muslim, and the Hausa bring their religion with them when they move South. This movement is offset by the establishment of churches in Northern cities by immigrants, mostly from the South.

Missionaries built and staffed the great majority of schools during the colonial period. Thus, the North–South education gap, with its effect on political awareness, attitudes toward civil rights, and the like, itself derives from the prohibition of missionaries in the North. There is, then, an overlay of religion on ethnicity that intensifies the North–South cultural split, and the case can be made that the most sensitive issues now involve religion rather than ethnicity. These overlapping cleavages are more dangerous because they accentuate regional differences. Because some fundamentalists among Christians as well as Muslims have found it unacceptable to live in a pluralist society, those seeking a basis for political stability in Nigeria must be sensitive to finding a balance between the two major faith groups, which each constitute about half of the population. Religious harmony has been elusive, though, when additional factors accent these cleavages. In the 1980s, the Maitatsine Islamic movement, composed largely of young men marginalized by the socioeconomic changes, rioted against the Christian presence in Northern Nigeria (as well as against police repression), with loss of life estimated in the thousands. Not long after, Southerners vociferously protested when President **Ibrahim Babangida** proposed in 1986 that Nigeria join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a group of more than fifty predominantly Muslim countries. Shortly after the 1999 transition, Nigeria experienced a new wave of ethnic and religious tension. Riots between Christian Igbos and local Muslims in the Northern city of Kaduna left hundreds dead in brutal violence. The sensitivity over Islam in Nigeria was highlighted again in 2002, when the Miss World beauty pageant took place in Abuja. A newspaper suggested that the contestants were so beautiful that the religion's founding prophet would have chosen one of them. Over two hundred people died when tensions between Christians

and Muslims flared up.[12] Overall, it was reported in 2010 by the Human Rights Watch that at least 13,000 people had been killed since 1999.

The return of democracy has possibly contributed to the heightened religious and regional identities. Surveys in 2008 reported that nearly three-fourths of Nigerians say they belong to religious associations, and half of Nigerians describe themselves as active members. Sometimes this has contributed to fundamentalism, as with the Maitatsine Movement or with the Izala movement—an acronym for the Society for the Removal of Heresy and Reinstatement of Tradition. Christians have also mobilized against, for example, the implementation of Islamic criminal law in the North. Organizations such as the Christian Association of Nigeria have opposed these changes as violations of Nigeria's constitution. A core challenge for democratic consolidation is thus balancing these regional identities with a sense of Nigerian nationhood, and also resolving ongoing questions about the state's relationship to religion.

The Evolution of Nigerian Nationalism

All of our preoccupation with Nigerian subcultures should not obscure the fact that the British colonial administration was responding to Nigerian nationalist forces when it granted independence in 1960. There were three major sources of nationalist sentiment. The first was a small number of freed slaves from North America and others of African descent from the Caribbean who settled on the West African coast and developed a culture unrelated to any of those indigenous to the country. Second, nationalist fervor grew out of the experience of Nigerians who fought for the British in World War II and felt frustration at the lack of recognition of their service. A third category of nationalists consisted of those Nigerians who studied in England and especially in the United States, including one of the most prominent among them, **Nnamdi Azikiwe** (see Box 13.2). Although they came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, in their quest for independence, these activists developed a sense of Nigerian nationalism and succeeded in forming cross-ethnic alliances.

Civil war also stimulated Nigerian nationalism. The two military coups before the Biafran war were clearly ethnic in their origins. However, the Biafran conflict brought together a military force that was cross-ethnic (excluding, of course, Igbos, who were at the heart of the Biafran succession). Although the officer corps is increasingly dominated by Muslims, it has continued to recruit nationally.

A study of Nigerian political culture must focus on orientations toward national (federal) political institutions. Nigerians oriented toward public political activities can be identified by (1) exposure to formal education and (2) involvement in the modern economy. As concerns interest in public policy, many Nigerians, particularly in rural areas and in the North, may be less engaged in issues of general political concern. Yet they still have to deal with local government officials on issues affecting themselves and their families. In Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa and the Third World, such concerns are likely to be handled through personal-interest contacting. In most cases, such contacting is part of a *clientelist* arrangement: Citizens go to an individual who is politically influential for help

BOX 13.2

The Story of Nnamdi Azikiwe

Although an Igbo, Nnamdi Azikiwe was born in Zungeru in northern Nigeria in 1904. He received his basic education in Nigeria and then went to the United States, where he studied at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Stores College in West Virginia, and the University of Pennsylvania. He also worked in the United States as a coal miner, laborer, and dishwasher. Upon his return home, he joined the Nigerian Youth Movement. His interest in self-rule led to his presence at the founding of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and to his founding of a pro-self-rule newspaper, the *West African Pilot*. He then moved to the Gold Coast (now Ghana), where he published an article, "Has the African a God," that resulted in a sedition charge. He won his case on appeal and went on to serve as the premier of the Eastern Region, and from 1963 to 1966 as president of Nigeria. He died in 1996 at the age of ninety-two.

and expect to "pay" for help through a long-term arrangement that may include payment in kind (as in bribes), or by turning out to vote when asked to do so, even while remaining uninterested in politics. Political activity is widespread and virtually all-embracing; interest in public affairs is strongly conditioned by education and employment.

Democratic Norms and Values

In order to assess Nigeria's chances for achieving political democracy, we must first consider the distribution of norms that might support democratic institutions. The legitimacy of opposition, manifested as tolerance for criticism, opposition, and competition for control, is an obvious prerequisite for stable democracy.[13] The history of political activism in Nigeria since 1960 suggests problems, even under democratic civilian regimes. As single parties gained control in each region, opponents were treated very roughly, with armed thugs hired to disrupt their meetings and attack their leaders. Harassment of political opposition by the government still occurs, and incumbents often use their position to gain unfair advantages.

Nevertheless, strong support has emerged for democratic norms since the military's exit in 1999. Since then, support for democracy has remained high, with 72 percent of Nigerians reporting in 2008 that "democracy is preferable to any other form of government." However, during the same period, the number of Nigerians who actually described the country as democratic (42 percent) has precipitously declined. This points to a wide gap between demand for and supply of democracy, and implies a good deal of disillusionment about government performance over the last decade.[14]

The Political Role of Women

In Nigeria's ethnic diversity, the position of women varies considerably. In Igbo, Yoruba, and other Southern Nigerian traditions, women had considerable control over their own affairs in what anthropologists label "dual-sex" systems. That is, there were parallel systems of political and social organization for men and women. Scholars of colonial history contend that women lost most of their autonomy under colonialism, because British custom at the time gave women less control of their own affairs than did the African societies they controlled.

In the North, Islamic custom greatly restricts women's roles in society. Although Hausa women have considerably more freedom than their counterparts in the Middle East, including significant roles in local production and trade, they generally were not allowed an active political role at the time of independence. Northern women voted for the first time in 1979.

The contemporary involvement of women in political leadership is similar to that of many countries; in most parts of the country, Nigerian women vote in equal numbers with men but are generally underrepresented in politics. Women have made only very modest gains under democracy. The 2007 elections brought twenty-six women to the 360-seat House of Representatives, up from only fifteen in 1999. Ten Senate seats (out of 109) are held by women, up from only three. Yet men still hold about 90 percent of the elected and appointed positions. Women are even more poorly represented in state governments, and there are sharp regional disparities. For example, not a single woman was elected to the state houses of assembly in any of the six states in northwest Nigeria.[15]

Political Corruption

A traveler on Nigerian roads meets frequent police checkpoints and barricades. Ostensibly in place to check for arms and smuggled goods, their actual function is to extort payments from travelers by uncovering various minor violations. Many Nigerians do not take offense at this behavior, noting that police officers' pay is low and often comes late.

Pervasive corruption has been a problem ever since the late colonial era; it was the central theme of Chinua Achebe's novel *No Longer at Ease*, in which an idealistic young administrator is gradually pressured by personal problems and the prevalence of corruption into accepting bribes. Achebe is only one of many Nigerians to condemn corruption; each political regime comes to power promising to eliminate the practice and punish offenders, only to fall into the same pattern. The huge sums of money that passed through officials' hands as a result of the oil boom greatly aggravated the problem; unprecedented forms of flagrant corruption appeared when oil revenues began to fill the federal treasury of General Yakubu Gowon in the early 1970s. His military governors spent large sums on openly lavish lifestyles, thus tarnishing the image of the military, which had

supposedly come to power in reaction to the corruption of the First Republic. The coup against Gowon in 1975 was a direct result, as was the assassination of his successor, General Murtala, in 1976.[16] Achebe asserts that corruption has grown more "bold and ravenous" under each new regime.[17] It is widely believed that the leader **Sani Abacha** and his family in the 1990s channeled enormous sums of money from petroleum revenue accounts into their private coffers at home and abroad. As part of its campaign to promote transparency in government and fight corruption, the Obasanjo administration successfully recovered $2 billion from the Sani Abacha family. Since the return of democracy, the National Assembly has removed several leaders, including a Speaker of the House who directed public funds to remodel her houses.

In 2002, the National Assembly passed the **Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)** Establishment Act. Its purpose is to "prevent, investigate, prosecute, and penalize economic and financial crimes." Crimes within its jurisdiction include money laundering, Internet fraud, bank fraud, bribery, and misuse of public funds. The EFCC was often accused of selective prosecution of the president's political enemies. For example, it launched an investigation of Vice President Atiku Abubakar in 2006, when he was running for president. The Commission's critics suspected that the charges were brought because Abubakar had opposed President Obasanjo's efforts to amend the Constitution so as to make him eligible for a third term in office.[18] In light of the charges, the **People's Democratic Party (PDP)** suspended him from the party just before the December 2006 presidential primaries to prevent him from contesting. During President Yar'Adua's tenure, EFCC prosecutions virtually ground to a halt, and the United States suspended some of its technical assistance out of concern for its integrity. The new president, Goodluck Jonathan, has considered plans to bring back the previous EFCC commissioner, who claims credit for recovering over $5 billion and successfully prosecuting eighty-two people when he served during Obasanjo's administration.

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Nigerians develop their political beliefs and attitudes through the influence of socialization "agents," such as the family, religious organizations, primary and secondary groups, formal education, the media, and government-sponsored activities.[19] A caveat is necessary, however, when comparing the political socialization process in Nigeria with the established liberal democracies. Political socialization in the developed world occurs through fairly stable institutions. We treat the fluidity of party alignments in France or events such as the Vietnam War in the United States as exceptional, whereas in Nigeria, people have grown up under political arrangements that shift constantly, even to their very core. Add to this the upheaval of urbanization and the sudden and dramatic impact of petroleum on the culture and the economy, and the need for a different perspective on socialization is apparent. Nevertheless, there is a universal quality to the importance of the agents of socialization we have identified, even as the nature of those institutions and the objects of political attitudes and values they shape may differ greatly from those in Europe or North America.

The Family

The family, whether nuclear or extended, remains the core unit of political activity in Nigeria. In many Nigerian traditions, families are identified with a particular trade or role in society. Thus, among the Yoruba, a family of warriors is called *Jagunjagun*, farmers are *Agbe*, and traders are *Onisowo*. To traditionally minded Nigerians, such identification remains important to the determination of one's appropriate role in modern politics.

Many Nigerians have grown up in polygamous families.[20] There is no law preventing a man from taking more than one wife, although Muslims are theoretically limited to a maximum of four and Christians of mainstream denominations to one. All indigenous traditions in Nigeria accept polygamy, and little stigma is attached to the practice. Some Christian denominations in Nigeria enforce monogamy only on those men who hold office in the church.

The large family units that result from polygamous households and the broader definition of family give kinship special political importance. A politician may be able to count on the support of literally hundreds of actual kin, and even larger numbers if one considers clan affiliations based on a sense of kinship even where exact genealogical ties cannot be demonstrated. Kinship provides the most powerful sense of

identity and loyalty to many in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa, and it is the model (and often the real-world basis) for clientelist relationships.

Schools

In most contemporary nations, schools play a central role in developing a sense of community. This is clearly an important mission in Nigerian schools, and balancing various loyalties is a delicate task for Nigerian educators. Also, formal education is one of the principal benefits Nigerians expect from government. The school certificate is highly regarded throughout the developing world as a means to economic and social advancement, and this is especially true in Nigeria.

As Nigeria approached independence in the 1950s, the two Southern regions invested massively in expansion of their educational systems, especially at the primary level. There is a broad consensus that primary education should be free and universal. Beyond that basic agreement, however, Nigeria has struggled with how to shape the curriculum and how to make it available.

There was only one university in 1948 and five in 1962. The oil boom of the 1970s stimulated a massive wave of secondary and postsecondary school expansion, even though amid this prosperity there was a lack of properly trained instructors at all levels. Today there are 104 universities, including 41 new private universities created since the 1999 transition; the higher-education system also includes 75 polytechnics and colleges of technology and of education.

Enrollment rates in Nigerian universities doubled every four to five years in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. They slowed somewhat in the 1990s but increased after the 1999 transition to democracy. Between 2000 and 2006, the primary enrollment rate went from 61 to 64 percent, and the secondary school enrollment rate increased from 24 to 32 percent. However, equal access has remained illusory for years, and the problem becomes more acute as one moves from the primary to the secondary and then postsecondary level. The bias is on the one hand socioeconomic—children of the elite occupy a disproportionate share of the enrollments—and on the other hand reflects gender. Enrollment of girls has hit an unfortunate plateau, as democracy has never pushed girls' enrollment above 45 percent, showing little difference in 2007 compared with the previous decade.

Another important disparity exists between the North and South.[21] There have been indirect political effects of the education gap across regions. As the number of secondary graduates increased in the South, many of them sought jobs in the North and were embittered at Northern rejection. At the same time, Northerners grew alarmed at the prospect of being inundated by educated Southerners. Differences

Graduation at the University of Ibadan

At the time of independence, the University of Ibadan boasted modern structures and a 100,000-book library. After years of decay, the government is trying restore the University to its previous *elite* status.

George Esiri/Reuters/Landov

in educational achievement thus contributed to the resentments that exploded in violence in 1966. Today, Northern political dominance in the face of higher-educational achievement in the South continues to aggravate interregional political conflict. In 2009, hundreds of people died in violence after a group calling itself *Boko Haram* (meaning "education is a sin") said they wanted to cleanse northern Nigeria, which is "polluted by Western education, and uphold *shari'a* (Muslim religious law) all over the country."[22]

Language is an aspect of community-building that is often taken for granted, but language usage in school can have a major impact on political attitudes. As noted previously, English is the official language of Nigeria and remains the vehicle of instruction in Nigeria from primary school through the university. Furthermore, English is the language of government and, for the most part, of the mass media. Because English is a second language in most Nigerian homes, school plays an especially critical role in enabling access to the political system.

As a nation-building effort, the three major indigenous languages—Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba—are also taught through secondary school and are topics in the Senior School Certificate Examinations. Proficiency in English is required for admission to a university, where the local languages are used only in programs where they might specifically be required. The connection between English usage and government activities gives added weight to the usual relationship between education and political efficacy.

Whatever the effect of intentional socialization in the schools, studies of political culture invariably affirm the effect of education on political participation. This is especially true in less-developed countries, where the cultural gap between those with and without formal education is especially great.

The Mass Media

The presence of a lively and politically independent press goes back at least to Azikiwe's *West African Pilot*. By the time of independence, a considerable number of competing newspapers existed in Nigeria. The political effect of the press is naturally limited in a country where one-third of the adults are illiterate. A 2008 survey found that only 25 percent of Nigerians get their news from newspapers at least a few times a week. But that same survey reported that 57 percent of Nigerians are somewhat or very interested in public affairs.

Most Nigerians get their news from radio, and 58 percent of Nigerians list television as a source of news at least once a week. For decades, radio and television were state-controlled media and were therefore faithful purveyors of the government's perspective on political events. After 1999, citizens enjoyed a variety of new choices through exposure to independent stations, satellite news, and dozens of new privately owned newspapers. While few Nigerians can afford computers, Internet cafés are common and inexpensive in cities, thus increasing access to other independent news sources.

The authoritarian regimes imposed a substantial number of restrictions on the media. According to the Center for Free Speech, a Nigerian watchdog organization, the military issued twenty-one decrees between 1966 and 1995 limiting press freedoms or even proscribing particular publications outright. There was a high level of tension between military governments and the press, and the life of a journalist was not easy. Many journalists were arrested, and in 1986, a prominent critic of the government was killed by a letter bomb.

The 1999 Constitution reversed many media restrictions instituted under the previous military rulers. Although it guarantees broad freedom for the media, journalists can still face criminal punishment for defamation of public officials, and a 1999 decree requires them to be accredited by a government-run media council. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported in 2009 that ruling party officials harassed journalists with impunity, and President Yar'Adua threatened to revoke a television station's license for reasons of "national security." Journalists—and increasingly bloggers—remain subject to physical harassment, and some have had to flee the country.[23]

The State

Nigerian political attitudes are far more likely to be affected by everyday contact with the state than by the state's direct, intentional efforts to shape attitudes. In Nigeria's federal system, direct contact comes largely through local officials. Rural residents without English-language proficiency find that, even at the local level, officials are much more educated than they and generally expect and get deference. Government is

remote and must be approached through some form of informal mediation. For those with formal education, contact with local government is relatively simple; furthermore, because Nigerian policy is to hire civil servants from their home areas, there is neither a social nor a cultural difference between the educated citizen and the public servant. Nigerians expect to pay for expeditious service, and while they are aware of norms of honesty and ethics that are higher than the behavior they perceive, they are not scandalized by the difference. Perceptions of policymakers are not usually the result of direct contact.

Nigerians generally express great cynicism about the motivations of policymakers at all levels, civilian or military, but for the most part, this results from media accounts of venality and corruption. Whether through direct contact or media portrayal, they most often get what they expect from governmental officials.

One would expect that the unhappy experience with military rulers would leave Nigerians cynical and disillusioned. There certainly have been such effects, but there is a remarkably abiding faith in the importance of politics, especially among the educated. There is an impact here of the oil economy. Profits from the sale of petroleum have flowed through the central government, so that the stake in access to those in government, especially at the top, is high. For many intellectuals, however, the knowledge that important resources will be distributed through the government is offset by the uncertainty of the outcome of any attempt to become involved. They tend, thus, to leave the political field to a collection of seasoned politicians, those who have assembled a voter base every time a regime has offered the prospect of new elections.

POLITICAL RECRUITMENT

All the chief executives of Nigeria since independence are identified in Table 13.1. Several features of Nigeria's political leadership stand out. First, Northerners have dominated the leadership of the country under both civilian and military rule, in the

Nigerian Chief Executives, 1960–2010 TABLE 13.1

Until the transition to democracy in 1999, coups and uncertainty characterized the political system.

Dates	Name	Title	Ethnicity	Cause of Departure
1960–Jan. 1966	Tafawa Balewa	Prime Minister	Hausa-Fulani (North)	Coup (killed)
1963–Jan. 1966	Nnamdi Azikiwe	President [appointed]	Igbo (East)	Coup (removed)
Jan.–July 1966	Agusi Ironsi	Military Head of State	Igbo (East)	Coup (killed)
July 1966–1975	Yakubu Gowon	Military Head of State	Tiv ("Middle Belt")	Coup (removed)
1975–1976	Murtala Muhammed	Military Head of State	Hausa-Fulani (North)	Coup (killed)
1976–1979	Olusegun Obasanjo	Military Head of State	Yoruba (Southwest)	Handed power to civilian government
1979–1983	Shehu Shagari	President	Hausa-Fulani (North)	Coup (removed)
1983–1985	Muhammed Buhari	Military Head of State	Hausa-Fulani (North)	Coup (removed)
1985–1993	Ibrahim Babangida	Military Head of State	Gwari (North)	Forced out of office
Aug.–Nov. 1993	Ernest Shonekan	Interim Head of State [appointed]	Yoruba (Southwest)	Forced out of office
Nov. 1993–June 1998	Sani Abacha	Head, Provisional Ruling Council	Kanuri (North)	Died in office
May 1998–May 1999	Abdulsalami Abubakar	Head, Provisional Ruling Council	Gwari (North)	Handed power to civilian government
May 1999–May 2007	Olusegun Obasanjo	President	Yoruba (Southwest)	Civilian-to-civilian transfer
May 2007–April 2010	Umar Musa Yar'Adua	President	Hausa-Fulani (North)	Died in office
May 2010–present	Goodluck Jonathan	President	Ijaw (south south)	—

first case because the population of the North is about the same as in the East and West combined, and in the case of the military regimes, because of increasing dominance of the officer corps by Northerners.

In the early years of independence, a military career lacked prestige, especially among educated Southerners. In an effort to speed the replacement of remaining British officers, the Balewa government actively recruited university graduates into the officer ranks. One result was the introduction of large numbers of educated Igbos into officer ranks; another was the politicization of the army.

When the military controlled the country between 1983 and 1999, an officer's commission came to be seen as the most regular path to political power. The first coup leaders in 1966 professed great regret at the necessity to intervene and promised that their stay would be temporary. They were removed and killed in the second 1966 coup before their sincerity could be tested. The longevity of General Gowon's regime was made necessary by the need to prosecute the civil war and then to lay a constitutional framework for civilian rule. When Gowon seemed inclined to settle in for the long term, he was removed, and General Obasanjo set and abided by his 1979 deadline. Thus, through the first period of military rule, although there was serious profit-taking on the part of many military leaders, none of them expected to have long-term political careers.

The second round of military power (1983 to 1999) produced a gradual change in the perspectives of at least some military officers. Many observers have wondered about the military leadership's annulment of the 1993 presidential election results and the abolition of state and local elective offices already filled. Most feel that if the presumed winner, Moshood Abiola, had been allowed to assume power, he would have been unable to deal effectively with the country's problems, would quickly have lost an already dubious legitimacy, and would thus have prepared the way for a return of the military with acceptance by the population. As it was, the Abacha regime faced massive resistance and was able to rule only on the basis of force, at least in much of the South. Many observers assume that Abacha's actions, while certainly supported by elements in the North that could not stomach a Yoruba president, also reflected the strong desire of a new generation of military officers to enjoy the fruits of power that come from oil revenues and from the potential profits that flow from the corruption of public office. The country witnessed open jockeying for positions as state governors or "chairmen" of local governments, which were allocated according to military rank. National-level offices were usually filled by generals, brigadiers, or colonels; state governors were mostly colonels; and local chairmen were lieutenant colonels and majors, often retired from active service. Politics in Nigeria is still largely a game of money; therefore, the retired military, the business group, and some retired civil servants dominate the elective positions, while a few academics have political appointments, like minister, commissioner, or in the foreign service.

Today there are more routes to professional advancement than simply joining the military, and education has arguably become more important. Nigerian universities produce large numbers of trained public administrators, and they follow long-term careers in federal, state, or local administration that usually are not affected by changes at the top. By the time of the 1979 transition, 89 percent of the bureaucrats at the assistant-secretary or permanent-secretary level held university degrees.[24] An appropriate educational level had come to be expected in the civil service. This is not to say that the civil service offered a stable career; an estimated 11,000 administrators were removed when Murtala Muhammed came to power in 1975 and took vigorous action against corruption. But to the degree that the administrative system continues to function through the many regime changes, it does so because of the permanence of the civil service.

Recruitment into political positions at the local and state levels generally excludes "strangers," even though they may be long-time residents of a community and, of course, Nigerian citizens. There are some exceptions: Where "strangers" are sufficiently numerous, they can run and win. In most places, however, regulations have expressly limited candidacy to indigenous candidates. In addition to simple democratic fairness, the advantage of creating a multiethnic council is that it stimulates identity and participation in the community on the part of populations that are otherwise excluded. An important characteristic of recruitment into political or administrative office, however, is the effort to "reflect the **federal character** of Nigeria" faithfully. In practice, this has become Nigeria's own version of affirmative action, which fills government positions with regard to identity. This reduces fears of

political exclusion by attempting to ensure that government is an ethnic microcosm of the locality or state it controls.

In the past, appointments of military personnel to government posts also reflected the country's federal character: Northern officers were appointed in the Northern states, Yorubas and others from the Southwest to states in that region, and so on. Even today, ethnic politics still very much dominate the politics of Nigeria. However, the federal government has increasingly made use of the zoning structure, which breaks Nigeria into six divisions for the purpose of appointments and the distribution of infrastructures. After all, it is easier to distribute appointments on the basis of six units rather than thirty-six states. In recent years, this appointment process has increasingly been challenged for a variety of reasons. Qualified people have to be "rotated out" in order to fill the position with someone from another zone. The Majority Whip of the House explained in 2010 that this approach helped stabilize the country after the transition and build confidence among previously marginalized communities, but it also deprives the National Assembly and many government agencies of experienced officeholders.[25]

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Before we can assess—or perhaps appreciate—Nigeria's political structure, it is critical to understand the instability that preceded the current "dispensation," as Nigerians frequently refer to regimes. After a tumultuous postindependence history with five successful coups, three civilian constitutions, and Babangida's annulment of the 1993 elections, the country seemed to heave a sigh of relief when Obasanjo was sworn in as president in 1999. It is thus important to evaluate the mixed democratic progress since then, bearing in mind the 2003 elections and the country's first peaceful transfer of civilian authority in 2007. After decades of constitutional fragility and failures of previous constitutional arrangements discussed in this section, the shortcomings of the Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, and Jonathan administrations may start to sound like small setbacks outweighed by the relative stability experienced by the political system under their stewardship.

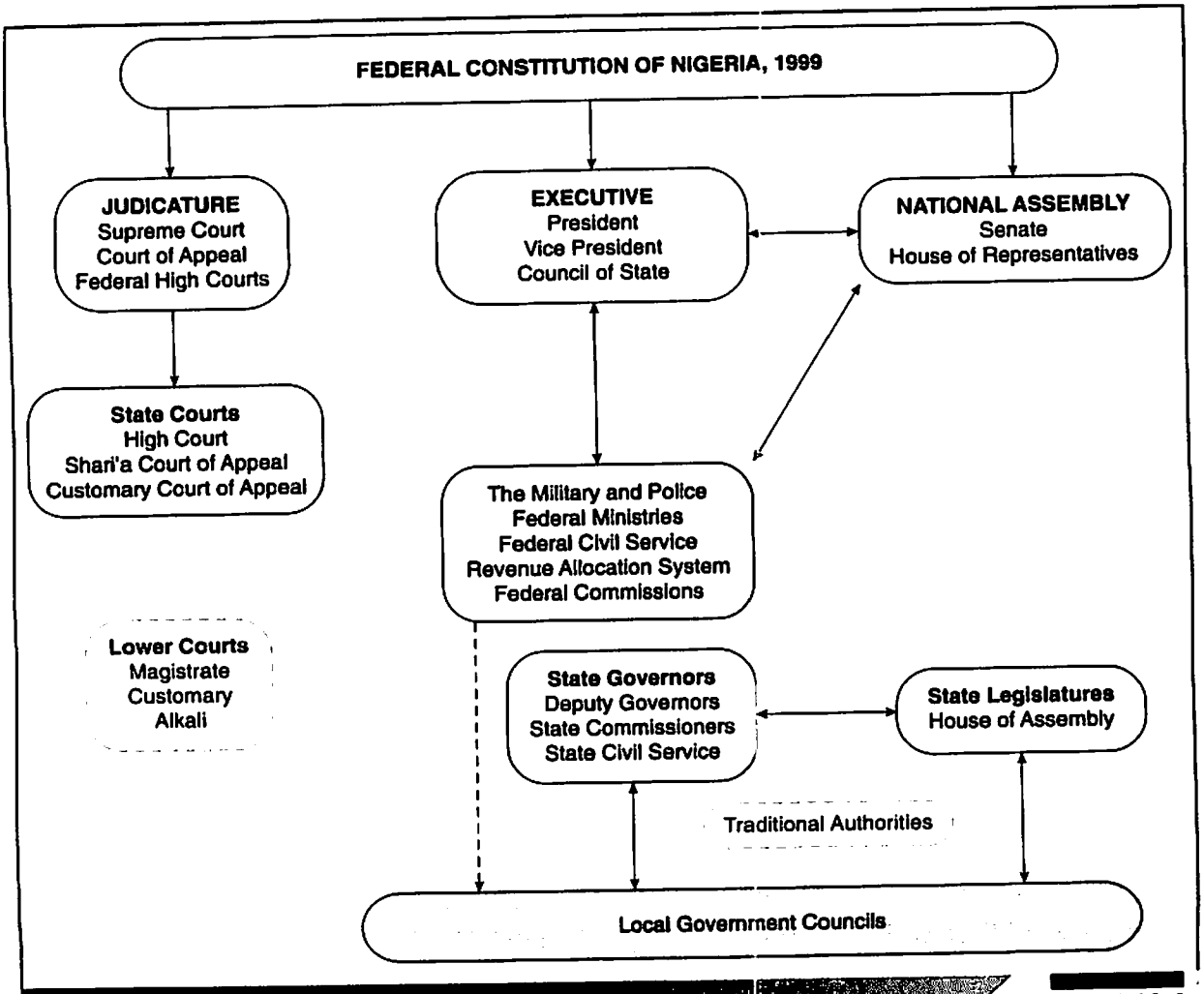
The first political institution in which Nigerians participated as Nigerians was the legislative council mandated by the Clifford Constitution of 1922, which provided for elected representatives from Lagos. Elections were introduced in this way and stimulated political activity. Through successive constitutional changes in the 1940s and 1950s, elective office was extended to local and regional governments, and the first provisions for a federal structure were introduced. Because of the numerous military interludes after independence, constitution drafting and large-scale reform efforts almost seem like a regular part of politics. The current constitution closely resembles the one promulgated in 1979. But the transition that made the current constitution possible and the various political bargains it enshrines are perhaps best understood by starting with a discussion of the failed transition in 1993.

The Development of the Constitution of 1999

As Babangida postponed the return to civilian rule in 1993, his standing with the population, and even within the military, moved ever lower. When he delayed announcing the outcome of the June 12, 1993, presidential election, apprehensions grew, for it was popularly believed that Moshood Abiola had won. Two days after the election, initial results released by the National Election Commission (NEC) showed that Abiola had won in eleven of fourteen states. Later, a private human-rights coalition, the Campaign for Democracy (CD), published election results indicating that Abiola had won in nineteen of the thirty states. A few days later, the military government declared the election invalid. At the same time, Babangida promised new elections and once again promised a return to civilian rule. He appointed a transition committee chaired by a Yoruba, Ernest Shonekan, and Babangida vacated the capital without fanfare—in a technical sense meeting his deadline for the restoration of civilian rule. However, Shonekan had virtually no support and was pushed aside by General Sani Abacha three months later in November 1993. General Abacha maintained the myth of a return to civilian government and created the Constitutional Conference to draft yet another governing document. The Constitutional Conference was inaugurated on June 27, 1994, but two weeks earlier, on the anniversary of the annulled election, Moshood Abiola had declared himself president. Abiola was arrested on June 23, 1994, and

charged with three counts of treason. Abacha seemed to manipulate the system to remain president, but his strategy was aborted by his death of a reported heart attack in May 1998. Meanwhile, Abiola had maintained his claim from prison, but he also died of a reported heart attack two months after Abacha, just as he was negotiating his release with Abacha's successor, Abdulsalami Abubakar. The succession of deaths, first of Shehu Yar'Adua in prison (November 1997), then Abacha (May 1998), and then Abiola (July 1998), was seen by many Nigerians as an entirely improbable set of events. Even though the departed represented an extreme range of political positions, conspiracy theories have since then been widely floated.

From 1983 to 1999, politics in Nigeria took the form of a succession of military regimes that constantly planned a return to democracy. Administrative and judicial proceedings continued as though a constitutional structure were in place. The 1995 Constitution was widely discussed and even cited as the basis for election procedures in 1997 and 1998—yet the document was only officially promulgated by General Abubakar in May 1999 as he handed power over to a civilian regime. The overall structure of the current Constitution is outlined in Figure 13.4.



The Structure of Government under the 1999 Constitution
Nigeria has a presidential system with a bicameral legislature.

FIGURE 13.4

Federalism

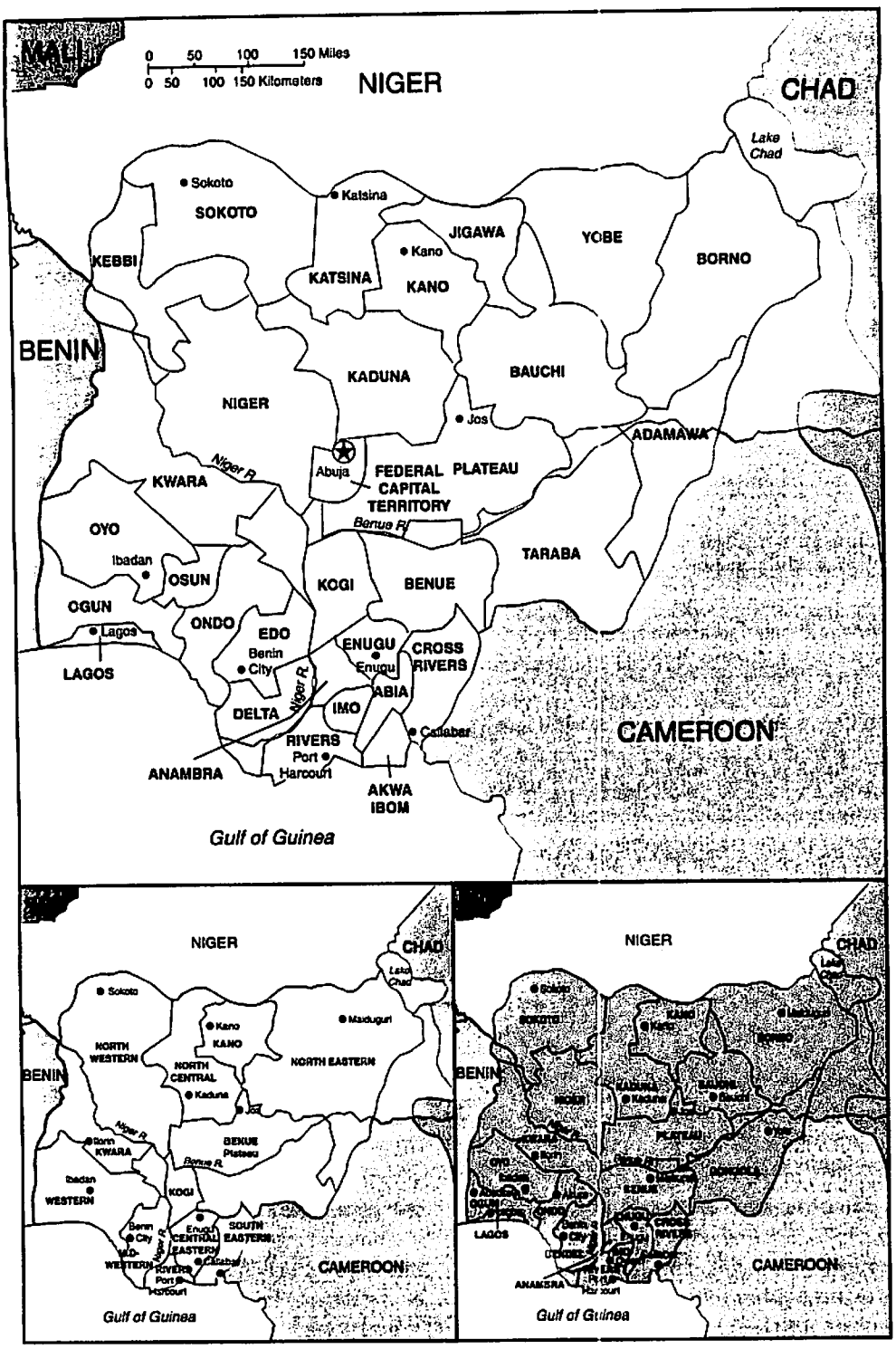
In a country as vast and complex as Nigeria, many political decisions are not made at the national level. A federal system was established as Nigeria moved to independence in 1954. In a uniquely Nigerian scenario, two of the regions, the Eastern and the Western, gained self-governing status in 1957; the North followed in 1959. Thus, a very decentralized federal system was already in effect at independence. The Constitution of 1960 was explicitly federal, dividing responsibilities between the federal government and the three regions. Federalism has been a constant in the three constitutions (1963, 1979, and 1989) since that time, and in the constitution developed but never promulgated under Abacha in 1995. For the return to civilian rule in 1999, Abubakar drew upon these federal traditions and a strong commitment to presidentialism.

In the face of formal federalism, however, stands a fiscal condition that calls the federal concept into question: All levels of government derive the largest portion of their revenues from the national oil monopoly, distributed through the national government. Beyond this fiscal fact of life, there has been the control of Nigeria by military governments for twenty-nine of its fifty years of independence. It is difficult to define federalism under a military chain of command. Nonetheless, any permanent civilian constitution will undoubtedly be genuinely federal. As political activists in the South have become convinced that Northerners are bent on dominating any central government in Nigeria, they have argued for greater state or regional autonomy. Moreover, with the emergence of militant groups, such as MEND, the federal government has had to confront an increasingly visible and viable secessionist movement in the South.

State-level politics has often been dominated by local ethnic rivalries, as states are called upon to settle local government boundary disputes and to decide on the competence of various traditional institutions. Pressures analogous to those at the local level have led to an expansion of the number of states. The three colonial regions, which became the states of federal Nigeria, quickly became four. With the outbreak of civil war in 1967, the country was divided into twelve states, a number that was increased to nineteen in 1976, to thirty in 1991, and to thirty-six in 1996 (plus the Federal Capital Territory; see Figure 13.5). The number of local government areas within the states has progressively increased, too, with different ethnic or subethnic groups vying for representation.

All these tensions finally converge at the national level, the source of most government resources. Recent federal governments have attempted to calm the ethnic struggle with a Nigerian version of affirmative action based on the country's federal character. Various regions—and thus ethnic groups—are guaranteed a proportionate share of federal positions. This is an application of the consociational model, a common solution where countries are deeply divided by religion or ethnicity.[26] If appointments were made on competence alone, the educational advantage of the southernmost populations would result in their having a disproportionate share of civil-service jobs. Federal character is thus widely accepted as a means of integrating the government and building confidence among disparate groups. In recent years, this approach has been used in the appointment process even at most local levels; federal character is no longer merely for appointments at the federal level.

Both the 1979 and 1989 Constitutions establish a three-level federalism. In such other large federations as the United States, Canada, and Australia, the constitution focuses on the federal–state relationship, with local government principally in the domain of the state or province. The fact that Nigerian constitutions have specified a uniform structure and common functions for local government is rather unusual. While there are no doubt advantages to this uniformity of structure and function, it does not allow for local governments to reflect the diversity of local cultures present in the country, nor is experimentation possible of the sort that has produced the manager and commission systems at the local level in the United States. Since colonial times, however, local government has really been little more than local administration of federal policy, a situation unlikely to change until local governments acquire independent sources of revenue. Clearly, in an oil-centralized system, the demand for local governments cannot be explained by the control of decision-making. Rather, ever more local government is attractive because of the formula-driven allocation of funds that supports local activities. In 1981, the Second Republic's National Assembly decided to allocate 10 percent of federal revenues and 10 percent of state revenues to the localities. However, not only were state governments unwilling to abide by this



The Creation of States, 1960–1996

Factors driving the creation of new states have been demands from minority groups seeking distinct representation and the revenue allocation system of federal grants.

FIGURE 13.5

Note: Lower left: Dark border (lower left map) shows original three regions, increased to four by the creation of the Midwestern Region, and to twelve in1967. Lower right: Nineteen states, 1976–1991. Above: Thirty states, 1991–1996. (Current thirty-six states are shown at the beginning of the chapter.)

mandate, they also frequently tapped for their own purposes the federal allocation that was transmitted to them for distribution at the local level. To remedy this situation, the 1989 Constitution provided direct payment of the federal allocation to local governments; in 1990, that allocation was increased to 15 percent, and a few years later, to 20 percent of federal revenues, where it stands today.

The process of subdividing administrative and political units has fueled a growth of the public sector. Employment in the public service is an indicator of the growth of government. At independence, there were 71,693 employees of federal and regional government; by 1974, there were about 630,000, not counting the 250,000 in military service. A study of local governments in 1978 and 1979 found another 386,600 positions at that level, not counting general laborers or district or village heads. The drop in oil revenues in the mid-1980s brought an end to government growth. However, the Buhari administration imposed a 15-percent across-the-board personnel reduction that started a long period of stability in government employment.[27] Since 1999, competition among states for the distribution of federal revenues is acute in two arenas: first in disagreements between the president and the National Assembly over the amount of money that should be returned to the oil-producing areas, or what Nigerians refer to as the "derivation formula." Second, the controversy has played out between the states and the federal government in a series of major Supreme Court decisions in 2002 concerning states' entitlement to offshore oil revenues and the federal government's right to exempt certain expenses from funds distributed under the derivation formula.

Some observers suggest that a genuine federalism would help to cure Nigeria's political problems, which almost always involve the tremendously large stakes in the oil-rich nation's federal government. Perhaps a national government with limited resources would result in a federation that is not viewed as a high-stakes zero-sum game.

Parliamentary versus Presidential Government

Without exception, British colonies came to independence with a parliamentary system based on the mother country's Westminster model. Initially, Nigeria followed the Commonwealth pattern, with a ceremonial governor-general named by the British monarch. In 1963, the formal structure was redesignated a republic, with Nnamdi Azikiwe as president with mostly ceremonial powers; the parliamentary system was maintained, with a prime minister as head of government. Because Nigeria's first experience with civilian rule ended disastrously in 1966, it is not surprising that the previous system was called into question as a new constitution was being framed in the 1970s. The drafters decided that the Westminster parliamentary model promoted majority rule with few checks and balances, which alienated much of Nigeria's population. Their solution was to model the Constitution of the Second Republic unabashedly after the U.S. presidential model: An independently elected president was balanced against a two-house National Assembly at the federal level, with governors and legislatures following the same model at the state level. The disorder in the Second Republic might have brought presidentialism into disrepute as well, but the principal aspects of the presidential system have been maintained in the more recent constitutions.

The 1999 Constitution provides for an independently elected president and a dual-chamber National Assembly at the federal level. Governors and single-house legislatures follow the same basic model at the state level. The Speaker of the House presides over the House of Representatives, while the president of the Senate, who is in the line of presidential succession after the vice president of the republic, presides over the upper chamber. Each of Nigeria's thirty-six states has three senators (plus one for the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja), while population determines the number of constituencies in each state for a total of 360 representatives. Senators and representatives serve four-year terms and are elected at the same time, rather than in staggered elections. The number of standing committees has increased in recent years, fragmenting the jurisdiction over issues and often making it impossible for members to carry out their responsibilities. For example, in 2010, there were eighty-six standing committees in the House of Representatives! Members demand chairmanships because of the additional resources, benefits, and power they offer. Committees are still getting accustomed to their role in the legislative process, and many bills are not amended or debated until they reach the floor for debate. As permitted by the Constitution, the Executive Branch introduces the federal budget and other major pieces of legislation, and how much the

National Assembly can or should modify these bills has been a hotly contested issue since the transition to democracy. Differences of opinion between the two branches of government have been dramatic, even though the president's party has consistently enjoyed a majority in both legislative chambers since 1999.

Nigeria's problems with achieving stable constitutional rule have made it an important case study in arguments over the relative advantages of presidentialism compared to parliamentarism in conditions of cultural pluralism. On the face of it, the fault may seem to lie with defects in the various constitutional frameworks, but the problem may actually be the intractable nature of Nigerian pluralism. A constitutional document cannot succeed at papering over a lack of trust among the country's subcultures. The lack of trust has led to suggestions of a "zoning" arrangement, which would require that the presidency and other top posts rotate automatically among the various geographical "zones" in the country, such that every major group could have a turn. The Constitutional Conference of 1995 gave a general endorsement to zoning at all levels of government—that is, for governorships of states and chairmanships of local governments as well as at the federal level. The National Assembly proposed similar constitutional reforms in 2001.

The Judiciary

Nigeria came to independence with a well-established legal system that included a court system and a thriving legal profession in the British tradition. The federal and state courts are integrated into a single system of trial and appeal courts. Thus, the 1999 Constitution provides a Supreme Court, a Court of Appeal, and state and federal High Courts with original and appellate jurisdictions. Traditional authorities maintain their greatest influence in their judicial powers, for states are explicitly allowed to constitute customary and *shari'a* (Muslim Koranic law) courts, both original and appellate. A dozen Northern states maintain *shari'a* courts, a point of contention between Muslim authorities and those who see such official recognition as divisive.

Successive military regimes undermined the judiciary as the country's dictators ruled by decree, often whimsically. Abacha seemed to deliver the final blow to judicial independence because his government had little inclination to respect the legal system. It reacted to court orders by changing the rules and establishing special military tribunals, even for common crimes such as robbery.

INTEREST ARTICULATION

There are at least two aspects of political influence in Nigeria. First is the effect of organized interest groups, such as unions and trade associations and religious bodies. The second involves the more informal channels of participation through individual relationships often described by the term "clientelism."

The activities of formal associations and institutions often offer the most vigorous expression of societal independence from a government. Characteristically, voluntary associations were either brought under control or abolished in the authoritarian regimes that took hold in Africa soon after independence. This was not, however, the case in Nigeria, where even during military regimes, organizations such as the Nigerian Women's Union have maintained an independent existence, even as their political influence was reduced.

Ethnic and Religious Associations

Many of the first formal associations in Nigeria had an ethnic base. The Igbo Federal Union (later the Igbo State Union) was "inaugurated by politically conscious representatives of the Igbo intelligentsia."[28] The Egbe Omo Oduduwa was organized among young, urban, Yoruba professionals. Minority groups especially found comfort in formal associations such as the Ibibio State Union, the Edo National Union, the Urhobo Renascent Convention, and others. These associations often formed the organizational base for parties and contributed to the latter associations' ethnic orientations. In the North, where individual clientelist ties are relatively stronger, associations even of the ethnic type have played less of a role. An ethnic association of contemporary significance is the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), founded by **Ken Saro-Wiwa**. MOSOP claims to speak for the 500,000 Ogoni people whose land is now occupied by Shell Oil drilling rigs. In the 1990s, the Ogoni complained that they have borne the brunt of the inconvenience of Nigeria's oil industry and have received little in return. Tensions reached a peak when four Ogoni chiefs were murdered by young militants. Saro-Wiwa

and fourteen other Ogonis were arrested and charged with murder for inciting the youths. In a blatant frame-up and an example of how Abacha's government undermined the courts, he and eight co-defendants were summarily convicted and hanged in 1995. This shocked world leaders and highlighted the deplorable state of human rights in Nigeria. The South African leader, Nelson Mandela, himself recently released from prison, said at the time, "General Sani Abacha is sitting on a volcano, and I am going to make sure that it blows up under him."[29] In November, the Ogonis were hanged, despite pleas of clemency from around the world. Saro-Wiwa's legacy remained sensitive, and it was not until 2002 that the federal government allowed the families to exhume bodies of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the others for a proper burial.

As in many other countries, religious institutions and associations play an important part in Nigerian politics. These groups are especially durable and resilient because when political activity is repressed, they remain organized around denominational objectives, and where an ethnic association might have to play a less obvious role, neither Christian nor Muslim religious groups and leaders find it necessary to camouflage their identities. As in other countries, religious-based interest groups take several forms: the formal institutions (churches, Koranic schools); leadership roles such as bishops, pastors, and *mallams* (Muslim teachers and learned men); and voluntary denominational associations. The effectiveness of religious institutions in articulating concerns to government has been reduced by intergroup conflicts, most frequently between Christians and Muslims, which put the government in the role of mediator.

Not surprisingly, associational life is most active in the South; however, the North is home to an Islamic "mystic brotherhood," the Tijaniyya, which is particularly influential among lower-class Hausa Muslims and is looked on with suspicion by the representatives of orthodox Islam (another brotherhood, the Khadiriyya, is identified with the traditional elite of the North). The existence of such groups blurs the distinction between "modern" associations and "traditional" institutions. A new breed of ethnic organizations has emerged under democracy, with groups such as the Arewa People's Congress, which declares its mission as "defending Northern interests," and the Odua People's Congress militating for its version of Yoruba interests in the Southwest.

Associational Groups

In the more urban and industrialized areas of the country, one encounters a range of associational interest groups common to the politics of any modern nation. Trade unions have played a role in Nigerian politics since the colonial period, sometimes collectively through the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC) and its affiliated unions. However, labor action is organized more frequently by sector. Groups representing the petroleum workers can have an immediate impact on the national economy and consequently have the potential for great political influence, as was demonstrated in 1994 strike actions by the **National Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers (NUPENG)** and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN). Groups such as the Nigerian Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE) are especially influential because of their immediate impact on government.

Professional organizations—such as the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Medical Association, and especially the Nigerian Union of Journalists—are politicized as issues concern them directly. Military governments periodically force the dissolution of such groups by arresting their leaders. The universities are another modern sector that has a tradition of political activism. Faculty as well as students were some of the earliest critics of military rule, and military governments have tried to marginalize their role in the country. Strikes by staff and students are common; it is not unusual for a student's undergraduate education to take six or seven years.

During the long periods of military rule, politicians at all levels who were turned out by the military have constituted an interest group united around their desire to be allowed back into the circles of power. They were a force pushing for the return to civilian rule, even as many of them were content to be "co-opted" into administrative service under the military.

Civil society groups such as such as the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) and the CD were at the forefront of the struggle for democracy. After Abacha died in 1998, a new coalition, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) emerged as an advocate for electoral form and a watchdog against electoral fraud. In 2007, it trained over 20,000 election monitors who fanned out across polling stations, and their final report condemned widespread electoral fraud.

Nonassociational Groups

A clear Nigerian example of the nonassociational interest group, but shadowy in its definition, is the famous "**Kaduna Mafia.**" Hardly any informal conversation on Nigerian politics fails to mention this network of powerful Northern leaders, who are said to maintain strong influence over the military and Nigerian politics. Richard Joseph offers this description:

> In a general sense [Kaduna Mafia] refers to members of the Northern intelligentsia who assumed positions of political and social influence during the decade of military rule after the civil war. These individuals are, on the whole, better educated than their predecessors in the emirate North who held similar positions in the first decade after independence. [They also] were less dependent on the patronage of the traditional rulers to advance in their careers.[30]

This group was highly influential in the Babangida years, but Sani Abacha distanced himself from it. General Yar'Adua, a political reformer and a leading figure in the Kaduna Mafia who served in military administrations in the 1970s, died in prison in 1997. When his brother, Umar Musa Yar'Adua, was elected president in 2007, some saw this as a return of their influence.

Given that most of Nigeria's labor force is involved in agriculture, one expects to find strong associational activity among farmers. However, the ethnic divisions in the country have prevented the formation of any national-level farm organizations. Those groups that do exist are usually engaged in local cooperative activities and are not active beyond the regional level. More commonly, the interest articulation activities of farmers are relatively spontaneous and unorganized, or take the form of clientelism (as we will discuss later).

Finally, one institution is far more than an interest group: the military itself. We will address its political role later. The Nigerian military is not a cohesive interest, as was demonstrated in the transition from Abacha to Abubakar. The enlisted personnel and lower-ranking officers have not seen any direct benefit from military rule, and many supported efforts to return to civilian rule. Also, the country's ethnic divisions are reflected in the military as well, although they compete there with a well-ingrained military professionalism. The military rank-and-file were originally drawn mostly from Northern non-Hausa minorities. Later recruitment drew from all over the country, but the minorities, especially from the "Middle Belt," remain disproportionately numerous. The early preponderance of Igbo officers ended with the second coup and the Biafran civil war, which resulted in the Northern dominance in the officer corps that is present today. However, there is wide ethnic diversity among the officers, and ethnicity is only one factor in the complex disputes within the military. There is a constant possibility that new factions will emerge to challenge the current leadership, to forestall or delay the return to civilian control.

Patron–Client Networks

An alternative structure for interest representation is found in the **patron–client network.** Powerful Nigerian political figures are able to mobilize support through personal "connections" with subordinates, who may themselves serve in a corresponding role of "patron" for a yet-lower set of "clients." **Clientelism** was an integral aspect of political life in the larger-scale precolonial systems of the Hausa, the Yoruba, and others. Those who are not represented by formal associations may be able to take advantage of their connections to achieve political ends, particularly at the local level and where traditional rulers and their political systems maintain some influence. Furthermore, the pattern of personal contacts is ingrained in the culture and thus remains important as an approach to powerful modern figures independent of any local traditional context.

Resting on these patron–client networks in Nigeria is a patronage system in which a ruler or an official gives a public office to an individual client in return for his loyalty in delivering political support at some lower level. The prevalence of such a system in Nigeria is not dependent on particular regimes, civilian or military.[31] Their durability makes the "restructuring" of Nigerian administration difficult when regimes are under pressure to develop an "austerity" budget.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Given the lack of either good census data or reliable voter registration figures, it is difficult to be precise about voter turnout figures, but estimates are in the range of 40 to 60 percent in some earlier elections, an

impressive level for a majority poor and illiterate populace. Some of the explanation is found in the prevalence of patron–client systems, the "machine politics" that ties ordinary voters into the electoral process through personalistic ties with political activists.

Interest in elections, even in the mobilization of patron–client networks, declined during the long transition to civilian rule, but it rose again with the return to civilian rule. In the presidential election of February 1999, turnout was estimated at 52 percent. Voter turnout for the 2003 election was an estimated 69 percent. Reflecting the underlying problems with the 2007 election, official estimates of turnout are unavailable, but unofficial estimates are around 57 percent.

Violence also is employed frequently, from the use of "thugs" by political parties in both republics to the confrontations with police in Lagos and the Southwest during the last days of the Babangida regime and in the challenges to Abacha's seizure of power. Violence by the state, although less common than in many authoritarian regimes, has played a major role in Nigeria politics: Upward of fifty people were executed for participating in the failed coups of 1986 and 1990; death sentences against those accused in 1995 were not carried out, only because members of the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) could not agree among themselves on whether to do so. The greatest example of political violence was, of course, the Biafran civil war from 1967 to 1970. Nigeria experienced over 2 million deaths in wars from 1960 to 1992, the vast majority of them during the civil war. Though on a lesser scale, the government remains complicit in human-rights violations following the 1999 transition. Violence often takes the form of reprisal attacks—often on a large scale—by security forces after one of their own is killed. Extrajudicial killings by police are not unusual, either.[32]

Nigeria has been a highly politicized country ever since independence. If democracy offers better representation, rule of law, and improved government performance, it will, it can be hoped, reduce the sense of alienation and frustration that inspires much of this violence.

PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

Nigeria's early political parties were influenced by the divisive effects of colonialism, which strengthened regional attachments, as well as nationalist opposition to British rule. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) emerged as a diverse nationalist movement in 1944 under the leadership of Nnamdi Azikiwe.[33] This organization advocated increased representation in the Nigerian colonial government. Political reforms creating indirect elections to regional assemblies strengthened ethnic attachments in the 1950s, and the NCNC broke up along ethnic lines. The Action Group (AG), an opposition party with its stronghold in the West, emerged under the leadership of a young Yoruba lawyer, Obafemi Awolowo. From the beginning, there were forces within both the NCNC and the AG arguing for movement in a multicultural, issue-based, cross-regional direction. However, the AG was split on how quickly to proceed to independence via a cross-regional strategy or along more conservative, ethnic-based, evolutionary lines. Azikiwe was particularly committed to action at the national level, but the NCNC played to its strength in the East when it became clear that he needed a regional power base. Thus, the NCNC came to be identified with that region and the Igbo people, while the AG was identified with the opposition in the West (see Table 13.2).

Unlike the NCNC and AG, the major Northern political parties never really tried to obtain political support outside their own region. Britain's successful application of indirect rule in the North had resulted in an alliance between the colonial administration and the traditional emirs that impeded the formation of

TABLE 13.2

Ethnic Distribution of Party Leaders, 1958

Even before independence, Nigeria's political parties acquired a strongly regional character.

Party*	Igbo	Yoruba	Hausa-Fulani
NCNC	49.3	26.7	2.8
AG	4.5	68.2	3.0
NPC	—	6.8	51.3

*NCNC: National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons; AG: Action Group; NPC: Northern People's Congress.

Source: Richard Sklar and C. S. Whitaker, Jr., "Nigeria," in *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa*, ed. James S. Coleman and Carl Rosberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964).

modern political movements. Although reformist political organizations were formed—notably the Northern Elements' Progressive Union (NEPU)—they operated only at the margins and tension points of the emirates. A more conservative movement, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), was taken over by the Sardauna (a traditional title) of Sokoto and a Hausa commoner, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The NPC, the traditional emirates, and the preindependence administrative structure were intertwined such that young administrators could run successfully for public office, but only if they had the support of their administrative superiors and of the local traditional elite. This political structure grew up among a population that was not as educated (less than 15 percent were literate) as in the South and that was much more loyal to their traditional authorities. The elite origins of the party's officers and candidates were deemphasized through both communal (ethnic) and religious (Islamic) appeals to the electorate. Not surprisingly, the NPC did not give high priority in its program to achieving national independence.

When General Ironsi assumed power following the breakdown of political order in the Western Region and the first coup, one of his first moves was to abolish all parties and a large number of political associations. It was a move imitated by later dictators, who sought either to eliminate political competition to consolidate power or to limit it as part of a managed transition to democracy. The country operated without political parties during General Yakubu Gowon's tenure from 1966 to 1975. When Murtala Muhammed then took over, he set in motion a process to return to civilian rule, including drafting a new constitution and establishing strict rules for political parties, which he thought should be "genuine and truly national political parties."[34] The constitution drafters in response specified that to be elected president, a candidate would have to poll at least 25 percent of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of the states. Parties were required to register with an electoral commission, and their governing boards had to reflect the country's "federal character"—specifically, coming from at least two-thirds of the states.

The elections of 1979 and 1983 are difficult to analyze because five parties competed for president, Senate and House seats, and state assemblies with varying degrees of success. Looking at the Senate, House, and state assemblies overall, most states were controlled by a single party. For example, Awolowo's party dominated five of the nineteen states, all in the Yoruba West and the Midwest (a "minority" area). Azikiwe's party carried three states, two of which were in the Igbo-dominated East. The ethnic factor was complicated by the success of the NPN in building cross-regional alliances. The NPN controlled eight states; five of these were in the North, but three were in the Southeast.

Following the military coup in 1983, Nigeria went nearly ten years before it held national elections again. After Babangida voided the national elections of 1993 and Abacha came to power, party activities were banned in Nigeria. Abacha artificially created five parties to contest local and state elections, which were allowed to exist only as long as they refrained from any criticism of the government. Reflecting their weak sense of political independence, all five endorsed Abacha as their presidential candidate.

In 1998, the Abubakar regime allowed new parties to be formed. In order to participate in the elections of 1998 and 1999, parties were required to demonstrate a nationwide organization. On the basis of the cases they submitted, nine parties were qualified to compete in the local elections of December 1998. The three parties that received the highest number of votes in the 774 local governments were then allowed to compete in the state and national elections of 1999. The PDP won in 389 local governments, the All People's Party (APP) in 182, and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) in 100, with other parties winning in the remaining 103. As the presidential elections of February 1999 approached, the APP and AD negotiated to present a single candidate—in other words, the normal effect of a winner-take-all situation pushed toward the creation of a two-party system. There were ultimately just two candidates: Olusegun Obasanjo, representing the PDP, and Olu Falae, leading the APP. Obasanjo won with 62.8 percent compared with Falae's 37.2 percent. The **Independent National Election Commission (INEC)**, created by the Abubakar regime for this election, declared Obasanjo the winner.

In 2003, Obasanjo ran for reelection. The APP, which had in the meantime renamed itself the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), selected Muhammed Buhari, another former military ruler, as its presidential candidate. The PDP increased its majority in both houses of Congress and won twenty-eight out of thirty-six governorships. Obasanjo was reelected by a

landslide, winning almost twice as many votes as Buhari. He and the PDP particularly improved their position in the Southwest, where they captured five governorships from the AD.

The 2007 election season began with a campaign by President Obasanjo's supporters to change the constitution in order to allow him a third term in office. Because his vice president, Atiku Abubakar, wanted to run, this led to an acrimonious battle within the PDP that carried regional dimensions too, since Abubakar is from the North. Abubakar failed to win the nomination in highly suspect primaries, and the dispute has left a lasting scar on the party.

After the third-term bid failed, Umar Musa Yar'Adua won the nomination and went on to be elected president in 2007 (see Table 13.3). At every level, the PDP remained dominant. It secured large majorities in the House and Senate again, and it won most of the governorships. International and domestic observers widely condemned the elections as fraudulent, and the courts threw out at least eleven gubernatorial and nine senatorial elections. In fact, the 2007 election of President Yar'Adua was not upheld by the Supreme Court until December 2008.

Nigeria loomed on the edge of constitutional crisis starting in November 2009, when Yar'Adua disappeared from public as his heart-related ailments increased. The cabinet (loyal to the chief executive in a presidential system) declined to assess his condition, as called for by the constitution. Under pressure from global leaders and new civil society organizations such as the Save Nigeria Group, the National Assembly swore in Vice President Goodluck Jonathan as "acting president." When Yar'Adua died in April 2010, Jonathan was formally sworn in as president, ending an awkward—and potentially explosive—impasse. Jonathan's administration has an ambitious reform agenda; he began by refusing to reappoint the top INEC official who oversaw the troubled elections of 2003 and 2007.

Ethnic Solidarity and Party Loyalty

Arguably, ethnicity still drives much of the political organizing in the country, and political leaders undermine truly national parties through ethnic appeals. The PDP today is so large that it seems to transcend such differences, but in other ways, it merely operates as a coalition of ethnic and regional elites. Figure 13.6 shows the formation of Nigerian political parties, notably their reemergence with the same regional ethnic bases they had in the 1960s, even before the military regimes. Ethnicity and regionalism complicate the role of political parties as instruments of interest aggregation and articulation. Until the election of Obasanjo in 1999, Hausas captured the top office in national elections. The annulment of the 1993 elections denied the South an apparent victory, which compounded the frustration for a region that had lost the presidency in 1979 and 1983. The annulled elections also created a "political debt" of sorts to the Yorubas, which heavily factored into the political party formations during the 1999 transition.

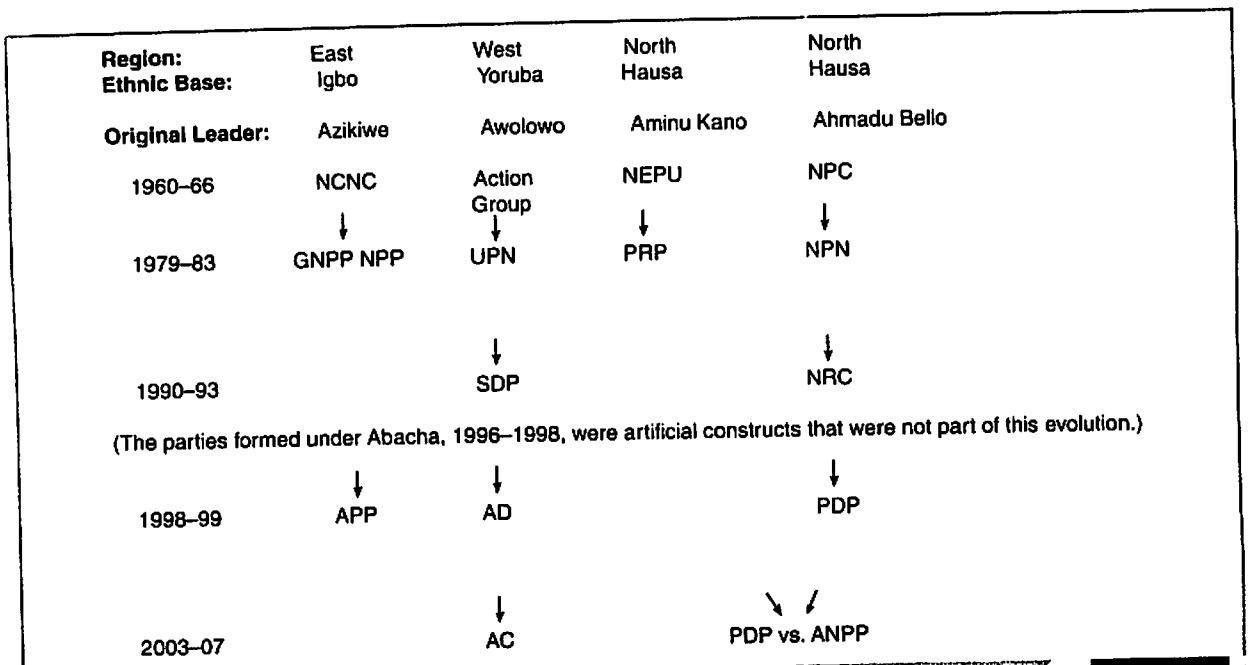
In 1979, the Hausa-dominated NPN won the ultimate prize, the presidency, essentially on the basis of a combination of Northern voters and minority voters in the Southern regions. The most significant difference for parties between the First and Second Republics turned out to be the carving-up of the original three regions into nineteen states. Ethnic groups other than the "big three" were dominant in a number of these states and had thus broken free of regional ethnic dominance. Party strategists henceforth combined a strong

Results of 2007 National Elections TABLE 13.3

In 2007, the PDP won the presidency and both chambers of the National Assembly by huge majorities.

	PDP (%)	ANPP (%)	AC (%)	Others (%)
Presidential vote	69.8	18.7	7.5	4.0
House of Representatives	73.0	17.5	8.3	1.1
Senate	79.8	12.8	5.5	1.8

Note: PDP: People's Democratic Party; ANPP: All Nigeria People's Party; AC: Action Congress.
Source: The Independent National Electoral Commission, results, www.inecnigeria.org.



The Evolution of Political Parties in Nigeria

Although the PDP offers the promise of overcoming the historically regional nature of Nigeria's major parties, its dominance over political competition has been criticized.

FIGURE 13.8

base in one of the main ethnic group areas with a successful appeal for support among minorities and potentially among dissident groups in the home bases of the other two major groups.

The same five parties remained in existence through the four years of the Second Republic and contested again in 1983 for the presidency, seats in the Senate and House, and state-level positions. However, the smallest parties, the PRP and the GNPP, had been weakened by their lack of access to resources. And, as is normal in a presidential system where the ultimate prize, the presidency, is a winner-take-all election, there were pressures on the two major opposition parties to combine against the incumbent. Such cooperation proved impossible, however, when neither Azikiwe nor Awolowo would defer to the other as presidential candidate. In a campaign marked with violence and vote-rigging, the NPN won a solid victory, recording gains against the opposing parties in their home areas. The NPN victory was short-lived, though. Three months into its second term, it met an early demise at the hands of Nigeria's fourth military coup. This time, the military's abolition of political parties had some political support because the parties were seen as so corrupt.

The two-year reign of Muhammed Buhari (1983–1985) presented no timetable for a return to electoral politics. However, Buhari's successor, Ibrahim Babangida, began outlining conditions for a return to civilian rule in 1986 that revealed his view of the country's problems. Between 1987 and 1989, a series of decrees created the NEC to replace the defunct Federal Election Commission (FEDECO) in managing the electoral process. The NEC provided for nonpartisan local council elections in 1987; set a timetable for the creation of political parties and the sequential election of legislators and executives at the local, state, and national levels; and promulgated a constitution to come into effect in 1992.

The military favored a two-party system, and it eventually overruled NEC and created two by fiat. Babangida then asked the NEC to examine the various documents of the dissolved parties and synthesize them into two discrete philosophies, one for a party "a little to the left," the other to fit a party "a little to the right" on the political spectrum. Even the parties' names were assigned by the government: The party on the left would be the Social Democratic Party, that on the right the National Republican Council (NRC).

Nigerians reacted to these developments with a mixture of cynicism and hope. It was difficult for intellectuals to accept a "democracy" based on parties and elections mandated by an authoritarian government, yet it promised to bring the country back to civilian rule. This transition process suffered a setback late in 1992, when the regime nullified the results of the parties' efforts to produce presidential candidates. The process had indeed been so poorly handled as to justify a postponement of the process. Yet Nigerians were ever more skeptical as to whether the military really intended to leave, or was just playing an elaborate game to buy time.

Babangida scheduled a new election for June 1993, ordered the parties to produce new candidates, and set August 27, 1993, as the date for turning over power to the civilian government. Under more careful control, the parties reconvened their national conventions and nominated new candidates. The NRC selected a relatively unknown figure, Bashir Tofa (a Kanuri from the Northeast), while the Social Democrats nominated a rich businessman from the Southwest, Moshood Abiola. The election finally took place on **June 12, 1993.** Nigerian and international observers reported that it was a generally fair election, and the NRC did not announce any plans to contest the outcome. Perhaps equally as important as its relative fairness, the election seemed to promote national unity. Abiola, from the South, appeared to have won a majority of the votes in nine Northern states, including his opponent's home state of Kano. The results seemed to suggest that under a two-party system, factionalism in each region and state could be exploited to prevent a strictly regional outcome.

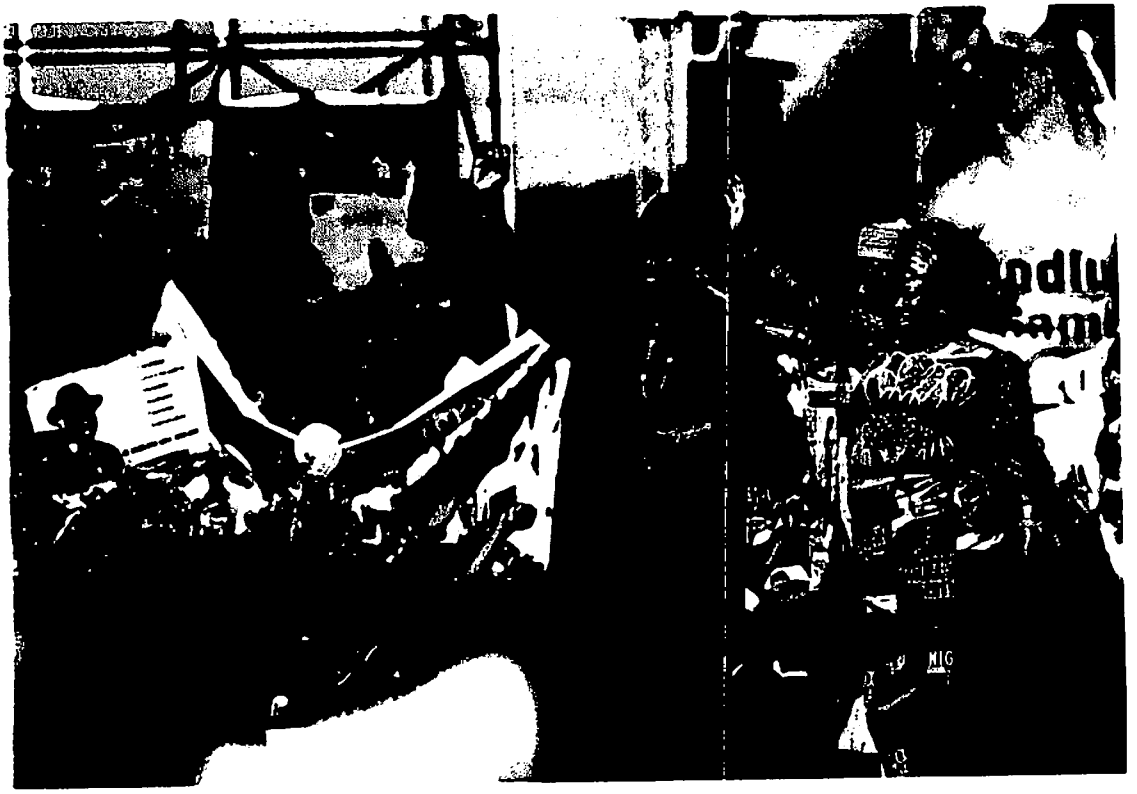
The 1993 results were never officially announced, however, and two weeks later, Babangida annulled the election. "June 12" became a term forever etched into Nigerian memory, particularly for political activists in the Southwest who claimed the Yoruba had been denied the presidency. Party politics, even the contrived variety invented by the Babangida regime, had once again proved to be an exercise unacceptable to the military leadership and their allies. The Abacha regime announced guidelines for the creation of new parties in June 1996, and political entrepreneurs immediately began forming alliances, even though NADECO and other opposition groups denounced the exercise as a sham. The five parties certified for local elections in March 1997 all nominated Abacha for the presidency.

On July 20, 1998, Abubakar announced the dissolution of the five parties, the nullification of the local and state elections, and a new start toward democracy with freely formed parties and a promise to hand over power to an elected president on May 29, 1999. A new organ, the INEC, was created to supervise the electoral process. Of the nine parties originally certified in October 1998, the three that survived the local elections represented some degree of continuity with earlier party formations—each with a base among one of the three major ethnic groups. However, because of the requirement to have a national base and for other strategic considerations, the candidates of each party were not necessarily of the ethnic group presumably dominant in it. Most importantly, even though the PDP is said to have its base in the North, its leaders threw their support for the presidential nomination to General Obasanjo, who had only recently been released from Abacha's prison. As both a Southerner (both he and his principal opponent, Olu Falae, were Yoruba) and a former military ruler, Obasanjo was seen by many both inside and outside the country as the individual most likely to provide effective leadership in the postmilitary state. However, some of those active in the various human-rights and democracy movements were dubious that a former authoritarian leader was an appropriate president for a democratic state, and his Northern backing raised doubts among many Southerners. And the question still remained: Would the military be ready to return to the barracks? The answer came with the inauguration of Obasanjo as president on May 29, 1999.

For Nigeria's third attempt at democracy to succeed, it will have to tackle significant problems, including corruption driven by substantial new oil revenues, a bureaucracy in need of retraining, ongoing ethnic and religious conflicts, and serious economic inequalities. Even though the president's party has held a majority in the National Assembly, there have been significant tensions between the executive and legislative branches. Since 1999, corruption investigations have resulted in two changes of leadership in the Senate and two in the House. The elections of April 19, 2003, in Nigeria were the first civilian-conducted elections in twenty years. This development represents a big step toward establishing an enduring democracy in Nigeria. President Olusegun Obasanjo won with 62 percent of the votes to Muhammed Buhari's 32 percent; other candidates had 6 percent, including

Odumegu Ojukwu, the former seccessionist leader of Biafra (1967–1970). Olusegun Obasanjo's PDP captured most of the governorships, along with supermajorities in the House and Senate. Election observers reported significant irregularities, concluding that they "severely limited and even denied in some parts of the country the ability of Nigerians to express their franchise" during both the legislative and presidential elections. The National Democratic Institute's observation report continued: "The cumulative effect of these problems seriously compromised the integrity of the elections where they occurred." Despite these flaws, Obasanjo was widely accepted as the winner, and the international community interpreted the elections as a step toward democracy.

Umar Musa Yar'Adua, the governor of Katsina State, emerged as the winner of the 2007 presidential contest. The election marked the first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power in the country's history, although power remained firmly entrenched in the ruling PDP. Yar'Adua received nearly 70 percent of the votes, while the party that took second place received less than 13 percent. International observers and domestic monitors criticized election preparations and the conduct of voting even more harshly than in 2003. The major national civil-society coalition, the Transition Monitoring Group, called for the results to be canceled outright. The EU's Observation Mission said that the "State and Federal elections have fallen far short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections." A report issued immediately after the elections noted "significant evidence of fraud" and concluded that the elections "cannot be considered to have been credible." The defeated vice president, Atiku Abubakar, and other candidates challenged the 2007 election results, which the courts did not formally resolve for over a year. Election tribunals sifted through hundreds of other results, overturning



Goodluck Jonathan Launches His Campaign

Goodluck Jonathan's political intentions were unclear during his term as "Acting President" and even after he was sworn in as president. He formally declared his candidacy in September 2010 at this rally.

Afolabi Sotunde/Reuters/Landov

several key governorships, further confirming the fundamental problems with the voting process. The election also marked the return of power to the North, since Yar'Adua came from a traditional Hausa-Fulani background. When Yar'Adua passed away in 2010, many Northerners were uncomfortable with the presidency reverting to the vice president, who was from the South. This tension was captured—and often critiqued—in many spirited newspaper editorials and cartoons, reflecting the central importance of political balancing between the Northern and Southern regions.

POLICY FORMATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

In comparing Nigeria's various civilian and military regimes, the ultimate question must always be their *performance*. This is certainly the "bottom line" for Nigerians, whose support of these various regimes is based on the quality of life they experience under them. This section thus focuses on the *decisions* governments have made, particularly in raising revenues, dispersing funds, and implementing programs. It will also discuss some background issues, such as planning and conducting the federal census, the results of which underlie all policy. Finally, it presents the constraints imposed on Nigerian decision-making by the outside world, particularly in the World Bank–supported **Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)**. Dealing with "SAP," as the economic restructuring program is commonly called, leads us back to the discussion of environment with which we began. Policy relating to Nigeria's international economic situation has responded to initiatives from other African countries, world powers, international organizations, and multinational firms. Here we consider the critical constraints that the world economy puts on the choices available to a Third World country, even one as large and resource-rich as Nigeria.

Extractive Performance

Nigeria inherited a fiscal system in 1960 that depended mainly on taxes on international trade. Indirect taxes provided 64 percent of total revenues, direct taxes only 16.5 percent, and other revenues 19 percent. The colonial system had developed a revenue system that operated through agricultural marketing boards. Ostensibly created to provide price stability to farmers, marketing boards accumulated surplus funds in good years that tempted government officials with development projects in mind. Peasant farmers also paid direct taxes, of which they were much more aware. Widespread tax riots broke out in the Western Region in 1968 and 1969, a period during which tax collection was halted, eventually to be replaced by a lower, much simpler flat tax.

In the First Republic and under the Gowon administration, the state governments collected the personal income, sales, and poll taxes. Tax collections generally declined as new states were created, without fiscal institutions in place and with smaller tax bases than the old regions. At the same time, rising oil revenues strengthened the fiscal position of the federal government (and those states with oil fields).

Oil production began in earnest in 1958. At independence, the federal government was collecting modest royalties from private Western oil companies. In 1971, within a few years of the Biafran civil war, Nigeria joined the **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** and also formed the **Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNOC)** to participate directly in oil production. NNOC acquired a one-third interest in the AGIP Company and Elf, both French-controlled firms. At the time, this was seen as retribution for French support of the Biafran separatist effort, but within a few years, the government had acquired a majority interest in all oil-production activities. The NNOC was merged with the Ministry of Petroleum Resources to form the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. Over this same period (the mid-1970s), petroleum prices had risen dramatically, from $3.30 per barrel in 1972 to $21.60 in 1979. Thus, the sale of crude oil directly by the Nigerian federal government to multinational oil companies came to provide the greater part of federal government revenues and, through the federal system, of state and local revenues as well.

In a pattern typical of Third World oil-exporting countries, Nigeria today depends almost entirely on the revenues from this single industry. Since there is no indication that the world's appetite for oil will diminish in the near future, it is a reliable revenue source that substitutes for the various forms of taxes

on private income. Nigerians are fortunate that they have not been directly burdened with the cost of supporting government programs; they are perhaps unfortunate that governments, especially authoritarian military regimes, can tap this vast wealth without risking the wrath of taxpayers. The exceptions to this general rule are enterprises and property owners in Lagos State, which has a large share of the country's modern enterprises and generates over half its revenues, and the Ogonis and other peoples who inhabit the oil-producing region, who do not feel they benefit from the natural resources of their home area.

Given their control of vast petroleum reserves, Nigerian regimes have not actively sought large amounts of direct foreign aid. They have, however, used the country's oil reserves as the collateral for massive borrowing from foreign and international banks in the 1970s and 1980s. The funds supported massive capital expenditures and gave Nigeria an enormous external debt, which rose from 10 percent of GNP to 140.5 percent between 1980 and 1995. Oil wealth did not bring the country financial independence; to the contrary, the debt gave international lenders a predominant voice in Nigeria's allocation of public funding. With the debt payoffs in 2005 and 2006, Nigeria will now be substantially insulated from such outside influences.

Distributive Performance

As a producer of high-grade petroleum, Nigeria has an unusually great potential to move out of the ranks of the less developed into the middle-income nations. In the 1970s, impressive projects, such as road development and irrigation projects, as well as the launching of Abuja as the nation's capital, were signs that potential might become reality.

Unfortunately, political corruption grew apace and probably began consuming a higher proportion of national wealth than in the pre-oil period. When oil revenues suddenly began their decline in 1980, "corruption and mismanagement prevented any kind of disciplined adjustment," and "the economy was plunged into depression and mounting international indebtedness. . . . Sucked dry of revenue by the corruption, mismanagement, and recession, state governments became unable to pay teachers and civil servants or to purchase drugs for hospitals, and many services (including schools) were shut down by strikes."[35]

In spite of the country's raw material advantage, Nigerians have not seen their lives improve in recent years. The UN Development Program publishes the Human Development Index based on three factors: life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, and per capita GDP (see Table 13.4). Nigeria has a rank of 158 out of 182 countries on the HDI and a rank of 141 on per capita GDP alone. It is not surprising to find the less-developed countries low on these listings. However, per capita GDP is a good measure of distributive potential. Thus, the comparison of per capita GDP and the HDI ratings can be an indicator of how well a country has done for its people compared with other countries with similar capacity. Because Nigeria's per capita GDP ranking is much higher than its HDI ranking, this suggests that the Nigerian advantage in oil revenue has had little noticeable impact on the overall quality of life.

Budgetary priorities are important in analyzing distributive performance. In the case of a country ruled by the military for most of the last decade, one might expect that military expenditures would loom especially large. In Nigeria, the military budget increased from $234 million to nearly $1.5 billion between 2000 and 2009. However, there are believed to be significant additional military expenditures that are not publicly reported. Extremely modest in size at independence, Nigeria's armed forces grew to 250,000 at the height of the Biafran civil war. Then the Gowon regime began a program of gradual attrition that reduced the force to about 100,000 in the mid-1980s. Further shrinkage since then has resulted in a total force of 85,000. This still leaves Nigeria a major military force, meaning that firm civilian control of the military remains central to the stabilizing of the country's nascent democracy. In a continental context, Nigeria's army remains one of the more professional. As we will discuss later, Nigerian leaders have used this military strength to maintain a high profile in West Africa.

Nigerians have a great enthusiasm for education, and parties and regimes have promised universal access to it. Some progress can be noted. In 1964, Nigeria ranked twenty-ninth among African nations in enrollments, with 5 percent of the school-aged population in primary school; it was nineteenth in secondary enrollments, with 5 percent of the appropriate age group in

Nigeria's Ranking on Per Capita GDP and Human Development Index (HDI) **TABLE 13.4**

Even with its tremendous oil wealth, Nigeria still ranks among the lesser developed countries.

Country	Life Expectancy at Birth, 2007	Adult Literacy Rate (%) 2007	Real GDP per Capita 2007*	Human HDI 2007
United States	79.1	99.0	45,592	0.956
Japan	82.7	99.0	33,632	0.960
Britain	79.3	99.0	35,130	0.947
Mexico	76.0	92.8	14,104	0.854
Botswana	53.4	82.9	13,604	0.694
Indonesia	70.5	92.0	3,712	0.734
China	72.9	93.3	5,383	0.772
Nigeria	47.8	72.0	1,969	0.511
Benin	61.0	40.5	1,312	0.492

*Note: These figures are in U.S. dollars converted at purchasing power parity (PPP) rates.
Source: United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2009.*

school. Ten years later, 24 percent of the school-age population was in school, and Nigeria was fifteenth in Africa on this measure. Primary enrollments stood at about 64 percent in 2006; youth literacy was 87 percent in 2008, up from 65 percent in 1985.

The Nigerian government's performance in the area of health has been mediocre overall. Nigeria's infant mortality rate has dropped from 185 in 1960 to 139 in 1970, 114 in 1980, and 96 in 2008. However, nearly one-fifth of all children die before reaching the age of five, a figure that improved only slightly between 2000 and 2007. These statistics reflect an unfortunate and perhaps surprising trend, mirrored in old age: In 2007, life expectancy was only forty-eight years, showing surprisingly little improvement over earlier data. The government has recently poured more resources into the health sector. In fact, Nigeria ranked fifteenth globally for spending on health in 2006 in per capita terms adjusted for PPP, and this may translate into progress in the health sector.

With petroleum firmly established as the major source of foreign exchange in Nigeria, and with that industry under government control, the distribution of wealth is heavily influenced by policy decisions. Private consumption surged as oil revenues multiplied in the 1970s, about 8 percent per year. This average figure conceals tremendous increases in wealth at the top; the lower 40 percent of the population benefited very little. Government expenditure grew at an even greater rate than private consumption, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of GDP.[36] This aspect of expenditure, of course, includes sums lost in corrupt payments to individuals. Nigeria should have reaped another windfall during the Gulf War, as petroleum prices temporarily shot up, but increased revenues never showed up in national accounts. In 1994, economist Pius Okigbo examined the books of the Central Bank of Nigeria; he reported (as he left the country) that $12.6 billion was not accounted for. The skimming of oil profits had indeed reached astronomical proportions.

Income distribution is also affected by inflation, which followed from the rapid increase in the money supply during the 1970s oil boom and continued apace later on, as governments followed a time-honored approach to balancing budgets when revenues decline: They printed money. The result was continuous inflation, a problem that became especially serious in the 1990s, as shown in Figure 13.7. The case study (see Box 13.3) shows the effect of this inflation on individual income. Consumer inflation peaked at 75 percent in 1995. Since the return of democracy, it has

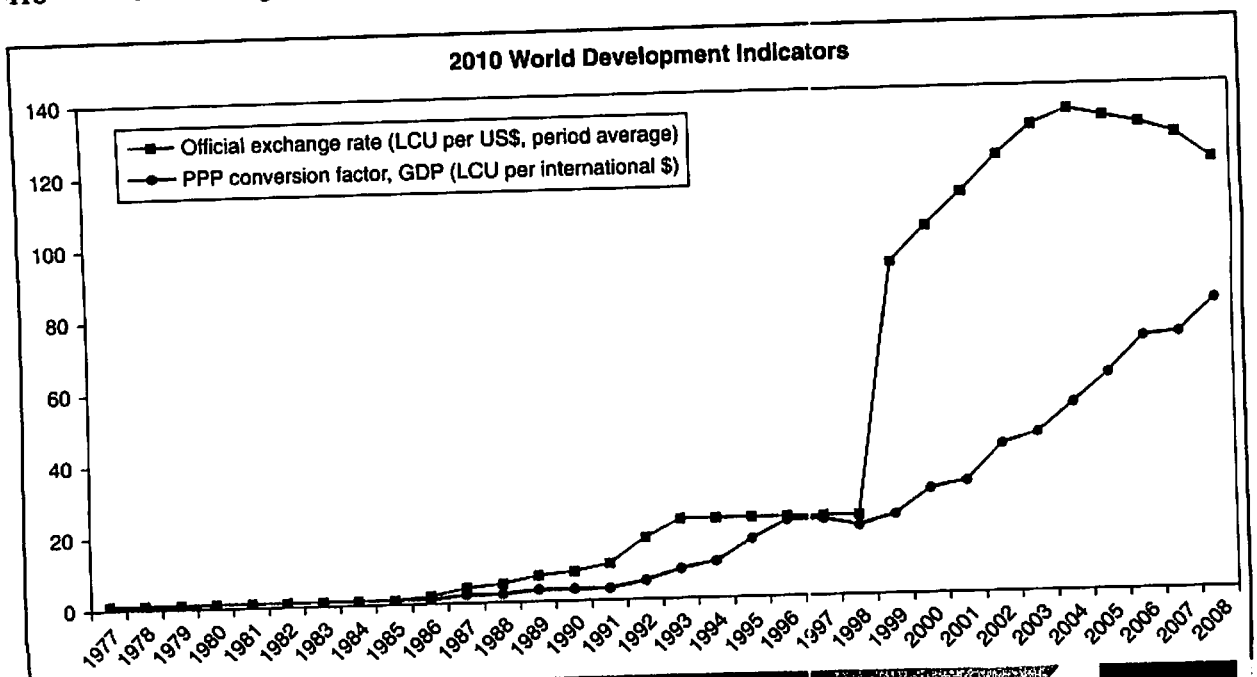


FIGURE 13.7

Naira Exchange Rate

Whereas a powerful naira once made foreign imports cheap for Nigerians, its value has declined in recent decades.

fluctuated but has hovered in the low teens since 2007. This is still a great financial burden for most people in a poor country.

Governments have attempted to deal with inflation by enforcing an official exchange rate for the naira, Nigeria's national currency. The result was a huge divergence in official and market exchange rates, causing chaos in the financial system. That chaos dried up investments and stimulated corruption, since anyone with access to foreign exchange at the official rate

BOX 13.3

The Effects of Inflation

A young graduate with a new doctoral degree won a position as an instructor at a Nigerian university in 1977. His salary and benefits totaled 6,000 naira per year. At that time, one naira equaled $1.50, so his salary was the equivalent of $9,000—modest by industrial-world standards but very comfortable in Nigeria. Twenty years later, this same man achieved the rank of full professor, at a salary of 51,000 naira per year, with fringe benefits raising his total annual compensation to 90,000 naira. However, at the parallel market exchange rate of 80 naira to the dollar, his salary was the equivalent of $1,125 per year, a figure not taking into account the effect of inflation on the purchasing power of the dollar since 1977. In 1998, a national review of faculty salaries increased the professor's salary to the equivalent of $5,000 per year. This discussion implies that salaries are regularly paid. However, in early 1999, the Abubakar government was in such financial straits that it failed to provide salary payments at all. In 2000, President Obasanjo improved the workers' pay generally and moved university teachers' pay to 130,000 naira per month, the equivalent of $1,000 per month. He did this to discourage brain-drain in Nigeria and to promote high-level productivity in all sectors.

can then sell the foreign currency "on the street" for a large profit. Since 1999, the government has reduced its role in stabilizing the currency, allowing the value of the naira to be largely determined by forces of supply and demand.

As a policy issue, distribution in a large country such as Nigeria is also seen as a geographic question, not just one of policy priorities. Nigerians have a fondness for referring to the national budget as the "national cake," and they see state and local governments as the major recipients of "slices." The federal government now spends between two-thirds and three-fourths of public monies and also has great control over how the money distributed to state and local governments will be spent. On the contentious question of how to distribute resources as the number of states and local governments expanded, governments settled on relatively straightforward formulas, a combination of equality (across-the-board distributions to all states) and population. States other than Lagos now depend on the federal Revenue Allocation System (RAS) for 70 to 90 percent of their recurrent revenues. In order to fund local governments, the RAS was extended to cover them directly in 1981. Beginning in 1982, federal revenues were shared according to set percentages among the three levels of government. Given the set formulas in the RAS, it is not surprising that regions and localities strive for statehood and local autonomy and that population counts loom large as a political issue.

Dealing with Debt and Structural Adjustment

Nigeria's recent debt repayments are historic—both for the country and for Africa. It solves a problem that began with fiscal indiscipline during the 1970s oil boom, when the government paid insufficient attention to the lack of productivity of public spending. Much of the money was applied to an increase in welfare expenditures, to developing an unprofitable steel industry, and to building the new capital at Abuja. Late in the 1970s, commodity prices fell, while oil prices remained high. African governments borrowed at an even faster pace, and the continent's total indebtedness increased. As African governments became unable to make debt payments, international financial institutions, principally the IMF and the World Bank, were called in to monitor a restructuring and rescheduling of the debt. Nigeria's total indebtedness continued to increase in the 1980s. By 1991, it represented 257 percent of the annual value of the country's exports and 109 percent of GNP. The annual cost of servicing the debt consumed 25 percent of the value of exports (up from 4 percent in 1980); the weight of this burden almost ensured that the debt would continue to grow. Throughout the past decade, the question of how to deal with the external debt has been a principal focus of political discussion in Nigeria.

The debt problem that began under military rule became much more acute during the Second Republic (1979–1983). The Buhari regime approached the IMF for relief in the form of new loans and more favorable repayment terms, but it rejected the severe conditions the IMF attached to its help. The naira would have to be devalued, trade restrictions would have to be dropped, and subsidies for domestic gasoline consumption ended. These and similar measures have been the issues involved in Nigeria's SAP. It was clear to the military leadership that such measures would be extremely unpopular with the Nigerian public and would lead to outbursts of political violence. When Ibrahim Babangida seized power in 1985, he opened a "national debate" on the issue. He claimed to fashion a Nigerian version of structural adjustment (while at the same time negotiating with the IMF). As the program's austerity measures began to be felt, the SAP became extremely unpopular. In his parallel program of moving back toward civilian rule, Babangida forbade candidates to criticize the program, but at the same time, he eased off on the necessary austerity measures. The net result was that, although Nigerians were suffering from the country's poor position in international finance, the SAP did not reduce the debt or reform the financial system.

Rather than allow the naira to float as urged by the IMF, the Abacha regime fixed an official exchange rate. In 1995, the exchange rate was partially opened to market forces, but this neither stabilized the economy nor satisfied the international sector. The total external debt reached almost $8 billion, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation owed over $1 billion to its foreign partners. In responding to gasoline shortages, however, the government lowered the subsidy on petroleum products. However, the sharp price rise seemed one more hardship to endure for the poor,

who were already suffering from rapid inflation. The discomfort increased when extreme fuel shortages reappeared in 1997, bringing long lines at official stations and in turn prompting a black-market rate of nearly seven times the normal price per liter.

There could hardly be a more dramatic demonstration of policy failure: a country rich in petroleum incapable of providing its citizens with fuel. By late 1998, disruptions in the oil-producing areas were having a serious impact on Nigerian oil production, a situation that complicated the inauguration of a stable civilian government. After President Obasanjo was inaugurated in May 1999, he tried to bring calm to the situation by voiding all contracts awarded in the six months prior to his administration. Since then, each attempt by the government to raise the price at the pump has been met with widespread protests and long lines at filling stations. Efforts to reduce government spending by eliminating the petroleum subsidy for domestic consumption remain highly controversial, because those efforts impact not only the cost of public transportation but also food and other daily essentials. For this reason, an academic study in 2010 concluded: "Virtually every fuel price hike that was announced by the government has been massively unpopular and has in almost all cases been resisted by most Nigerians."[37]

Regulative Performance

At independence in 1960, the Nigeria Police Force was essentially regionalized. Because the police were frequently mobilized for political purposes during the rough-and-tumble politics of the 1960s, the military regime decided to consolidate the police function at the national level. It is this national police force that now enforces traffic laws and other government legislation. However, it is often still the case that "law and order" is maintained in individual communities—especially in rural areas—through traditional institutions and norms. Traditional leaders not only prevent deviant behavior but also take responsibility for the welfare of the "strangers" who, in accord with accepted procedures, have taken up residence in their communities.

Although Nigeria was under military rule from 1983 to 1999, the average citizen has not felt oppressed by an authoritarian state. That citizen is aware of the police presence at checkpoints along the country's highways, but fear of authority does not restrict citizen's actions to a significant degree. As in most Third World countries, there simply are not the resources available to the Nigerian government to keep close tabs on its large population.

Nigeria's judicial system remains vigorous, and until the advent of Abacha's period in office, it had been surprisingly diligent at following a rule of law through the various informally constituted regimes. Still, military regimes intruded on that rule of law. The regime imposed the State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree in 1984, which allows detention without trial of those "suspected of posing a threat to national security." State officials seemed to intervene with increasing frequency into the judicial system where political questions are involved. Though Nigeria's democratic regime appears committed to ending such arbitrary exercises of authority, detention without trial remains a serious problem due to inefficiencies, inadequate resources, and few public defenders. Amnesty International reported in 2008 that nearly two-thirds of Nigeria's inmates were being held without trial—often in the most miserable prison conditions.

The Census Issue One policy issue, the census, has overshadowed all the others since independence, because the outcome often determines how political goods will be distributed. A minor policy issue in some countries, in Nigeria, the population counts have been fraught with conflict. In a country where federal subsidies make up the lion's share of budgetary allocations at all levels, the distribution of population directly affects the distribution of resources.

> After a false start in 1962, a national census was conducted in 1963. It reported a total population of 55.6 million, making Nigeria the tenth-largest country in the world. However, it found a majority of that population (30 million) to be in the North, a finding that was then, and since then, questioned by Southern Nigerians, who maintain that a flyover or drive through the North and South will easily demonstrate that population densities are higher in the latter (although it is also true that the area of the North is much larger). Nevertheless, the 1963 census, or straight-line projections from it, remained the official source of population statistics for almost twenty years. Even in 1973, when General Gowon's regime placed the integrity of the military on the line by having unarmed soldiers accompany enumerators, people rejected the results. In particular,

the figures inspired profound anxiety among Southerners, who alleged overcounting in the North. Fears of regional domination are never too distant within Nigeria.[38]

After almost two additional decades of continued reliance on the 1963 figures, the Babangida government commissioned a new census to be conducted by a National Population Commission. Following methodical pretesting and sampling, a census in November 1991 put the country's total population at 88.5 million, a substantial downward revision from estimates that had exceeded 100 million. According to this census, the highest population concentrations were in the states of Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto in the North, and Lagos, Oyo, and Rivers in the South. The census caused new consternation in the South, where feelings ran high that the figures had again been "cooked" to favor the North. As mentioned earlier, the recent 2006 census effort fared only slightly better.

Conclusions on Performance

While our judgments on performance should be nuanced, given the complexity of Nigeria's political environment and the problems it faces, an overall conclusion emerges unfailingly. In comparison with other countries with equivalent natural resources, skilled human resources, and size, Nigeria has not done well.

That outcome caused Chinua Achebe to write *The Problem with Nigeria*, in which he concluded that the "problem" was leadership. Until Nigerians can settle on a constitutional arrangement that provides responsive leadership from the national to the local levels, the country will continue to fall far short of its potential. Although the Second Republic failed, it was a significant improvement over the first in reining in the politicization of ethnicity. There was reason to be optimistic that the Constitution developed in the later years of the Babangida regime would introduce another increment of correction. Although Abubakar was able to move the country to civilian rule, his decision to base the transition on the poorly articulated Constitution drafted under Abacha in 1995 did not inspire confidence in most Nigerians that the new regime would be based on the rule of law. Democracy cannot be "delivered" by a military regime; indeed, further progress in democratization will depend on the formation and maintenance of a coalition with the strength to force the country in that direction.

A fatal flaw in political culture may have developed in Nigeria since independence, and it is part of the "curse of oil": Public policy is often seen in Nigeria as the "national cake," and the unfortunate analogy suggests that "they"—the government—bake a cake that is distributed in slices sized to match the political influence of various constituencies. At least at the mass level, constituencies are defined in ethnic terms, and politics becomes a competition among ethnic groups for larger slices of cake. The analogy could of course be used to describe the politics of many countries, but not to the extreme degree to which it applies in Nigeria. There, communities look to the government to provide for them. A successful Nigerian constitution not only must provide responsive leaders, it also must shift responsibility so that extractive and distributive performance come from the same budget, and so that there is some relationship between the amounts one pays into and receives from the public sector. Public goals based on community effort were the norm in most Nigerian traditions; that norm must be rediscovered.

NIGERIA IN AFRICA AND IN THE WORLD

Nigeria has the population and resource base to be a regional power, and it has stimulated hopes and fears among its neighbors concerning that potential. Under the First Republic (1960–1966), Nigeria generally focused inward and played a rather minor role in the continent's turbulent politics. But then came the civil war over Biafra in 1966; Nigeria's army grew from 10,000 to 250,000, the country's oil potential became known, and, as we have seen earlier, world powers took an interest in the war's outcome.

Some West African governments offered clear support to Biafra, a support Nigerians suspected grew from a desire to see their country divided up and thus reduced in influence. This was thought especially to be the case with Cote d'Ivoire (the Ivory Coast) under President Houphouet-Boigny, who favored Biafra with French support. When the war ended, relations among these countries were, as might be expected, strained.

Subsequently, Nigeria under General Gowon took a leading role in establishing, in 1975, the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, hoping to bring Nigeria closer to other West African countries while at the same time countering French influence in the region. The Ivoirian government had taken the lead in forming the Economic Community of West Africa, an exclusively French-speaking organization, and was wary of the predominant position that Nigeria might play in a wider regional organization. But Nigeria was successful in first approaching Togo, Benin, and Niger, the French-speaking countries with which it already had close ties, offering attractive economic inducements that included special petroleum prices. With this group in hand, Nigerian diplomats cast their net wider, and the representatives of sixteen West African governments signed the Treaty of Lagos. The ECOWAS treaty specified a two-year phase during which intracommunity tariffs would be frozen, followed by an eight-year period that would end with the removal of duties on trade among members. Finally, a common external tariff wall would be created.

Thus, West Africa under Nigerian leadership is partaking in the worldwide movement toward free-trade zones. As elsewhere, however, progress has been difficult. Ten years after its creation, ECOWAS reported that it had not made "tangible progress in practical terms," and by 1989, the member governments were $80 million in arrears in their contributions to the organization. The proportion of intracommunity trade in the member countries' total international trade has not changed since 1980. At the same time, ECOWAS has had better success as a regional political organization, especially in mediating disputes among member states, and in 1990, a Nigerian proposal was approved that created a standing mediation committee.[39]

Because of its prominence on the continent, Nigeria's international financial problems have been especially embarrassing. Forced along with other African nations to accept stringent structural adjustment planning from the World Bank and IMF, Nigeria has reacted with frustration and anger. It has led the region's governments in their critique of international lenders' policies, hosting the meeting that led to the Lagos Plan of Action as a response to international debt-structuring proposals. When the Obasanjo administration renegotiated and paid off most of the country's debts, this move was seen as liberating the country from foreign pressures, allowing Nigeria to assume its rightful place as a giant on the continent. Sub-Saharan Africa's great powers—Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa—increasingly believe that Africa deserves permanent representation on the UN Security Council.

Of all the world powers, France plays the most prominent role in West Africa. Although the French interest focuses on its own former colonies, in recent years, the French have come to believe that Nigeria's size and potential wealth should not be overlooked, and France actively promotes closer economic ties with Nigeria, a move that upsets Nigeria's French-speaking neighbors. The Western powers, especially Britain and the United States, were openly critical of Nigeria's military rulers and supported the country's return to civilian rule, especially during the Babangida regime and once again with Abdulsalami Abubakar. The United States and Britain condemned Babangida's 1993 election annulment, and they suspended aid as a result. However, this relationship was not important enough to Nigeria's rulers to modify their behavior. Presumably, an embargo on purchases of Nigerian oil would have had that effect, but the industrial nations' governments did not have the will to take such a drastic step. Most observers saw the Abacha regime's treatment of dissenters as a calculation of how far it could silence opposition without provoking more severe international sanctions. In contrast, many Nigerians were critical of what they saw as the West's premature zeal over actions that until then were only *promised* by Abubakar in 1998. Western support returned with enthusiasm upon Obasanjo's inauguration.

Nigeria has played a prominent role in the region through commitment of its substantial military capacity, notably in supplying the leadership and the majority of troops for the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the ECOWAS-sponsored peacekeeping force in Liberia. That operation was viewed as a success, with armed conflict halted and elections held. Nigerian troops have also been stationed in Sierra Leone to protect that country's borders from incursions of Liberian rebels, and have confronted a Sierra Leonean military junta that overthrew an elected civilian government, an action more than a bit ironic given the origins of the Abacha regime. Nigeria has participated in

wider-ranging UN operations in Lebanon, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia.

Nigeria moved beyond peacekeeping during the Obasanjo and Yar'Adua administrations, demonstrating regional leadership on a variety of other foreign-policy issues. The Chief of Defense Staff affirmed the military's respect for civilian authority in 2010 and then went on to note that the military needs to be "more proactive and responsive to nonmilitary stimuli and developments."[40] This is reflected on issues such as drug and human trafficking, which led the government to establish new agencies to confront these growing transnational criminal networks. Nigeria recognizes that some of these security problems originate within its borders, too, for example as international ties of some militant groups have been exposed. The United States is very concerned both about the incubation of Islamic extremism in the North and threats to the flow of oil in the Niger Delta. Nigeria often prefers to treat such challenges as domestic problems first, although ECOWAS is becoming increasingly important to its foreign policy and as a lens for formulating a regional understanding of terrorism and other security threats.[41]

PROSPECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria's political and economic setbacks do not equal the tragedies of Rwanda, Sudan, or Somalia, but the frustrations are nonetheless deep and enduring. Billions of desperately needed naira have been wasted, a few people have grown rich at the expense of the poor, and accountability in government has proved highly elusive. Poet Tanure Ojaide captured this frustration in "No Longer Our Own Country," written in 1986:

> We have lost it,
> the country we were born into.
> We can now sing dirges
> of that commonwealth of yesterday—
> we live in a country
> that is no longer our own.[42]

In much of the world, the attraction of democracy has been its association with prosperity. Like other people, Nigerians are more interested in the outcome of the political process than in the process itself. Calls for better leadership and the welcome initially extended to some military regimes suggest that Nigerians' highest priorities are economic security and the rule of law. If these could be provided by generals, the country would probably accept an authoritarian system. However, at least since Plato we have known that benevolent authoritarianism is an elusive concept. Western democracies have developed on the premise that democracy is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for accountable leadership. And Nigerians have had enough opportunities to compare the results of military rule with their expectations that a majority of them are ready for another try at elective civilian rule. Perhaps another constitutional correction will be enough to usher in the long-term political stability for which they have hoped.

This discussion highlighted so many different problems (alongside a few hopeful solutions) that the reader might feel overwhelmed by the sheer complexity of the Nigerian case. There are a handful of enduring questions, though, that characterize Nigeria's past, present, and future challenges. First is the relationship between the state and the economy. "Stable democracy is associated with an autonomous, indigenous bourgeoisie, and inversely associated with extensive state control over the economy," writes Larry Diamond. "In Nigeria, and throughout much of Africa, the swollen state has turned politics into a zero-sum game in which everything of value is at stake in an election, and hence candidates, communities, and parties feel compelled to win at any cost."[43]

Oil wealth exacerbates the problem because so much money accrues to the central government, giving federal politicians vast resources for patronage. Part of the answer appears to be the emergence of a vigorous private sector capable of counterbalancing political power emanating from the capital. Nigerians have a reputation for entrepreneurship around the world, and the recent economic development of Lagos gives us some idea of what such a political counterweight might look like—especially since it is one of the few states controlled by a governor from the opposition party. Another part of the answer lies in creating an environment conducive to such investment, where rule of law protects the political rights of citizens and entrepreneurs do not have to spend huge portions of capital on generating power or surviving poor roads.

A second and related problem stems from the exploitative and destructive nature of oil itself. The vast environmental destruction throughout the Niger Delta gave rise to the Ogoni movement and, later, more militant groups such as MEND. Unlike the

Biafran secession movement, their rallying cry has often been "resource control," rather than demands for political independence. Even though Goodluck Jonathan is the first president to come from the Niger Delta region, he must reassure the area that his policy promises are more credible than the years of betrayal and neglect these communities have suffered. A broad amnesty plan brought nearly 20,000 militants out of the swamps and into a rehabilitation and reintegration process in 2009 and 2010, but such progress may fall by the wayside absent sustained political commitment and massive public investment in the region. As a technical committee convened by the federal government in 2008 concluded, the region does not necessarily need new ideas or government agencies; it merely needs the government to implement the critical recommendations of seventeen previous committees on the Niger Delta.

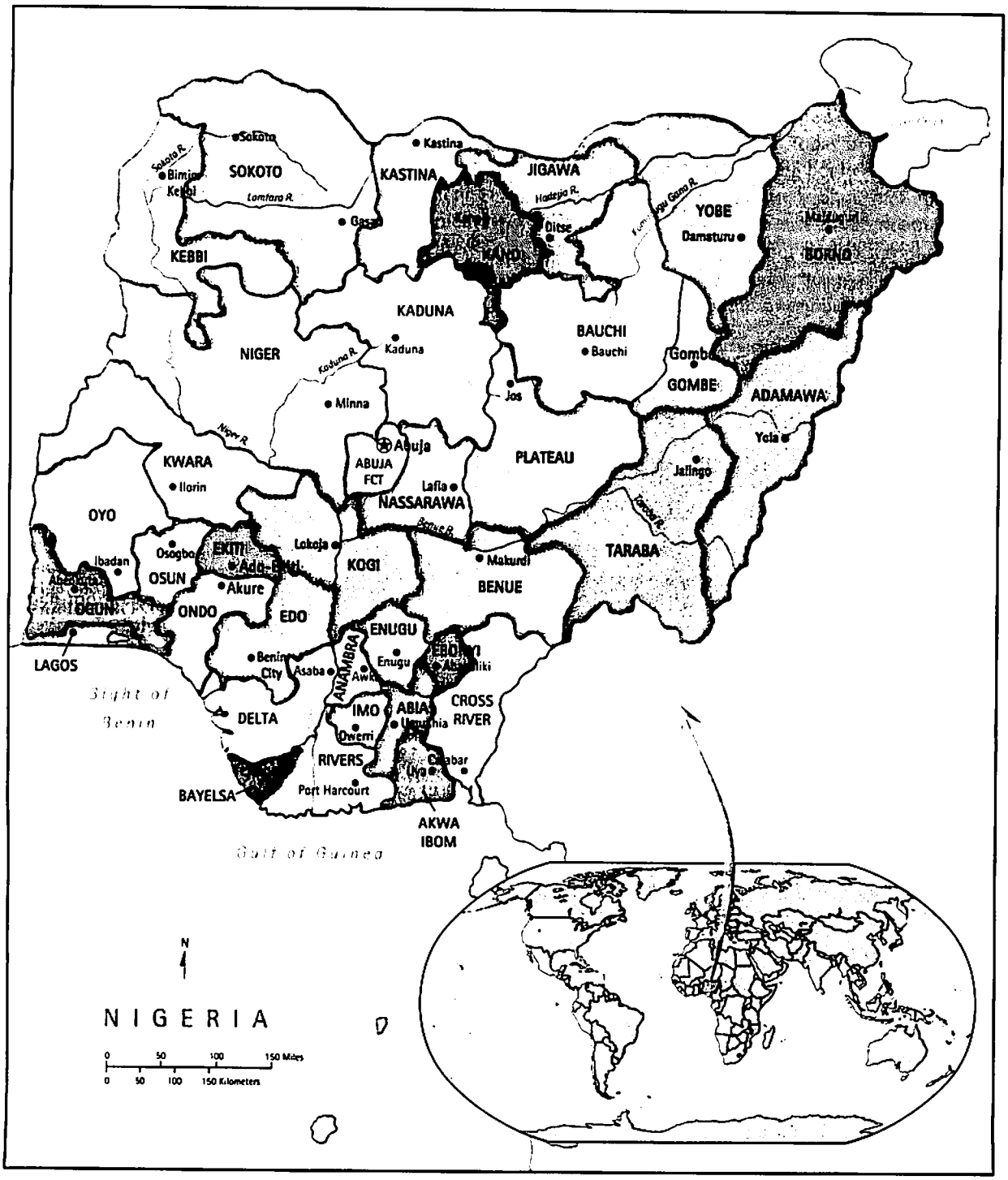
Finally, representation remains a central debate within the political structure and across society. Born of an awkward amalgamation of two distinct colonies a century ago, Nigeria's two regions may not always exist in harmony, but they do create a political equilibrium that has helped the country survive. After eight years of a Southern president, there was a broad national consensus in 2007 that there must be a "power shift" to the North. Tensions over succession after Yar'Adua fell ill in late 2009, however, highlighted how quickly such traditions become complicated by unforeseen circumstances, as many Northern elites protested a vice president from the South (Jonathan) taking the helm of government. Whether Nigerians will continue to insist on power shift, federal character, and other efforts to balance ethno-regional identities remains a pressing question. Beyond those fundamental distinctions between North and South, the country's system of zones, states, and local governments adds progressively complex layers of representation, often at the core of civil tensions. Nigerians have a wealth of ideas, abundant resources, and a rich history on which to draw in formulating solutions for Africa's twenty-first-century giant.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- What factors—cultural, historical, or otherwise—explain Nigeria's ongoing underdevelopment despite its tremendous oil wealth?
- After so many failed democratic transitions, why did the one in 1999 succeed?
- How have Nigeria's constitutional structures and political traditions attempted to deal with the country's tremendous ethnic and religious diversity?
- What were some of the lasting influences of colonialism on politics after independence?
- What are some examples of the informal nature of politics in Nigeria, where political recruitment and interest aggregation often take place?
- Why has civil conflict remained such a problem, even though support for democracy appears to be strong?

KEY TERMS

Abacha, Sani
Abuja
Azikiwe, Nnamdi
Babangida, Ibrahim
Biafra
clientelism
Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
federal character
Fulani
Hausa
Hausa-Fulani
Igbo (Ibo)
Independent National Election Commission (INEC)
Jonathan, Goodluck
June 12, 1993
Kaduna Mafia
Lagos
Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)
naira
National Union of Petroleum and Gas Workers (NUPENG)
neocolonial
Nigerian National Oil Corporation (NNOC)
Obasanjo, Olusegun
Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
patron–client network
People's Democratic Party (PDP)
Saro-Wiwa, Ken
Structural Adjustment Program (SAP)
Yar'Adua, Umar Musa
Yoruba


Sokoto
Kastina
Bimin Kebbi
Sokoto R.
Lamtara R.
SOKOTO
KASTINA
JIGAWA
Hadejia R.
Gashua
Dutse
KANO
Yobe R.
YOBE
Damaturu
Maiduguri
BORNO
KEBBI
KADUNA
BAUCHI
Bauchi
Gombe
GOMBE
ADAMAWA
NIGER
Kaduna R.
Kaduna
Jos
Minna
Niger R.
Abuja
ABUJA FCT
PLATEAU
Yola
KWARA
Ilorin
Lafia
NASSARAWA
Jalingo
Benue R.
OYO
Ibadan
Osogbo
EKITI
Ado-Ekiti
Lokoja
KOGI
Makurdi
TARABA
OSUN
Akure
BENUE
OGUN
ONDO
EDO
ENUGU
Benin City
Asaba
Awka
Enugu
ANAMBRA
EBONYI
Abakaliki
LAGOS
Bight of Benin
DELTA
IMO
ABIA
Umuahia
CROSS RIVER
Owerri
RIVERS
Calabar
Uyo
Port Harcourt
BAYELSA
AKWA IBOM
Gulf of Guinea
N
NIGERIA
0 50 100 150 Miles
0 50 100 150 Kilometers

Women (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 201–11, "Muslim Women's Games."

61. Asked whether she would ever "want to throw off the head scarf in public," she answered: "Do you want to issue me my death sentence?" *International Herald Tribune*, April 3, 2003, 2.

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