

SHEHU OTHMAN AND GAVIN WILLIAMS

Politics, Power and Democracy in Nigeria

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About the Authors

Shehu Othman obtained degrees from the Universities of Sussex and Oxford and is currently Research Associate at the International Development Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford. He has published a number of articles in books and journals, including 'Classes, Crises and Coup: the Demise of Shagari's Regime', *African Affairs*, 83, 333 (1984); 'Les relations internationales globales du Nigeria' in D. C. Bach, J. Egg and J. Philippe (eds), *Le Nigeria: un Pouvoir en Puissance* (Karthala, Paris, 1988); and 'Nigeria: "Power for Profit" Class, Corporatism and Factionalism in the Military' in D. Cruise O'Brien, J. Dunn and R. Rathbone (eds), *Contemporary West African States* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Gavin Williams graduated from the Universities of Stellenbosch and Oxford, and is a Fellow of St Peter's College, Oxford. He has published numerous articles on the politics and political economy of Nigeria and on the World Bank, states and agriculture in Africa and contributed to and edited *Sociology and Development*, ed. with E de Kadt (Tavistock, London, 1974); *Nigeria: Economy and Society* (Rex Collings, London 1976); *Rural Development in Tropical Africa*, ed. with Judith Heyer and Pepe Roberts (Macmillan, London, 1981), and *Sociology of Developing Societies: Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. with Chris Allen, (Macmillan, London, 1982). He is the author of *State and Society in Nigeria* (Afrografika, Idanre, 1980) and *The Nigerian Civil War*, Open University Case Study, 1982. He is an editor of the Journal of Historical Sociology, the Review Of African Political Economy, and Oxford Development Studies.

Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, England.
Fax: (01865) 27 36 07, E-mail: Shehu.Othman@qeh.ox.ac.uk

St Peter's College, University of Oxford, Oxford OX1 2DL, England.
Fax: (01865) 27 88 55, E-mail: Gavin.Williams@spc.ox.ac.uk

*Politics, Power and Democracy in Nigeria*¹

SHEHU OTHMAN AND GAVIN WILLIAMS

Since independence from Britain in October 1960, Nigeria has been governed by military rulers for more than quarter of a century and by civilians for only nine and a half years. Democratic constitutions, of both parliamentary and presidential forms, have failed to establish a credible framework for electoral competition, legitimate political leadership and political stability.

There is a broad consensus in Nigeria in favour of democratic forms of government. Nobody has ever seriously attempted to establish a single-party state. Military regimes proclaim their commitments to transferring power to elected governments and risk losing power when they renege on these promises. Nigerians have developed a complex range of institutions of civil society: local and professional associations, religious sects and organisations, trade unions, ethnic and regional networks, newspapers and movements advocating democracy and defending human rights. These have been beyond the direct control of government and often come into active opposition to them.

Colonial and military governments held elections in 1959 and in 1979 which broadly qualified as free and fair. In 1964 and 1983, civilian governments in the federation, and in 1965 in the Western Region, failed to conduct elections whose outcomes commanded general acceptance. Democracy itself was discredited: 'democracy' in the rich political language of Nigeria.²

In 1986, the government of Gen Ibrahim Babangida committed itself to transferring power to civilians on 1 October 1990. In the following years, Babangida changed the rules governing the formation and recognition of parties and the conduct of elections many times and thrice postponed the final dates for the presidential election and the transfer of power. On 12 June 1993, the military regime held an election whose reported outcome is generally accepted as a fair reflection of the preferences of voters as between the two candidates: Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba from Ogun State in the south-west, and Bashir Othman Tofa, born of Kanuri parentage in Kano State in the north.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was given under the title 'Democratization: the Nigerian Experience' at the Wits History Workshop Conference, Johannesburg, 13-15 July 1994, and was subsequently presented at Queen Elizabeth House, and at the School of Geography, University of Oxford; at the Conference on Transitions in West Africa, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, September 1995; at the Institute for Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown; at the University of Cape Town; and at the University of Stellenbosch.

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² This term was originally used and popularized by the musician and social critic, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti.

Babangida and his supporters in the armed forces annulled the election and abrogated the decrees which governed the entire electoral process.

This gave credence to the view that the military regime never intended to give up its hold on power. It was widely but incorrectly interpreted by many Yoruba as a refusal by northerners to allow a Yoruba to become president, which opened divisions between supporters of Abiola's candidacy in the south-west and in the northern states. Babangida was forced to leave the presidency on 26 August 1993.

After a brief interregnum, Gen Sani Abacha formally took power on 18 November 1993. He persuaded leading members of the political class, from both parties and all parts of the country, to participate in his government. He initiated a constitutional conference, taking Nigeria back to 1988 (and to 1977, and to 1966, and to 1950). Elections for conference delegates attracted a poor response from voters, particularly in the south-west, but a wide range of political interests from across the country participated in the constitutional negotiations to have a say over any future political arrangements. On 1 October 1995, Abacha announced yet another programme for a staged political transition to culminate on 1 October 1998.

Abacha's manoeuvres were designed to neutralise the annulment of the presidential election and to enable the regime to stay in power and direct the political process. The regime was opposed by disparate groups of politicians, notably the National Democratic Coalition which has its strongest support in the Yoruba states, of retired military officers and, ironically, of civil rights activists who had opposed the procedures through which the Babangida regime finally managed the presidential nominations of Abiola and Tofa. The opposition's lack of nationally organised popular support leaves them dependent on collaborators within the armed forces to pursue their objectives. The arrests of senior officers and retired generals in early 1995 for involvement in an alleged coup plot exposed the tensions within the regime but it also indicated the limitations of the political opposition to military rule.

If Nigerians are so keen on democracy, why do they fail to achieve or to sustain a democratic political order? The short answer is that Nigeria's political class, like their supporters, may like democracy; but they like power and office and their spoils even more. They prefer constitutional arrangements which enable them to compete for office and allocate positions and their rewards amongst themselves and their associates rather than military governments which render them into dependent clients of soldiers. Their primary concern is to position themselves strategically for successive rounds of the changing political game. There is little or no percentage for politicians, and for their clients, in their staying out of office.

Democratic elections are valued as a means of gaining access to, or maintaining control of, positions of power. Politicians show little respect for the rules and conventions of democratic politics in their own right. 'Politics', under civilian and military governments, is largely a matter of 'who gets what, when, how?'³ For the public, government by politicians (Yoruba: *ijoba oselu*) succeeded government by whites (*ijoba oyinbo*) and alternates with government by soldiers (*ijoba ologun*). Government by the people doesn't enter into it.

³ H.D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* [1936] (Meridian, New York, 1958).

Nationalists, the State and Regional Politics, 1939-59

Nigerian politicians may have had little love for Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, but they certainly appreciated and acted on his advice to 'Seek ye first the political kingdom.' Nationalists sought to gain control of the colonial state as a means to acquire access to the resources from which they had been excluded by European firms and Levantine traders and by an alien government. Control of the state would enable them to decide which Nigerians would get access to these resources.

Nigeria is a colonial construct. Its external and internal boundaries and railway and road networks have given shape to patterns of economic activities and to the formation of a plurality of overlapping political and linguistic identities within local, state, regional and national arenas. The northern and southern provinces were amalgamated in 1914 under the common authority of the Governor(-General) but retained their distinctive forms of administration. From the colonial period onwards, western education expanded far more rapidly in the southern provinces than in the North and, in the North, in the predominantly non-Muslim areas.⁴ The separation of the Southern Province into the East and West in 1939 transformed Nigeria into three regions. Each region was demographically dominated by a single language group, the Yoruba in the West, the Igbo in the East and the Hausa-Fulani in the North, and incorporated numerous 'minorities' (including the Anioma Igbo in the West, and the Yoruba of Ilorin and Kabba in the North).⁵

In Nigeria, the export-import trade offered the most accessible target for nationalist ambitions. In the colonial period, it was dominated by a limited range of staple lines of exports and imports, and a small number of foreign companies, notably the United Africa Company (UAC), a subsidiary of the Anglo-Dutch Unilever combine. Their monopolistic practices were a target of nationalist hostility and popular resentments when world commodity prices fell in 1921, in 1929, in 1931, in 1934 and again in 1937.

In 1939, the colonial government took over the purchase and export of cocoa, followed by oilseeds in 1942. State export monopolies provided an effective way of keeping prices down, reducing demands for imports, earning dollars for the sterling area and raising taxes for the government. They were therefore perpetuated with the creation of commodity marketing boards for export crops in 1946 and 1947. Opposition to the marketing boards from Nigerian trading interests was undercut by granting them licenses to sell produce to the boards. The marketing boards were justified by the need to regulate markets and to stabilize prices and later, by Fabian economists, as a means of financing industrial development. They provided the foundations for a political economy centred on securing access to the state as a means of controlling markets.⁶

⁴ This was the result of mission initiatives rather than government action; government initiated schooling in the Muslim areas of the North. P. K. Tibenderana, *Sokoto Province under British Rule, 1903-1939* (Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria, 1988), pp. 180-232.

⁵ A. C. Burns, *History of Nigeria*, 3rd ed. (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1942); M. Perham, *Lugard*, 2 vols (Collins, London, 1956, 1960); I. Nicholson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1969).

⁶ P. T. Bauer, *West African Trade: A Study of Competition, Oligopoly and Monopoly in a Changing Economy* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1954); G. Williams, 'Marketing Without and With Marketing Boards', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 34 (1985); J-G. Deutsch, 'Educating the

Nigeria's first nation-wide political party, the National Convention of Nigeria and The Cameroons (later, National Convention of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC) was formed in 1944 by Herbert Macaulay, founder of the Lagos-based Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo newspaper editor from Onitsha in the East. The NCNC drew a response from a range of people in the urban centres of the southern provinces and even from some towns in the North.

Trade union demands for higher wages in response to war-time and post-war inflation led to a general strike by public sector workers in 1945 and subsequent strikes in the Enugu coal fields in 1949 and by UAC workers in 1950 and 1951.⁷ Farmers in the Ibadan area resisted the compulsory cutting out of cocoa trees infected by swollen shoot.⁸ In a period of rationing of basic imports and official control on price, Nigerian traders and consumers resented the monopolistic trading practices of colonial firms which at various times became the targets of violent attacks in the Niger Delta and the Eastern Region. Radical nationalists in the Zikist Movement, named after Azikiwe, embarked on an unsuccessful campaign to mobilize popular opinion behind radical nationalist demands.

Populist nationalism was undermined by the incorporation of the rising political class into a process of constitutional reform directed by the colonial government. In 1950, delegates to the first national constitutional conference were elected indirectly from 'Native Authorities' and local councils. In 1951, parliaments were elected for each of three regions and, from them, to the federal legislature. The NCNC won overwhelmingly in the East. In the Western House of Assembly, the Action Group (AG), formed in 1950, won over a majority of members at the expense of the NCNC. The NCNC defeated the AG in the Lagos seats for the Western House. The AG then got their revenge by nominating a Yoruba NCNC member as Lagos's representative in the federal legislature instead of his party leader, Azikiwe, who felt he had been excluded on ethnic grounds and subsequently withdrew to the East.

In the Northern Assembly, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), whose political base was founded in the 'Native Authorities', took most seats to the exclusion of the populist Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). Both the AG and NPC were founded as regional parties. They grew out of cultural associations designed to bring together modern and traditional élites and aimed to gain control of regional governments and their resources. Each party maintained control of its region in subsequent elections through a combination of patronage, coercion and appeals to ethnic sentiments.⁹

In 1953 and 1954, a new round of constitutional negotiations created a federal constitution which met nationalist demands for 'responsible government' for the Western and Eastern regions from 1956, while the North chose to delay. Control of power and

Middlemen: A Political and Economic History of Statutory Cocoa Marketing in Nigeria' (Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1990).

⁷ R. Cohen, *Labour and Politics in Nigeria, 1945-71* (Heinemann, London, 1974), pp. 159-169.

⁸ C. E. F. Beer, *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria* (Ibadan University Press, 1976), pp. 41-65.

⁹ J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1963), pp. 271-368; R. L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 41-140; B. J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (Frank Cass, London, 1968); C. S. Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946-1966* (Princeton University Press, 1970).

patronage was devolved downwards from the colonial government and upwards from 'Native Authorities' and local councils to the regional governments. The commodity marketing boards were reorganised into regional marketing boards. The Chick Fiscal Commission, appointed in 1953, provided for the allocation of a significant share of state revenues, including mineral rents and royalties, according to the principle of 'derivation'. This favoured the West more than the Eastern and Northern Regions but in all three regions politicians gained control over economic resources. Despite rising taxation of export earnings, agricultural exports continued to expand until 1966. In 1965, Nigeria was the world's largest exporter of groundnuts and palm produce and second, after Ghana, as an exporter of cocoa. The regional marketing boards provided the fiscal basis for expanding development spending and government employment, party political activities, political patronage, and private business activities.¹⁰

The reformation of state institutions proved to be a powerful agent of class formation.¹¹ The regional governments provided the focus for the emergence of coalitions of élites, drawn from business, the professions, politics and the civil service. In the North, the new élites continued to align themselves with the aristocracy and officials who ran the 'Native Authorities'. In the southern regions, wealthy citizens invested in titles in pursuit of recognition of the status which they claimed in their communities. Rising real wages, expanding education, high agricultural prices and wider commercial opportunities blunted radical demands. Popular politics were assimilated into the politics of patronage. The style of political appeals is exemplified by the AG slogan: 'Life more abundant'.

The primary concern of the NPC was to protect the interests of 'One North, One People' from the competition in commerce and jobs by the more numerous western-educated southerners, particularly Igbo. Given the North's demographic majority, they could dominate the federal House of Representatives and the cabinet as long as they could ensure the political unity of the North. The Yoruba leaders of the AG wanted to bring modern and traditional élites together to resist the Igbo challenge to the Yoruba in education and commerce.¹² In the East, the NCNC consolidated its support in the Igbo-speaking areas, and among the non-Yoruba Benin and Delta provinces of the Western Region, but alienated political élites in some of the non-Igbo areas of the East.¹³

In 1954, the leaders of the three major parties, Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto (NPC), Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC) and Obafemi Awolowo (AG) were each premiers of their respective regions. The federal government, an NPC-NCNC coalition, was led by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, deputy leader of the NPC. The 1957 constitutional conference agreed, under British direction, to keep the three regions intact as the NPC demanded.

¹⁰ G. K. Helleiner, *Government, Peasant Agriculture and Economic Growth in Nigeria* (Irwin, Homewood, 1966); Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, pp. 449-460.

¹¹ Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, pp. 480-481; G. Williams, 'Nigeria: A Political Economy' in G. Williams (ed.), *Nigeria: Economy and Society* (Rex Collings, London, 1976), and in *State and Society in Nigeria* (Afrografika, Idanre, 1980); S.O. Osoba, 'The Nigerian Power Elite, 1952-1965', in P. C. W. Gutkind and P. Waterman (eds), *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader* (Heinemann, London, 1977).

¹² O. Awolowo, *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), p. 166.

¹³ Coleman, *Nigeria*, pp. 369-408; Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*; Dudley, *Parties and Politics*; Whitaker, *The Politics of Tradition*; K. W. J. Post and G. Jenkins, *The Price of Liberty: Personality and Politics in Colonial Nigeria* (Cambridge University Press, 1973).

The AG and NCNC ostensibly wanted the regions to be divided into new states but could not agree on the number of states to be created or where their boundaries should be.¹⁴ The Willink Commission was asked to inquire into the grievances of 'minorities'. It recommended measures to devolve some decisions to the provinces but not the break-up of the regions.

In 1957, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa invited two AG ministers, S O Akintola and Ayo Rosiji, to join the federal coalition. It looked as though Nigeria could be governed by a cartel of regional leaders in a government of national unity. However, the NCNC were not ready to concede control of the West to the AG or to relinquish the claim of their supporters in the mid-West to a region of their own. Awolowo sought to build a national coalition by aligning with politicians from the 'minorities' in the east and the north. He was partially successful in this, attracting support for the AG from Calabar Province, from the Yoruba-speaking areas of Ilorin and Kabba provinces, and from supporters, notably from Benue Province, of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). However, most northern 'minorities' preferred to seek the protection of the NPC and its defence of 'One North, One People' against southern competitors for economic opportunities.

The AG strategy brought them into conflict with one of the other parties in each of the three regions. In the 1959 federal elections, the AG won more than half their seats in the North and East but still came third behind the NPC and the NCNC.¹⁵ The AG continued to depend on the revenues of the government of the Western Region for its funds but the concerns of its allies in the Northern and Eastern regions now had greater weight in the party. The AG, despite its small share of seats in the federal legislature, was poised to put itself forward as a national opposition party.

During the 1950s, Nigerian politicians inherited control over the colonial state. Political office and the revenues of the marketing boards were devolved to regional governments. The three main political parties each formed the government of one region, within which they consolidated their power through the exercise of patronage and coercion. A certain accommodation of regional interests took place, which was partly undermined by the competition of the major parties and their affiliates within each region. At independence, the federal government acquired ultimate authority over regional governments and increased its share of state funds. The allocation of power at all levels came to be dependent on conflicts within the federal arena.¹⁶

The Politics of Power and Conflict, 1960-1970

Politics was a game of winner takes all. Politicians used all their resources, constitutional and extra-constitutional, to gain and maintain control of office. In the 1950s, politicians were able to compromise on constitutional issues and on the allocation of revenues among regions because all gained access to something, though some gained more than

¹⁴ Post and Jenkins, *The Price of Liberty*, pp. 351-393.

¹⁵ K. W. J. Post, 'The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons: The Decision of December 1959' in J. P. Mackintosh, *Nigerian Government and Politics* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1966); and *The Nigerian Federal Election of 1959* (Oxford University Press, London, 1963).

¹⁶ B. J. Dudley, 'Federalism and the Balance of Political Power in Nigeria', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, 4 (1966); Cf. R. L. Sklar, 'Contradictions in the Nigerian Political System', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 3 (1965).

others. After independence in 1960, they competed for shares of the same, limited resources. Negotiators each sought to protect sectional gains, not to arrive at a solution to common problems. Compromise amounted to no more than backing down in the face of superior force. People resorted to political violence, whether against local agents of government or against outsiders, when changes in control of government, at either federal or regional levels, appeared to threaten their access to opportunities and resources within their own territories and to symbolise their political humiliation. The politics of co-optation and exclusion was inherently unstable and served only to aggravate conflicts between and within regions as well as parties. Neither force nor constitutional procedures were sufficient to resolve the conflicts, maintain central authority, and ensure stable political order.

After the 1959 federal election, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa formed a coalition government with the NCNC, whose leader, Azikiwe, became Governor-General (and President when Nigeria became a Republic in 1963). Awolowo became Leader of the Opposition and Akintola became Premier of the West. Dr Michael Okpara took over as Premier in the East. The federal government created a Central Bank and extended its capacity to borrow money and regulate imports and financial markets. Oil exports from the Niger Delta began in December 1958; oil revenues were shared between the federal government and the governments of the East and, later, the Mid-West.

The AG took the precaution of calling an election in the West in 1960 so that they were returned to office before its opponents took over the federal government at independence. It adopted a more radical posture and committed itself in 1961 to 'Democratic Socialism', which amounted mainly to expanding education and promoting Nigerian capitalism. In 1960, and again in 1964, in Benue Province, the Tiv supporters of UMBC, aligned with the AG, came into armed conflict with the government of the Northern Region and its local officials.¹⁷

In 1962, the AG split between the supporters of Awolowo and Akintola. Awolowo sought to keep control of party, and thus regional government, funds which were necessary to support his strategy of building a national opposition. Akintola did not approve of using the resources of the West to fund weak opposition groups in the other regions or see why the AG should exclude itself from access to federal patronage. Akintola's supporters caused a fracas in the Western House of Assembly to prevent the Governor, Adesoji Aderemi, the Ooni of Ife, from appointing Dauda Adegbenro to replace him, which gave the federal government an opportunity to declare a state of emergency. Awolowo and his supporters, including Joseph Tarka, the Tiv leader, were tried and imprisoned for planning to overthrow the federal government.¹⁸

¹⁷ M. Dent, 'A Minority Party The United Middle Belt Congress', in J. P. Mackintosh, *Nigerian Government and Politics*; and J. I. Tseayo, *Conflict and Incorporation in Nigeria: the Integration of the Tiv* (Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1975).

¹⁸ F-A. Baptiste, 'The Relations between the Western Region and the Federal Government of Nigeria' (MA thesis, University of Manchester, 1965); Mackintosh, 'The Action Group: The Crisis of 1962 and its Aftermath' in *Nigerian Government and Politics*; R. L. Sklar, 'The Ordeal of Chief Obafemi Awolowo' in G. Carter (ed.), *Politics in Africa: Seven Cases* (Harcourt, Brace and World, New York, 1966); L. Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic* (Macmillan, London, 1988), pp. 93-130; T. Clark, *Abubakar from the Black Rock: The Life and Times of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa* (Hodder and Stoughton, London) 1991), pp. 539-563.

The removal of the AG from power in the West opened the way to the creation of a new Mid-Western Region, which elected Dennis Osadebay of the NCNC as its Premier. Akintola persuaded enough AG members of the Western House of Assembly to join the winning side. He first formed a coalition government with the NCNC and then launched a new party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) with a virulently anti-Igbo platform. The NCNC's position in the federal government had allowed them to gain control of a second region at the cost of surrendering most of their support in the Yoruba-speaking West to Akintola. Akintola's chauvinist strategy did not succeed in winning broad Yoruba support for the NNDP but it did exacerbate conflicts between Yoruba and Igbo élites over posts in federal ministries and, especially, universities.

The NCNC were increasingly dissatisfied with their junior status in the federal coalition and NPC direction of federal spending to the Northern Region (whose government continued to get the smallest share of revenues in relation to its population). The NCNC looked to the 1962 census to alter the demographic balance and thus the division of federal constituencies, between north and south, and both the East and the West helped the process along. The North responded by 'verifying' its own tally to bring it into line. A further census, in 1963, inflated regional totals all round and maintained the political status quo.

The NCNC formed a new coalition, the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) with the AG and NEPU to challenge its senior partner, the NPC, and its allies, including the NNDP, in the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). In June 1964, rival trade union organisations united in support of a general strike for full payment of wage increases recommended by the Morgan Commission. Workers and the wider public demonstrated their support for the strike and opposition to politicians of all parties.

The 1964 election campaign was marked by intimidation, particularly in the North where two UPGA candidates were killed and others prevented from submitting their nomination papers. When it became clear that the NNA's majority could not be overturned, the UPGA called an election boycott. The boycott was total in the East where NCNC controlled the government and in three of four seats in Lagos. The government of the newly-created Mid-West called off the boycott. In the West, the boycott enabled NNDP candidates to win seats on a low poll and the NPC won all but four seats in the North.

President Azikiwe refused to accept the result of the election and to re-appoint Abubakar as Prime Minister but, acting on judicial advice, the armed forces chiefs of staff recognised the Prime Minister's authority. A compromise was now reached. A further election was arranged for March 1965 to fill seats in the East and Lagos. A national government was formed by Abubakar, including NCNC ministers, which the NNDP were also invited to join. The parties of government each maintained control in their regional fiefs, to the exclusion of the AG. Politicians demonstrated their solidarity with the holders of power and patronage.

The AG now looked to the 1965 regional election to regain control of the West. NNDP Deputy Premier, Remi Fani-Kayode, declared on the eve of the poll that, whichever way you vote, we shall be in power after the election. And so it proved. The election was followed by political violence in which party thugs from both sides made their own vicious

contribution to the discourse and technology of political murder. Politicians had lost whatever was left of their legitimacy.¹⁹

On 15 January 1966, a group of army majors killed the Prime Minister of the Federation, the premiers of the North and the West and senior northern and western military officers. The majors were generally better educated than their older superiors and saw themselves as saving Nigeria from the moral turpitude and profiteering into which the politicians had taken the country. However, the coup failed. Power passed on to Maj-Gen J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, head of the army who, like most of the coup-makers, was Igbo. The coup-makers were arrested but not brought to trial. For many in the south they were heroes. Many northerners, particularly in the army, regarded the coup-makers as traitors whose actions had been condoned, if not approved, by the Ironsi regime.²⁰

The new regime tried to apply the military virtues of discipline, hierarchy and central command to the ills of regionalism and corruption. Postings and promotions in the army were seen by northerners to favour Igbo officers. Young northern civil servants and intellectuals organised northern opinion against the new regime which they regarded as an instrument of southern and especially Igbo interests.

On 24 May 1966, Ironsi issued a decree which declared the abolition of the regions, which became 'groups of provinces', and the unification of the federal and regional public services. Northerners interpreted the decree as a means of displacing them from official positions by southerners. Northern students and junior civil servants demonstrated against the decree. There followed attacks on the Igbo in the main commercial centres of the North which were orchestrated by senior civil servants with the connivance of officials of the 'Native Authorities', former politicians and their clients.

On the night of 29 July 1966, northern soldiers revenged the January coup. In an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicions of coup-plotting, they seized Ironsi and Lt Col Adekunle Fajuyi, Military Governor of the West, in Ibadan and murdered them and killed eastern officers and soldiers in northern and western barracks. Only in Enugu, in the East, was a truce negotiated.

Federal civil servants and the UK High Commissioner and US Ambassador persuaded Northern officers and soldiers to abandon their demand for separation. A Christian northerner, Lt Col Yakubu Gowon, became Head of State and Supreme Commander of

¹⁹ On politics between 1960 and 1965 see Mackintosh, 'The Struggle for Power, 1964' in *Nigerian Government and Politics*; K. W. J. Post and M. Vickers, *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria* (Heinemann, London, 1973); Clark, *Abubakar*, pp. 635-769; and Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy*.

²⁰ On the events of 1966 and the origins of the civil war, see R. First, *The Barrel of a Gun: Power and Politics in Africa* (Allen Lane, London, 1970), pp. 272-362; S. K. Panter-Brick (ed.), *Nigerian Politics and Military Rule: Prelude to Civil War* (The Athlone Press, London, 1970); R. Luckham, *The Nigerian Military: A Sociological Analysis* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1971); N. J. Miners, *The Nigerian Army, 1956-66* (Methuen, London, 1971); J. Oyinbo (pseudonym), *Nigeria: Crisis and Beyond* (Charles Knight, London, 1971); R. Melson and H. Wolpe (eds), *Nigeria: Modernization and the Politics of Communalism* (Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1972); B. J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria* (Ibadan University Press, 1973); G. Williams, *The Nigerian Civil War* (Open University Case Study, Milton Keynes, 1982); J. Garba, "Revolution" in *Nigeria: Another View* (Africa Journal, London, 1982); I. Elaigwu, *Gowon* (West Books, Ibadan, 1985), pp. 39-133.

the Armed Forces. Lt Col Odumegwu Emeka Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, refused to recognise Gowon as Supreme Commander. On 3 August, Gowon sought to broaden support for his new government by releasing Awolowo and other leaders of the AG from jail.

The successive coups gave rise to conflicting interpretations of events. Two extreme versions may be called 'the Igbo conspiracy' and 'the Northern conspiracy'. Each seeks to identify a common pattern in all actions of Igbo/ Northerners. These constructions reinforced the distrust sown by the coups and killings and justified the actions of opposing sides in the conflict, and continued to be revived to serve new political ends.

Representatives of the four regions and Lagos met at a constitutional conference in September. Initially, the East and the North favoured a 'confederal' solution and maintenance of their regional integrity. Northern élites, however, were divided between those who were concerned to maintain the integrity of the North and those who recognised the need for new states. The West and Lagos preferred a federal government and the creation of states but, failing that, would settle for a confederation. Only the Mid-West unequivocally supported a strong federal centre and the division of the regions into new states. All agreed that the army be reorganised into regional units.

On 20 September, the Northern delegation changed its position to favour a federal government and accept the creation of states under pressure from soldiers from the Northern minorities and from Northern officers who found themselves in control of the federal government and recognised the economic and political weakness of a separate North. Northern élites, who feared the consequences of these changes, set off a renewed wave of attacks by civilians and soldiers on the Igbo across the North on 28 September, killing perhaps 8,000 people and leading to an exodus of a million people to the East. The constitutional conference adjourned on 3 October; the East did not return.

From October 1966 to May 1967, Ojukwu and the government of Eastern Nigeria pursued three related strategies. One was to negotiate a confederal solution, which would give them control of their own territory, security and resources, especially oil revenues, while sharing common services with the rest of Nigeria. The second was outright secession. The third was to form an alliance with the West, where many people saw themselves threatened by Northern dominance of the army, which would have led to separation between the North and the southern regions.

The first strategy complemented the second. If confederation could not be negotiated, Eastern Nigeria would secede, and doubts among senior officers and civil servants quelled. The strategy of detaching the West from the North fitted uneasily with the pursuit of Eastern autonomy or independence and would depend on the actions of Westerners. Eastern intellectuals, many of whom had returned from Lagos and Ibadan to the East, elaborated a vision of a new Eastern republic; the massacres of Igbo in the North and return of refugees to the East provided a popular base for their aspirations. Oil revenues would provide the funds with which to realise their dreams.

The federal government followed two alternative strategies. One was to try to meet Eastern demands for security and control of their own region while maintaining the ultimate authority of the federal government. The other, pressed by senior federal permanent secretaries, was to create states, which would separate Eastern minorities and most of the oilfields from the Igbo, bring civilians into government, and restore the exclusive and concurrent powers of the federal government. This would also require the

division of the North into several states. In early 1967, the leaders of the old northern political parties, Aliyu Makaman Bida (NPC), Aminu Kano (NEPU) and J S Tarka (UMBC), and Umaru Dikko, representing the élite of young northern civil servants, toured the North to mobilize northern support for these policies which were irrevocably accepted at a meeting of Northern 'Leaders of Thought' in early May 1967.²¹

The Supreme Military Council, including Ojukwu, met on 4-5 January 1967 at Aburi in Ghana, where they agreed that the army be organised under regional commands and that decisions be made by the SMC, with the 'concurrence' of the regional Military Governors.²² Agreement was reached by not dealing with the fine print. Ojukwu announced that Aburi had gone a long way towards confederalism, which was just what senior federal civil servants feared. Ojukwu demanded implementation of Aburi in full and rejected a federal proposal which would have allowed three of four regional governors to approve a state of emergency. Attempts by Awolowo and others to mediate proved ineffective.

On 27 May, Gowon decreed a state of emergency and the division of the four regions into twelve states. Six were from the North, two from the West, and three from the East; only the Mid-West remained intact. The largest of the three Eastern states, East-Central, was almost entirely Igbo; the smaller two, Rivers and South East, were mainly non-Igbo. The decree was intended to win the support of the non-Igbo minorities in the East. Most of the Eastern oil fields fell within the boundaries of the new Rivers State. Ojukwu responded by declaring the Eastern Region independent as the 'Republic of Biafra' on 30 May 1967. War now appeared unavoidable.

In July 1967, the Nigerian Army invaded first from the north and then from the sea. Biafran forces responded by attacking and briefly occupying the Mid-West, with the connivance of mid-western Igbo officers, but were checked at Ore in the West and driven back across the Niger. The leaders of the mid-western adventure, including some of the key planners of the January 1966 coup, sought to remove Ojukwu and negotiate a cease-fire and were executed for plotting against him. Enugu, the Biafran capital, fell on 4 October. Federal forces soon took control of most of the 'minority' areas of the new Rivers and South-Eastern states, and denied Biafra access to the coast. Relief and arms had henceforth to be flown into Biafra by air.

Biafra continued for two more years to defend a small and densely-populated area, linked by a network of roads, while federal forces attacked from three fronts whose commanders communicated only through Lagos. Arms from France and other countries and medicine and relief supplies from charities allowed Biafra to prolong its resistance, but never gave it any chance of winning the war. Biafra won the propaganda war, but the federal government won the diplomatic war. This ensured Nigeria's international recognition and access to British and Soviet weapons despite federal dissatisfaction with constraints on British war supplies.

War did not end negotiations. Neither side wished to appear intransigent. Throughout the series of meetings in different countries, each side kept to its conditions for settlement.

²¹ Oyinbo, *Nigeria*, pp. 79-80; D. Williams, *President and Power in Nigeria: The Life of Shehu Shagari* (Frank Cass, London, 1982), pp. 97-98.

²² For primary documents and analysis, see A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook, 1966-69*, 2 vols (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1971).

Nigeria insisted on an end to secession and acceptance of the twelve-state structure. Biafra demanded a cease-fire and return to its pre-war boundaries. Neither had any intention of settling the matter by negotiation, except on their own terms. Finally, Biafran resistance collapsed and Maj-Gen Philip Effiong surrendered on 15 January 1970.²³

The transfer of power to the armed forces led to the politicization of the military and the militarization of politics. The outcome of the July 1966 coup and the massacres of 1966 created the conditions which made Eastern secession possible but not inevitable. Control over oil revenues was a major prize in the conflict between the governments of the Federation and of the Eastern Region/ Biafra to assert their authority over the territory of the Eastern Region of Nigeria but it was not the cause of the civil war. As the threat of secession and civil war loomed, and after war was declared, neither side was prepared to concede its claims to the territory of the former Eastern Region. International intervention allowed both sides to arm themselves and kill each other. The constitutional issue was finally resolved by military victory.

Oil, Federal Power and Constitutional Reforms, 1970-1979

After the civil war, the volume and price of mineral oil exports expanded dramatically. The allocation and spending of oil revenues, and the distribution of the imports it generated, came to dominate political life. Industrial investment by Nigerian and foreign firms and domestic food production by small farmers increased in response to rising demand. Agricultural exports fell disastrously, to zero in the cases of groundnuts and palm oil, as producer prices fell behind the rate of inflation and the expansion of opportunities in other sectors of the economy.²⁴ The direction of policy and control of revenues were concentrated increasingly in the hands of senior federal civil servants and of state governors and their key civil servants. Politicians and military commanders increasingly resented their exclusion from their due share of power and patronage and looked for a change of government.

At the September 1966 constitutional conference, representatives of the four regions met to determine the future of Nigeria. The federal government appeared to be able to do little more than hold the ring. Following the final adjournment of the conference on 3 October, the political initiative on the federal side passed into the hands of a group of permanent secretaries, who came to be known as 'Super Permsecs.' They centralised fiscal authority in the federal government. Between 1966 and 1979, the revenue allocation scheme was altered six times. These changes sharply increased the share of revenues spent directly by the federal government and reduced dramatically the share of oil revenues accruing directly to the region/ state from which they originated.

²³ On the civil war, see also Oyinbo, *Nigeria*, pp. 81-110; Williams, *Nigerian Civil War*; J. de St Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1972); N. U. Akpan, *The Struggle for Secession, 1966-1970: A Personal Account of the Nigerian Civil War* (Frank Cass, London, 1972); J. J. Stremmlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970* (Princeton University Press, 1977); J. J. Oluleye, *Military Leadership in Nigeria, 1966-1979* (University Press, Ibadan, 1985), pp. 51-145; Elaigwu, *Gowon*, pp. 133-235; D. A. Ejoor, *Reminiscences* (Malthouse Press, Lagos, 1989).

²⁴ T. Forrest, 'Agricultural Policies in Nigeria, 1900-1978' in J. Heyer, P. Roberts and G. Williams (eds), *Rural Development in Tropical Africa* (Macmillan, London, 1981).

The federal government was now in a position to take charge of economic planning and direct funds for development. It took the agricultural marketing boards back from the regions though, as most of the boards bought little and no longer generated much revenue, it hardly mattered. States now depended for most of their revenue on the allocation of money from the Distributable Pool Account, divided partly on the basis of population and partly on the basis of an equal share for each state. This made it even more difficult to produce an agreed population census and encouraged the multiplication of demands for new states.²⁵

In order to save foreign currency and encourage local industrial production during and after the war, the Gowon government controlled imports. It did not follow Britain's devaluation of the pound and restricted the convertibility of the currency. It acquired ownership of a substantial share of the oil industry and passed the first Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree to reserve specific economic activities to Nigerians and require foreign firms to transfer 40 or 60 percent of their equity to Nigerian shareholders.²⁶ These measures were designed to increase national control over the economy.

The result of all these policies was to increase the federal state's ability to allocate opportunities, exacerbate import dependency, provoke sectional conflicts over the regional distribution of shares in foreign enterprises and reward corruption. Arms purchases, for both sides during the civil war, and governments contracts laid the basis for substantial private fortunes and subsequent political ambitions. Cocoa farmers in the Ibadan area rebelled against war-time taxes, official extortion and low cocoa prices.²⁷ Workers had to be content with the 1970 Adebayo award, which provoked strikes in support of demands for its extension to the private sector.²⁸

²⁵ S. E. Oyovbaire, 'The Politics of Revenue Allocation' in S. K. Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria* (Frank Cass, London, 1978); and *Federalism in Nigeria: A Study in the Development of the Nigerian State* (Macmillan, London, 1985), pp. 162-200; T. Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development in Nigeria* (Westview, Boulder, 1993), pp. 82-83.

²⁶ P. Collins, 'Public Policy and the Development of Indigenous Capitalism', *Journal of Comparative and Commonwealth Political Studies*, 15, 2 (1977); R. Joseph, 'Affluence and Underdevelopment: the Nigerian Experience', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 16, 2 (1978), pp. 221-239; B. Beckman, 'Whose State? State and Capitalist Development in Nigeria', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 23 (1982); C. Ake, 'Indigenization: Problems of Transformation in a Neo-colonial Political Economy' in C. Ake (ed.), *Political Economy of Nigeria* (Longman, London, 1985), pp. 173-200; T. Biersteker, *Multinationals, The State, and Control of the Nigerian Economy* (Princeton University Press, 1987); D. M. Zelikow, 'A Political Economy of Business Regulation in Nigeria: An Examination of the Nigerian Business Enterprise Promotion Decrees of 1972 and 1977' (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1989).

²⁷ Beer, *The Politics of Peasant Groups in Western Nigeria* (Ibadan UP, 1975), pp. 160-208; C. Beer and G. Williams, 'The Politics of the Ibadan Peasantry' in G. Williams (ed.), *Nigeria: Economy and Society*.

²⁸ A. Peace, 'Towards a Nigerian Working Class: The Lagos Proletariat as a Political Elite', P. Lubeck, 'Unions, Workers and Consciousness in Kano', and D. Remy, 'Economic Security and Industrial Unionism: A Nigerian Case Study' in R. Cohen and R. Sandbrook (eds), *The Development of an African Working Class* (Longman, London, 1976); A. Peace, *Choice, Class and Conflict: A Study of Southern Nigerian Factory Workers* (Harvester, Hassocks, 1979); P. Lubeck, *Islam and Urban Labour in Northern Nigeria: The Making of a Muslim Working Class* (Cambridge UP, 1986), pp. 220-261.

In 1970, the Gowon government promised to transfer power to an elected government in 1976. It committed itself to an ambitious programme of political reforms and national reconstruction, defined by a leading civil servant, Allison Ayida, as a 'national revolution' with the states-men of the civil service as a surrogate vanguard. This was resisted by the northern intelligentsia who, with others in the political class, resented the power of the 'Super Permsecs'.²⁹ The Gowon government failed to implement its own programme most blatantly in the case of the disastrous 1973 national census. The census figures attributed a majority of the national population to the four most northern states, which almost doubled the 1963 figures; by contrast, the figures for the Western and South-Eastern states were lower in the 1973 than in the 1963 census.

In 1974, the Gowon government postponed the transfer of power indefinitely. Oil revenues flowed into government and corruption escalated as federal and state governments spent their largesse and those in power took their share while the going was good. Government committed itself to ambitious programmes to expand primary education, build roads, improve telecommunications, produce steel and fertilisers and irrigate large dry areas in the far northern states. State and federal parastatals multiplied in profusion. Gowon attempted to buy political support by backdating, by nine months and in a single payment, the wage and salary awards recommended by the 1974 Public Service Review Commission (Udoji Commission); this only provoked a renewed round of strikes and runaway inflation.³⁰

On 29 July 1975, senior military officers removed their superiors in the federal and state governments. Brigadier Murtala Mohammed, from Kano State, replaced Gowon, whose family originally came from Plateau Province and settled at Wusasa, near Zaria. Brigadiers Olusegun Obasanjo, T Y Danjuma and Iliya Bissalla took the posts of Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters; Chief of Staff, Army; and Federal Commissioner for Defence respectively. The new rulers banished permanent secretaries from meetings of the Federal Executive Council unless specifically invited. The new state military governors were to be serving officers under central command. Murtala's government established the centralised military government envisaged by Ironsi, but this time under northern control. In January 1976, the new rulers promoted themselves, raising resentment in the armed forces.³¹

Gen Mohammed committed his regime to transfer power in 1979 to a civilian government. But he was assassinated in an unsuccessful coup on 13 February 1976. He was replaced by Maj-Gen Obasanjo; Lt-Col Shehu Musa Yar'adua, who was promoted to brigadier, took Obasanjo's place as Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters. Maj-Gen

²⁹ A. A. Ayida, *The Nigerian Revolution, 1966-76* (Nigerian Economic Society, Ibadan, 1973) and in *Reflections on Nigerian Development* (Malthouse, Lagos, 1987); B. J. Dudley, *An Introduction to Nigerian Government and Politics* (Macmillan, London, 1982); A. D. Yahaya, 'Nigerian Public Administration under Military Rule: The Experience of the Northern States' in O. O. Adamolekun (ed.), *Nigerian Public Administration, 1960-1980* (Heinemann, Ibadan, 1985).

³⁰ O. Oyediran (ed.), *Survey of Nigerian Affairs 1975* (Oxford University Press, Ibadan for Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1978); Elaigwu, *Gowon*, pp. 133-208.

³¹ I. Campbell, 'Army Reorganisation and Military Withdrawal', and T. Turner, 'Commercial Capitalism and the 1975 Coup' in Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil*; Oluleye, *Military Leadership*, pp. 154-167; Elaigwu, *Gowon*, pp. 209-235.

Bissalla, and a number of middle-rank officers, mainly from the newly-created Plateau State, were executed for their part in the plot.³²

Murtala had already set in motion a series of reforms. The government carried out an arbitrary purge of civil servants which undermined morale. The 1973 census results were rejected and seven states were created in 1976. In 1977, trade unions were restructured into industrial unions and a single Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) was set up under government direction. The government revised the rules governing ownership of shares in foreign enterprises in 1977 to try to produce a more equitable share of the benefits among state-based interests. They maintained a high exchange rate of the Nigerian currency, the naira, in order to try to control inflation and to the benefit of those with access to foreign exchange and imported commodities. Rising government spending generated a continued rise in imports. They were partly checked when oil prices fell in 1977 by cutting public spending and extended import controls and required advanced deposits against letters of credit. Nevertheless, the government's domestic and foreign debts rose sharply in 1978. Students campaigned against rising costs and several were killed in Zaria in 1978 when the army was called in to deal with them.³³

The Constitutional Drafting Committee, appointed in 1975, recognised that politics in Nigeria was concerned with gaining the 'opportunity to acquire wealth and prestige, to be able to distribute benefits in the form of jobs, contracts, scholarships, and gifts of money and so on to one's relatives and political allies.'³⁴ They recommended a presidential constitution as a means of regulating political competition. Elections were held for local government councils which elected members of the Constituent Assembly (CA) in 1977. The Assembly recommended a new draft constitution to which the military government made seventeen minor amendments. The CA provided an opportunity for politicians from the different states to form new coalitions in preparation for the coming elections.

Northern interests had been able to direct the First Republic largely through their control of the government of the Northern Region and the 'Native Authorities' within it. These sources of control were undermined by the assumption of federal control over the NA police, courts, and prisons and by the creation of states. A new basis was needed if a coalition of northern interests was to regain the position it had held in the First Republic.

³² Oluleye, *Military Leadership*, pp. 177-183, 194-196; Elaigwu, *Gowon*, pp. 254-278; S. Othman, 'Nigeria: "Power for Profit" Class, Corporatism and Factionalism in the Military' in D. C. O'Brien, J. Dunn and R. Rathbone (eds), *Contemporary West African States* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 127-128.

³³ Campbell, 'Army Reorganisation'; M. J. Dent, 'Corrective Government: Military Rule in Perspective' in Panter-Brick (ed.), *Soldiers and Oil*, pp. 101-137; Dudley, *Nigerian Government and Politics*; O. Oyediran (ed.), *Nigerian Government and Politics under Military Rule, 1966-79* (Macmillan, London, 1979); *Survey of Nigerian Affairs 1975*; *Survey of Nigerian Affairs 1976/1977* (Macmillan, Ibadan, 1981); A. Kirk-Greene and D. Rimmer, *Nigeria Since 1970: A Political and Economic Outline* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1981); Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 58-63.

³⁴ *Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee* (Lagos, 1976), vol. I, p. v; see G. Williams and T. Turner, 'Politics in Nigeria' in J. Dunn, *West African States: Failure and Promise* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 133, and in Williams, *State and Society*, p. 69; W. D. Graf, *The Nigerian State: Political Economy, State Class and Political System in the Post-Colonial Political Era* (James Currey, London, 1988), pp. 65-74.

The institutions of the former Northern Region, such as the Interim Common Services Agency, the New Nigerian Development Corporation, northern marketing boards and textile industries, the New Nigerian newspaper, and Radio Kaduna, provided a base for the network of members of the northern intelligentsia who came to be widely known as the 'Kaduna Mafia'. The core of this group began their careers in the northern bureaucracy under the patronage of Ahmadu Bello, the Northern Premier. They established close links in the army and moved into the federal government, industry and took up gentleman farming. They took the lead, as we noted, in opposing Ironsi's unification decree and opposed the 'Super Permsecs' who ran the Gowon government. Kaduna, founded by Lord Lugard as colonial capital of the Northern Region, was the focus for their business activities, social interactions and *sub rosa* political negotiations.³⁵

The 'Kaduna Mafia' saw the forthcoming elections as their chance to assume their rightful position in the national political order. They were active at the Constituent Assembly in raising the issue of the status of appeals to federal courts from sharia courts in the northern states. The issue was used to mobilise a bloc of support around a symbolic issue of Islamic commitment. At the same time, it put the supporters of a separate Sharia Court of Appeal directly at odds with Christians, especially northern Christians, in the Constituent Assembly. The military government finally insisted that the issue be dropped, which in turn weakened the political position of the 'Kaduna Mafia'.³⁶

The new Constitution followed the model of the United States in the election of president and state governors. Their periods of office were coterminous with the bicameral national and unicameral state legislatures. Ministers and state commissioners were not to be members of, nor responsible to, the legislatures. Parties were to be registered and regulated by the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO), which would have to be satisfied that the parties were nationally organised and that their leadership was drawn from across the country.

People elected for one party could not switch their allegiance to another party without resigning their seats or elected offices. Election to office required a plurality of voters nationally (or for governors, across the state) as well as the support of a quarter of the electorate in two-thirds of the states (or local government areas). Public bodies were required 'to reflect the federal character of the country' in making appointments.³⁷ Politicians and public officials were to be required to declare their assets and institutions

³⁵ Rufa'i Ibrahim, 'Of the Mafia, AWO and the Race', *Triumph* (Kano), 3 Aug 1983; Yahaya, 'Nigerian Public Administration'; S. Othman, 'Classes, Crises and Coup: The Demise of Shagari's Regime', *African Affairs*, 83, 333, (1984); and ' "Power for Profit" ', pp. 122-124; R. Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (Cambridge University Press, London, 1987), pp. 133-136; B. J. Takaya and S. G. Tyoden (eds), *The Kaduna Mafia* (Jos University Press, 1987).

³⁶ D. D. Laitin, 'The Sharia Debate and the Origins of Nigeria's Second Republic', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 20, 3 (1982); D. Williams, *President and Power*; Y. B. Usman, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987* (Vanguard, Kaduna, 1987).

³⁷ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'Ethnic Engineering and the "Federal Character" of Nigeria: Boon of Contentment or Bone of Contentment', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 6, 4 (1983); P. P. Ekeh and E. E. Osaghae (eds), *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria* (Heinemann, Ibadan, 1989); L. Adamolekun, J. Erero, and B. Oshionebo, ' "Federal Character" and Management of the Federal Civil Service and the Military', in L. Adamolekun (ed.), *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* [Special Issue on Nigerian Federalism], 21, 4 (Fall 1991).

set up to enforce a code of conduct. Forrest points out that the Constitution emphasised the duties of the state towards individuals rather than the rights, including rights to property, of individuals.³⁸

The Constituent Assembly failed to resolve the question of revenue allocation. Although each state had its own claim for more favoured treatment, the key issue was the demand of politicians for a larger share of revenues to go to the states, the point of access for most of them to a share of public resources. They therefore rejected the report of the Abovade Technical Committee, placed before them with the regime's blessing, which sought to balance revenues against expenditure commitments. The Constitution left the question open for the new government.

FEDECO recognised five political associations of the 19 which applied for registration. Four of the five had clear origins in the parties of the First Republic, but with some significant changes in political alignments. Each party was a coalition of largely state-based interests, working within broader regional and national networks. Politicians from each of the major language groups were divided over state and regional policies and how the interests of their group could best be protected at the national level.

The National Party of Nigeria (NPN) rightly saw itself as the 'natural party of government'.³⁹ Its core was the coalition of the leaders of the old northern political parties who had been brought together in 1966 to advance a northern political agenda: Aliyu Makaman Bida (NPC), Aminu Kano (NEPU) and Joseph Tarka (UMBC). The northern leaders of the new party recruited spokesmen for southern minorities and 'men of timber and calibre' from the Yoruba- and Igbo-speaking areas. Shehu Shagari, a former NPC minister, was chosen as presidential candidate, defeating Maitama Sule, also a former NPC minister, and Adamu Ciroma, the preferred choice of the 'Kaduna Mafia' whose time had not come. Dr Alex Ekwueme, a millionaire Igbo architect from Anambra State was nominated as vice-presidential candidate.

The Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) grew out of the Committee of Friends organised under the aegis of Awolowo. Although it was successful in winning support in the Yoruba-speaking states and Bendel and retained some of the support for the AG in Cross Rivers and Gongola, it failed to form a nation-wide alliance and Awolowo lost the support of several prominent non-Yoruba leaders of the AG, who threw in their lot with the NPN.

From Club 19 (of 19 states) came the aim of constructing a 'majority of minorities'; these political 'minorities' included the Igbo who felt they had been marginalized from the main positions of power in the post-civil war period. Rivalries over leadership split this prospective coalition into the Nigerian People's Party (NPP), which in the south drew particularly on former supporters of the NCNC and nominated, for the presidency, Azikiwe, who had originally agreed to deliver the Patron's address at the launching of the NPN,⁴⁰ and the Greater Nigerian People's Party, led and financed by Waziri Ibrahim, a former NPC Minister and war-time arms dealer, from Bornu State.

³⁸ On the 1979 Constitution, see B. O. Nwabueze, *The Presidential Constitution of Nigeria* (Christopher Hurst, London, 1982); Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, p. 64; also Graf, *Nigerian State*, p. 67.

³⁹ R. Joseph, 'Political Parties and Ideology in Nigeria', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 13 (1979), p. 83.

⁴⁰ Personal information to Shehu Othman from former President Shehu Shagari and Umaru Dikko.

The People's Redemption Party (PRP) inherited the radical Muslim tradition of NEPU and the support of younger radicals from northern universities. Aminu Kano, probably because he felt that he and his supporters were marginalized within the NPN, accepted the leadership. The NLC was forbidden to support political parties. The Nigerian left could only form small groups based mainly on different campuses. Socialists joined either the PRP or the UPN or remained aloof from the electoral process.

In the 1979 elections, Shagari and the NPN gained the largest number of votes and seats of any party and won seven state governorships. It took the governorship in two of the four states with Hausa majorities and in five states dominated by former regional 'minorities', including the Tiv of Benue State. The concern to be on the winning side persuaded many 'minorities' politicians to support the NPN and thus ensured its victory. Fast arithmetic footwork was needed to secure Shagari the required quarter of two-third of the votes in the thirteenth of the nineteen states, an argument upheld by the Supreme Court.

None of the other parties could claim significant support in a majority of states. The states in the former Western Region, previously the scene of bitter political divisions, all gave overwhelming support to the UPN, in part a tribute to the popularity of Awolowo's promise of free and universal secondary education and the dislike of the former NNDP government in the West whose leading members were now prominent in the NPN. The NPP won both Igbo-majority states and the northern minority state of Plateau; and the GNPP the north-eastern states of Bornu and Gongola. In all states except Lagos, the NPN came first or second. It alone could claim national support.⁴¹

Military rulers presided over a centralisation of revenue and planned to use Nigeria's expanding oil incomes to build the foundations for a modern economy. Spending rose to exceed revenues and government borrowed heavily from European financial markets. Government spending fuelled inflation and state investments in industrial and agricultural production bore little fruit. Like its colonial predecessor, the Murtala-Obasanjo regime shaped the Constitution and directed the transition to elected government. This was expressly to avoid the pitfalls which had brought the First Republic to grief. It would prove no more successful in constraining politicians and securing the conditions for democratic political order.

Politics, Parties and Coups, 1979-1985

⁴¹ On the formation of the political parties and the 1979 elections see W. Ofonagoro, *The Story of the Nigerian General Elections 1979* (Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 1979); W. D. Graf, *Elections 1979: The Nigerian Citizen's Guide to Parties, Politics, Leaders and Issues* (Daily Times, Lagos, n. d.); B. J. Dudley, *Nigerian Government and Politics*; O. Oyediran (ed.), *The Nigerian 1979 Elections* (Macmillan Nigeria, Ibadan, 1981); H. Adamu and A. Ogunsanwo, *Nigeria: The Making of the Presidential System* (Triumph Publishers, Kano, 1982); A. Kurfi, *The Nigerian General Elections 1959 and 1979 and the Aftermath* (Macmillan, Lagos, 1983); Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics* (pp. 125-127 for results); Graf, *Nigerian State*, pp. 77-90 (pp. 86, 88 for results); T. Abdulraheem, 'Politics in Nigeria's Second Republic (1979-1983)', (D. Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1990); J. Ibrahim, 'L'Accès à l'état: classes sociales, élites, factions: une étude du "National Party of Nigeria"', Thèse de Doctorat, Institut d'Études Politiques de Bordeaux, 1991, pp. 139-156.

The American-style Constitution of the Second Republic (1979-83) was expressly designed for Nigerians. State regulation sought to promote national rather than sectional parties to ensure that state largesse was broadly spread and to avoid the winner-takes-all pattern of the British parliamentary system. The American Constitution can only work with parties in the American mould where members of Congress are not bound by party discipline. Nigerians followed the more partisan practices of Britain. Politics turned on the distribution of federal oil revenues among politicians and their clients at national, state and local levels. State governments, and parties other than the NPN, and even the factions within the NPN, were dissatisfied with their shares of the spoils. Bitter conflicts took place between and within political parties in the states and the federation. The failure of the politicians to manage these conflicts discredited democratic government in Nigeria and opened the way for the armed forces to return.

After the 1979 Iran crisis, the volume of oil exports reached 2.1 million barrels a day and at its height the price reached \$40 a barrel. This encouraged politicians in both federal and state governments to spend and appropriate funds vastly in excess of their revenues. The rise in oil revenues proved temporary. In 1981, Nigeria could only find a market for 1.4 million barrels a day and between 1981 and 1983 the price fell by more than twenty per cent. Nigerian exports rose from \$10.4 billion in 1978 to \$25.9 billion in 1980 and fell back to \$10.3 billion in 1983.⁴²

The NPN formed a government in Lagos with the support of the third largest party, the NPP, whose nominees were given ministerial, legislative and other positions. This recreated in some respects the NPC-NCNC alliance of the previous parliamentary system. Elements in both parties were dissatisfied with the alliance. The NPP was frustrated by its inability to affect the policies of the federal government and claim a larger share of the spoils. Factions of the NPN thought that too much had been given away to the NPP in relation to the qualified support it gave to the governing coalition. The Yoruba faction of the NPN was particularly uneasy with a government which aligned northern and eastern interests and which might perpetuate their exclusion from the presidency.

The alliance collapsed on 6 July 1981. NPP state governors first joined non-NPN governors in protesting against the appointment of Presidential Liaison Officers to state capitals, where they could act as a focus for NPN patronage and undermine the political pre-eminence of state governors. All the non-NPN governors strongly opposed the federal government's proposals for the division of revenues between federal, state and local governments. Shagari's proposal to distribute revenues gave the federal government 55 per cent (down from 76 per cent in 1979) and the states 26.5 per cent (up from 21 per cent in 1979); the rest went to local government (10 per cent) and a Special Fund (8.5 per cent).⁴³ This did not satisfy state governors, particularly from the non-NPN parties.

⁴² International Monetary Fund (IMF), *International Financial Statistics Yearbook*, 1993, p. 549; Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', p. 118; Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, p. 134.

⁴³ Oyovbaire, *Federalism*, pp. 257-260; P. N. C. Okigbo, 'Economic Implications of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria' in Nigerian Economic Society, *The Nigerian Economy: A Political Economy Approach* (Longman, London, 1986); Graf, *Nigerian State*, pp. 139-141; Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 82-83.

The NPN could no longer rely on the NPP but secured the support of some members of the GNPP and the PRP who preferred to co-operate with the ruling party. In order to get the bills passed by the two houses of the National Assembly reconciled through a joint committee, one PRP member of the committee was displaced by another. The committee version was rushed to the President for signature but was subsequently overruled by the Supreme Court because it had not been passed by the full Assembly.⁴⁴ A further compromise gave the states directly 30.5 per cent (at the expense of the Special Fund) and was passed.

The issue of revenue allocation split the three smaller parties into pro- and anti-NPN factions. Party leaders in the Senate were most likely to favour co-operation; governors were opposed. Aminu Kano, leader of the PRP, favoured working with the NPN government. Only the second largest party, the UPN, remained largely united under Awolowo's leadership. The UPN, however, lost leading members to the NPN in 1983 when Awolowo insisted that incumbent governors all be renominated, denying their deputies and other rivals a chance to take over their posts.⁴⁵

The parties proclaimed support to create states which were popular with voters and with businessmen and civil servants since they would multiply the points of access to a share of the oil revenues. Each party was only interested in new states if their boundaries and the choice of state capitals suited their own calculations of political advantage. There was, therefore, no chance that agreement would be reached on which states should be created. Local Government Areas (LGAs) could be, and were, multiplied within the fiefs of state governments. Between 1979 and 1981, the number of LGAs rose from 301 to 710; fourteen or nineteen states now had twice or more times as many LGAs as before; only Rivers State had not established any new ones.⁴⁶

In Kaduna State, a PRP governor, Balarabe Musa, was confronted by an NPN legislature, which refused to approve his nominees for cabinet commissioners. He tried to carry out his policies through his Secretary to the Government, a radical academic, Dr Yusufu Bala Usman, without the benefit of commissioners. In Kaduna, as in neighbouring Kano State, the PRP wished to undermine the hierarchical network of 'traditional authorities', on whom rested local support for the NPN and the NPC before them, and replace them with their own appointees. They therefore abolished direct local taxes, collection of which was a key instrument of authority of local notables. Lacking parliamentary procedures for votes of no confidence, the NPN resorted to the procedure

⁴⁴ Personal information to Shehu Othman from former President Shehu Shagari; *West Africa* (London), 2 April 1984; J. O. Ojiako, *Ist Four Years of Nigeria's Executive Presidency: Success or Failure* (Daily Times of Nigeria, Lagos, 1983), pp. 147-175; B. O. Nwabueze, *Nigeria's Presidential Constitution, 1979-1983* (Longman, London, 1985), pp. 262-265.

⁴⁵ Ojiako, *Ist Four Years*, pp. 25-58; Graf, *Nigerian State*, pp. 90-100; L. Diamond, 'Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism, and the Struggle for Democracy' in L. Diamond, J. J. Linz and S. M. Lipset (eds), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Africa*, vol. 2 (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1988), p. 50 revised in 'Nigeria: the Uncivil Society and the Descent into Praetorianism' in *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, 2nd ed., (Lynn Rienner, Boulder, 1995); the first 1990 ed. includes the 1988 version.

⁴⁶ Ojiako, *Ist Four Years*, pp. 225-233; Graf, *Nigerian State*, pp. 142-147, 180-202; A. Suberu, 'The Struggle for New States in Nigeria', *African Affairs*, 90, 361 (1991); Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, p. 84.

for impeachment to bring Balarabe Musa down, giving ideas for other legislators to use against governors and deputies of their own parties.⁴⁷

Political violence broke out between interests supported by the NPN and the governing parties in Kano, Bornu and Oyo states. In Kano, the PRP upgraded the status of local rulers, placing some at a par with the Emir of Kano. The governor followed this up in July 1981 by requiring the Emir to show within forty-eight hours why his reign should not be terminated, implicitly reminding the Emir of his predecessor's dismissal by Ahmadu Bello, the Northern Premier, in 1961. This strategy divided the PRP and provoked violent attacks on government buildings and supporters, culminating in the tragic death of Dr Bala Mohammed, the radical political adviser to the governor.⁴⁸

In 1980, police killed farmers at Bakalori in Sokoto State who protested against their displacement by a large irrigation scheme.⁴⁹ State police commissioners came into direct conflict with several state governors. The Nigeria Police Force failed to control political violence in Kano, Bornu and Oyo states. Between 1980 and 1982, the authorities were confronted in Kano, Kaduna and Bornu states by a violent millennial sect, the '*Yan Tatsine*', which denounced the moral corruption and 'modern' practices which characterised Nigeria during and after the oil boom of the 1970s and was brutally repressed by armed actions, involving some five thousand deaths.⁵⁰

Rising oil revenues in 1980 allowed the government to increase the import of consumer goods and expand its spending commitments. A general strike secured another round of wage increases in 1981.⁵¹ The fall in income from oil in 1981, with little realistic prospect of recovery, did not constrain spending. Federal and state governments and parliaments committed themselves to expenditures well beyond their revenues on infrastructural, agricultural and irrigation schemes.⁵² The federal government approved the foreign

⁴⁷ On events in Kaduna and other states, see A. D. Yahaya, 'PRP Crisis: The Truth of the Matter', *West Africa*, 15 June 1981; Ojiako, *Ist Four Years*, pp. 111-119, 176-219; Nwabueze, *Nigeria's Presidential Constitution*, pp. 89-125; Diamond, 'Nigeria', p. 51, and 'The Uncivil Society'.

⁴⁸ West Africa, 10 July, 1981; Y. B. Usman, *Political Repression in Nigeria*, vol. 1 (Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1982); Ibrahim, 'Accès a l'état', pp. 298-307.

⁴⁹ T. Wallace, 'Agricultural Projects and Land in Northern Nigeria', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 17 (1980), pp. 64-65; B. Beckman, 'Bakalori: Peasants versus State and Capital', *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 4, 1-2 (1985); W. M. Adams, 'Rural Protest, Land Policy and the Planning Process on the Bakolori Project, Nigeria', *Africa*, 58, 3, (1988); M. Gwandu, 'The Politics of Rural Development in the Area of the Sokoto-Rima River Basin Authority' (Ph. D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1988).

⁵⁰ R. Hickey, 'The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria: A Note', *African Affairs*, 83, 331 (April 1984); P. Lubeck, 'Islamic Protest under Semi-Industrial Capitalism: 'Yan Tatsine Explained', *Africa*, 55, 4 (1985). Similar conflicts took place in 1984 in Jimeta, Gongola State and 1985 in Gombe, Bauchi State. *West Africa*, 6 May 1985.

⁵¹ D. Otodo, 'The Nigerian General Strike of 1981', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 22 (1981), and 'The Political Clash in the Aftermath of the 1981 Nigerian General Strike', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 25 (1982).

⁵² T. Wallace, 'The Kano River Project, Nigeria: The Impact of an Irrigation Scheme on Productivity and Welfare' in Heyer, Roberts and Williams (eds), *Rural Development*; G. Andrae and B. Beckman, *The Wheat Trap: Bread and Underdevelopment in Nigeria* (Zed, London, 1985); R. Palmer-Jones, 'Irrigation and the Politics of Agricultural Development in Nigeria', B. Beckman, 'Public Investment and Agrarian

exchange spending to which the states committed themselves. Mobilisation funds were paid out for contracts which were never begun. Arson destroyed evidence of corruption in government ministries and parastatals. Governors appropriated large sums for their personal use and party war chests. Balarabe Musa described the system as a 'Contractocracy' a government of contractors, for contractors, and by contractors.⁵³

Scarcities of commodities generated profits for those with access to import licences and foreign exchange. Policy making was subordinated to the priorities of allocating benefits. Commercial activities were oriented towards realising profits in foreign currencies. Factories operated far below their capacity for lack of essential inputs. The overvalued exchange rate and the regime of exchange and import controls created a massive boom in illegal trade with neighbouring countries. The government responded to the collapse of the oil boom by the forcible expatriation of some two million foreign workers, of whom about half were Ghanaian. Political chicanery, violence and corruption rendered President Shagari's calls in 1982 and 1983 for an 'Ethical Revolution' risible.⁵⁴

The prospects of elections in 1983 divided governing and opposition parties alike. FEDECO and the police found opportunities to demonstrate their partisanship. In 1978, the NPN Constitution had provided that all positions in the party and for elective state offices be equitably shared and rotated among members from five defined zones of the country. It did not, however, specify for subsequent share-outs the sequence or timing of the rotation, or whether every post would always be affected; although party policy required that party leaders submit to a bi-annual confidence vote. Moshood Abiola, a wealthy and ambitious businessman, who in December 1980 had failed to displace Adisa Akinloye (a fellow Yoruba) as party chairman, brusquely left the NPN in July 1982 after party barons refused to let non-northerners to challenge President Shagari for the party's 1983 presidential nomination. The candidacy, Umaru Dikko bluntly told Abiola, was 'not for sale'.⁵⁵

The 'Kaduna Mafia' found themselves to be excluded from control of patronage by President Shagari and Umaru Dikko, and their associates. They were frustrated by the deficiencies of the government and the consequences for their business enterprises. They negotiated an alliance with their long-standing rival, Awolowo, in 1983 but to little, if any, electoral effect.⁵⁶ National control of patronage and power kept the NPN largely intact.

Transformation in Northern Nigeria', P. Clough and G. Williams, 'Decoding Berg: The World Bank in Rural Northern Nigeria' in M. Watts (ed.), *State, Oil and Agriculture in Nigeria* (Institute of International Studies, Berkeley, 1987); G. Williams, 'The World Bank in Rural Nigeria Revisited', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 43 (1988).

⁵³ Cited in Y. B. Usman, 'Middlemen, Consultants, Contractors and the Solutions to the Current Economic Crisis', *Ifè Lecture Series*, No. 1 (Jan 1984).

⁵⁴ Graf, *Nigerian State*, p. 95.

⁵⁵ Ojiako, *1st Four Years*, pp. 36-41; *Constitution of the National Party of Nigeria*, Article 21; *National Concord* (Lagos), 6 May 1982; *The Telex* (Kaduna), 18 June 1982; *Sunday Triumph* (Kano), 11, 25 July, 1982; *New Nigerian* (Kaduna), 1, 2 Sept 1982.

⁵⁶ Yahaya, 'Nigerian Public Administration under Military Rule'; Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics*, pp. 133-136; Othman, 'Classes, Crises and Coup', pp. 446-450.

Their rivals were even more divided. A coalition of non-NPN parties, the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA), could not form an electoral coalition because of their inability to agree on a common presidential candidate. FEDECO recognised the pro-NPN faction of the PRP, led by Aminu Kano, but the anti-NPN faction of the GNPP, led by Waziri Ibrahim. Governor Abubakar Rimi of Kano aligned himself with the NPP. FEDECO refused to register the Progressive People's Party (PPP) which was formed, after the failure of the PPA, as an alliance of the NPP with sections of the PRP and GNPP, excluding the UPN. FEDECO did recognise on 24 May 1982 a sixth contender, the Nigerian Advance Party, which sought to compete with the UPN in its stronghold.

The logic of a presidential system brought about an incomplete rationalization of the party system in which politicians in the minor parties were forced to join or align themselves with major parties. Three, rather than two, major parties remained at federal level; in the states, one-party dominance or two-party competition was now the rule, except in Kano and Gongola.⁵⁷

Gowon and Ojukwu, both in exile, were granted amnesty on 1 October 1981 and 18 May 1982 respectively. Ojukwu flew into Lagos on 14 June 1982 to a hero's welcome from Igbo supporters and subsequently declared his support for the NPN, to the chagrin of leading figures in the military and the 'Kaduna Mafia'. Awolowo, whom many Igbo believed had betrayed them in the crucial period just before the civil war, was determined to run again for the presidency. So the elderly founding fathers of the NCNC and the AG, Azikiwe and Awolowo, ran for the NPP and the UPN respectively, hoping that Shagari would not get sufficient support in enough states to be elected on the first ballot. The failure to find an electable opposition ticket ensured Shagari's victory. FEDECO reversed the order of elections so that there would be an effective federal government in place to complete the electoral proceedings. Opposition parties argued that this would favour NPN candidates in the other elections.⁵⁸

The 1983 elections secured a substantial win for President Shagari with some twelve million votes, more than four million ahead of Awolowo. Only in Lagos, Ondo and Ogun states did Shagari have less than 25 per cent of the votes cast. The NPN governorship candidates were originally declared winners in 13 states, including two Yoruba states, Oyo and Ondo, and one Igbo state, Anambra. It was essential to the aspirations of Yoruba and Igbo 1987 presidential hopefuls in the NPN that in 1983 they should deliver at least one state in their region to the NPN. The Ondo result was reversed by the courts as, ultimately, was Ojukwu's election to the Senate from Nnewi, Anambra State. The campaigns heightened conflicts, intimidation and violence and the results provoked further violence in Ondo and Oyo. The election outcomes owed more to political calculations and judicial decisions than to the recorded preferences of voters. Political violence focused on state elections, whose outcomes most directly affect the majority of candidates for office and their local clients.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Graf, *Nigerian State*, p. 105. Only in Gongola and Kano states did the third presidential candidate get more than 20 per cent of the vote and for governor more than 15 per cent. For results, see pp. 101-104 or Nwabueze, *Nigeria's Presidential Constitution*, pp. 470-475.

⁵⁸ *West Africa*, 4 Apr 1983.

⁵⁹ *West Africa*, 15-29 Aug, 12-19/26 Dec 1983; Diamond, 'Nigeria in Search of Democracy', *Foreign Affairs*, 62, 4 (1984); 'Nigeria', pp. 372-373; J. Herskovits, 'Dateline Nigeria: Democracy Down

The NPN had used their patronage and power to win the federal elections against the fragmented opposition. The parties used their constitutional powers to maintain their position but showed little regard for constitutional constraints. The non-NPN parties, and their press, began to call on the armed forces to intervene. By the end of 1983, the government was bankrupt and democracy was discredited. Few Nigerians mourned the end of civilian rule when the military removed the government from office on 31 December 1983. The military coup had been planned before the elections and was clearly designed to address the concerns of senior officers and of their associates in the 'Kaduna Mafia' for order and discipline in the economy, polity and society.⁶⁰

The new military government sought to impose on Nigerian society the military virtues of order, discipline and central command under the direction of the Supreme Military Council, recreating the forms of military administration of the Murtala regime.⁶¹ Decree 2 enabled the government to detain people arbitrarily, try people by military tribunals and restricted the authority of the courts. Decree 4 limited the rights of journalists to criticise public officials. The death penalty was extended to cover a wide range of economic, violent and anti-social offences and public executions were reintroduced. Executions of drug peddlers was only stopped when a senior police commander, related to Maj-Gen Muhammadu Buhari, the new head of state, was implicated in a drug scandal.

Government declared a War Against Indiscipline. It assailed all forms of degeneracy and promoted the virtues of honesty, patriotism, hard work, family life, queuing and the good society. It culminated in an attack on street traders in the name of environmental sanitation and a further expulsion of 'illegal aliens'. The government's policies of retrenchment brought them into conflict with journalists, academics, students, lawyers, doctors and workers.

The leading figures in the military junta which took power under Buhari were predominantly northern in origin and conservative in outlook. They were drawn from the generation who had been encouraged by northern ministers, notably Shagari himself, to join the army and make up the northern quota of recruits to the officer corps in the 1960s. They shared training, war-time experience in the federal cause and personal friendships and had connections with their civilian counterparts in the 'Kaduna Mafia'.

The cabinet had a majority of civilians and was evenly recruited from amongst all parts of the country. A leading 'Kaduna Mafia' ideologue, Dr Mahmud Tukur, was appointed to the key post of Minister of Commerce and Industries. The new government made sweeping arrests of politicians and officials. A number of leading figures were sentenced to long prison terms for corruption. These trials focused particularly on state governors and others without strong connections to leading figures in the new regime.⁶²

But Not Out', *Foreign Policy*, 54 (1984); Nwabueze, *Nigeria's Presidential Constitution*, pp. 387-468; Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics*, pp. 153-183; Graf, *Nigerian State*, pp. 94-112; W. Miles, *Elections in Nigeria: A Grassroots Perspective* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1988); C. Hart, 'The Nigerian Elections of 1983', *Africa*, 63 (1993).

⁶⁰ Othman, 'Classes, Crises and Coup'.

⁶¹ *West Africa*, 9 Jan, 26 Mar 1984.

⁶² On the Buhari regime, see Othman, 'Classes, Crises and Coup', pp. 460-461, and 'Power for Profit', pp. 135-140; Graf, *Nigerian State*, 149-167; Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 93-98.

The country's economic crisis was also to be addressed through military order and discipline. Nigeria would finance the servicing of its debts by retrenchments in government service, wage freezes, a strike ban, the reintroduction of poll and cattle taxes and the raising of various 'development levies'. The poor would have to pay for the profligacy of the rich. While Buhari was preaching the need for austerity and reducing defence spending, the Chief of Army Staff, Maj-Gen Ibrahim Babangida, proposed that Nigeria should develop its industrial economy by building an 'arms city' in the hinterland.⁶³

Government maintained the overvalued exchange rate of the naira. All imports were placed under special licences, which were allocated with the necessary foreign exchange, by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.⁶⁴ The state took on a large share of responsibility for distributing imported food and consumer goods, mainly to state employees, and promoted barter arrangements with Brazil, Italy, Austria, and other countries. The River Basin Development Authorities which were responsible for irrigation schemes were expanded. Wheat continued to be imported freely.

These measures concentrated the profits from imports and exports among a limited number of beneficiaries among whom the 'Kaduna Mafia' and their associates were prominent. Obasanjo articulated a sense of grievance among the Yoruba 'that there is a grand design to perpetually exclude' them 'from political leadership' because they had 'economic ascendancy'.⁶⁵ Government resisted IMF demands for a substantial (60 per cent) devaluation and a rise in petrol prices.⁶⁶

The military government was increasingly riven by dissension over its strategies for economic management, the detentions and trials of political detainees and the rising power of Brigadier Tunde Idiagbon, the Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, and the driving force behind the regime's authoritarian policies, and of the Nigerian Security Organisation (NSO). In July 1985, Idiagbon declared that the regime had no plan to return Nigeria to civilian rule and banned political debate.⁶⁷ Buhari and Idiagbon were increasingly isolated from their military colleagues. Both the NPN government and their military successors had exhausted their economic strategies and their political credibility. On 27 August 1985, Buhari and Idiagbon and their close associates were removed in a palace coup.

The Constitution of the Second Republic was designed to overcome the endemic problems of regional conflict and political instability. In practice, it failed to provide a framework for regulating political competition. The constitutional arrangements themselves became a focus for political conflicts over the relations between federal and state governments, the allocation of revenues, the creation of states and the relations

⁶³ Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', p. 139. The speech was reported in *Africa Confidential* (London), 26, 13 Mar, 1985, p. 7.

⁶⁴ P. P. Cowitt (ed.), *World Currency Yearbook, 1986-87* (Brooklyn, New York, 1989), pp. 144.

⁶⁵ General Olusegun Obasanjo, 'Nigeria: Which Way Forward?', *Daily Times* (Lagos), 7, 8 Aug 1985, or *West Africa*, 19 Aug 1985, and discussed in Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', pp. 137-138.

⁶⁶ Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 98-102.

⁶⁷ *West Africa*, 29 July 1995.

between executives and legislators.⁶⁸ Politicians in all parties, business interests and military officers were all dissatisfied with the incoherence of government and with their shares in the allocation of spoils. The 1983 elections demonstrated the NPN's hold on the machinery of power and patronage and the inability of the other parties to combine to challenge the political strategies of the NPN. On the last day of 1983, the armed forces overthrew a discredited political system, wracked by political conflicts, religious tensions and economic bankruptcy. Politicians and their business associates were primarily concerned with appropriating public money for private purposes. They showed little concern for issues of public policy or effective government which was exacerbated by civil service resistance to political control. The politicians were slow to confront the consequences of the sharp collapse of oil revenues. The more the government sought to impose controls over economic activities, the more rulers and officials exacted tolls on them, and the more people resorted to ways of evading both. The Buhari regime sought to deal with the economic and social crisis by austerity and discipline. It lacked a coherent strategy for economic, social and political reforms.

Economic Reforms and Political Transition, 1985-1991

Maj-Gen Babangida came to power with a sharp appreciation of the multifold ethnic and regional interests dividing Nigeria and the magnitude of its economic and political crises and of the ways he could manage these to serve his own purposes. He sought to create a strong and centralised state through which he could 'dominate' his political environment and implement his strategies. At the same time, he saw the need to build political support within the armed forces, in the business community, among the political class and in the wider society. At the outset, Babangida struck a liberal note and adopted a populist style, presenting his government as one which would listen to public opinion. In practice, he and his advisers and allies directed from above the formulation and adoption of ambitious programmes of economic reform and political transition. Babangida's economic strategy, though claiming indigenous origin, largely followed the prescriptions of the IMF and the World Bank. After a promising start, the government did not maintain the fiscal discipline necessary to the imposition of its structural adjustment programme, a failure graphically exemplified by the continuing fall in the exchange rate of the naira. The political programme envisaged a transformation of the political culture under military tutelage⁶⁹ and legislated into existence a two-party presidential system. Babangida continually changed the rules under which the political game would be played.

Babangida headed the new Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). Unlike his military predecessors, Babangida proclaimed himself President. He divided the political and military functions which had been vested in Idiagbon's office between the new Chief of General Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, leaving himself in direct control. Maj-Gen Sani Abacha was made Chief of Army Staff and kept his close proximity to Babangida until he displaced him in August 1993. At the beginning of 1990, Babangida assumed the post of

⁶⁸ J. C. Okoroji, 'Federal-State Relations in Nigeria's Second Republic: A Study of Conflict and Co-operation' (Ph. D. thesis, University of Keele, 1989).

⁶⁹ Report on the Committee [of eight Permanent Secretaries] on Political Programme, cited in T. Olagunju, A. Jinadu and S. Oyovbaire, *Transition to Democracy in Nigeria (1985-1993)* (Spectrum Books, Ibadan, 1993), p. 188.

Minister of Defence; Abacha became Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Later that year, the post of Chief of General Staff was abolished and its incumbent, Vice-Admiral Augustus Aikhomu, retired to become Vice-President. Abacha now became Chief of Defence Staff and Minister of Defence.⁷⁰

The AFRC and the part-civilian cabinet and military state governors were recruited from across the country. Babangida promoted his younger military associates to strategic positions in the new regime. His appointments prompted immediate complaints that there were only two Hausa-Fulani in the AFRC and no Muslims among the four General Officers Commanding in the army.⁷¹

Babangida immediately declared that the percentage of Nigeria's external earnings earmarked for paying its foreign debts would be reduced from 44 to 30 per cent. His government released political detainees, cut sentences and abolished the Public Officers Protection Against False Accusation Decree 4, 1984 which constrained journalists from attacking public officials, though the other repressive decrees of the Buhari regime merely remained temporarily in abeyance.⁷²

On 1 October 1985, Babangida declared a state of 'Economic Emergency' and called for a 'vigorous search for a New Political Order'. He banned the import 'of rice and maize forthwith'.⁷³ The declaration gave the President sweeping powers to deal with the economy and thereby over political decisions. Babangida then initiated a debate on whether Nigeria should accept a US \$2.5 billion loan from the IMF with its accompanying conditionalities. Opposition came from trade unions, local manufacturers and certain bankers and financiers who had been close to political power. Support was muted; it was strongest in the corporate sector, with the chairman of the United Africa Company (UAC), Ernest Shonekan, a noted supporter. Public opinion was strongly against it and the government ostensibly discontinued its negotiations with the IMF. No alternative strategy was apparently yet in sight.⁷⁴

Four months after taking power, the new regime announced that it had discovered plans for a violent coup which involved Babangida's school and course mate, Maj-Gen Mamman Vatsa, a notable poet. The alleged coup plotters were marked by their training and academic qualifications. They resented their exclusion from strategic appointments and regarded Babangida as morally unfit to rule and likely to lead the country to disaster.⁷⁵ They were cynically presented as supporters of the IMF's plans to impose its policies on Nigeria. Following a secret trial, Vatsa and nine other officers were executed secretly and without prior announcement in March 1986.

⁷⁰ *West Africa*, 2, 9 Sept 1985, 8-14 Jan, 10-16, 24-30 Sept 1990.

⁷¹ Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', p. 140, 'The Military and Politics', *West Africa*, 30 Sept 1985.

⁷² Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', pp. 138-140, 'On Decree No. 4', *West Africa*, 9 Sept 1985.

⁷³ *West Africa*, 7 Oct 1985.

⁷⁴ *West Africa*, 23/30 Dec 1985; Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', pp. 140-141; Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 209-211.

⁷⁵ Personal information to Shehu Othman from ret. Lt-Gen T. Y. Danjuma, 10 Apr 1987; *The Guardian* (Lagos), 21 Dec 1985; *West Africa*, 6 Jan, 3 Mar 1986; *Newswatch* (Lagos), 17 Mar 1986; Othman, ' "Power for Profit" ', pp. 141-142.

The limits of military liberalism were soon exposed. On 23 May 1986, police went on the rampage and killed some twenty students in Zaria, demonstrating a continuity with past regimes and setting a precedent for subsequent depredations by the mobile police, the 'kill-and-go'. On 19 October, Dele Giwa, a journalist, was blown up by a parcel bomb, presumed to be sent by the security forces.⁷⁶

The stages of transition from military to civilian rule were not to be as direct as they had been under the Murtala-Obasanjo regime. In January 1986, Babangida appointed a Political Bureau, which he staffed mainly with academics, to make recommendations for a political and economic programme which would lead to a transfer of power to civilians on 1 October 1990. To the political bureau he added a series of directorates with long-winded names, each equipped with a panoply of national and state secretariats, to promote civic virtue and rural development and to extend the patronage of the president and his wife. These included the Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) set up on 1 October 1985, the Directorate for the Mass Mobilisation for Self-Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) set up on 7 July 1987, and later the Better Life Programme for Rural Women under Maryam Babangida's direction.⁷⁷

The 1986 budget committed the government to a realistic exchange rate policy, privatization and control of government spending without abandoning bureaucratic controls. Government had to confront a collapse in the international oil market. Between 1985 and 1986, the volume of oil exported fell by 38 per cent and in mid-1986 the price dropped to as low as \$10 dollars a barrel. Earnings from all exports fell by more than a half from \$13.1 billion to \$6.0 billion.⁷⁸ By June, the Lagos Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria and key civil servants were in favour of substantial devaluation.

In July 1986, Babangida outlined his 'home-grown' Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) which, in most respects, followed the standard lines of IMF/ World Bank programmes. Dr Kalu Idika Kalu, the Minister of Finance, was himself a former World Bank official. Nigeria gained access, in principle, to IMF and World Bank credit and support for debt rescheduling, subject to continuing negotiations over their conditions. Britain and the United States saw Babangida as a man with whom they could do business. Commodity marketing boards and import licences were formally abolished; limits on foreign investors to 40 or 60 per cent of equity in Nigerian firms were removed; tariffs were liberalised; fuel prices raised from 15 kobo (15k) to 29.5k per litre; and interest rates increased.

A foreign exchange auction was instituted on 26 September 1986. It produced a two-thirds fall in the exchange rate of the naira from 1.55 to 4.6 = \$1. Access to the profits of the import-export economy switched from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to the banking system. Over 100 new banks came to life in order to bid for foreign exchange. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) managed the auction to distribute foreign exchange

⁷⁶ *West Africa*, 2 June, 27 Oct, 17 Nov 1986; D. Pallister, 'Death Letter to the Editor', *The Guardian* (London), 20 Oct 1986; Diamond, 'Nigeria', pp. 59-60, 'The Uncivil Society'; A. R. Mustapha and S. Othman, 'The Recent Police Killings on Nigerian Campuses', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 38 (1986), pp. 73-75; A. M. Jega, *Nigerian Academics under Military Rule* (Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, 1994), pp. 18-22.

⁷⁷ A special edition of *Newswatch*, 5 Oct 1992, entitled 'The Money Guzzlers' assesses the profligacy and incompetence of these and other institutions.

⁷⁸ IMF, *International Financial Statistics Yearbook*, 1993, p. 549.

among bidders and keep some control of the exchange rate. Government kept a higher ('first-tier') fixed exchange rate for specific government payments. In October, the World Bank agreed to grant Nigeria a loan of \$452 million. In December, agreement was reached to reschedule Nigeria's foreign debts and, in January 1987, the IMF agreed to a standby loan of SDR 600 million. The new policies and their approval by the IMF and the World Bank contributed to a rise in the exchange rate of the naira to 3.2 = \$1. In July 1987, the two tiers were merged into a single official auction rate.⁷⁹

Against the trends to economic liberalisation, the government added to the existing bans on rice and maize a ban on wheat and other food imports from January 1987. This was designed to encourage wheat production but instead produced claims from different states to imaginary levels of wheat output to sustain the federal government's subsidies for fertiliser. It led to increased bread prices, illegal imports of wheat flour and a collapse of the flour milling industry, and strong criticisms from the US government and grain exporters.

In 1990, the government announced a forthcoming ban on the export of cocoa beans, which it rescinded when it became clear that manufacturers lacked the capacity to process the crop for export. The ban was supposed to reap for Nigeria the questionable benefits of beneficiation; it offered a means for government to recapture control of cocoa exports and the foreign exchange it earned. Each round of devaluation opened further the gap between fuel prices in Nigeria and the price of oil in world markets and of fuel in neighbouring countries. The World Bank continued to press the government to raise fuel prices and end the wheat ban.

SAP initially seemed to be able to realise many of its objectives, though not always quite as they had been planned. The naira price of cocoa multiplied severalfold as a result of devaluation, of the abolition of the marketing boards and of demand for a crop which could be bought in naira and sold in dollars. Manufacturers could get access to imported machinery and materials as long as they were willing to pay higher prices for imports and credit in a stagnant market. Northern manufacturers who found themselves at a relative disadvantage were critical of the new import regime. Cotton production increased and the production of textiles and other industries using local materials recovered. Production of vehicles and other industries assembling imported parts fell.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *Financial Times* (London), 27 Sept, 16 Oct, 18 Nov 1986, 2 Mar, 4 July 1987; *West Africa*, 23 Feb 1987, p. 359; Central Bank of Nigeria, *Annual Reports*, 1986, 1989; P. P. Cowitt (ed.), *World Currency Yearbook* (Brooklyn, New York, 1991), pp. 144-149 for the period 1985-1988; A. O. Philips and E. C. Ndekwe (eds), *Structural Adjustment in a Developing Economy: The Case of Nigeria* (Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan, 1987); A. O. Olukoshi (ed.), *The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (James Currey, London, 1993); Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 211-220.

⁸⁰ For crop prices and volumes, see Central Bank of Nigeria, *Annual Reports*, 1986, pp. 19-22, 27; 1989, pp. 18-23, 29. G. Deutsch, 'Cocoa Marketing Without Statutory Marketing Boards: The Nigerian Example, 1936 and 1986', Conference of the African Studies Association of the U. K. (Birmingham, 1990); A. R. Mustapha, 'Harvesting SAP: Cocoa, Farming Households and Structural Adjustment in Nigeria' in Y. Bangura (ed.), *Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria* (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, forthcoming); G. Williams, 'Agrarprotektionismus, Freihandel und GATT: Beispiel Nigeria und die Agrargeschichte des Nordens' in R. Buntzel (ed.), *Landwirtschaft in den Zwängen des Welthandels: Beiträge über Agrarpolitik, Hunger und Umwelt in der Uruguay-Runde*, Texte 50, Verlag Dienste in Übersee, Hamburg; G. Andrae and B. Beckman, *Industry Goes Farming: The*

Food prices remained relatively stable until drought recurred in 1987, provoking a ban on food exports which raised the cost of selling food across the border. However, the government was unable to meet its declared commitment to end the fuel subsidy. Facing rising prices and declining incomes, trade unions and the wider public refused to accept the cogent arguments for a fuel price increases which, they presumed, would only go to line the pockets of those in government even deeper. Government imposed a wage freeze on a divided trade union movement and in 1988 dissolved the leadership of the NLC and suppressed a strike by academics by proscribing ASUU, the university staff union.⁸¹

In 1986, the year in which structural adjustment was introduced, the dollar price of Nigeria's oil exports halved. The exchange rate at the foreign exchange auction stayed between 4 and 5 to the dollar until 1988. An expansion of the government's fiscal deficit and of bank credit fuelled inflation in 1988. Nigeria's foreign debt liabilities escalated under structural adjustment from \$20 billion in 1985 to \$31 billion in 1988. By 1989, the auction rate had fallen below 7 to the dollar and the naira was available on the autonomous market at about 10. Bankers and their owners were able to recycle foreign exchange to pocket much of the difference. Access to foreign exchange continued to fuel speculative activities rather than provide the means to purchase imports for industry. In subsequent years, the appropriation of funds by the ruling soldiers and massive spending of money on political campaigns undermined the control of government spending and the money supply, causing a continuing erosion of the value of the naira.⁸²

The announcement in February 1986 of Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), which had not been discussed by the AFRC, provoked alarm among Christians but the government could not withdraw the decision for fear of offending Muslims. Nigeria's relation to the OIC remained opaque.⁸³ The regime itself was subject to religious rivalries and each new appointment was closely inspected for its religious and sectional significance. On 22 April 1990, the leaders of a rather farcical attempted coup demanded the temporary excision of five, mainly Muslim, far northern states from Nigeria; following a secret trial, 69 soldiers were executed later that year.⁸⁴

In a situation of economic and moral crises, far more people responded to the promises of evangelical preachers, Christian and Muslim, than to appeals by politicians who were largely left to play the political game amongst themselves. Religion brought consolation and gave meaning to people's lives but it also proved to be a source of conflict. Rivalries

Nigerian Raw Materials Crisis and the Case of Textiles and Cotton, Research Report 80 (Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1987); G. Williams, 'World Bank in Rural Nigeria Revisited', pp. 43, 61; *Financial Times*, 8 Apr 1987, 7 Mar 1988, 6 Mar 1989.

⁸¹ The NLC was placed under a government-appointed administrator for six months and labour leaders detained. D. Ootobo, 'State and Labour: The 1988 Ban of the NLC' in D. Ootobo (ed.), *Labour Relations in Nigeria* (Malthouse, Lagos, 1992); The ban on ASUU was lifted on 27 August 1990. Jega, *Nigerian Academics*, pp. 31-45.

⁸² *Financial Times*, 'Nigeria', 6 Mar 1989, 19 Mar 1990; 12 Mar 1991; *International Herald Tribune* (Paris), 30 June 1988; Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, 217-218.

⁸³ *West Africa*, 3 Feb, 31 Mar, 3 July 1986, 3-9 June, 29 July - 4 Aug, 26 Aug - 1 Sept 1991, 23 Dec 1991 - 5 Jan 1992.

⁸⁴ *West Africa*, 30 Apr - 6 May, 24-30 Sept 1990; *New African* (London), Sept 1990; T. McCaskie, 'Nigeria: Recent History', *Africa South of the Sahara 1996* (Europa, London, 1995), p. 711.

between communities and provocative evangelising led to a series of violent clashes between Muslims and Christians in northern states. In March 1987, clashes which began in Kafanchan and spread to Kaduna, Zaria and Katsina left some thirty people dead. Worse was to come. Over 200 people were killed in April 1991 in Bauchi State and some 300 in October in Kano.⁸⁵ Kataf and Hausa came into conflict in Zangon Kataf, Kaduna State, in February and again in May 1992. This was followed by clashes in other parts of the state, causing hundreds of deaths. Those accused of murder were tried by special tribunals acting outside the Constitution and the authority of the ordinary courts. Maj-Gen Zamani Lekwot (rtd) was among those originally sentenced to death.⁸⁶

The military government's political programme combined a vision of directing the mobilisation of popular energies to public purposes and managing the transition to a regulated system of electoral competition. On 11 July 1987, it rejected the Political Bureau's proposal for a dirigiste 'socialist socio-economic system' and modified its political programme, generally to keep it in line with the provisions of the 1979 Constitution.⁸⁷ Two states were created in September 1987 making 21 and resolving the problem posed in 1979 by the two-thirds rule. A series of bodies were set up to deal with mobilising revenue, codes of conduct for public officers and to conduct a population census. In January 1988, the president restricted the tenure of permanent secretaries to that of the regime they served, abolished their responsibilities for accounting and made the Federal Civil Service Commission purely advisory.⁸⁸ The administration, and its revenues, were now directly in the patrimony of the ruler.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ J. Ibrahim, 'The Politics of Religion in Nigeria: The Parameters of the 1987 Crisis in Kaduna State', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 45/46 (1989); 'Religion and Political Turbulence in Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 29, 1 (1991); 'Ethno-religious Mobilisation and the Sapping of Democracy in Nigeria: On the Legacy of the Transition Programme' (University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 1994); R. Marshall, ' "Power in the Name of Jesus": Social Transformation and Pentecostalism in Western Nigeria "Revisited" ' in T. Ranger and O. Vaughan (eds), *Legitimacy and the State in Twentieth-Century Africa: Essays in Honour of A. H. M. Kirk-Greene* (Macmillan, London, 1993), and originally in *Review Of African Political Economy*, 52 (1991), and ' "God is Not a Democrat": Pentecostalism and Democratisation in Nigeria' in P. Gifford (ed.), *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*, Brill, Leiden, 1995; M. Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Spectrum, Ibadan, 1993).

⁸⁶ Lekwot's sentence was commuted to five years imprisonment by Babangida on the eve of his own departure from office. Lekwot was released in April 1994. *Newswatch*, 1, 8, 15 June 1992; *The African Guardian* (Lagos), 8, 15 June 1992, 25 Jan, 15 Feb 1993; *West Africa*, 1-7 June 1992, 12-18 Apr 1993, 11-17 Apr 1994; A. R. Mustapha, 'Ethnicity and Democratization in Nigeria: A Case Study of Zangon Kataf', Meeting of the African Studies Association (Toronto, 1994); Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 113-118.

⁸⁷ *West Africa*, 3-31 Aug 1987 and R. Mustapha and S. Othman, 'The Idea of Democracy', *West Africa*, 28 Sept 1987. More generally, see Olagunju, Jinadu and Oyovbaire, *Transition to Democracy*, pp. 90-160 this is an authoritative apologia for the Babangida regime's political transition programme; Forrest, *Political and Economic Development*, pp. 118-123; McCaskie, 'Nigeria', pp. 710-711; E. Nwokedi, 'Nigeria's Democratic Transition: Explaining the Annulled 1993 Presidential Election', *The Round Table*, 330 (1994).

⁸⁸ D. White, 'Voodoo Politics: Analyzing the Political Class and the Centralized State in Nigeria' (B. A. thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), p. 20, citing *West Africa* 7 Mar 1988.

⁸⁹ M. Weber, *Economy and Society* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978), vol. 2, part 3, ch. 7. Cf. Ibrahim, 'L'accès à l'état'.

The regime's key political innovation was the announcement that two, and only two, parties would be recognised by the National Electoral Commission (NEC). This would follow a political beauty contest in which contending organisations would seek to establish their claims to meet the NEC's criteria best. The political scientists who proposed this solution argued that the combination of federalism and presidential government had created a tendency towards the creation at the national level of a two-party system out of the multi-party system.⁹⁰ This would direct politics away from the tripolar regional alignments of the First Republic which had emerged in new forms in the Second Republic. Politicians in the Second Republic had failed to recognise the logic of an American party system. The military in government would therefore legislate it for them.

In 1986, the military government had banned all politicians of the Second Republic from politics for ten years. The ban was extended on 23 September 1987 to all current and previous holders of high political and military office and for the period of the transition. Babangida explained the exclusion of the military by declaring 'categorically that this administration does not wish to plan to succeed itself.'⁹¹ The military rulers intended to keep 'moneybags', together with their own now-retired military seniors and peers, out of politics while covertly funding their own clients.

The idea of building a new democracy on a new generation relied on an extremely short memory: the 'newbreeds' of the Second Republic had been even more corrupt than the 'old guard' inherited from the First. By banning, unbanning and rebanning contestants, Babangida would exhaust his rivals and their 'war chests' as they spent their way through successive rounds of elections. He could outlast them all since he had the national exchequer at his disposal. The transition to civilian rule was now postponed to 1 October 1992. Local elections were held without parties in December 1987 and rerun in 312 wards where the initial results had been annulled in March 1988. The new Constitution was promulgated on 3 May 1989.

As in 1977, the Constituent Assembly, inaugurated on 11 May 1988, provided a fertile site for coalition making. Thirteen political associations applied for the two vacancies for official parties and six were recommended for consideration by the NEC to the AFRC. The three leading contenders were the outcome of a re-formation of the alignments of the major parties in the Second Republic.⁹² Politicians had not yet aligned themselves in accordance with the bipolar logic of American presidential government.

On 7 October 1989, Babangida dissolved all thirteen associations because of their ties to old power structures and roots in 'ethnic and religious bigotry'. And since they did not meet the regime's 'vision of a new political order', he created two parastatal parties. One, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), was to be 'a little to the left and the other', the National Republican Convention (NRC), 'a little to the right of the centre'.⁹³ Both would

⁹⁰ Olagunju, Jinadu and Oyovbaire, *Transition to Democracy*, p. 143.

⁹¹ *Newswatch*, 29 Aug 1988, p. 31. On the bans, *West Africa*, 7 July 1986; 5 Oct 1997.

⁹² *African Concord* (Lagos), 5 June, 9 Oct 1989; A. Akinola, 'Manufacturing the Two-party System in Nigeria', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 28, 3 (1990).

⁹³ *The Independent* (London), 9 Oct 1989; *Financial Times*, 9 Oct 1989; *West Africa*, 2-30 Oct 1989; interview with Prof Eme Awa, former Chairman of the National Electoral Commission, in *African Guardian*, 18 Oct 1993; T. Adeniran, 'The Two-Party System and the Federal Political Process', in L. Adamolekun (ed.), *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*.

effectively be parties of the centre, accepting the basic framework of federalism and presidentialism and maintain the economic restructuring programme initiated by the regime. As in America, parties provided a framework for politicians to compete for office; issues of policy and representation of the people are of little consequence.

The regime provided each of the two parties with `a constitution, a manifesto, offices, even colours and an election symbol.'⁹⁴ The new parastatal parties elected their executives in August 1990: the NRC chose Tom Ikimi, a southerner from the `minority' Edo State, as its party chairman, and the SDP Babagana Kingibe, a `minority' Kanuri from Bornu State in the north. These decisions were interpreted as designed to secure a northern presidential candidate for the NRC and a southern candidate for the SDP in both cases from the dominant ethnic groups. The regime had reduced politics to its bare essentials. Parties would not be concerned to develop their own policies and offer them to the electorate. They would, as in the United States, simply provide the institutional framework within which candidates competed for office.

On 27 August 1991, in the midst of the primary campaigns for state government elections, Babangida suddenly decreed nine new states and 47 new local governments.⁹⁵ They each had to be equipped with new capitals which opened the way to a round of massive contracts. The location of states and capitals owed much to the interests of Babangida's wife, Maryam, originally from Asaba, capital of the new Delta State, and of serving or retired officers close to Babangida. They were also designed to boost Babangida's own political support as the contest for political power began to get under way. However, the exercise provoked demonstrations over boundaries and the choice of capitals. Disputes over new state and local government boundaries provoked bloody conflicts over land between communities in several northern and eastern states. In the new north-eastern Taraba State, a series of conflicts between communities over access to land led to over five thousand deaths.⁹⁶

Communities in the oil-producing areas in the Niger Delta protested against extensive oil and gas pollution and demanded a larger share of oil resources and a greater say in their allocation. Rises in fuel prices and in bus and taxi fares caused widespread disaffection and led to demonstrations and looting in urban centres. Protests were met by brutal suppression, provoking hostility towards, and attacks on, the police themselves.⁹⁷

In December 1990, about four out of five registered voters ignored the elections by `open ballot' (queuing behind candidates' posters and being counted aloud) to local government authorities.⁹⁸ SDP gained a majority of councillors and councils. On 19 October 1991, primary elections were held for the 30 state assemblies and governors. The parties proved unable to manage them. The AFRC annulled primary election results

⁹⁴ *The Economist* (London), 15 Dec 1990, p. 78.

⁹⁵ *West Africa*, 19-25 Aug, 2-8 Sept, 4-10 Nov 1991. On 11 May, 1988 Babangida had instructed the inaugural meeting of the Constituent Assembly that it `does not possess the power to create states'. *Newswatch*, 29 Aug 1988, p. 31.

⁹⁶ *The Independent*, 22 Feb 1992; *Newswatch*, 1 June 1992; *Citizen* (Kaduna), 14 Sept 1992.

⁹⁷ *Newswatch*, 25 May 1992; *African Concord*, 12, 19 June 1989; *West Africa*, 12-18 June 1989, 1-7 June 1992.

⁹⁸ In April 1991, this was modified to `open secret' ballot and to secret ballot for the presidential poll. *West Africa*, 8-14 Apr 1991; Diamond, `The Uncivil Society'.

in nine states and selectively disqualified twelve candidates for governor, alleging electoral irregularities and claiming the candidates were fronts for the interests of banned politicians.⁹⁹

Thirteen prominent banned politicians were arrested and charged with involvement in the transition programme on 2 December. They were then freed on 20 December, two days after the regime suddenly lifted the ban on all but serving military officers and all those banned "on moral grounds".¹⁰⁰ Earlier on 12 December, Babangida formally moved the federal government from Lagos to the new capital, Abuja, situated in the centre of the country.

On 14 December 1991, the SDP won majorities in 16 state assemblies but two less in elections for governors in Katsina and Lagos states where divisions within the SDP led voters to reject the party's nominees. Elected state governors were sworn in on 2 January 1992, followed two weeks later by state legislators. The dates of the presidential election and the transfer of power were postponed till the end of the year.¹⁰¹

The Gulf War in 1990 presented the Nigerian government with windfall oil revenues which soon disappeared from view.¹⁰² Babangida secretly distributed bounties amounting to hundreds of millions of naira among different military commands to buy the loyalty of the armed forces.¹⁰³ Officers and soldiers were also allocated cars and motor-cycles, valued according to rank, at very low prices and on credit. Substantial sums were spent from 'dedicated accounts' outside the normal budgetary procedures. The budget deficit increased by 150 per cent to 35 billion. Lagos and its international airport became an important international route for the export of narcotics.

Nigeria played a leading part in the formation of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which was sent to Liberia on a peace-keeping mission. However, there was hardly any peace to keep. ECOMOG troops arrived in the capital, Monrovia, on 24 August 1990 and eventually extended their military commitments into the interior by early 1993. Nigerian forces, later to reach 8,500, were to remain in Liberia for years to come despite increasing public calls for their withdrawal because of the costs and the loss of Nigerian lives. In 1991, Nigerian troops were sent to Sierra Leone after military conflicts had spread there from Liberia. Nigeria's West African commitments provided lucrative contracts to military officers and their business associates and drained the state's

⁹⁹ *The Independent*, 7 Dec 1991.

¹⁰⁰ *West Africa*, 9-15 Dec 1991, 23 Dec 1991 - 5 Jan 1992, p. 2162, 6-12 Jan 1992.

¹⁰¹ *The Guardian* (London), 20 Dec 1991; *African Concord*, 13 Jan 1992.

¹⁰² *Financial Times*, 27 June 1991, 16 Mar 1992; Forrest, *Politics and Economic Development*, pp. 246-247. William Keeling, *Financial Times* correspondent, was promptly deported from Lagos on the night of 29 June 1991 for what the authorities described as 'totally false' report 'intended to cause disharmony among Nigerians'. Yet, Alex Akinyele, the Information Minister, would confirm on 2 July that up to \$2.1 billion had been put in a special Foreign Currency Stabilisation Fund between October 1990 and March 1991. *Financial Times*, 1, 4 July 1991, and of 14 July for the reaction of George Dove-Edwin, Nigeria's High Commissioner to Britain.

¹⁰³ *New African* (London), Sept 1990.

finances. In August 1995, the Nigerian government presided over the signing in Abuja of a peace agreement among Liberia's factions to form a Transitional Council of State.¹⁰⁴

The opening of *bureaux de change* in January 1991 to encourage legal exchange of foreign currencies made it easier for bankers and those with connections to the state to profit from their shares of the oil revenues allocated by the CBN. In March 1992, the exchange rate was reduced from 10.6 to 17.8 to the dollar and the naira was then floated, threatening the profitability of many banks. By the end of the year, the value of the naira had declined to 20 to the dollar and prime interest rates were well over 40 per cent. In March 1993, the government tried to stem the decline of the naira by fixing the exchange rate at 24.99 to the dollar but only succeeded in reopening the gap between the official and parallel markets.¹⁰⁵

By the end of 1991, the military government was clearly losing its capacity to maintain public order, to pursue its economic strategies and to implement its political programme. The structural adjustment programme changed the rules for official and private tribute-taking. But it failed to eliminate the profits to be made from currency exchanges, petrol sales, contracts and thefts and stimulated Nigeria's emergence as an entrepôt for the international drug trade. Babangida used his control of the public purse to direct the political transition. Politicians spent large sums in pursuit of their political ambitions. The political transition was undermining economic reforms. Economic failures generated a deep moral crisis and intensified the battle for power and control over resources. The death tolls from religious and communal conflicts and from the actions of the police and the army were beginning to reach the ghastly levels of 1966. It was becoming apparent that Babangida and his military associates, increasingly bloated with the fruits of office, did not intend to transfer power.

Soldiers, Politicians and the Presidency, 1992-1993

Babangida was the first and to date the only military ruler of Nigeria to claim the title of President. He was determined to control the succession to the office, if he could not keep it for himself. The political class depended on the military rulers for contracts, campaign finance and to secure their eventual access to office. They consequently found themselves in the positions of clients to the regime. Babangida was able to change the rules governing the election process time and again to suit his immediate priorities because the political class preferred to stay in the game and adapt to the changing conditions rather than to withdraw from the struggle for office and its perquisites. They cared much for the chance of getting a share of the substance; procedures only mattered in so far as they advanced or hindered their campaigns.

The government continued to revise the formula for the allocation of its revenues. In 1991, it shifted the balance towards local government and an 'ecological fund', part of which was to be directed towards the claims of the oil-producing areas for a fairer share of oil revenues. Fifty per cent of revenues were allocated to the federal government, 30

¹⁰⁴ M. Vogt (ed.), *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG: A Bold Attempt at Regional Peace Keeping* (Gabumo, Lagos, 1992); M. Vogt and A. Ekoko (eds), *Nigeria in International Peace-keeping, 1960-1992* (Malthouse, Lagos, 1993); A. Adebajo, 'Farewell to Arms', *West Africa*, 25 Dec 1995 - 7 Jan 1996. By 1995, the Nigerian government claims to have spent \$3 billion in Liberia, *Daily Times*, 29 Mar 1996.

¹⁰⁵ *Financial Times*, 12 Nov 1990, 7 Mar 1992, 1 Apr 1993.

per cent to the states, 15 per cent to local government and 5 per cent to the ecological fund, of which 1.5 per cent was to go to the oil-producing areas. The formula for states share now included land mass and internal revenue (each counting 10 per cent) in addition to population (now 30 rather than 50 per cent) and an equal share for each state, making up the remaining 50 per cent of state revenues.

In May 1992, another revision further increased the shares going to local government and the oil-producing areas. The federal share was to be 48.5 per cent, the states only 24 per cent, local authorities 20 per cent and the 'ecological fund' 7.5 per cent. Three per cent (i.e. 40 per cent of the ecological fund) would be distributed by the new Oil and Minerals Producing Areas Development Commission.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, the 1991 census results were announced on 19 March 1992. The total number of 88.5 million Nigerians gave the country its first plausible estimate of its total population since 1951. Nevertheless, the results were subject to partisan disputes by state-based interests.¹⁰⁷

State assemblies became scenes of bitter and often violent wrangling over the spoils of power. Three months after their inception in January 1992, several assemblies still withheld approval for cabinet nominees; in one case, unless the Governor paid 100,000 for each candidate. Babangida amended the Constitution to enable governors to appoint their cabinet without legislative approval. Legislators divided over the election of parliamentary leaders, award of contracts, and financial transparency. The police had to be called into a number of assemblies, notably in Kano, Osun, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Enugu states. On 30 October 1992 in Akwa Ibom, the police themselves helped some ousted parliamentary leaders to beat up their successors; the police were to seal up Rivers State legislature for several weeks in late 1993.

Virtually all the assemblies sacked their leaders, or threatened to impeach governors that did not give them their due share of the fruits of office. In July 1992, Adamawa State legislators even embarked on a two-week strike over allegedly unpaid salaries and allowances; their colleagues in Imo State threatened not to pass any bills unless they received 100,000 car loan each; while the ones in Delta State went on an "indefinite" strike until their demands for housing, transport and other facilities were met.¹⁰⁸ Babangida's much-vaunted exercise in guided democracy was a miserable failure.

On 4 July 1992, after yet another round of selective disqualifications, the SDP gained a majority in the elections to the two houses of the National Assembly. However, the scheduled inauguration of the legislature was postponed on 22 July, ostensibly to await the presidential election and avoid constitutional crisis.¹⁰⁹ The first round of presidential primaries took place on 1 August and were annulled following complaints of

¹⁰⁶ B. Olowo, 'Sharing the Cake', *West Africa*, 24-30 Aug 1992, pp. 1434-35.

¹⁰⁷ *The Independent*, 20, 26, 27 March 1992; *West Africa*, 30 Mar - 5 Apr, 8-14 June 1992; *African Concord*, 30 Mar, 6 Apr, 18 May 1992. The census was conducted on 27-28 September 1991. While the aggregate figure appears more plausible than previous estimates projected from the 1963 census, the relative numbers for specific states are open to question.

¹⁰⁸ *African Concord*, 27 Jan, 9 Mar, 18 May, 7 Sept 1992; *West Africa*, 10-16 Feb, 24 Feb - 1 Mar 1992, 26 July - 1 Aug, 2-8 Aug, 30 Aug - 5 Sept, 20-26 Sept, 27 Sept - 3 Oct, 4-10 Oct 1993.

¹⁰⁹ *West Africa*, 13-26 July, 3-9 Aug 1992; *African Concord*, 13, 20 July 1992; *National Concord*, 23 July 1992; *Newswatch*, 21 June 1993 (full results); Diamond, 'The Uncivil Society'.

malpractices. Primaries were then held in different states on three dates in September.¹¹⁰

Four leading candidates emerged from 23 contenders. For the SDP: Maj-Gen (ret) Yar'adua, a scion of the Katsina aristocracy, who had been an *éminence grise* behind one of the aborted parties and candidates for party and legislative offices; and Olu Falae, a Yoruba and former Secretary to the Federal Government. For the NRC: Umaru Shinkafi, Federal Commissioner of Internal Affairs under Obasanjo and Director-General of the National Security Organization under Shagari; and Adamu Ciroma, the leading northern technocrat of his generation who had served in Shagari's cabinet. It seemed quite likely that the final contest would be between Yar'adua and Ciroma two northerners who had been strongly linked in the past to the 'Kaduna Mafia'. This was not to be.

Candidates in the presidential primaries were accused of bribery and electoral fraud. Falae and nine other SDP contenders withdrew from the final round. The party chairmen confirmed the allegations in their reports to the president in the case of SDP's Kingibe, this would open the possibility for him to launch his own presidential candidacy. On 16 October, the AFRC annulled the primaries, sacked the SDP and NRC party executives, and disqualified all 23 candidates.¹¹¹ Fortunes had been spent in the pursuit of office over the previous three years but the electoral process remained crucially incomplete. The regime may not have decided who would succeed them but it was already clear who would not. Babangida could just not risk as his successor any of the leading contenders, men of immense ambitions, wealth, influence and self-confidence.

The presidential election was now postponed to 12 June 1993 and the handover of power to 27 August 1993, the eighth anniversary of Babangida's coup. A new administration, the Transitional Council, was introduced on 2 January 1993 under Ernest Shonekan, chairman of UAC, the dominant firm in the national economy. The Council was not responsible to the National Assembly, which was now convened on 5 December 1992, but to the National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) which replaced the AFRC.¹¹²

Nigeria's western creditors and the international financial institutions welcomed Shonekan's appointment but he proved unable to gain control of government spending or prevent the further decline of the naira. The CBN maintained the auction rate at 24.99 to the dollar, which only caused the margin between the official and parallel rates to widen significantly. The fuel price was way below the levels in neighbouring countries, provoking massive smuggling and hoarding in anticipation of future increases. State governors conceded 45 per cent wage increases to workers, adding to inflation and state debts.¹¹³

The presidential race was thrown open to everyone except the contenders in the previous round of primaries and a new procedure of indirect election from local government wards upwards was introduced to decide on party nominations. In this way,

¹¹⁰ *Newswatch*, 31 Aug 1992; *National Concord*, 10 Sept - 6 Oct 1992; *Newbreed* (Lagos), 5 Oct 1992.

¹¹¹ *West Africa*, 17-30 Aug, 21-27 Sept, 5-18 Oct 1992; *National Concord*, 24 Sept, 16 and 18 Oct 1992; *Weekend Concord* (Lagos), 17 Oct 1992; *The African Guardian*, 26 Oct 1992.

¹¹² *West Africa*, 14-20 Dec 1992, 11-17 Jan 1993; *The African Guardian*, 18 Jan 1993.

¹¹³ *West Africa*, 1-14 Mar 1983; *Financial Times*, 1, 13 Apr 1993.

each state would elect a favourite son or daughter for each of the two parties and the party conventions would choose their candidates from among them. The regime brought politicians from every state, including the 'minorities' who felt themselves excluded by the major ethnic groups, into the contest while making it easier to manage the process. Babangida encouraged several prominent Nigerians to stand for office to make the process look more credible. Gen Gowon was eliminated at the first round, thanks to his Christian religion being made an issue among Muslim constituents, and Ojukwu was excluded for non-payment of tax.¹¹⁴

Two candidates finally emerged from the process between 28 and 29 March, Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba from Ogun State, and Bashir Othman Tofa, who is from Kano State but of Kanuri origin. Both had initially been associated with the NPN during the Second Republic and entered the race with Babangida's blessing. Abiola was head of ITT in Africa and the Middle East, a newspaper magnate and a noted philanthropist who had a wide network of associates and was well known across the country. Tofa, who chaired a merchant bank, had allegedly been rescued from near insolvency by an oil contract obtained through the influence of Brigadier Halilu Akilu, the Co-ordinator of National Security and an intimate of Babangida.¹¹⁵

Abiola risked losing Christian votes when he named a Muslim northerner, Babagana Kingibe, as his vice-presidential candidate to satisfy kingmakers in his own party.¹¹⁶ Tofa named Dr Sylvester Ugoh, an Igbo-speaking economist who had been Governor of the Central Bank in war-time Biafra. The advantages to Tofa of appointing a Christian running mate were lost to some extent when on 6 June 1993 he was confronted with statements he had made in 1991 which were taken to be anti-Christian.¹¹⁷

The election campaign itself was brief and devoid of any serious discussion of policies, issues or alternative visions. As an observer reported: 'Neither party has coherent policies which differ much from those of the outgoing military regime'. Both candidates 'promised the world' and 'left issues which matter almost untouched'. The one was seen by rivals and in official circles as a 'foreign agent', and the other as a 'nonentity' and 'a stooge of Babangida'.¹¹⁸

On 10 June 1993, the Association for Better Nigeria (ABN), led by Francis Arthur Nzeribe, a war-time arms profiteer, political entrepreneur and bankrupt, who had been conducting a high profile campaign for Babangida to stay in power, secured an interim injunction in the federal High Court at Abuja around 9.45pm to stop the election 27 hours away. The substantive suit itself asked the court to extend military rule by four

¹¹⁴ *West Africa*, 23 Nov - 6 Dec 1992, 15-21 Mar 1993; *Newswatch*, 8 Mar 1993.

¹¹⁵ *African Concord*, 5 Apr 1993; *West Africa*, 5-11 Apr, 3-16 May 1993; *Hotline* (Kaduna), 3-9 May, 1993; *The African Guardian*, 10 May 1993; *Viva Weekly* (Lagos), 17 May, 14 June 1993.

¹¹⁶ *Sunday Concord* (Lagos), 19 July 1992.

¹¹⁷ *National Concord* (Lagos), 7, 9, 10, 11 June 1993, citing Tofa in *The Pen* (Kano), 20 Aug 1991; *Newswatch*, 14, 21 June 1993.

¹¹⁸ P. Adams, 'Nigerians Promised the World', *Financial Times*, 10 June 1993; D. Pallister, 'Passing the Parcel of Political Power', *The Guardian* (London), 5 June 1993, p. 18.

years.¹¹⁹ The NEC, with the support of the regime, went ahead nevertheless, citing section 19(1) of the Presidential Election (Basic Constitution and Transitional Provisions) Decree 13 of 1993.¹²⁰

Early official results for 14 states and Abuja showed a clear win for Abiola. The ABN then obtained an injunction on the evening of 15 June to prevent the release of further results. This was challenged successfully in several federal high courts. The NEC now suspended the electoral process 'in deference to the court injunction and other actions'. Meanwhile, Bashir Tofa, who had promised 'to accept the verdict of the people' and appeared ready to concede defeat, asked a court to declare the election fraudulent. However, on 21 June the ABN again obtained a ruling at the Abuja High Court that the election was illegal.¹²¹

The NEC sought to have the ABN injunctions quashed and other related matters clarified by the federal Court of Appeal in Kaduna. The court was due to decide the issues on 23 June. Babangida lay ominously in wait. Early on that day, a few hours before he met Abiola at the funeral in Katsina of Yar'adua's father, Babangida had, unknown to Abiola or the public, signed a decree in which the NDSC declared the elections invalid, suspended the NEC as well as the transition programme and abrogated the decrees which governed them. Babangida justified his action by the need 'to protect our legal system and the judiciary from being ridiculed and politicised both nationally and internationally'.¹²² By then, the absence of results by the midnight of 20 June had, in law, rendered the election void. And along with it, some 200m which it cost to hold the election.¹²³

The unofficial results showed that Abiola had won a majority in 19 states – all seven in the original Western Region, three out of seven in the former East, and nine of sixteen in the erstwhile North – including Tofa's home state of Kano and even his voting centre. Both candidates won at least thirty per cent of the vote in all but eight states – Sokoto and Kebbi in the north-west won by Tofa, and the six majority Yoruba-speaking states, won by Abiola.¹²⁴ In many respects, the compulsory two party system, with its military-approved candidates, had defied its critics, who had predicted a sharp polarisation between north and south, Christian and Muslim.

¹¹⁹ *Newswatch*, 26 Apr, 7 June 1993; also 20 Dec 1993 for Nzeribe's account; *The Independent*, 14 Feb 1987 on Nzeribe's London bankruptcy hearing; *The Independent on Sunday* (London), 7 June 1992 on how he defrauded the South African government; and *West Africa*, 28 June - 4 July 1993.

¹²⁰ Which states that 'no interim or interlocutory order or ruling, judgment or decision made by any court or tribunal ... shall affect the date or time of holding the election or the performance by the [NEC] of any of its functions under this decree'.

¹²¹ *New Nigerian*, 16 June 1993; *National Concord*, 18, 22 June 1993; Cf. *West Africa*, 21-27 June with 28 June - 4 July 1993, p. 1080-81; *Newswatch*, 21 June 1993, 10 Jan 1994; *Tell* (Lagos), 26 June 1995.

¹²² Special Statement by the Federal Military Government, reproduced in *National Concord*, 24 June 1993, p. 2; *Newswatch*, 5 July 1993 printed Babangida's broadcast of 26 June and *National Concord*, 1 July 1993 his address to state governors on 29 June 1993. Babangida himself was interviewed in *Tell*, 24 July 1995. See also *Newswatch*, 12 July 1993.

¹²³ *African Concord*, 21 June 1993.

¹²⁴ *African Concord*, 28 June 1993; I. Campbell, *Nigeria's Continuing Crisis: The Quest for a Democratic Order*, Conflict Studies, 283/284 (1995), pp. 50-51.

The cancellation of the election provoked a torrent of condemnation across the country and, then, a series of demonstrations, strikes and riots which claimed several lives. These actions were largely confined to the cities of the south-west and to the petroleum workers, but were grave enough for Babangida to threaten to impose a state of emergency.¹²⁵ In the south-west, the annulment was widely but incorrectly interpreted as the outcome of a refusal by northern interests to accept a southern and, more specifically, a Yoruba president. This response alienated northern SDP supporters from Abiola and their party members from the south-west.¹²⁶ The regime encouraged protests in pro-NRC areas in the north against Abiola's election. Some of the excluded presidential candidates now saw a chance to revive their own ambitions. The political situation was becoming explosive.

Babangida made desperate attempts to wriggle out of the crisis. On 25 June, he promised to hold a further election, from which Abiola and Tofa would be excluded, before his scheduled departure from office on 27 August 1993. This was obviously unrealistic and was only acceptable to the NRC. As an alternative, he offered the formation of an interim national government; what his own position was to be remained vague. On 6 July, the regime gave the parties less than 48 hours either to agree to join a national government and accept the dissolution of all elected bodies or face new elections before 27 August. The parties agreed on the need to maintain elected institutions and end military rule on 27 August; the SDP wanted a majority position in an interim national government while the NRC preferred fresh elections.¹²⁷

The proposal for an interim government won support from a meeting of 'northern elders'. It was also canvassed by Yar'adua and his associates, who held critical posts on the SDP executive and had no wish to see an Abiola/ Kingibe presidency, as well as by other groups and personalities such as Obasanjo, who saw this as a way of removing Babangida himself. Following a weekend meeting with Babangida at which fresh election was ruled out, a meeting of SDP/NRC figures on 4-5 August agreed to the formation of an Interim National Government (ING).¹²⁸

Babangida addressed the National Assembly on 17 August to seek support for the deal. The two houses of the assembly were divided, despite the offers of large sums of money and of valuable building plots in Abuja.¹²⁹ Babangida, for his part, offered as his 'own personal sacrifice to voluntarily step aside'¹³⁰ which would allow the armed forces to stay in power, if not in office, and march on without him. Meanwhile, as press attacks on him and his regime intensified, Babangida outlawed five previously shut media groups,

¹²⁵ *International Herald Tribune*, 30 June, 6 July 1993; *The Times* (London), 6 July 1993; *The Daily Telegraph* (London), 7 July 1993; *The Guardian* (London), 30 June, 7 July 1993; *The Independent*, 7 July 1993; *West Africa*, 12-18 July 1993; *Financial Times*, 13 Aug 1993.

¹²⁶ *The Guardian* (London), 26 July 1993.

¹²⁷ *Sunday Concord*, 27 June 1992; *Newswatch*, 5, 26 July, 1 Nov 1993; *The Times*, 7 July 1993; *Financial Times*, 8-9 July 1993; *West Africa*, 19 July - 1 Aug 1993.

¹²⁸ *Financial Times*, 2, 6 August 1993; *Newswatch*, 18 Oct, 1 Nov 1993; *West Africa*, 8-14 Nov 1993.

¹²⁹ *Financial Times*, 4 Aug 1993; *Newswatch*, 19 July 1993, 16-30 Aug 1993; *West Africa*, 16-22 Aug 1993; *The Guardian* (Lagos), 18 Oct 1993.

¹³⁰ *The Independent*, 18 Aug 1993; *The Guardian* (London), 18 Aug 1993; *West Africa*, 23-29 Aug 1993; *Newswatch*, 30 August 1993, p. 15.

including Abiola's Concord group, in the biggest media clampdown since independence; and decreed 10-year prison term or fine for anyone convicted of publishing falsehood or rumour.¹³¹

Babangida had not only exacerbated conflicts between northerners and westerners but his actions had also alienated significant northern interests. More critically, he had brought the armed forces into disrepute and split the entire officer corps. For example, Col Abubakar Umar, a protégé of Babangida, resigned his commission, arguing that he could neither explain the annulment of the election to his boys nor command them to quash any civil unrest it might provoke.¹³² Babangida could no longer count on the support of many of his friends abroad. The US government suspended all assistance to Nigeria. Even the British government also suspended aid (worth £14.5 million in 1992) and reviewed its co-operation with the Nigerian armed forces though orders for arms exports continued to be met.¹³³ Politicians of both parties adjusted their sights to the new rules of the political game. Babangida himself had played his last card and the game would now continue without him.

Leaders of the two parties nominated candidates for the ING which would be in power for six months during which it would arrange fresh presidential elections. Shonekan, the Yoruba industrialist appointed by Babangida to chair the Transitional Council and who is also from the same locality as Abiola, became Head of the ING and Commander-in-Chief on 27 August 1993. Few of the country's leading politicians joined his 32-member cabinet. Shonekan's appointment was also designed to appeal to foreign business, governments and the international agencies. Power was formally transferred to civilians, with Gen Sani Abacha as Secretary for Defence to assure the new government of military support and apparently to protect Babangida's legacy.¹³⁴

Babangida failed to implement his political transition programme and was unable to keep his hold on power. There is no simple explanation for the military government's repudiation of the results of the 12 June 1993 presidential election.¹³⁵ The regime had altered the electoral procedures and processes many times to suit its calculations and vetoed several candidates along the line before it finally allowed Abiola and Tofa to contend for the presidency. It was always uncertain what the eventual outcome would be.

Each time Babangida excluded some politicians from the race for office, other candidates stepped in to take their places. Elections for party offices, state assemblies and governors and for the federal legislature conferred money, status and influence on members of the political class while the military rulers kept control of the machinery of

¹³¹ *Financial Times*, 17 Aug 1993; *The Independent*, 17 Aug 1993.

¹³² *National Concord*, 28 June 1993; *Africa Confidential*, 2 July 1993.

¹³³ *The Times*, 25 June 1993; *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1993; *International Herald Tribune*, 25 June 1993; *Financial Times*, 2 July 1993; *West Africa*, 5-11 July 1993; *The Economist*, 27 Aug, 3 Sept 1994; *The Guardian* (London), 25 June, 2, 21 July, 6 Nov 1995.

¹³⁴ *Newswatch*, 6, 20 Sept 1993; *West Africa*, 6-12 Sept 1993.

¹³⁵ See Nwokedi, 'Nigeria's Democratic Transition', pp. 195-200; I. Campbell, 'Nigeria's Failed Transition: The 1993 Presidential Election', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 12, 2 (1994), pp. 188-192; P. Lewis, 'Endgame in Nigeria? The Politics of a Failed Transition', *African Affairs*, 93 (1994).

government. Babangida could not accept a candidate or a party which did not subscribe to his economic agenda and protect his legacy.¹³⁶

The manifestos of both parties were written by the regime; whereas the NRC manifesto followed the lines of the structural adjustment programme, the SDP was given a more interventionist formula.¹³⁷ The SDP could claim a wider constituency than the NRC for elections to local, state and federal legislatures but, as with the Democratic Party in the USA, its very diversity would make it difficult to mobilise them behind a single candidate.

Tofa had previously advocated an extension of Babangida's regime to the year 2000. In office, he might have been expected to serve the interests of his military patrons and could, if need be, be disqualified without alienating powerful northern interests. Abiola, on the other hand, had close personal and business ties with the Babangida regime; these relations had also brought him into conflict with several influential members of the ruling military clique. They did not regard him as a sufficiently reliable person on whom to confer presidential office. They knew him and distrusted him. His unexpected victory presented them with a problem. The election process had to be stopped in its tracks.

The denial of victory to Abiola provoked fierce nation-wide opposition to military rule but also divided his supporters along regional lines. Babangida had lost credibility nationally and internationally. In order to avoid being sent out of office in disgrace, the armed forces had to jettison Babangida. Eight years before, he had assumed the presidency on a wave of popular support; now he left Abuja in tears to go into 'voluntary' retirement. He closed his valedictory speech on 26 August 1993 apparently unaware of the ironies: 'May we continue to be inspired by the sacrifice of our fathers towards building a nation blessed with democratic traditions and institutions and based on the demands of our society'.¹³⁸

The Failure of Compromise, 1993-95

The installation of Shonekan's government enabled the armed forces to save face and retrieve their battered image, internationally as well as within Nigeria. Shonekan lacked the authority or power to address the political impasse or the economic crisis. Abacha took direct control of power to the satisfaction, and even with the connivance, of many of the politicians who had opposed the interim regime. He co-opted leading SDP and NRC figures and promised a national constitutional conference. His government fixed the exchange rate and sought to manage the country's economic crisis by a return to state direction and public discipline. Once it became clear that he was not going to realise the hopes of Abiola's supporters, a confrontation became inevitable, to which he responded by repressing his critics. Abiola declared himself president and was consequently charged with treason. Attempts to negotiate a political compromise were no more successful than was an extended strike by petroleum workers in support of Abiola's

¹³⁶ See, presciently, S. C. Nolutshungu, 'Fragments of a Democracy: Reflections on Class and Politics in Nigeria', *Third World Quarterly* (Jan 1990), p. 98.

¹³⁷ *Manifestoes of the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Convention: Some Significant Differences*, MAMSER (Abuja, n.d.).

¹³⁸ *West Africa*, 6-12 Sept 1993, p. 1579.

claims. The politics of negotiations and compromises gave way to pre-emptive and retaliatory violence.¹³⁹

Shonekan's government lacked public legitimacy from the outset. He was blatantly rejected in the south-western states, only tolerated in the east and grudgingly accepted by the northern political establishment as 'the best in the circumstances'.¹⁴⁰ New local as well as presidential elections were now scheduled for 19 February and the transfer of power for 31 March 1994.

The new government was confronted on 29 August 1993 by a strike called by the NLC against the rejection of the election results and a proposal to raise the fuel price from 70k (c. \$0.03) a litre to 7.50. Shonekan's government agreed to postpone the fuel price rise; only the oil (transport) workers union (NUPENG) held out for a few days for recognition of the election.¹⁴¹

On leaving office, Babangida had defied the military hierarchy and announced appointments of new service chiefs. These appointments were now reversed; Lt-Gen Joshua Dogonyaro, a Babangida loyalist, was replaced as Chief of Defence Staff by Lt-Gen Oladipo Diya and Brig-Gen Akilu was deployed from head of the intelligence services to Reserves, Recruitment and Resettlement.¹⁴²

On 25 October, while Shonekan was at the Commonwealth Summit in Cyprus, an obscure group, the Movement for the Advancement of Democracy (MAD), hijacked a Nigerian Airways plane *en route* from Lagos to Abuja and diverted it to Niamey, the capital of Niger Republic. The hijackers reportedly demanded Abiola's installation, although Abiola himself rapidly condemned the hijack.¹⁴³ The drama ended three days later after Niger's paratroopers, in discreet collaboration with the French, stormed the aircraft to the satisfaction of Isma'ila Gwarzo, Nigeria's National Security Adviser, and his visiting team.

One crew member was killed and among the female hostages released earlier by the hijackers themselves was their most important catch who, having supplied a pseudonym, later turned out to be Justice Basseyy Ikpeme the Abuja High Court judge whose order set off the election crisis. By now, economic life came perilously close to paralysis, aggravating social and political tension. The fear of imminent chaos and disintegration stalked the land.¹⁴⁴

The National Assembly, which under Babangida had been forbidden to discuss political and fiscal matters, suddenly came to life after the June 12 election fiasco. As in the

¹³⁹ See *Newswatch*, 5, 19 Feb 1996.

¹⁴⁰ *West Africa*, 20-26 Sept 1993, p. 1678; *Newswatch*, 13 Sept 1993.

¹⁴¹ *Financial Times*, 7 Sept 1993; *West Africa*, 20-26 Sept 1993.

¹⁴² *Financial Times*, 14 Sept 1993; *Newswatch*, 20, 27 Sept 1993; *West Africa*, 4-10 Oct 1993.

¹⁴³ *Newswatch*, 8 Nov 1993. MAD denied that they had demanded Abiola's installation. Their printed list of demands, which was said to include the trial of Babangida and his close colleagues, probes into the Dele Giwa murder and into the crash of Nigeria Airforce's C-130 Hercules which killed many military officers in September 1992, and the unbanning of the newspapers proscribed by Babangida, was distributed to passengers but allegedly was seized and substituted by Nigerian security officials. *African Concord*, 8 Sept 1993.

¹⁴⁴ *The Sunday Times* (London), 22 Aug 1993.

Second Republic, the House of Representatives was unwieldy and without much purpose. The Senate, which elected Dr Iyorchia Ayu, a former university lecturer, as its president sought to grasp the political initiative and end military rule. But SDP Senate leaders and members, like their minority NRC counterparts, divided between proponents and opponents of collaboration with Babangida and his successor regime.

The assembly itself was plagued by cash-flow crisis ever since it emerged in January 1993 that 306m had been questionably spent in reckless contract awards. For instance, 75 per cent of an 8.7m contract was paid for several months before it was supposed to be done and without any proposal, justification or specifications. Legislators featured in hotel accommodation rackets, accumulated 130m debt, and had to adjourn on 25 August after the government paid 100m of the debt. In due course, the National Assembly would be 200m in deficit.

Meanwhile, Shonekan managed to find some funds to enable them to return on 1 November but only for a bi-partisan majority of the Senate two days later to sack its leaders, claiming that they were only transitional. Their target was the Senate President. He was not only at odds with his deputy, who ceaselessly plotted against him, but had lost the support of the very SDP notables that saw him into the Senate presidency. An advocate of 'June 12', Dr Ayu did not seem the right sort of man Shonekan could do business with. Moreover, as his political stocks rapidly increased nationally, he was beginning to appreciate the significance of his office as the rightful constitutional heir to the country's presidency in the absence of an elected president and vice-president.¹⁴⁵

Abiola, who had left the country on 3 August, returned on 24 September. He and several of his supporters approached Abacha to remove Shonekan and resolve the political impasse. Prof Bolaji Akinyemi, one-time Foreign Minister under Babangida and a presidential pretender in the 1993 primaries, delivered his own invitation to Abacha in two scholarly articles on the pages of newspapers. Beko Ransome-Kuti of the Campaign for Democracy and other rights activists like Dr Olu Onagoruwa of the Movement for National Reformation and the militant lawyer Gani Fawehinmi also helped the idea along.¹⁴⁶

On 8 November, the government again announced an increase in the fuel price, this time to 5 per litre, provoking another national strike a week later. On 10 November, a Lagos High Court had declared that the installation of the interim government by Babangida was illegal because, having resigned, he was not competent to decree his succession.¹⁴⁷ On 17 November 1993, Abacha, together with Diya and Maj-Gen Aliyu Mohammed, the

¹⁴⁵ *African Concord*, 8 Mar, 17 May, 8 Nov 1993; *West Africa*, 23-29 Aug, 11-17 Oct, 8-14 Nov, 20-26 Dec 1993; and personal information.

¹⁴⁶ On 5 Oct 1993, Abiola commended Abacha for 'easing out' Babangida and looked to him to 'ease out Babangida's surrogates. I have been talking with the military people.' *Tell*, Oct 11, 1993, p. 13; Abiola's own account is in *Newswatch*, 20 June 1994. While Ransome-Kuti's is in *African Concord*, 9 May 1994: "Well, certainly there was a consultation ... and I think we gave it all the support possible", p. 13. *West Africa*, 4-10 Oct 1993; *Sunday Concord*, 21 Nov 1993; E. Babatope, *The Abacha Regime and the June 12 Crisis: A Struggle for Democracy* (Ebino Topsy, Lagos, 1995), pp. 7-12, 53-54. After he seized power, Abacha approved Prof Akinyemi's request for a 13,046,000 research grant to write the memoirs of his two years as Foreign Minister. Akinyemi later turned up as 'NADECO Ambassador' to the UK. *Today* (Kaduna), 9-15 July 1995.

¹⁴⁷ *The Guardian* (London), 11 Nov 1993; *Newswatch*, 22 Nov 1993.

Chief of Army Staff, called on Shonekan who was meeting with his kitchen cabinet (of which Abacha was a member) to tell him that they were relieving him of his intractable problems. Shonekan resigned rather than agree to transfer power.¹⁴⁸

The next day, Abacha formally assumed power and placed his own supporters in key positions in the armed forces. He dismissed all elected officials and dissolved all federal and state legislatures and both parties. He retired several leading officers associated with the Babangida regime and even some of those involved in his own takeover of power.¹⁴⁹ Abacha reduced the increase in the fuel price to settle the NLC strike which had provided the opportunity to remove Shonekan.¹⁵⁰ He took a leaf out of the democratic opposition's book by pledging a constitutional conference but not quite the 'sovereign national conference' intended to replace military rule with a new political settlement.¹⁵¹

Abacha formed a new Federal Executive Council under the authority of the new military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC). He himself chaired the new cabinet, with Diya who like Abiola is Yoruba from Ogun State as his deputy; and brought back Dr Kalu as Finance Minister. Politicians from both parties fell over themselves in the queue to join his government. Abacha recruited to his cabinet Abiola's vice-presidential nominee, Kingibe, as Foreign Minister; as well as the former Senate President, Dr Ayu; sometime presidential candidates, Adamu Ciroma and Dr Jerry Gana; former governors, Samuel Ogbemudia (military and NPN, Mid-West and Bendel), Lateef Jakande (UPN, Lagos), Solomon Lar (NPP, Plateau) and Abubakar Rimi (PRP, Kano); and two leading campaigners for democracy and human rights, Dr Onagoruwa and Ebenezer Babatope. Abiola himself put forward some of those appointed.¹⁵² Few politicians resisted Abacha's call. Yar'adua and Shinkafi both elected to stay out of the cabinet to nurse their ambitions.

By the end of 1993, the Babangida government's economic strategy had fallen apart, alongside the collapse of its political programme. The budget deficit had reached 75 billion. Inflation was rampant. Western diplomats and the World Bank had leaked reports revealing the massive misuse of state funds.¹⁵³ A list of leading military and political figures were identified as beneficiaries of allocations of land in Lagos by the Babangida regime. These included Abacha, Diya, Lt-Gen Aliyu Mohammed, Shonekan, and Pascal Bafyau the President of the NLC. The Abacha regime revoked these allocations in 1994.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Babatope, *Abacha Regime*, pp. 5-7.

¹⁴⁹ *West Africa*, 29 Nov - 5 Dec 1993; *Newswatch*, 29 Nov 1993, 11 Apr 1994.

¹⁵⁰ *Sunday Concord*, 21 Nov 1993; *National Concord*, 22 Nov 1993.

¹⁵¹ The opposition wanted to follow the example of Benin, where the national conference declared itself sovereign and appointed a prime minister responsible to it and not the incumbent president. On the transition in Benin, see C. Allen, 'Restructuring an Authoritarian State: "Democratic" Renewal in Benin', *Review Of African Political Economy*, 54 (1992).

¹⁵² *West Africa*, 6-12 Dec 1993; *Newswatch*, 6, 13 Dec 1993, 11 Apr 1994; *Quality* (Lagos), 14 Dec 1993; Babatope, *Abacha Regime*, pp. 50-52; also the claim by Gen Diya, *West Africa*, 13-19 June 1996.

¹⁵³ *Financial Times*, 27 June 1991, 16 March 1992; and 25 March for the reaction of the World Bank to the second leak.

¹⁵⁴ *Financial Times*, 11 Nov 1993; *The Guardian* (Lagos), 22 Mar 1994.

State military administrators, senior officials of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Nigerian Airways, the National Electric Power Authority, the Nigerian Customs Service, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) and the Post Office were variously investigated, suspended, arrested and removed. Nigerian drug law enforcement officials were identified as beneficiaries of the lucrative re-export of narcotics. On 4 April 1994, the U. S. Department of State listed the Nigerian government as failing to take adequate steps to prevent drug trafficking. By the end of 1995, the Abacha government had taken extensive action against drug dealers, money launderers and corrupt officials.¹⁵⁵

The new government tried to turn the clock back to the policies of the era prior to the structural adjustment programme while denying that they were abandoning it. The exchange rate was fixed at 22 to the dollar on 28 January 1994. All foreign currencies acquired by banks were to be returned to the Central Bank. A special committee was set up to decide on the allocation of foreign exchange. Interest rates were capped at 21 per cent, way below the rate of inflation. The black market exchange rate rose to 45 to the dollar. Annual debt servicing was restricted to 30 per cent of export revenues.¹⁵⁶ The World Bank and the IMF made it clear that they did not think the return to these old policies could work. They would clearly not accept them.

Nevertheless, the military rulers held the political initiative. They could use the prospects of present and future office and the issue of whether to participate in their government and their conference to widen the regional and political divisions among their opponents. When Abiola publicly endorsed a resolution of the US House of Representatives seeking to strengthen sanctions against the Abacha regime, Kingibe responded by claiming that he and Abiola had canvassed military intervention against the Shonekan government.¹⁵⁷

The focus of many Yoruba politicians and their supporters on what they saw as their continuing exclusion from the presidency forced politicians from other parts of the country to keep a distance from them. The human rights and opposition groups divided over issues of internal democracy and responses to overtures from the new regime and were themselves separated by regional differences in political outlook and affiliation.¹⁵⁸

Abacha's decision to convene a National Constitutional Conference (NCC) found the various regional and political networks ill prepared to respond. Some groups sought to build new regional blocs in preparation for a possible redivision of the national patrimony. More cautious voices warned of the need to maintain national unity.¹⁵⁹ Divided Northern interests initially resisted the call for a national conference, at least until they could agree on their own political strategies.

Leading political figures took part in the elections to establish their political base and prevent local rivals from upstaging them. Yar'adua, Ojukwu, and Lamidi Adedibu, a leading Ibadan politician, were all elected. Most leading Yoruba politicians, supported by

¹⁵⁵ *Newswatch*, 25 Oct 1993, 17, 31 Jan, 7-28 Feb 1994, 22 Jan 1996; *Tell*, 21 Feb, 28 Aug 1994; *Tempo* (Lagos), 3 Mar 1994; *African Concord*, 7 Mar 1994; *West Africa*, 18-24 Apr 1994; *Financial Times*, 27 Aug 1994.

¹⁵⁶ *Financial Times*, 11, 12, Jan 1994; *Newswatch*, 24 Jan 1994; *Tell*, 14 Feb 1994.

¹⁵⁷ *Newswatch*, 4 Apr 1994, pp. 28-29; also *Tell*, 26 Sept 1994.

¹⁵⁸ *Newswatch*, 7 Feb 1994; *The African Guardian*, 7 Feb 1994; *Tell*, 21 Feb 1994.

¹⁵⁹ The Azikiwe-Gowon National Symposium on Nigeria, Conclusions (typescript, Lagos, 1994).

Yoruba public opinion, stayed out of the conference. The turn-out of voters to elect 273 delegates to the NCC on 23 May 1994 was low, especially in the Yoruba states. The government nominated a further 96 participants, including Umaru Dikko who was invited from exile by Abacha as a counterweight to Yar'adua in northern politics. By returning to a constitutional conference and agreeing to lift the ban on political activity on 17 January 1995, the Abacha regime began anew the timetable for a transition to civilian government, granting itself an extended lease of life.¹⁶⁰

In Ogoniland in Rivers State, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), formed in 1990, intensified opposition to Shell's degradation of the environment and demanded that Shell pay oil royalties, including back payments, directly to the Ogoni people. In 1993, there were a series of violent conflicts with neighbouring communities, with other ethnic groups in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, and with the military. MOSOP itself divided in 1993 over whether to participate in the presidential election and again in 1994 on what strategies to follow in pursuing their campaign and whether to take part in the elections for the NCC.

The writer and businessman, Ken Saro-Wiwa, who had formed a militant youth wing, took over the leadership of MOSOP. Those who favoured a strategy of compromise were accused of betraying the Ogoni cause. Four prominent members of the Ogoni political élite, who had been among the founders of MOSOP, were taken from a public meeting and brutally killed by MOSOP youth on 21 May 1994. Ken Saro-Wiwa and others were arrested and accused of responsibility for the murders. Military repression of MOSOP supporters intensified.¹⁶¹

The National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) brought together a group of mainly Yoruba politicians and military officers and others who had been excluded by, or excluded themselves from, the Babangida and Abacha regimes. They wanted a 'sovereign national conference', including representatives from the country's different ethnic groups, who would not have to submit their recommendations to the regime. They demanded that Abiola should be called upon to form a broad-based national government, composed of representatives of various ethnic and interest groups.

At the end of May 1994, a majority of members of the dissolved Senate and, in early June, of the House of Representatives reconvened and called on the regime to accept the 1993 election result. Ameh Ebute, who had replaced Dr Ayu as Senate President, and Senator Polycarp Nwite were arrested on 2 June 1994 and charged with 'conspiracy and treason' but the trial remained in abeyance.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ *West Africa*, 30 May - 6 June 1994; *The African Guardian*, *Tell*, *The week* (Lagos), *The Nigerian Economist* (Lagos), all 6 June 1994. *West Africa*, 2-8 May 1994, gives the transition timetable for the first phase.

¹⁶¹ The Ogoni tragedies have been the subject of partisan reporting. Informative accounts of events include *The Guardian* (London), 9 Aug 1993, 23 Mar 1996; *Newswatch*, 1 Nov 1993, 18 Apr, 6 June, 26 Sept 1994; *The African Guardian*, 31 Jan, 6 June, 8 Aug 1994; *The Guardian* (Lagos), 8 June 1994; *National Concord*, 9 June 1994; *Tell*, 6 June, 22 Aug 1994. For more partisan versions, see 'The Ogoni Crisis: A Case Study of Military Repression in Southeastern Nigeria', *Human Rights Watch/ Africa* (New York), 7, 5 (1995) and compare *The Ogoni Question in Nigeria: MOSOP and NYCOP: The Reality of the Situation* (Marine Communications, Port Harcourt, 1995).

¹⁶² *The Guardian* (Lagos), 7, 8 June 1994; *West Africa*, 13-19 June 1994.

On 11 June, Abiola announced the formation of his government at a secret venue.¹⁶³ Abacha declared on 12 June that 'no individual and no group will be able to hold this country to ransom.'¹⁶⁴ After a reward of a mere 50,000 (\$2,300) was offered for information about him, Abiola emerged from hiding on 22 June and was arrested the next day and charged with 'treason and felony' on 6 July.¹⁶⁵

Attempts were made to broker a compromise to allow Abiola to be released on bail and thus ease political tension. These involved the PRC, Diya, government ministers, Obasanjo, traditional rulers, the NLC and part of Abiola's family. A hastily arranged court in Abuja conditionally granted a bail application on 5 August 1994, apparently without the knowledge of Abiola or his lawyers, but failed to secure Abiola's agreement to its terms. The original trial judge withdrew from the case and was replaced but proceedings remained stalled. Subsequent court decisions to release Abiola were challenged by the government.¹⁶⁶ If the regime released Abiola, his presence might stand in the way of any prospect of future presidential elections. Continued trial proceedings, on the other hand, would allow defence lawyers to challenge the legitimacy of the regime since it was, in law, a continuation of the Shonekan regime which had been declared unlawful.

Abacha toured his military constituencies to assure them of the government's determination to deal with the economic crisis, ensure the success of the constitutional conference and look after the material interests of the armed forces. In May, he launched the regime's War Against Indiscipline and Corruption.¹⁶⁷ On 27 June 1994, he inaugurated the NCC.¹⁶⁸

The military regime was confronted by protests and riots, which it suppressed with a heavy hand, and by extensive strikes in Lagos, Ondo, Osun and Delta states.¹⁶⁹ In August, properties of ministers and of prominent people accused of supporting the regime, including Obasanjo, were burned. Public buildings and installations continued to be targets of bomb attacks in major northern cities, thus exacerbating regional tensions. Certain prominent supporters and financiers of the opposition were in turn subject to armed attacks. Violent action increasingly became the currency of political battles and regional conflicts.

The most serious challenge to the regime came from NUPENG and PENGASSAN, the senior staff union in the oil industry, whose members in the south remained on strike for two months; an NLC strike on 3 August was called off the next day.¹⁷⁰ The regime

¹⁶³ *The Guardian* (London), 11 June 1994; also the statement by Abiola 17 June 1994; *The African Guardian*, 27 June 1994.

¹⁶⁴ *West Africa*, 20-26 June 1994; *Newswatch*, 27 June 1994.

¹⁶⁵ *West Africa*, 27-3 July 1994; *Newswatch*, 18 July.

¹⁶⁶ *Financial Times*, 17 Aug 1994; *West Africa*, 15-28 Aug, 12-25 Sept 1994; *The Guardian* (London), 5 Nov 1994; *The Independent*, 5, 7, 19 Nov 1994; *Policy* (Lagos), 8 Apr 1996, pp. 22-23. Also Babatope, *Abacha Regime*, pp. 163-170.

¹⁶⁷ *Newswatch*, 16 May 1994.

¹⁶⁸ *West Africa*, 4-10 July 1994.

¹⁶⁹ *West Africa*, 4-10, 25-31 July 1994; *Financial Times*, 13, 15, 19, 29 July 1994; *The Guardian* (London), 30 July 1994.

¹⁷⁰ *West Africa*, 1-7 Aug 1994; *Newswatch*, 18 July, 8 Aug 1994; *Financial Times*, 3, 4, 5, 18, 19 Aug, 5, 6 Sept 1994.

dissolved the executives of the NLC, NUPENG and PENGASSAN on 17 August and subsequently proscribed three major private press groups. It brought back Decree 2 which authorized the Chief of General Staff or the Inspector-General of Police to detain anyone without trial for up to three months. Dr Onagoruwa, the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, stated that the decrees had been issued without his knowledge and he was subsequently dismissed.¹⁷¹

The defeat of the strikes enabled the regime to raise the petrol price to 15, which it then reduced to 11, and it promised to place the increased revenue in a Petroleum Trust Fund, which Gen Buhari was later appointed to chair. Its trustees included Catholic Archbishop Olubunmi Okogie and Group-Captain Usman Jibrin, a retired governor of Kaduna State, who later resigned in protest at the way the Trust was managed.¹⁷²

A call in September by a pan-Yoruba meeting in Ibadan for withdrawal from the constitutional conference and government appointments was rejected by Jakande and Ebenezer Babatope, two prominent Yoruba federal ministers.¹⁷³ The same month, Maryam Abacha collected 400 million in donations to a trust fund at the launch of her own Family Support Programme in place of Maryam Babangida's Better Life Programme for Rural Women.¹⁷⁴

After a year in power, the regime appeared to have consolidated its grip. It could turn for support to surviving former heads of state: Gowon, Shagari, Buhari, Babangida and Shonekan, if no longer Obasanjo¹⁷⁵; and also to Ojukwu, the former Biafran leader. Abiola could no longer claim the broad national support which voted for him as president in 1993. Many of his supporters had gone over to the regime and others, including Abiola himself, had been compromised by their willingness to seek military support and even that of Babangida¹⁷⁶ for their ends.

On 1 October 1994, Abacha enlarged the Provisional Ruling Council from 11 to 25 members, removing all three civilian members. Then, on 8 February 1995, he dismissed his cabinet.¹⁷⁷ The politicians he had co-opted could now be discarded and left to consider their next political moves. For their part, the military governments' repudiation of the elections had created a political impasse.

The Abacha regime's attempt to direct the economy and fix the exchange rate at 22 to the dollar for all transactions was an abject failure. In October 1994, Dr Pius Okigbo, who had been appointed to investigate the Central Bank, reported that between 1988 and 1994 \$12.4 billion in oil revenues had disappeared into 'special accounts' without being

¹⁷¹ *West Africa*, 22 Aug - 4 Sept, 12-25 Sept 1994; *Newswatch*, 29 Aug 1994.

¹⁷² *Financial Times*, 4, 5 Oct 1994; *Nigerian Tribune* (Ibadan), 10 Nov 1994; Victor Ogene, 'The Buhari Billions', *The Sunday Magazine* (Lagos), 7 Apr 1996. The Trust received some 61 billion (or 37 per cent more than the total capital expenditure by all federal government ministries) in 1995, and 125 billion was allocated to it in the 1996 budget.

¹⁷³ *West Africa*, 19-25 Sept 1994; Babatope, *Abacha Regime*, pp. 171-182.

¹⁷⁴ *West Africa*, 14-20 Nov 1994.

¹⁷⁵ Obasanjo criticised the regime in Feb 1994 and in May supported international sanctions against it. *Tell*, 14 Feb 1994; *The Democrat* (Kaduna), 26 May 1994.

¹⁷⁶ *Razor* (Lagos), 5 Apr 1994; *The Punch* (Lagos), 22 Apr 1994.

¹⁷⁷ *West Africa*, 3-9 Oct 1994; *Financial Times*, 9 Feb 1995.

accounted for. The allocation of foreign exchange provided a huge subsidy for the 'favoured few'.¹⁷⁸ Dr Kalu, the Finance Minister, had been excluded from the committee and was sacked on 18 October.¹⁷⁹

The regime's economic policies were unsustainable. The fiscal deficit and inflation continued to rise. Lack of access to foreign exchange hit manufacturing production; the high exchange rate penalised manufacturing exports and cocoa farmers. Government was \$8 billion in arrears to its main international debtors and unable to secure IMF and World Bank support to renegotiate its debt. On 14 January 1995, the regime reopened a regulated 'autonomous' foreign exchange market, trading at 85 to the dollar while government continued to acquire dollars at 22. Interest rates remained fixed at 21 per cent. The government abolished the 1962 Exchange Control Act and the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree. 'Dedicated' accounts were transferred from the presidency to the Central Bank. Policies of privatization gave way to an emphasis on commercialization of remaining state enterprises.¹⁸⁰ The wheel had gone round another half circle. Abacha proclaimed, with no sense of irony, that his 'administration draws inspiration from the recognition that free enterprise is the bedrock of a democratic political system.'¹⁸¹

Many of the banks which had arisen to exploit the opportunities created by Babangida's exchange control policies faced bankruptcy because they could no longer recycle their foreign exchange purchases at higher prices. In November, the Central Bank revoked the licences of 30 'distressed' banks and 19 finance houses, owing among them over 5 billion in unretrievable deposits. Senior bank executives were charged under the Failed Banks (Financial Malpractices) Tribunal Decree, 1994 with massive frauds and prominent businessmen were held in detention until they paid their debts to the banks; in March 1996, 181 bank chiefs were in detention.¹⁸²

Significantly, the government announced its intention of taking back control of the four largest commercial banks, in which it had sold its shares, in response to a take-over of the French-linked United Bank of Africa by a group of young Nigerian businessmen, earning sharp reprimand from the World Bank and the French government. The state was not willing to surrender control of these particular commanding heights even to those who had profited from its patronage.¹⁸³

At the end of February 1995, the regime arrested Col Lawan Gwadabe and 28 officers and civilians, followed a few days later by Yar'adua, Obasanjo, journalists and political activists, alleging that they had been involved in or had knowledge of a planned coup. The regime followed the examples of the Obasanjo and Babangida regimes in holding secret trials of alleged conspirators.¹⁸⁴ Reports of death sentences on 14 defendants and

¹⁷⁸ *Financial Times*, 29 Sept 1994; *Newswatch*, 24 Oct 1994; 16 Jan 1995.

¹⁷⁹ *Financial Times*, 19 Oct 1994.

¹⁸⁰ *Financial Times*, 16, 17, 18, 20 Jan, 26 May 1995.

¹⁸¹ *Africa Report* (Washington), March/April 1995, p. 12.

¹⁸² *Tempo*, 3 Mar 1994; *The African Guardian*, 7 Mar 1994; *West Africa*, 21-27 Nov 1994; *Tell*, Oct 30 1995; *Newswatch*, Mar 11 1996.

¹⁸³ *Financial Times*, 17 Mar, 5, 13-14 May 1995.

¹⁸⁴ *Financial Times*, 6, 7, 11, 14 Mar 1995; *The Independent*, 7 Mar 1995; *The News* (Lagos), 6 Nov 1995 gives prisoners' own accounts. Gwadabe had been made Principal Staff Officer to Abacha after

a 25-year jail sentence on Obasanjo provoked international condemnation and threats of actions, and counter-actions, against, and by, the regime. Relations with the US and British governments worsened.¹⁸⁵

A new cabinet was eventually announced on 20 March. It retained a few key figures, including Anthony Ani, as Minister of Finance. Ikimi, the former NRC chairman and political adviser to Abacha, became Foreign Minister in place of Kingibe, the former SDP chairman, who was moved to Internal Affairs.¹⁸⁶

The Constitutional Conference was predictably dominated by the concerns of politicians to find mechanisms for sharing out offices and spoils. On 6 December 1994, it accepted Yar'adua's proposal to set the transition date at 1 January 1996, resisting pressure from the government to delay the handover. The NCC completed its deliberations on 25 April 1995. It agreed that the presidency should rotate between north and south and be accompanied by three vice-presidents; to a multi-party system; and that the federal government's share of revenues be reduced to the benefit of the states and that 13 per cent be allocated to the state of derivation, which would mainly benefit the oil-producing states. With Yar'adua in detention, the conference reneged on its earlier decision to fix a date for the transition to a government of politicians.¹⁸⁷ Abacha received their (unpublished) report on 27 June and rescinded the ban on political activity as part of his continuing strategy to divert their activities away from opposition to military rule. He set up two committees to review the proposals made by the conference.¹⁸⁸

On 1 October 1995, Abacha unveiled his programme for a transition to an elected government which would take office on 1 October 1998.¹⁸⁹ Abacha modified the NCC proposals and divided Nigeria into six political zones among which would rotate six key positions 'for an experimental period of 30 years': President, Vice-President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives.¹⁹⁰ Initially, southern politicians wanted the presidency to rotate between north and south but this left open the question of which section within the south would first claim the prize. Northern fears of being excluded initially by a southern president were neutralized by the creation of a prime minister.

Abacha then set up the National Electoral Commission of Nigeria (NECON), a Transitional Implementation Committee, a National Reconciliation Committee, and a Federal Character Committee to add to his previously announced Human Rights Commission.¹⁹¹ He also instituted a panel to consider the creation of yet more states and

Abacha seized power in 1993. He was subsequently sent to train the Gambian Army and, on his return to Nigeria after the coup against President Dauda Jawara on 22 July 1994, was posted to Yola, Adamawa State, far from the centre of action.

¹⁸⁵ *The Independent*, 29 June, 15 July 1995; *The Times*, 5 July 1995; *Financial Times*, 7, 18 July 1995.

¹⁸⁶ *Financial Times*, 21 Mar 1995; *West Africa*, 27 Mar - 2 Apr 1995.

¹⁸⁷ *New African*, Feb 1995; *The Guardian* (London), 26 Apr 1994; *Financial Times*, 26 Apr 1994; *Newswatch*, 15 May 1995; Campbell, *Nigeria's Continuing Crisis*, pp. 36-38.

¹⁸⁸ *The Guardian* (London), 28 June 1995; *Newswatch*, 28 Aug 1995.

¹⁸⁹ James Jukwey, Reuter Agency Report, 1 Oct 1995; *The Times*, 2 Oct 1995.

¹⁹⁰ A. A. Akinola, 'The Concept of a Rotational Presidency in Nigeria', *The Round Table*, 337 (1996), p. 22.

¹⁹¹ *West Africa*, 18-24 Dec 1995.

local governments and boundary adjustments and a consultative committee of key traditional rulers and 'leaders of thought'.

In his 1995 Independence Day speech, Abacha also commuted the (as yet unannounced) sentences on the alleged coup plotters in response to pleas from Nigerians and from foreign dignitaries and governments. Together with the announcement of a transition programme, Abacha went some way to defuse international criticism of the regime but then only on his own terms.

On 31 October, Saro-Wiwa and eight others were condemned to death by the Rivers State Civil Disturbances Special Tribunal without the opportunity for further appeal for the killings of four Ogoni leaders on 21 May 1994, after a trial which the defence claimed was characterised by questionable evidence and procedures. The PRC hastily confirmed the sentences on 8 November. On 10 November, without prior announcement, the men were hanged just as Commonwealth leaders were meeting in Auckland with the political situation in Nigeria high on its agenda.¹⁹²

Nigeria was immediately suspended from the Commonwealth with expulsion to follow if they did not make substantial progress towards democracy by the time of the next conference two years later. The Commonwealth appointed a Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, composed of foreign ministers of eight countries, to protect and promote human rights and fair government in member states. It was asked to visit Nigeria to monitor developments and recommend appropriate action. The regime rebuffed the Commonwealth delegation. The European Union, the United States, Canada and South Africa imposed limited sanctions, including an arms embargo and restrictions on the entry of Nigerian officials into Europe and withdrew their envoys, all of whom returned later after Abacha had refused to deal with their subordinates.

Nelson Mandela demanded more effective action but could not get support either for a southern African or a wider African initiative. Nigeria retaliated against South Africa's sporting sanctions by withdrawing from the African Nations Cup which allowed South Africa, the host country, to win the championship in their absence. More extensive sanctions are blocked by British resistance to freezing foreign assets held in Britain or to action against Shell's supplies and American unwillingness to ban Nigerian imports of oil or see Nigeria withdraw its troops from Liberia. Despite the outcry, Shell signed a contract on 15 November for a £2.5 billion liquefied gas project in Nigeria.¹⁹³

At the end of 1995, Adegunle Ajasin, the 87-year old leader of NADECO convened an all-politicians conference to form a common front to engage in dialogue with the Abacha regime over the political impasse. But first they had to agree among themselves. They agreed to meet by excluding the issue which most sharply divided them, the outcome of the election of 12 June 1993. When Ajasin raised it at the outset of the conference, many delegates vehemently opposed any discussion of the subject. In any event, the

¹⁹² *Daily Telegraph, Financial Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Times* (all London), 31 Oct, 1, 2, 10-13 Nov 1995; *Sunday Times, Sunday Telegraph* (both London), 12 Nov 1995; *Newswatch*, 13 Nov 1995; *Africa Confidential*, 17 Nov 1995.

¹⁹³ *Financial Times*, 15, 16, 20, 21 Nov 1995; *The Times*, 14, 16 Nov 1995; *The Guardian* (London), 14, 16, 21, 23 Nov 1995; *The Independent*, 27 Nov 1995.

conference delegates soon dispersed unceremoniously after about twenty thugs disrupted the meeting.¹⁹⁴

Abacha has kept decision-making firmly in the hands of the Head of State without the pretence of consultation of civilian and military opinion in which his predecessor engaged. His style of government is more imperial than presidential. Appointments to, and dismissal from, office depend on the personal favour of the ruler. Like Babangida, he has not hesitated to replace key military appointees to ensure the loyalty of those serving him.¹⁹⁵ Those who seek his patronage must pay tribute at his court.

Abacha's government has taken action to reclaim moneys from and dismiss and punish those who have engaged in free-lance appropriation of bank finances and public revenues. Whereas Babangida turned the politics of government into a game in which he continually remade the rules, Abacha's style is more direct. He will make compromises when he needs to but usually on his own terms. He has sought to maintain a decisive role for the state in the direction of the economy and to create a more orderly and disciplined environment for capitalist enterprise.

Like Babangida, Abacha demonstrated the capacity of the military in power to play members of the political class off against one another and to co-opt politicians to their own agenda by providing rewards in the present and holding out the prospects of access to office and its spoils in the future. Babangida extended his transitional programme to its limits; Abacha has continued the same process for a further period.

However, there are constraints on the ability of the armed forces to stay in power. They cannot rule legitimately in their own name and need to continue to present themselves, to local as well as foreign audiences, as a transitional government.¹⁹⁶ This not only offers politicians the prospects of future office but assures their subordinates in the armed forces of opportunities for promotion and all the benefits that this will bring.¹⁹⁷

Meanwhile, the pursuit of public policy, effective government, and consideration of alternative directions are all held hostage to the sway of distributive politics, legerdemain and moral bankruptcy. Politicians' pursuit of their own advantage and their inability to rise above their local and sectional concerns prevent them from offering a coherent alternative. Consequently, military regimes in Nigeria have never been confronted by broad national movements capable of putting forward an agreed agenda for a democratic political order. The armed forces continue to be the arbiters of power.

Class, Politics and Democracy

The political history of Nigeria reveals a number of recursive themes. Access to state funds and state office was a potent instrument of class formation. The colonial marketing boards provided the state with a mechanism for taxing exports and the politicians with

¹⁹⁴ *The News*, 26 Feb 1996.

¹⁹⁵ *New African*, Feb 1995; cf *West Africa*, 29 Aug - 4 Sept 1994; *Newswatch*, 5 Sept 1994. Also cf. P. Lewis, 'From Prebendalism to Predation: The Political Economy of Decline in Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 34, 1 (March 1996).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (1962, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1975 ed.), p. 14-16.

¹⁹⁷ Nolutshungu, 'Fragments', p. 107.

the means to pay for their policies, their political activities and their business pursuits. In the 1950s, power was devolved to regional governments. This gave shape to political alignments and fiscal arrangements. The regional marketing boards provided the financial basis for the regional governments and their ruling parties.

After independence, and particularly during and after the civil war, power and patronage increasingly came to be exercised by the federal government, which extended its capacity to regulate imports, exports and the exchange of currencies. In the 1970s, mineral oil replaced agricultural exports as the major source of foreign exchange and state revenue, consolidating federal domination of the import-export economy and the profits extracted from it.

Political competition within and between states turned on their capacity to claim a share of mineral oil revenues and to distribute them. The creation of states meant that political alliances had to be built on coalitions of state-based interests. Networks of regional political élites persisted but they could no longer ensure the political hegemony which the former regional governments had enabled them to exercise. Politicians from each of the three dominant language groups, and from the former regional 'minorities', were divided by rivalries for local and state office and national positions, and differences of strategies through which to advance their own careers and the interests of their groups.

Oil rents and the contracts they funded provided politicians, soldiers and businessmen with new sources of revenue. Control of foreign exchange and imports created licences for those in power to print money. Liberalization of agricultural exports, of imports and of foreign exchange did not eliminate sources of tribute-taking but led those in office to find new ways of benefiting from their good fortune. The Abacha regime returned briefly to the economic and political strategies of the Buhari regime only to follow Babangida's example of again allowing markets in foreign exchange.

A series of colonial and military regimes sponsored transitions to elected government. They began with constitutional conferences, indirectly elected from local-level constituencies. The colonial/ military regime determined the shape of the constitution and secured the agreement of the political class to their proposals. Politicians invoked constitutional principles in order to serve their own political strategies. They showed little respect for laws or conventions and exploited all the resources at their disposal, constitutional and extra-constitutional, to gain access to and maintain their hold on power.

On numerous occasions, political élites appeared to resolve conflicts by agreeing to compromise. These usually evaded rather than addressed the issues in dispute. Compromises were not the outcome of serious attempts to identify shared goals and establish agreed principles but were rather truces which recognised the prevailing balance of forces.

The makers of the 1979 Constitution recognised that politics in Nigeria was concerned with the allocation of scarce resources, not to alternative ends but to different people. Politicians mobilised resources in order to be elected to political office and treated political office as a source of bounty which would repay their investments, reward their clients and fund their continuing political activities.

Formally, elections decide who will exercise power. In practice, those who exercise power are able to manage the outcome of elections. Politicians use their control over the instruments of patronage, coercion and intimidation either to secure the votes they need

to confirm themselves in power, or to remove opponents from office, or to prevent the electorate from voting them out of office. They are only inclined to accept those results which give them victory and deny the legitimacy of their opponents successes. The conduct of politicians and their manipulations before and after the elections of 1964 and 1965, and of 1983, discredited the electoral process and civilian government and left the path open for military intervention.

Successive military governments have sought to solve Nigeria's problems by unifying administration under military auspices and to bring order and discipline to society and politics. The barracks approach proved ineffective in addressing economic crises, political conflict or social order. Military rulers relied on civil servants and aligned with and co-opted politicians to serve their regimes. They soon acquired a taste for the benefits of office, which provided the means for establishing themselves in commerce, industry, finance and gentleman farming and of launching their own political careers.

The turnover of military and civilian administrations, as a result of coups, putsches and one transfer of power, created scope for promotions within both the armed services and the civil service and sustained high expectations of social mobility and access to the rewards of high office. The political class, replenished from time to time by new recruits from business and universities, as well as the military and the civil service, resented the control of power by military officers whom they regarded as less competent and less entitled to rule than themselves. Hence their consistent support for the principle of a return to *civilian rule*. In the meantime, they seek to position themselves most effectively for the next contest for political office and depend on military rulers to make it possible for them to return to power.

Military governments need to offer the prospect of a return to civilian rule. Otherwise they risk giving malcontents within the armed forces a pretext for removing them. By co-opting politicians into the political process, soldiers are able to extend their period of office and control their succession. Trade unions have resisted government economic policies and repressive practices. National strikes have provided a means of pursuing workers' demands and have sometimes acted as a focus for popular opposition to repressive and exploitative regimes. Governments make concessions to workers' immediate economic demands without acceding to their political objectives.

Three aspects of politics may be distinguished: politics as the allocation of scarce resources, politics as the pursuit of public policy, and politics as the process of class conflict.¹⁹⁸ Considerations of public policy give way time and again to calculations of political and economic advantage. Military regimes advanced grand plans to develop the economy in the 1970s and to reform the economy in the 1980s. Both politicians and military rulers use public resources for the pursuit of personal wealth and their political ambitions and to reward their clients. Consequently, they are unable to maintain fiscal discipline and an effective system of administration. These failures have amplified Nigeria's economic crises and weakened the capacity of governments to deal with them.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Williams and Turner, 'Politics in Nigeria', p. 133; First, *Barrel of a Gun*, p. 113.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Lewis, 'From Prebendalism to Predation'.

The competition for scarce resources has displaced class politics.²⁰⁰ Popular demands force their way on to the political stage in the forms of strikes, resistance and violence by workers, rural communities and the urban poor. Workers have engaged in nation-wide strikes for increased wages and against higher prices. But neither popular resistance nor workers' strikes have given rise to effective national movements and their demands are rarely incorporated into the process of competition among parties. Contests for material resources and resentment against injustices have all too often turned communities and religious groups against one another. Democratic political competition can only operate within an accepted framework of rules and conventions. The unconstrained pursuit of power, by military rulers and their civilian rivals, continues to stand in the way of the establishment of a democratic political order.

²⁰⁰ Nolutshungu, 'Fragments', p. 102.