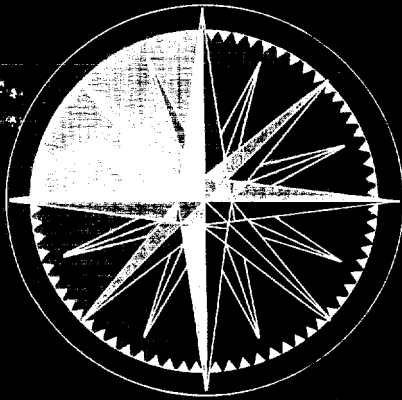


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SPECIAL REPORT

REGIONAL STRAINS THREATEN NIGERIAN FEDERATION

**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE**

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REGIONAL STRAINS THREATEN NIGERIAN FEDERATION

Three and a half years after independence, the Federal Republic of Nigeria--Africa's most populous country and the kingpin among the continent's moderate states--appears headed for difficult times. The release in February of the alleged results of a politically important census has inflamed traditional antagonism between the conservative northern Muslims, who are dominant in the central government, and the more Westernized non-Muslim southerners who are becoming increasingly impatient to take control of the federal machinery. Parliamentary elections are due later this year, and Nigeria's regionally based parties are already caught up in intense maneuvering. The political tensions are sharpened by popular dissatisfaction over the slow progress of the government's economic development program and over corruption among government officials. Such social and economic ills seem likely to induce growing numbers of Nigeria's "have-not" masses to switch allegiance from traditional parties to more radical leaders. Although integrative and ameliorative forces are at work, the viability of the Nigerian federation will be severely tested in the coming months.

The Federal System

Nigeria's federal system ensures extensive "states' rights" to its four regions, thereby providing the mutually antagonistic major ethnic groups some basic assurance against "alien" control. The system was laboriously fashioned under British tutelage in the years between World War II and 1960, when Nigeria became an independent member of the Commonwealth.

This type of government grew in part out of the British colonial policy of "indirect rule," which left largely undisturbed the network of highly

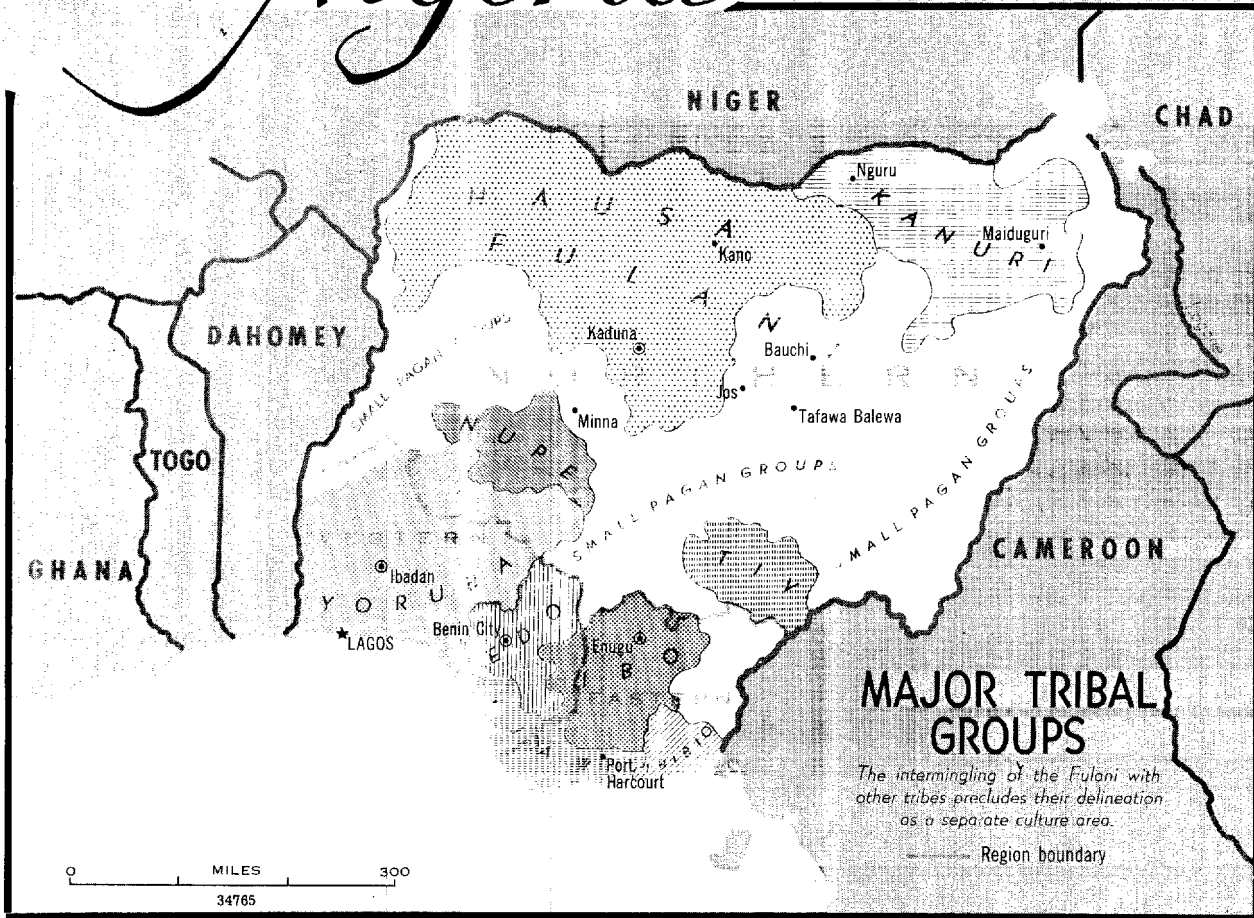
organized Muslim principalities that London's early proconsuls found in northern Nigeria. The feudal hierarchy of militantly Muslim emirs was allowed to preserve its wide authority there, and Christian missionaries who brought Western education to other parts of Nigeria were generally not permitted in the "Holy North." As a result, the northern region fell far behind the south in terms of contact with the outside world in general and with Western political doctrines in particular.

Sensing this, the northern rulers, although convinced that their religion and their Fulani-

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Nigeria



Hausa tribal traditions were culturally superior, became wary of close political connections with the Western-educated and more nationalist-minded southerners. By the early 1950s, as Britain became anxious to accelerate Nigeria's evolution to self-rule, fear of possible southern domination had increased among most northern leaders and further strengthened their unity already assured by common religion and tribal origins.

The southerners, on the other hand, were by no means united. All wanted independence, but none was willing to take second place to another. In eastern Nigeria, the Ibo tribe commanded the scene; in the western region, the Yorubas were predominant.

The British solution to the problem was to allow the development of separate, powerful regional governments, each with its own parliamentary system

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and economic structure. In each of Nigeria's three original regions--a fourth was created last year--a different one of the country's three main tribal groups ruled through its own political party.

Federal institutions with limited power were developed simultaneously, but at a slower pace. The key office of federal prime minister, for example, was not established until 1957. Prior to the final pre-independence elections in 1959, executive positions at the federal level were shared among the three major parties in a "national" government.

Current Alignments

Since 1959, the once apprehensive northerners have managed to keep the upper hand because of their larger population, their greater unity, and the rivalry among the southerners. The federal executive is controlled by a two-party coalition in which the dominant voice is that of the conservative Northern People's Congress (NPC)--the political vehicle of the Muslim rulers. Their party won a large plurality of the 312 federal parliamentary seats in 1959 and has since gained, through desertions from other parties, a small absolute majority.

NIGERIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

PARTY	TRIBAL BASE	LEADER	FEDERAL STATUS	REGIONAL STATUS	REMARKS
Northern People's Congress (NPC)	Fulani-Hausa	Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto	Senior partner of governing coalition, absolute majority in Parliament	Ruling party in Northern Region	Parochially oriented; little appeal outside Northern Region
National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC)	Ibo	Michael Okpara	Junior partner of governing coalition, controls 26% of the seats in Parliament.	Ruling party in Eastern and Mid-Western Regions; opposition in Western Region	Nationally oriented; appeal throughout three southern regions
Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP)	Yoruba	Samuel Akintola	Less than 10% of the seats in Parliament	Ruling party in Western Region	Appears to lack strong support among Yorubas; oriented toward alliance with NPC.
Action Group (AG)	Yoruba	Obafemi Awolowo (imprisoned); acting leader is D. S. Adegbenro	Less than 10% of the seats in Parliament	Opposition in Western Region	Appears to have strong support among Yorubas; oriented toward alliance with NCNC.
Nigerian Elements Progressive Union (NEPU)	Fulani-Hausa and minority tribes in Northern Region	Aminu Kano	Less than 1% of seats in Parliament	Small minority parties in opposition to NPC in Northern Region	NEPU is formally allied with NCNC; UMBC has had ties with AG. The two minority parties formed the Nigerian Progressive Front last December.
United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC)	Minority tribes in Northern Region	Joseph Tarka	Less than 3% of the seats in Parliament		
Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of Nigeria (SWFPN)	None	Olatunji Otegbeye	No representation		Formed in August 1963 by a pro-Communist group known as Socialist Core; appears to have little strength at present

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The junior coalition partner is the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), in which the nationalistic Ibo from the southeast predominate. The NCNC won the second largest number of seats in 1959.

The head of the NPC and Nigeria's most powerful individual figure is Sir Ahmadu Bello, the political leader of the Muslim emirs. His title of Sardauna of Sokoto also puts him second only to the aged Sultan of Sokoto among the northern religious leaders. An aristocrat who is disdainful of "infidel" southern politicians, the Sardauna has chosen to continue as premier of the Northern Region and to leave the post of federal prime minister to his party deputy, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. The latter has risen from a relatively humble background and lacks an independent political base, but he has won national respect because of his ability and integrity. Sir Abubakar has proved himself particularly adept at effecting the compromises between northerners and southerners which permit Nigeria, in its present shape, to exist.

In its own bailiwick the NPC's sway is almost complete. Since independence, it has squeezed out two minority parties, neither of which now poses a serious challenge to the Sardauna's organization. The NPC has had no visible strength outside the north and, until recently, showed little interest in developing any. However,

as its leaders have gained confidence, they have begun to move away from a purely defensive posture and now seem to be making a serious effort to develop support in the south--so far with little success.

The NCNC, on the other hand, has always sought to project the image of a dynamic national party and, although Ibo-based, has had the broadest national appeal of all Nigerian parties. It has been the ruling party in the Eastern Region since responsible government was introduced there, and it now is also in power in the Mid-Western Region created last year. At least until very recently, the NCNC also has had a strong following in the Western Region--the Yoruba stronghold--and in the 1954 federal elections won a majority of the Western parliamentary seats. From January 1963 to February 1964, when a number of important NCNC leaders in the West defected to join a new party, the NCNC participated in a coalition which governed the Western Region.

Founded in the 1940s as a militant nationalist party, the NCNC still contains many of the more radical elements in Nigeria, but has come to embrace leaders holding widely divergent views and attitudes. In recent years this has resulted in a marked deterioration of party discipline. Since practically all elements in the party are increasingly impatient with continued northern domination of the federation, however, they may in time be able to submerge their differences.

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In the past five years, since Michael Okpara succeeded the US-educated nationalist hero, Nnamdi Azikiwe, first as premier of the Eastern Region and then as head of the NCNC, the party's internal problems have multiplied. Lacking the dynamism of Azikiwe, who is Nigeria's federal President, Okpara has come under increasing fire from within his party. Although his retention of the NCNC leadership apparently was not challenged at the party congress in February, disenchantment with Okpara is strong among members of the educated elite and is evidently growing among the NCNC rank and file.

The Yoruba Problem

Nigeria's present difficulties are compounded by the fact that, from the beginning, the Yorubas of the Western Region have been excluded from the national governing coalition. After the 1959 elections, in which the Yorubas' Action Group (AG) antagonized the NPC by waging a vigorous but futile campaign in the north, the progressive AG was relegated to the role of principal opposition in the federal legislature. Its ambitious top official, chief Obafemi Awolowo, and other AG leaders soon began to display signs of growing frustration. These feelings were intensified by their suspicion--not altogether unfounded--that the federal coalition partners were bent on destroying the AG. Against the wishes of conservative party elements, led by Western Region

Premier Akintola, Awolowo and his cohorts began to advocate more radical policies and to resort to demagoguery.

Tensions within the AG led to an open split in 1962, and a major crisis in the Western government led the federal government to declare a state of emergency in the region. After a period of direct federal rule, during which the conservative faction formed a new party, Akintola was restored as regional premier, with a coalition which included the local NCNC.

Awolowo, meanwhile, had been charged with complicity in what was alleged to be an AG coup plot against the federal government. Eventually convicted of "treasonable felony," he now is serving a ten-year sentence. He nevertheless seems to have retained the allegiance of the bulk of the Yoruba masses, while Akintola's faction, which now has merged with NCNC elements to form yet another regional party, has not gained widespread popular support. Thus political frustration remains high among the Yorubas, and there is a continuing possibility of violence in the Western Region that also infects national politics to some degree.

The Census Issue

In February, north-south political tensions were again bared with the release of the results of a new national census conducted last year. It was

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NIGERIAN POPULATION EXPLOSION

CONFIDENTIAL	Population Figures (millions)			Implied Growth Rate 1952 to 1963	Present Alloc. of Seats in Fed. Parliament	Proposed Change of Alloc. on Basis of 1963 census.
	1952	1962 *	1963			
NORTHERN REGION	16.84	21.9**	29.8	5.1%	174	167
EASTERN REGION	7.22	12.3	12.4	5.2%	73	69
WESTERN REGION	4.59	10.6	10.3	7.5%	62	58
MID-WESTERN REGION	1.49	***	2.5	5.0%		14
LAGOS	.27	.45	.68	8.5%	3	4
TOTAL	30.42	45.3	55.7	5.9%	312	312

* Figures never released; census nullified

** After "verification," raised to 30.25 by Northern authorities

*** No interpolated 1962 figures available for Mid-Western Region, which was part of Western Region until 1963.

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anticipated that the census would be used to redistribute the seats in the federal Parliament among the four regions. On the basis of a 1952-53 population count, made under British auspices, the northern region was allocated 174 of the 312 seats, and all but a handful of the 174 now are firmly held by the NPC. The outcome of the new census has thus become a critical matter both to the northern defenders of status quo and to the restless southerners.

A census held in 1962 was nullified even before the results were announced, after a bitter controversy developed over charges of overcounting in all regions. The recently published figures also appear to reflect sizable inflation in all regions, but particularly in the north.

The new controversy over the census has touched off a major political uproar which may seriously, perhaps even fatally, damage prospects for

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preserving Nigeria's unity. The strongest adverse reaction has come from NCNC militants, particularly those in the Eastern Region, where Premier Okpara and his legislature have flatly rejected the results and there has been muttering about secession. Okpara is demanding a meeting of all regional premiers with federal Prime Minister Balewa to attempt to work out a solution. Mid-Western Region Premier Osadebay, also a member of NCNC, has likewise refused to accept the announced figures, although his public posture on the subject is much less intransigent than Okpara's. Radical youth elements, both within and outside the NCNC, have staged protest demonstrations.

In the unsettled Western Region, the census announcement produced a sharply divergent reaction among the leaders and led to a major realignment of political forces. Premier Akintola's acceptance of the results precipitated a split in the ranks of his NCNC coalition partners, most of whom joined his new grouping, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). The rest of the regional NCNC promptly announced a "working agreement" with the Action Group in the West.

This shift within the Western Region may foreshadow an eventual new alignment at the federal level along progressive-versus-conservative lines. There appears to be a chance that the NPC will arrange a coalition with the NNDP, and

that the NCNC and AG will join in opposition. National NCNC and AG leaders reportedly have already concluded an agreement to come into effect when the parliamentary elections are formally announced. The threats of secession which were breathed immediately after the release of the census results have receded, and Nigeria's political leaders now appear convinced of the necessity of avoiding tactical actions which might lead to the breakup of the federation. A basic realignment of coalition partners, however, would seem on a longer view to increase the chance of a deep and permanent north-south split, since it would tend to place all the northerners, plus a few conservative westerners, on one side of "the carpet" and at least the vast majority of the "progressive" southerners on the other.

Economic Problems
Strengthening Radicals

Nigeria's growing economic problems, and their social and political consequences, may eventually prove even more troublesome than the current political tensions. Economic development is keyed to an elaborate six-year plan (1962-68) which aims at preserving the impressive four-percent growth rate achieved in the decade before independence. The plan calls for a gross investment of \$3 billion over the six-year period, with \$1.8 billion put into the public sector. Foreign aid commitments so far have reached

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approximately \$470 million, including \$225 from the US and lesser but still substantial amounts from Britain, West Germany, and Italy.

The Nigerian economy, however, is not expanding at the projected rate. Unemployment, for example, has risen sharply in the past three years; according to conservative estimates some 15 to 20 percent of the labor force is idle now. Part of the trouble lies in the fact that private foreign investment has dropped off sharply since 1961. Widespread corruption at all levels of both the federal and regional governments --manifested in blatantly ostentatious living standards on the part of most government ministers--is also having adverse effects.

This situation is leading to increased social pressures with clear political implications. Last fall, Nigeria's badly splintered labor movement formed a joint action committee which, by threatening a general strike, forced the government to establish a commission to review the wage structure. Unless the government moves effectively, Nigeria's discontented and frustrated elements may be attracted in increasing numbers to radical movements such as the Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of Nigeria (SWFPN) organized last summer by pro-Communist youth leaders. The party reportedly has received funds from Moscow, where it is said to be regarded as an embryo for an eventual reg-

ular Communist Party. Linked with the SWFPN are the WFTU-supported faction of the Nigerian labor movement and the Communist-controlled Nigerian Youth Congress. Although these leftists at present do not constitute a significant force, they can be expected to press their efforts to develop and dominate a broad national front of the discontented.

Foreign Relations

Within the framework of an avowed foreign policy of non-alignment, Nigeria has generally sought to maintain strong ties with the West, its primary source of economic aid. At present, the government is attempting to negotiate an association with the EEC.

Relations with Communist countries, in contrast, have been minimal. Poland reportedly extended a credit of \$42 million last summer and conducted studies on the possibility of supplying industrial plants for the Northern Region, but as yet no Communist aid has been forthcoming. However, the disappointing showing of the development program is stimulating pressure on the Balewa government to seek substantial assistance from the USSR.

Nigeria is most anxious to play a prominent role in intra-African affairs and represents a strong moderate influence in the Organization of African Unity (OAU) founded at Addis Ababa last year. In opposition to the

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more radical states, notably Ghana, Nigeria's present government leaders believe African unity must be approached gradually through a process which stresses economic and technical cooperation. Nigeria participated in the UN military operation in the Congo and recently agreed to provide troops for Tanganyika. Lagos has also taken a moderate stand on issues regarding South Africa and the Portuguese colonies, even though this has subjected the government, and especially Ex-

ternal Affairs Minister Wachuku, to considerable domestic criticism.

This kind of foreign policy seems to demand the present federal structure and something like the present mix of conservatives and nationalists to support it. A breakup of the federation and a drastic realignment would pose serious dangers and problems for Africa generally, as well as for Nigeria. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM)

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