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# Africa Review

18 August 1978

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AFRICA REVIEW

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NOTE: A Supplement to today's edition of AFRICA REVIEW has been published and disseminated in special intelligence channels.

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Africa Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis, with occasional contributions from other offices within the National Foreign Assessment Center. The Africa weekly focuses on major African issues and their implications. We solicit comments on the articles as well as suggestions on topics that might be treated in future issues. Comments and queries can be directed to the authors of the individual articles or to [REDACTED], Chief, Africa Division [REDACTED]

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Nigeria: Libyan Involvement in Northern Politics

Scattered reports in recent months strongly suggest that Libya is attempting to develop political ties and influence with aspiring Muslim politicians in Northern Nigeria. The country will soon enter the final and most challenging phase in its planned return to civilian rule in 1979--the formal resumption in October of political activities allowing the organization of political parties for elections next year. Even without Libyan involvement, the transition is likely to be turbulent because of the rivalries that political activity will engender among Nigeria's competing regional and ethnic interests and because of the country's traditional style of confrontational politics.

The extent of Libyan involvement and intrigue is not clear at this time. It seems safe to assume, however, that Libyan President Qadhafi has ambitions to advance the political fortunes of Muslims in Nigeria--by far the largest Muslim community in Africa--and to develop a following among them. The Nigerian Government is uneasy over the incipient Libyan connections with northern politicians and has stepped up efforts to monitor Libyan activities in the country.

Nigeria's military leaders are already concerned about the ever-present tensions between the northern and southern parts of the country. These tensions were exacerbated during the recent review of Nigeria's new constitution for civilian rule when the constituent assembly rejected a controversial proposal for a federal Islamic court of appeals. If covert Libyan activism in Nigeria increases significantly and key Muslim leaders are receptive, this could cause northerners to take an even more confrontational approach and make religion more of a political issue. Such a development, by forcing to the surface dangerous ethnic and religious antipathies in Nigerian society, could jeopardize prospects for a peaceful transition to civilian rule.

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In the event of serious communal disorders, the military probably would intervene, either halting the process temporarily to let passions cool or canceling the return to civilian rule to preserve stability. A successful transition to civilian rule, on the other hand, could well result in the installation of a Muslim-dominated government, though we do not believe such a regime would be beholden to Libya or involve Nigeria deeply in Arab affairs.

### Islam and the Dynamics of Nigerian Politics

Muslims constitute the largest religious group in Nigeria, composing at least 47 percent of Nigeria's population of 70 million or more, and have always wielded strong political influence. Islam, arriving from the northeast in the 13th century, has long been the dominant creed in the north and is slowly moving southward, particularly among the Yoruba ethnic group. Christians account for about 35 percent of the population, while some 18 percent are followers of traditional African religions.

Islam's hold is strongest in the far north from Sokoto to Borno, an area regarded by Nigerian Muslims as the "holy north." Between 95 and 98 percent of all Nigerian Muslims are considered to be orthodox (Sunni) Muslims, and the north has been the most conservative section of Nigeria because of its long exposure to conservative Islamic values. The political power of northern traditional leaders has eroded in recent years, but not their enormous religious and social influence over the Muslim masses. The most important of these conservative leaders are the Sultan of Sokoto--titular leader of all Nigerian Muslims--the Emir of Kano, and the Shehu of Borno. The Sultan of Sokoto heads a supreme council for Islamic affairs with avowedly religious and cultural goals. It serves as a coordinating body for Nigerian Muslims and has been a force for moderation in the north.

Politics in Nigeria are based less on religious relationships than on regional and tribal identities. Sixty percent of Nigeria's people belong to three main ethnic groups: the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Christian and Muslim Yoruba in the southwest, and

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the Christian Ibo in the southeast. Small pagan, Islamic, and Christian tribes in the "middle belt" of Nigeria who fear domination by the big tribes, serve as a political and ethnic buffer between the Muslim north and non-Muslim south. Each major group, including the middle belt, has vied for supremacy in the government.

The vastly larger and more populous northern region, dominated by the Hausa-Fulani, controlled postindependence politics in a regionally based parliamentary system that fueled ethnic rivalry. The 1966 military coup transferred power briefly to the Ibo, who imposed a unitary government. A northern countercoup brought a stronger federal system with middle beltters acting as brokers between the larger tribes. This regime was overthrown in 1975, and the process of returning to civilian rule was begun. The prominence of the Hausa-Fulani and Yorubas in this government contributed to an attempted coup by middle beltters in 1976, in which Hausa Head of State General Muhammed was assassinated and replaced by General Obasanjo, a Christian Yoruba.

The recent battle over the north's proposal for a federal Islamic court of appeals was a regional power contest as much as a reflection of differences over the relationship of religion to government. To Muslims, the court proposal was a natural outgrowth of a belief that a strict separation of church and state need not apply in all instances. More importantly, the Muslims regarded the court issue as a symbolic test of the power that northerners hope to wield under civilian rule.

The defeat of the proposal at the hands of southerners and middle beltters demonstrated to the Muslim north that it can no longer expect to control the political scene automatically as it did between 1960 and 1966. Clearly the creation of 10 states in the former northern region has broken the hold the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy once had over smaller Muslim ethnic groups and middle belt tribesmen. This has led to the passing of the old "solid" north and allowed the ethnic and political diversity that has always existed in the north to manifest itself. The battle over the court seems to indicate that a new and more fluid balance of political forces may be developing in which traditional northern political influence, though still prominent, is no longer predominant.

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The Muslims, facing the prospect of decreased power under a civilian government and less northern unity than heretofore, recognize that they may be headed for a real contest with non-Muslims in the coming political elections. Under these circumstances, some Muslim leaders could be more psychologically receptive to Libyan blandishments than they might otherwise be.

Although the ban on politics remains in effect, behind-the-scenes politicking is in full swing. In the north there are indications that the emergent political contender for national power will be a group dominated by moderate-to-conservative older generation "establishment" northerners, with many younger and more progressive-minded elements co-opted. Northern strategy is aimed at reestablishing old links with middle belt and the southern Christian Ibo peoples with whom the Hausa-Fulani had been allied during Nigeria's first civilian regime. This could well prove to be a winning coalition and result in the installation of a Muslim president.

Right now, northerners--including many old-guard middle belt politicians--seem to be consolidating behind Shehu Shagari, the strongest contender to become the major northern presidential candidate. Shagari is a 53-year old Hausa from Sokoto state who held various ministerial posts in the first civilian government. He has a reputation for honesty and moderation.

The "Libyan Connection" With Northern Politics

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25X1C Much of our information about Libyan involvement in northern politics comes from [REDACTED]  
25X1C [REDACTED] probably will head a second northern party, which seems destined for minority status if it survives at all. [REDACTED]  
25X1C [REDACTED], some younger elements in the Shagari camp have had contacts with Libya since before the Islamic court dispute. Supposedly there are northerners who regularly visit Tripoli, while other contacts are handled through the Libyan Embassy in London.

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25X1C [REDACTED] claims Tripoli provides advice and financial support. He has also heard, but cannot confirm, that some Libyan arms have been smuggled into Nigeria where they could be used in the event of communal

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disorders between Muslims and Christians who work in the north. He reports that Qadhafi has given northern visitors to Tripoli assurances that he will spend "millions, billions, whatever it takes to make Nigeria a Muslim nation."

Qadhafi has long given high priority to extending Tripoli's influence in Africa and believes it a religious duty to promote Muslim political influence in African states that have some Muslim population. Some Nigerian Muslim politicians undoubtedly are opportunistic enough to accept Libyan money to build up their political campaign chests. The Nigerian Government, for its part, intends to fund equally all registered political parties to try to reduce inequities between them and decrease the temptation to seek financing abroad.

The Nigerian Government is aware of the Libyan activities. Nigerian security officials believe--perhaps overconfidently--they have Libyan activities under effective surveillance and control. Nigeria's security organization apparently has uncovered some evidence that Qadhafi has attempted to "purchase" or otherwise gain influence with several well-known Nigerian Muslims, including the Sultan of Sokoto and Brigadier Yar' Adua, the regime's second-ranking officer. We have no evidence, however, that any leading Nigerian Muslim religious or governmental figure is actually connected with the Libyans.

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[REDACTED] Qadhafi has sought to acquire influence by offering large sums to Islamic religious organizations for such things as building mosques. The treasurer of one Islamic group recently told the US Consul in Kaduna that a Libyan religious delegation had visited there several months ago and offered financial assistance to the Muslim community. He claims his organization is considering accepting Libyan help for purely religious purposes, including establishment of a newspaper that would carry the "truth" for Muslims. He left little doubt that the Libyans were willing to provide funds for other activities if asked. He also said that Libya aids a Pakistani Muslim sect that is active in southern Nigeria, although it has been banned in Pakistan. He did not say that Libya was aiding several small hard-line Muslim sects found in the north.

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Libya is also developing contacts between Al-Fateh University in Tripoli and at least two Nigerian universities, including Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria which has a number of northern radicals and socialists on its staff. There are few Nigerian students or other residents in Libya.

The Libyan community in Nigeria is somewhat larger and of longstanding. Libyans have lived in Kano, an ancient gateway to north Africa, for 200 years. The Libyan Ambassador to Nigeria was born in Kano, and his family is one of five or six large Libyan landholders in northern Nigeria.

Alleged Conduits for the "Libyan Connection"

We know little about the two Nigerian politicians-- Dr. Ibrahim Datti Ahmed and Mohammed Abubakar Rimi-- portrayed [REDACTED] as the principal conduits for the "Libyan connection" among the Shagari grouping of northerners. Ahmed admits privately to being pro-Libyan, and [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED], he is one of the Nigerians that Libya has tried to "buy." Tripoli allegedly favors Ahmed as a possible northern presidential candidate. He is said to visit Libya frequently, although the US Embassy in Tripoli cannot confirm these visits.

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Dr. Ibrahim Datti Ahmed

Ahmed, a medical doctor in his 40s, was born in Kano State and educated in Nigeria. He apparently is well-known locally and is politically active. He has been described as a Muslim hard-liner with an abrasive personality who is passionately opposed to colonialism. He reportedly favors a militant solution to the problems of southern Africa.

Ahmed is reported to be well connected with various influential older northern politicians. The northern-oriented New Nigerian newspaper recently portrayed him as one of the new and untested politicians on the northern scene

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who could pose a potential challenge to the old guard leadership if it does not close ranks in a broad political front. Ahmed was a member of the committee that drafted Nigeria's new constitution for civilian rule, though his candidacy for the constituent assembly became bogged down in litigation for reasons that remain unclear.

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The other alleged Libyan connection, Mohammed Abubakar Rimi, is described [redacted] as one of the leading young northerners from Kano State in the recent constituent assembly. [redacted] claims Rimi is personally close to Qadhafi. The New Nigerian has portrayed him as a radical with socialist proclivities. Educated in British universities, he is a former journalist and the present administrative secretary of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, a research group that offers foreign policy advice to the government.



Alhaji Mohammed  
Abubakar Rimi

Ahmed and Rimi must be considered radically inclined, disaffected sons of the northern establishment. This younger, better educated group of Muslims tends to be more progressive and reformist in outlook and less responsive to the wishes of the traditional elite than most ordinary northerners. They also are intensely nationalistic, and their "radicalism" takes on a chauvinistic, xenophobic cast.

It is probably among the northern university student community and recent graduates that Ahmed and Rimi find the bulk of their supporters. There reportedly is growing sentiment among this group for "Muslim unity and power." We have not yet seen evidence, however, that the kind of militant political ideology espoused by Qadhafi is taking hold in Nigeria.

We cannot yet ascertain now much political influence Muslim militants like Ahmed and Rimi have in the larger northern political establishment. In today's political climate, the northern political "king-makers" are a generally conservative and cautious lot. They probably

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view Qadhafi with disdain and are wary of his activism in Africa. These leaders are not likely to involve themselves with the Libyans in ways that risk upsetting the local establishment or jeopardizing their political ambitions by antagonizing Nigeria's watchful military government.

#### Libyan-Nigerian Relations at the Official Level

Official relations between Libya and Nigeria can best be described as outwardly cordial and correct. Qadhafi regards Nigeria as a major power in Africa and also as a rival to his own African leadership pretensions. Nigeria acknowledges Libya as an important "African state," but regards it as an unwelcome competitor for influence south of the Sahara and takes a jaundiced view of Qadhafi's subversive activities in the region. Lagos has made clear that Nigeria will not tolerate the patronizing attitude Libya displays toward most other African states.

Qadhafi is keenly disappointed with the present Nigerian military regime which was initially headed by a Muslim but no longer is. Libya, the first country to extend recognition after the July 1975 coup, quickly sent a delegation to Lagos in a none-too-subtle effort to influence the new regime to adopt a strong pro-Arab stance and to promote revolutionary programs. Instead, the Nigerians quickly adopted an activist, African-centered foreign policy concerned primarily with eliminating white minority rule in southern Africa and asserting a Nigerian leadership role in Africa.

We know of no cultural, economic, or military agreements between Libya and Nigeria. For strictly economic reasons, Nigeria and Libya, together with Algeria, are now closely coordinating their oil policies in a sort of mini-OPEC because their oils are similar in quality and are competing with one another at a time of depressed demand and diminished revenues.

#### Islam, Libya, and Nigeria's Future Orientation

In the event that a Muslim-dominated civilian government comes to power next year--even with Libyan encouragement--we do not believe it would align Nigeria

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closely with Libya or adopt a significantly more pro-Arab stance. Because of domestic political realities, a Muslim political leader in Nigeria cannot afford to champion Muslim causes in foreign policy lest this heighten fears of Muslim domination at home and seriously strain the internal political fabric. Similarly, Nigeria, which has long aspired to a leadership role in black Africa, cannot side overtly with the Arab states of North Africa or the Middle East. Neither Nigeria's first civilian president nor General Obasanjo's predecessor, both Muslims, advanced Muslim interests in the country's foreign policy.

Despite the supposed bond of Islam, the bulk of Nigeria's Muslims do not seem to display a strong sense of political identity with or a feeling of special kinship for the Arabs of North Africa or the Middle East. Nor do they seem to have a high degree of interest in such Arab-related problems as the Arab-Israel conflict, the Western Sahara, and the Chad-Libya dispute. The present government takes an officially neutral stance toward the Western Sahara and Chad-Libya problems. Nigeria generally has avoided attending international Islamic gatherings and refrains from allowing Arab organizations like the PLO to open offices in Lagos.

The prevailing pro-Arab sentiment in the north does not translate into a significantly stronger position on the Arab-Israel issue than that of the current government. Nigeria's general support for the Arab side in the Middle East is no more forthright than the stance taken by many other black African states, and Nigeria was among the last of the OAU members to sever relations with Israel in 1973. Nigeria officially supports the Arabs on many issues that are not of direct relevance to it or of particular concern to Nigeria's Muslims because of its OPEC membership and in the name of Third World solidarity. Though Lagos favors closer Afro-Arab cooperation in principle, many Nigerian Muslims no doubt share the regime's resentment that Arab states have not given as much support for majority rule in southern Africa as Africans have given the Arab side in the Middle East dispute. (SECRET NOFORN)

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South Africa: Strategy of Liberation Groups

The leadership of the African National Congress, the larger of South Africa's two exiled liberation organizations, is convinced that externally based guerrilla warfare like that being waged in Rhodesia will not work against South Africa. The ANC, therefore, is planning to concentrate on fomenting industrial unrest and urban guerrilla warfare inside South Africa to force the government to change its policies toward blacks. It claims it has stored large caches of arms inside the country for that purpose. Although the majority of South African blacks are opposed to violence and realize that they will be hurt most by urban terrorism, an increasing number see violence as their only recourse.

The ANC, the oldest existing South African political organization, was founded in 1912. It functioned inside South Africa until 1960 when it and the rival Pan Africanist Congress were banned after the government became alarmed over political protests following a massacre of blacks by police at Sharpeville. The ANC, infiltrated during the 1950s by members of the small, previously banned South African Communist Party, receives modest support from Moscow. White, Asian, and colored Communists are an important minority in the organization's leadership.

The Pan Africanist Congress, the smaller and less effective of the two exile groups, agrees in principal with ANC strategy to concentrate on internal disruption rather than cross-border raids. There is, however, little coordination between the two groups. The PAC was formed in 1959 by members of the ANC who rejected both the multiracial approach and Communist influence in the older body. The role of whites in a black-ruled South Africa is still a main area of disagreement between the two groups, both of which rule out a merger between them, despite renewed attempts by the Organization of African Unity to arrange a reconciliation. The PAC receives

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some financial and military assistance from Peking. Both receive funding through the OAU and are seeking expanded support from African countries. The United Nations has recognized the ANC as the "true representative" of the South African people.

After languishing for more than a decade, both groups were revitalized in 1976 by a large influx of students who fled South Africa after the Soweto riots. Their present strength is difficult to gauge. The South African Government estimates that the ANC has some 3,000 members and the PAC some 1,000. These estimates probably include many of the students now in refugee camps. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] there are about 800 trained cadre in military camps primarily located in Tanzania, Zambia, and Angola, while about 100-200 with military training are inside South Africa. The number of PAC members undergoing training or operating inside South Africa is considerably less.

The South African military leadership agrees with the ANC and the PAC that the Rhodesian model of armed incursion from operational bases in neighboring countries is unlikely to happen in South Africa in the near future. It bases this judgment on the belief that most of the adjacent countries would be reluctant to support large-scale operations because of the heavy military and economic retaliation South Africa could inflict.

The military is aware of the steadily increasing infiltration of trained terrorists into South Africa and expects that acts of sabotage and terrorism will increase in urban areas and eventually extend into rural areas as well. Since July 1977, more than a dozen incidents, including bombings and attacks against blacks and whites, have occurred in Johannesburg and its black environs.

The ANC needs much more internal support than it now has before the urban guerrilla bases it envisages can be set up. Such bases would be difficult to hide from South Africa's security forces, even among a sympathetic populace. Moreover, the ANC is aware that the black community, which is largely moderate and opposed to violence, would be damaged most by urban terrorism and unrest and that blacks are dissatisfied with the limited accomplishments of the liberation organization.

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██████████ indicates that the majority would rather negotiate with whites than fight them. Nevertheless, 28 percent of the blacks ██████████ believe that their lot will never improve unless they resort to violence, and a significantly larger proportion of younger and better educated blacks support the need for violence than do their elders. Only 10 percent were in favor of strikes as a method of inducing change. That figure points up the economically fragile plight of urban blacks and highlights the growing belief among them that they have few alternatives to violence as long as the government refuses to grant genuine political concessions.

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██████████ taken between the Soweto riots of 1976 and the massive police crackdown on black political leaders and organizations last October, the ANC garnered 22 percent of popular support among black leaders, and the PAC polled 7 percent. ANC President Nelson Mandela, imprisoned in South Africa since 1974, received most of the backing; the exiled leaders of both organizations obtained minimal support.

The extent of support for the ANC and PAC is surprisingly high considering that the organizations have been outlawed for nearly 18 years and have thus been precluded from any open propagandizing or organizing. In reality, the support may be higher than ██████████ indicates because many blacks would be unwilling to express support publicly for the two groups for fear of police reprisals. (SECRET NOFORN-NOCONTRACT-ORCON)

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The attached map #623936 should be inserted with  
"Nigeria: Libyan Involvement in Northern Politics,"  
in your copy of the publication.

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### Nigeria: Federal States, Tribal Groups, and Islam



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