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Nigeria Under Civilian Rule: The Record and the Outlook



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An Intelligence Assessment

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July 1983

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Nigeria Under Civilian Rule: The Record and the Outlook

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted] Office
of African and Latin American Analysis. It was
coordinated with the Directorate of Operations and
the National Intelligence Council. [Redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, West-East Africa Division,
ALA, [Redacted]

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**Nigeria Under Civilian Rule:
The Record and the Outlook**

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Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 June 1983
was used in this report.*

In our judgment, heightened political tensions associated with national elections scheduled for August 1983 will severely test the survivability of the Shagari government and Nigeria's still untested democratic institutions. Nigerian elections traditionally are violent affairs that aggravate ethnic animosities and strain Nigeria's delicate social and political fabric. We expect the period ahead to be turbulent, but, on balance, believe President Shagari has a fairly good chance to muddle through and win reelection. Even if he wins reelection, however, he still will face troublesome political problems and be forced to make difficult economic decisions.

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Sharply reduced oil revenues over the last two years have put Nigeria in an increasingly precarious economic position but election concerns have deterred Shagari from implementing stringent economic measures needed for recovery. Moreover, Lagos has had difficulty paring down now unrealistic development projects and curbing government spending. We expect Nigeria will reach an agreement with the IMF after the elections, but we have serious doubts about Nigeria's ability to adjust to lower income levels and implement longer term structural reforms because of the government's corruption and inefficiency. While oil production has rebounded temporarily to well over a million barrels per day, government revenues for 1983 are still likely to be 20 percent below last year. So far, rising inflation, unemployment, plant closings, and shortages of imported goods have not sparked widespread demonstrations, but we believe that urban tempers could boil over as economic woes continue to mount.

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In our judgment, senior military officers continue to favor democratic rule and prefer to see Nigeria's 120,000-man Army remain on the political sidelines. Despite grumbling and rumors of plotting among some middle and junior grade officers and enlisted men, we do not believe a consensus favoring a coup has yet developed within the military. We believe, however, that the undermanned police force is not up to the job of coping with widespread popular disturbances, and, as a consequence, civilian authorities will be forced to call on the Army to restore order or supervise the elections if violence gets out of hand. Indeed, extensive election violence and the blatant rigging of the vote pose, in our view, the greatest short-term threats to the continuation of civilian rule.

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If there were to be a coup, the most likely scenario, in our view, would involve senior or middle-grade officers taking power. Considering the pragmatism, level of sophistication, and generally favorable disposition toward the West existing at this level of the military, we would expect no dramatic changes in domestic or foreign policy under such a government.

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Although we view a takeover by lower ranking military personnel as less likely, such a government almost certainly would usher in a period of political turmoil and foreign policy uncertainty as well as more rapid economic decline. West African experience suggests that populist-oriented enlisted men lack the education, experience, organizational skills and vision to carry out their goals.

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Although past Soviet and Libyan efforts to gain influence in Nigeria have met with little success, we expect both powers would try to take advantage of any social or political breakdown that occurred. Ordinarily, Nigeria's sheer size and diversity make it a more difficult target for meddling than smaller West African states, and these factors tend to drown out radical doctrines and extremist movements. In our judgment, a coup by naive and directionless junior officers and enlisted men would offer the best opportunities for expanded Soviet and Libyan influence.

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We anticipate that Lagos in the near term will increase pressure on the United States to help rescue Nigeria's flagging economy by interceding with the IMF, providing food assistance, and persuading US banks to agree to restructure Nigeria's increasingly burdensome debt. If Washington's response does not match Nigerian expectations, we believe civilian or military leaders could lash out at the United States, most likely over its southern Africa policy. We do not believe, however, that Nigeria is in a strong enough economic position to take anti-US measures that would jeopardize US interests regarding oil purchases, trade, investment, or technology.

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Figure 1
Nigeria: Federal States and Tribal Groups



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**Nigeria Under Civilian Rule:
The Record and the Outlook**



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Introduction

Governing Nigeria—which is split between a predominantly Islamic north and a largely non-Muslim south and has more than 85 million people divided into 250 ethnic groups—is difficult under the best of circumstances. After almost four years in power, Nigeria's civilian leaders, like their military predecessors, continue to wrestle with deep-seated ethnic, sectional, and religious rivalries that constantly threaten Nigeria's political stability. Furthermore, since 1981, Nigeria's economy has been buffeted by falling oil production and the break in oil prices.¹ In our judgment, the convergence of worsening economic conditions and potentially turbulent national elections in August will provide the severest test thus far of Nigeria's still fragile democracy.



This study evaluates the performance of the Shagari government, updates the economic situation, and assesses the impact of the current economic crisis and the coming elections on the prospects for continued civilian rule. The likelihood of military intervention, opportunities for Soviet and Libyan meddling, and implications of potential developments for US interests also are discussed.



Shagari's First-Term Performance

In our view, the administration of President Shehu Shagari has proved more resilient and adaptive than many outside observers expected when the military handed power back to an elected civilian government in October 1979. US Embassy reporting indicates that after almost four years in office Shagari himself remains Nigeria's most popular and respected politician. Overall, however, we believe the political and economic climate has deteriorated in the last year.



The Political Scorecard. We agree with the US Embassy's estimate that Nigeria's US-modeled political structure has helped to moderate and control



longstanding ethnic, regional, and religious rivalries that were critical factors in bringing down the first civilian government in 1966, provoking a bitter civil war from 1967 to 1970 and ushering in 13 years of military rule. Embassy and academic sources report that, although the federal system with three branches of national government and 19 states is cumbersome, inefficient, and expensive, it provides for a more balanced and widely shared distribution of ethnic power and political patronage that has helped to contain potentially destabilizing conflicts. The 1979 election results, for example, gave each of the five competing parties a stake in maintaining the system because each won at least two state governorships as well as representation in the federal Senate and the House of Representatives. Furthermore, in our judgment, the administration merits high marks for fashioning a compromise among competing ethnic, regional, and state interests that made possible the passage of a new federal revenue allocation bill; this resolved a divisive issue that had bedeviled past civilian and military governments.



We believe Shagari's most significant political accomplishment to date has been his ability to project an image as a national leader above the more rancorous aspects of Nigerian politics. In a recently conducted Nigerian public opinion poll that claimed to interview members from all major tribes and political persuasions, over two-thirds of the respondents approved of Shagari's handling of the country's affairs. US Embassy reporting indicates that, while Shagari's emphasis on conciliation and compromise makes him vulnerable to charges of weakness, his low-key style has helped moderate potentially divisive issues such as the calls for the creation of new states. In addition, Shagari has carefully followed the constitutional requirement that cabinet appointments and military recruitment must reflect Nigeria's "federal character"—a euphemism for maintaining a relative ethnic and regional balance in government.



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Searching for a Workable Political System

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's most persistent and complex political problem has been the search for a lasting political framework capable of accommodating the country's tribal, regional, and religious diversity. Two-thirds of Nigeria's more than 80 million people belong to one of the three major ethnic groups: the Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the north, the mixed Christian and Muslim Yoruba in the southwest, and the predominantly Christian Ibo in the southeast. Nigeria's ethnic map is further complicated by several hundred smaller tribes scattered throughout the country. [redacted]

Nigerian politics has been characterized by long periods of political wrangling—followed by sudden and violent shifts in power—between tribal groups over the allocation and distribution of political power and economic spoils. The military overthrow of the British-inspired parliamentary democracy in 1966, for example, was preceded by six years of bitter tribal competition and growing corruption. Successive military governments maintained national unity at great cost but also suffered from bureaucratic inefficiency and a persistent inability to curb corruption. The most serious threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity came in 1967 when the Ibo-led eastern region seceded to form the Republic of Biafra, and civil war followed until the Ibo defeat in 1970. [redacted]

After a complex and often acrimonious—but relatively orderly—three-year transition, Nigeria's military rulers handed power back to civilians in 1979. The federal structures and legislative processes created by the constitution closely parallel those of the United States. In addition, the constitution attempts to ensure that all groups have a strong stake in maintaining the system by requiring that political parties, the federal civil service and military, as well as executive appointments, reflect Nigeria's ethnic diversity. [redacted]

Despite reported military and civilian support for continued civilian rule, many US Government and academic commentaries note with apprehension that tribalism remains the driving force of politics, and that the concepts of political compromise and tolerance are far from fully taking hold. These same sources further point out that many issues that helped bring down past governments—such as ethnically motivated demands for the creation of new states—remain unresolved. [redacted]

We believe that there will continue to be serious tests of the system throughout 1983. We especially note that, historically, Nigerian elections have aggravated tribal tensions. [redacted]

Despite these pluses, according to US Embassy reporting, Nigerian politics as a whole continues to aggravate longstanding tribal and regional animosities and remains highly personalized and prone to violence. As a matter of general practice, politicians prefer to engage in vituperative personal attacks against opponents and make unrealistic promises rather than debate issues or government policies. Most current presidential candidates, for example, continue to promise “free” education and vast improvements in social conditions, although Nigeria clearly cannot afford to implement such programs during the current economic crunch. Political parties—notwithstanding the constitutional prescription that they eschew tribalism—continue to rely on and appeal to ethnic and regional loyalties. The ruling

National Party and the two major opposition groups—the Unity Party and the Nigerian People's Party—draw most of their support respectively from the Hausa-Fulani north, the Yoruba west, and the Ibo east (see figure 1). The Embassy reports that Shagari's National Party, which won the most nationwide and ethnically diverse support in the 1979 election, has yet to shake popular perceptions in areas controlled by opposition parties that it is dominated by an inner circle of conservative northern Muslims. [redacted]

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The Foreign Policy Dimension

In our view, foreign policy continues to take a backseat to domestic political concerns under the Shagari administration, and we concur with US Embassy reporting that foreign policy issues will not affect the outcome of Nigeria's elections. The recent Nigeria-Chad border dispute, for example, has provoked little public interest nor has the opposition made Shagari's handling of the conflict an election issue. The US Embassy also notes that Shagari is careful to act only on those international issues over which there is likely to be little domestic dissent. For example, popular support in Nigeria for the expulsion of over a million or more West Africans earlier this year far outweighed the widespread international criticism the move engendered. [redacted]

The transition from military to civilian rule, in our view, has had little impact on the substance of Nigerian foreign policy. The centerpieces of Nigerian policy continue to emphasize backing the Frontline African states against white minority rule in southern Africa, support for the Organization of African Unity, and opposition to outside intervention in African affairs. On larger East-West issues, Nigeria has consistently sought to project a nonaligned position. In practice, the Shagari administration has valued friendly ties with the United States and the West—Nigeria's principal trading partners and sources of investment, aid, and technology—while maintaining correct, but not particularly close, relations with the Soviet Union and other Communist states. [redacted]

Shagari, despite occasional criticism from opposition parties that Lagos should play a more active leadership role in Africa, has shown a reluctance to commit Nigeria to foreign policy positions that might be difficult to support, or that could endanger the country's economic ties to the West. As a consequence, Shagari can claim few major foreign policy

successes, but he also has not been held responsible for any major debacles. The US Embassy reports that Nigeria agreed to participate in an OAU peace-keeping force in strife-torn Chad in 1981 only after Washington agreed to underwrite a large portion of the cost of equipping and transporting the Nigerian contingent to N'Djamena. Shagari also has avoided endangering Nigeria's close economic ties to the West by not strictly enforcing decrees dating from the era of military rule that call for an economic boycott of firms doing business in both Nigeria and South Africa. [redacted]

Reporting by US Embassies in the region indicates that Nigeria's often haughty behavior—as well as its size and relatively greater wealth and military power—have at times offended, antagonized, or frightened smaller neighbors and often worked against Nigeria's leadership aspirations. Nigeria's neighbors, for example, were caught unawares when Nigeria suddenly announced its decision early this year that up to 2 million undocumented African workers had to leave Nigeria within 2 weeks. Embassy commentaries also suggest that resentment against Nigeria is especially strong among French-speaking countries in west and central Africa that historically have resisted—with Paris's support—English-speaking Nigeria's claims to regional dominance. More recently, the worldwide oil glut has reduced Nigeria's ability to use its influence by promoting greater bilateral and regional economic cooperation. Finally, the clumsy and often uncoordinated foreign policy making apparatus makes it difficult for Lagos to implement decisions effectively once they are made. Reporting from the US mission at the United Nations indicates, for example, that the Nigerian delegation played almost no role—and in effect worked against Lagos's own interests—during last spring's Security Council debate on Libyan involvement in Chad. [redacted]

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The complex relationship between ethnicity and personality is typified by the government's pardon in 1982 and the subsequent return to political activity of Ibo leader Odumegwu Ojukwu, ex-military head of secessionist eastern Nigeria ("Biafra").² The US Embassy reports that, while Ojukwu's public declaration of political support for the National Party has helped Shagari in the predominantly Ibo states of Anambra and Imo, it has cost him some support in the south-eastern minority states of Rivers and Cross Rivers, whose small tribes dislike the Ibo and previously had been solidly behind the National Party. The US Defense Attache reports that Ojukwu's return from exile has also led to some grumbling among Army officers who harbor bitter memories of Ojukwu's role during the civil war. [redacted]

In our view, the system of checks and balances between various branches and levels of government that was created by the 1979 constitution remains largely untested. According to the US Embassy, constant squabbling between the executive and legislature, the central and state governments, elected officials and civil servants, and party leaders and elected representatives has at times brought the legislative process to a standstill and tested public tolerance. In our judgment, the 95-member federal Senate and 449-member House of Representatives—with few roots and traditions and little experience to fall back on—have been the weakest links in the new system and have yet to demonstrate their ability to operate as equal partners of the executive. The Embassy reports that federal legislators remain uncertain of their roles and often are more concerned with protecting their personal perquisites than coming to grips with national issues on a sustained basis. Among the more contentious issues between legislators, for example, have been their salaries, order of precedence, and the quality of accommodations for legislators in Lagos. [redacted]

As a consequence, Shagari has effectively increased the powers of the president at the expense of the legislature. US Embassy reporting indicates that Shagari often bypasses established structures, preferring to make decisions informally after consultation with a small coterie of advisers. Sources available to

² Ojukwu is running as a National Party candidate for the federal Senate from his home state of Anambra. He is being challenged by a candidate from the Ibo-dominated Nigerian People's Party. [redacted]

the US Embassy also report that, although the National Party lacks a legislative majority in the National Assembly, it has been able to achieve a voting majority when needed by frequent and extensive use of bribery. [redacted]

Problems between governors and state assemblies are similar to those at the national level and frequently have led to violent confrontations between supporters of various individuals, parties, or party factions. The US Embassy reports that governors have consolidated their power against legislators by making constitutionally questionable appointments to local government councils, while some assemblies have turned to the impeachment process to deal with politically difficult governors. The opposition party governor of Kaduna State, for example, was impeached in 1981 by the National Party-dominated state assembly after over a year of bickering that paralyzed the legislative process and much of the operation of state government. In Kano State, rivalries within the badly divided People's Redemption Party led to the impeachment of the deputy governor, several violent clashes between various factions, and numerous politically related deaths. [redacted]

Economic Performance. Shagari and his key economic advisers have been tardy in responding to Nigeria's rapid economic decline, which was unanticipated when civilian rule was reinstated in 1979. [redacted] the new leaders assumed that oil prices and production would climb steadily and that increasing revenues would sustain economic growth and allow Nigeria to finance its ambitious development plans. This optimism was fueled by an average annual growth in national output of 5.5 percent between 1975 and 1980, foreign exchange reserves of well over \$5 billion in 1979, and a relatively modest official inflation rate of 11 percent. However, even during the first two years of civilian rule when economic indicators looked good, US Embassy reporting indicated that economic performance quickly fell prey to corruption, mismanagement, and inefficiency. Nor has the government made much headway on diversifying Nigeria's oil-dependent economy. We estimate, for example, that oil still accounts for 80 percent of government revenues and over 98 percent of exports. [redacted]

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The current economic crisis stems in large part from diminishing government revenues caused by the worldwide drop in the demand for oil that began in 1981. Nigerian oil production in 1981 and 1982, for example, was 30 percent and 37 percent, respectively, below the 2.1-million-barrels-per-day average in 1980. First-quarter production in 1983 dropped to an average of only 800,000 barrels per day, falling during part of February to about 400,000 barrels per day or less than one-fifth of capacity. The US Embassy reports that oil revenues in 1981 were only about two-thirds of those projected initially by the Nigerian Government, while revenues last year were only half those the Shagari administration was counting on. Nigeria's price cut in February of \$5.50 per barrel and OPEC's pricing and production agreement a month later helped boost average production back to well over a million barrels per day, but we estimate that oil revenues still will be down by over 20 percent in 1983, making it difficult for Nigeria to meet its financial commitments without increased outside assistance.³ [redacted]

The downward spiral of major economic indicators in the last two years reflects Nigeria's overdependence on oil revenues and the government's inability to reduce spending significantly in the face of hard economic times. We estimate that national output contracted by 11 percent last year while the current account deficit grew to over \$3.5 billion. Nigeria registered a \$9 billion trade surplus in 1980 but an \$800 million deficit in 1982. Foreign reserves fell from over \$10 billion to about \$1.5 billion—enough to cover only about a month's imports at traditional rates. Finally, Nigeria's total debt has climbed from a relatively modest \$5 billion in 1979 to almost \$15 billion today, including, according to banking sources and the US Embassy, almost \$6 billion in short-term arrears. [redacted]

In our judgment, the Shagari administration has preferred to hope for economic miracles in the form of increased demand for oil or new international bank loans rather than make painful adjustments required

³ This estimate is based on the premise that Nigeria will meet its 1.3-million-barrels-per-day OPEC quota and that the price of Nigerian crude will remain at about \$30 per barrel. [redacted]

to stem the current economic slide. For example, [redacted] imports have been cut to about \$900 million per month—from an average of about \$1.6 billion before austerity measures were announced in 1982—it has taken the government over a year to achieve this target. Recent negotiations with international banks to secure new loans and reschedule some of Nigeria's debt have been stymied thus far by the lack of an agreement with the IMF and mounting short-term arrearages, while a much discussed multibillion-dollar loan from Saudi Arabia has yet to materialize. [redacted]

Nor has the government—despite the steady flow of bad economic news and gloomy predictions—formally scaled back development plans or effectively reevaluated economic priorities. US Embassy reporting indicates, for example, that, although the Fourth Development Plan—initiated in 1981 and based on an expected five-year oil income of over \$125 billion—is floundering and probably will be scrapped after the election, both the government and opposition parties continue to promise to implement costly social and economic projects. The government is still publicly committed to moving ahead with prestige projects that could be postponed, such as the Soviet-built Ajaokuta steelworks and the new federal capital in Abuja. There is widespread agreement among US Government and open sources, for example, that Ajaokuta—now far behind schedule—will never produce competitively priced steel. [redacted]

The country's dwindling resources are further strained by the mounting need for food imports and the inability of the Shagari government to make good on its 1979 campaign promise to move quickly toward food self-sufficiency. The US Embassy reports that agricultural production—badly neglected since the outset of the oil boom in the early 1970s—recently has been growing by about 2 percent per year, but this is largely due to improved weather conditions and, in any case, is far below the targeted growth of 4 percent per year. Skyrocketing food demands in rapidly growing cities have left the government with little choice but to import popular food staples such as rice.

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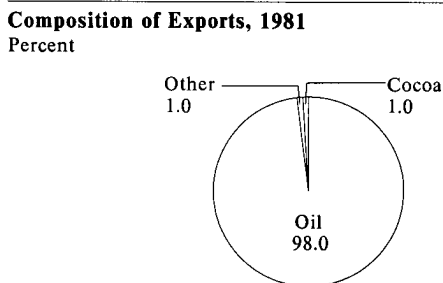
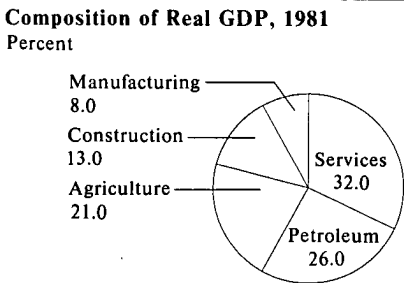
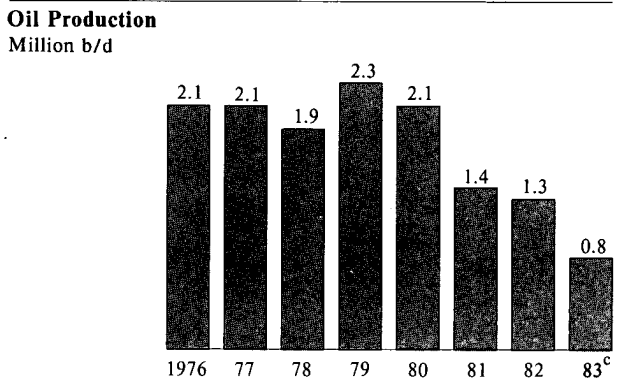
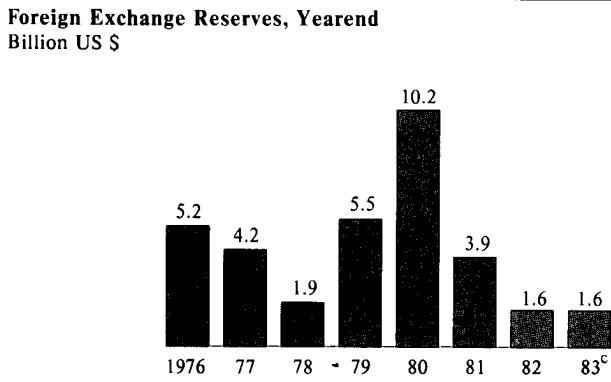
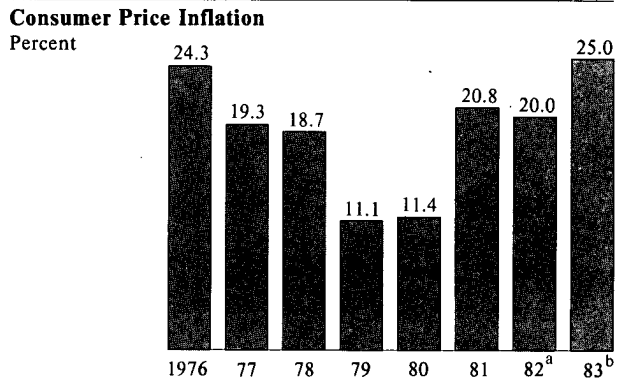
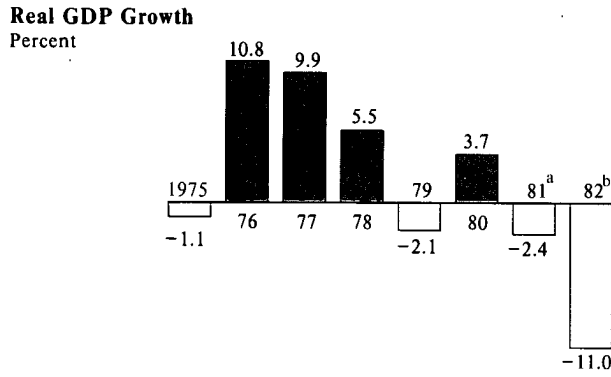
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Figure 2
Nigeria: Selected Economic Indicators



^a Estimated.
^b Projected.
^c 1st Quarter.

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Nigeria imported about 600,000 tons of rice in 1982, for example, compared to less than 100,000 tons annually in the 1960s. Last year's food imports cost about \$2 billion and this year Nigeria has been forced by foreign exchange shortages to buy cheaper Thai rice rather than higher quality US rice. A comparison of projected urbanization and population growth trends with agricultural production suggests that the gap between food demands and local production is likely to widen for the foreseeable future. [redacted]

In our judgment, government efforts to gain control of the economic situation are seriously impeded by endemic corruption, bureaucratic inertia, and maladministration. [redacted]

[redacted] almost all contracts let by the federal government require a substantial kickback to the National Party coffers. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] the scramble for funds has increased markedly as this year's election campaign heats up and parties attempt to fatten their war chests. [redacted]

Extensive corruption in awarding import licenses—one of the most lucrative forms of graft in Nigeria—also hampers government efforts to limit import spending and to establish a systematic priority list for imports. [redacted] US rice costing \$5.5 million has a street value of over \$20 million in Nigeria. Moreover, US Embassy economic reporting indicates that luxury items often continue to be imported while essential commodities such as raw materials and spare parts are in increasingly short supply. Construction and manufacturing companies have been particularly hard hit; both Peugeot and Volkswagen, for example, are forced to shut down periodically because of a lack of spare parts or foreign exchange. Foreign firms—once bullish on investing in Nigeria—have cut back or begun to pull out of Nigerian operations in the face of these problems, thus further weakening the economy. [redacted]

Civilian Rule on Trial

In our judgment, civilian leaders face a difficult challenge in 1983 as they wrestle with the need to take far stronger corrective economic steps without endangering their grip on political power. Prior to the election, we believe the Shagari administration, rather than risk politically painful austerity measures, will continue its band-aid approach to the economic crisis. The US Embassy reports, for example, that the government apparently does not want to present a new austerity package for legislative debate in the heat of an election campaign, preferring instead simply to continue past policies. On the political front, US Embassy reporting indicates that the government will have a difficult time managing the election process and that disgruntled losers could provoke instability by challenging the election outcome. [redacted]

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Economic Challenges. We believe Shagari's closest financial advisers now realize that there are no quick remedies for Nigeria's economic difficulties. Although recent increases in oil production, an anticipated rescheduling of short-term arrears, and access to new loans from international banks may give Nigeria more money than expected at the beginning of the year, we believe the government's room to maneuver its way around the current economic mess will remain circumscribed without a significant turnaround in the worldwide demand for oil. In our judgment, corruption and mismanagement—coupled with the lack of clear economic priorities and perceived political constraints—will continue to work against economic reform and undermine the impact of austerity measures. As a result, while we believe Nigeria will reach an agreement with the IMF after the elections, we question whether the government has the wherewithal or resolve to follow through consistently on the politically risky economic adjustments likely to be demanded by the Fund. If Lagos falters, we anticipate that the economy will continue to stagnate or decline even further as leaders attempt to negotiate new agreements. [redacted]

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In any case, we do not believe the Nigerian economy will recover quickly enough to ameliorate the economic and social dislocations in potentially volatile cities. US Embassy reporting has documented a marked deterioration in living standards, including increases

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of over 65 percent in the price of such consumer staples as rice, yams, chicken, and palm oil during the first three months of this year. One senior Nigerian official estimates that urban unemployment may now be as high as 30 percent, double what it was a year ago. We believe that plant closures are likely to top last year's rate when Nigerian labor and industrial organizations estimated that at least 45 industries laid off employees or shut down, idling upwards of 150,000 workers. The head of the Nigerian Labor Congress claims that over 200,000 of an estimated 3 million organized workers have lost their jobs since the government introduced stabilization measures last year, and he has promised to resist strongly any proposals that call for wage freezes, strike bans, and increased working hours. [redacted]

Despite tough conditions, relatively little serious, economically inspired protest has materialized so far. A widespread extended family system—whereby better-off members are obligated to aid their less fortunate relatives—and a large underground economy have helped cushion the impact of the current recession. Continuing economic shocks, however, in our judgment, will test the resilience and patience of urban dwellers and could spark antigovernment protests. The US Embassy, for example, has reported that the government is particularly sensitive to the political risks that could arise from any widespread food shortages. [redacted]

Students and labor groups historically have borne a disproportionate share of the hardship when the economy turns sour, and Embassy reporting suggests that these groups once again are faring worse than recent migrants from rural areas who can more easily return to their villages in case of an economic collapse. In the past, restive students and labor have provided early warning signs of widening popular dissatisfaction with the government. [redacted]

At present, there is little reporting to suggest that unions or students—both closely monitored by the government and divided among themselves—could carry out sustained strikes or demonstrations capable of bringing down the government. The US Embassy also notes that these groups represent only a relatively small percentage of the population and that thus far strikes have been relatively isolated and short lived,

while student demonstrations have focused more on campus issues. Despite this, student and labor groups tend to be more politically active and relatively better organized and, in our judgment, have the potential to provoke more widespread urban unrest that could tax the government's ability to maintain order. This, in turn, could serve as a pretext for a military attempt to overturn the government, especially if it appeared that the civilian leaders had lost control of the situation. [redacted]

Election Threats. In our view, the ever-present threat of uncontrollable election violence and the blatant rigging of the outcome of the elections pose the greatest short-term threats to the continuation of civilian rule. Early trends are not promising for a noncontroversial election process. The US Embassy has reported that all political parties—for contingency purposes—appear to be training squads of thugs that could be used to intimidate voters, engage in violence, and stuff ballot boxes. We believe the potential for election violence is greatest in the western Yoruba states where Unity Party leader Obafemi Awolowo publicly has called on his supporters to “take the law into their own hands” if they think the elections are rigged. [redacted]

[redacted] We also believe the leadership gap created by the death last April of Aminu Kano—Kano State's most popular and respected political figure—increases the possibility of political turmoil in one of Nigeria's historically most strife-ridden and violent states. [redacted]

The conduct of the elections will be complicated by serious logistic problems that will increase the government's vulnerability to charges of ineptitude and manipulation. Opposition parties already have charged that the ostensibly neutral federal election commission is little more than a partisan instrument serving the interests of the ruling National Party. The commission has been widely criticized for its clumsy handling of such technical issues as voter registration and the preparation of ballots, as well as for its

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1983 Election Scorecard

Party	1983 Candidates for President/ Vice President	1979 Results			Strengths	Weaknesses
		Federal		Governorships		
		Senate	House			
National Party of Nigeria (NPN)	Shehu Shagari ^a (Hausa-Fulani)/ Alex Ekweme ^a (Ibo)	36	168	7	Incumbency. Largest campaign war chest. Broadest base of national support. Core support among Hausa-Fulani in northern Nigeria. Shagari viewed as most "national" of candidates.	Vulnerable to charges of economic mismanagement. Party hurt at state levels by intraparty feuding. Lost some support among minority tribes.
Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)	Obafemi Awolowo ^a (Yoruba)/ Muhammadu Kura (Bauchi) ^b	28	111	5	Traditionally strong base of support among Yoruba in southwest.	Little support outside Yoruba areas. Party has difficulty shaking historical image of serving only Yoruba interests. Awolowo's often strident personality; antipathy among non-Yoruba.
Nigerian People's Party (NPP)	Nnamdi Azikiwe ^a (Ibo)/ Shettima Mustapha (Borno) ^b	16	78	3	Azikiwe viewed as "rightful" Ibo leader among most Ibos in Southeast. Recently picked up disaffected members of PRP and GNPP in northern Nigeria. Enjoys some minority tribe support, especially strong in Plateau State.	Has not proved it can appeal to voters outside primarily non-Ibo areas. Weak state organizations outside southeast strongholds. Probably continued residual anti-Ibo sentiment from civil war.
People's Redemption Party (PRP)	Hassan Yussuf (Borno) ^b / Mrs. Bola Ogunbor (Bendel)	7	49	2	Strong base of support in Kano and Kaduna States. Historically appealed to Hausa-Fulani who oppose traditional northern elite.	Badly factionalized. Death of party founder and leader Aminu Kano in April 1983 deprived party of charismatic leader and intellectual driving force.
Great Nigeria People's Party (GNPP)	Waziri Ibrahim ^a (Kanuri)/ Robert Nnaji (Imo) ^b	8	43	2	Strength among Kanuri in northeast who traditionally resist Hausa-Fulani domination. Party leader Waziri Ibrahim, one of the wealthiest businessmen in Nigeria.	Badly divided. Ibrahim's leadership challenged by GNPP governors and factions. Little appeal outside Kanuri strongholds.
Nigerian Advance Party (NAP)	Tunji Braithwaite (Yoruba)/ Usman Girel ^b (Gongola)	Not recognized until 1983			Attempting to appeal to young, educated Nigerians on basis of leftist ideology.	No track record; no organizational strength or widespread support.

^a Party nominee in 1979.

^b Ethnicity unknown; home state listed.



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decision to hold this year's presidential elections first rather than last, as was done in 1979. Without the inhibiting presence of the military, which supervised elections four years ago, we believe there is a danger that controversies over the "fairness" of the election could spark wider protests. If the violence spreads beyond a few cities, Nigeria's badly undermanned and ill-prepared 80,000-man police force, according to the US Defense Attache, will be unable to control the situation, and the government will have little choice but to call on the Army to assist in restoring order.

Another stumblingblock would occur if opposition parties refuse to accept the election results. On the basis of past voting patterns and current US Embassy reporting, we believe President Shagari is still in the best position to be reelected to another four-year term.⁴ But we believe that opposition parties expect to better their showing over the 1979 elections by picking up additional governorships, as well as state and federal legislative seats, at the expense of the National Party. The perception of widespread fraud and manipulation favoring Shagari's party could, in our view, tempt opposition parties to refuse to accept the results or to call for a boycott or scrapping of the elections, as occurred during some regional parliamentary elections in 1965. Shagari, in turn, could feel compelled to resort to strong-arm tactics—including a declaration of a state of emergency—to preserve order and enforce the election results.

The Army's Critical Role. In our judgment, the fate of Nigeria's democratic system ultimately rests on the willingness of the armed forces to remain subordinate to civilian control.

⁴ In an effort to prevent candidates from appealing to narrow tribal or regional groups, the constitution requires that for a presidential candidate to win on the first ballot, he must receive a plurality of votes nationally and at least 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of the 19 states. If no candidate meets this requirement, the top votegetter and the candidate who wins at least 25 percent of the vote in the most states meet in a runoff election. In 1979, Shagari received a plurality of the national vote and more than 25 percent of the vote in 12 states. After considerable legal wrangling over what constituted two-thirds of 19, the Supreme Court declared Shagari the winner by ruling that Shagari's 20 percent of the total vote in Kano State was the equivalent of 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of a state. The Nigerian Supreme Court later dismissed a suit to overturn the decision that was brought by Unity Party leader Awolowo.

[Redacted]

We concur with US Embassy reporting that the senior officer corps remains loyal to Shagari, but we believe that the frequent and prolonged use of the Army to keep order during the election campaign or to supervise elections ultimately would undermine civilian authority, weaken military discipline and morale, and politicize the armed forces in a way that could spur a military takeover by senior or middle grade officers. Furthermore, we believe Shagari could be forced to invite senior officers to temporarily assume or share power if the government is unable to maintain order or if it appears that political power is about to shift from the present leadership.

Although we believe junior officers and enlisted men would have a more difficult time carrying out a successful coup, recent Embassy reporting portray these ranks as the most potentially restive factions within the military.

[Redacted]

We believe these ranks could rebel at being called on to bail out the civilian government, especially if the Army was used in discriminatory fashion against Shagari's opponents.

Shagari has sought to establish close links to the approximately 120,000-man Army in an effort to reinforce constitutionally mandated civilian control of the military. The President holds the defense portfolio, and senior civilians meet daily to monitor the attitudes and movements of key officers and units.

Most importantly,

Shagari has systematically placed low northerners in key senior command positions, while retiring officers of suspect loyalty. Shagari has further sought to cement ties with the military by insulating the services from budget cuts—despite the current recession—and ensuring that senior officers continue to receive their share of perquisites and graft. Recent senior officer promotions, according to

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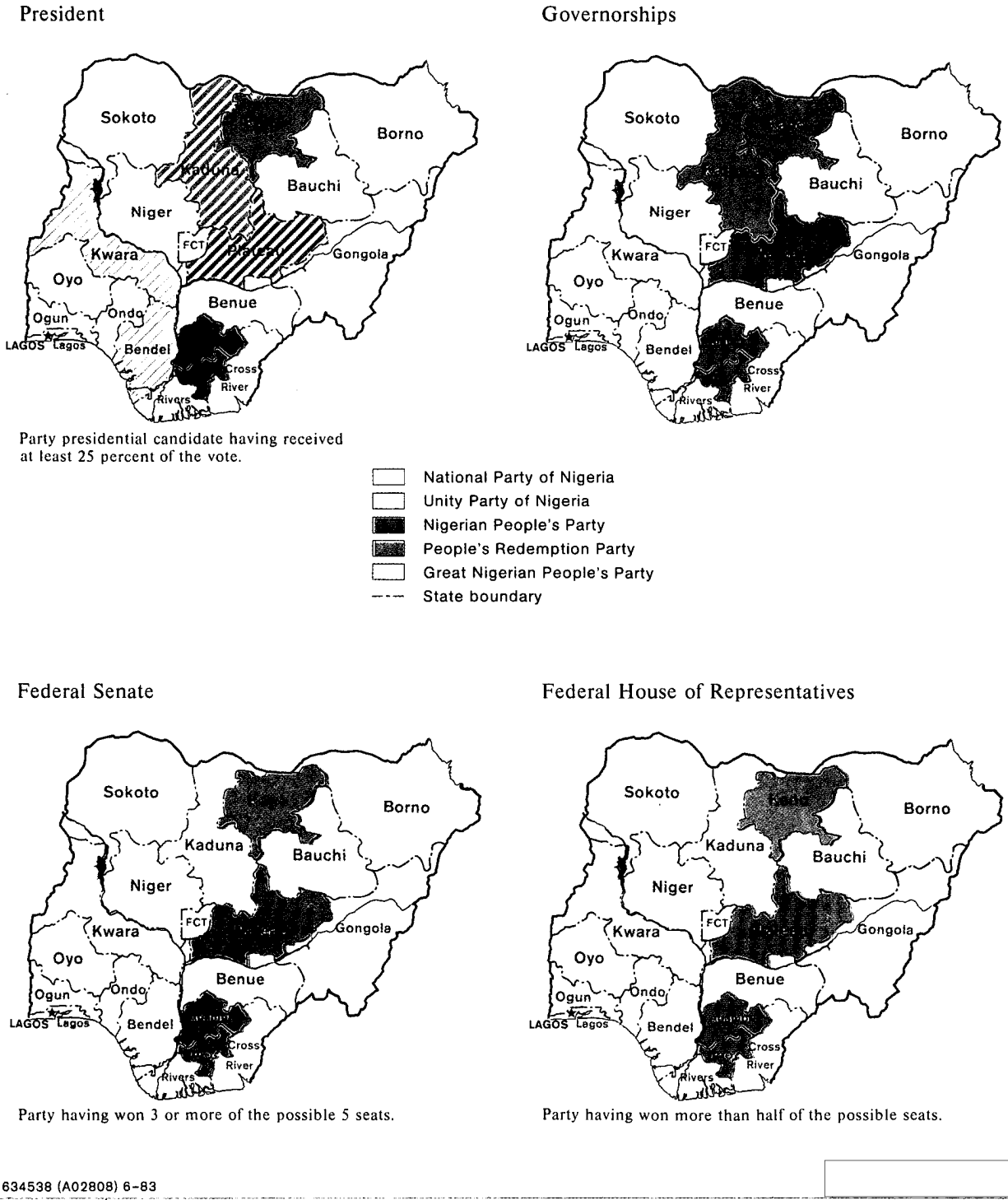
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Figure 3
Nigeria: Distribution of Political Power by State, 1979 Election Results



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[redacted] reporting, were intended as a visible display of the government's support for the armed forces. [redacted]

In anticipation that the government may reluctantly have to call on the military to maintain order during the coming election, Lagos recently purchased crowd-control equipment and has sent high-level military delegations overseas to study riot-control techniques.

[redacted]

[redacted] But the military's overall skill in crowd control, according to US Defense Attache and Embassy reporting, remains suspect and the use of troops could add to civil tensions rather than control them. The Army, for example, was widely criticized in 1980 for its heavyhanded use of force in quelling Islamic religious rioting in the northern city of Kano. [redacted]

In our judgment, serious logistic obstacles will face any group within the military that attempts to seize the initiative by launching a coup. The Army today is far larger, more ethnically diverse, and more widely dispersed throughout the country than was the 10,000-man Army that carried out the country's first two coups in 1966. As a consequence, we believe conspirators would find it hard to achieve a broad ethnic consensus in the Army favoring a coup, preserve secrecy during the coup's planning stages, and maintain essential communications and coordination during the coup attempt. Furthermore, we concur with the US Embassy assessment that a successful coup would require the active support of key units—currently commanded by Shagari loyalists—stationed in and around Lagos. Without their backing, we believe the conspirators could have difficulty neutralizing the legitimate government and gaining control of the country's communications and logistic network. [redacted]

Scenarios Through 1983

Despite Nigeria's current problems and the potential pitfalls ahead, we believe civilian rule has a good chance of survival between now and the elections. Neither the country's economic problems nor latent ethnic and regional animosities, however, are amenable to short-term remedy. Moreover, although we

believe it is important that whoever governs in the postelection period move quickly to salve bruised political feelings and make difficult economic decisions, we anticipate that bureaucratic ineptness and continued political wrangling will continue to plague a military or civilian government. [redacted]

Continuing Civilian Rule. We are guardedly optimistic that civilian leaders will be able to complete the election process, but not without considerable difficulty. If Shagari is elected to a second term, as we presently expect, he probably would continue to pursue moderate domestic and foreign policies. Although we anticipate that Shagari's postelection government will proclaim its intention to press ahead with efforts to reverse the two-year economic decline, we do not anticipate bold action on the government's part or a rapid economic recovery. Moreover, we believe that while discussions between Nigeria and the IMF and Western commercial banks are proceeding, negotiations still could prove difficult and drawn out as the nationalistic Nigerians resist the conditions that the IMF has compelled smaller and poorer countries of West Africa to accept. [redacted]

On the political front, we judge that postelection political tensions will remain high. At the very least, we expect a spate of lawsuits from losing parties and candidates challenging election procedures and results as was the case after the 1979 elections. Should opposition parties increase their representation in the federal legislature, we believe resulting legislative bottlenecks caused by inevitably increased political bickering would hinder government attempts to implement economic measures required by the IMF. In our view, the government also would quickly be faced with the stormy issue of demands from a host of ethnic groups for the creation of additional states. [redacted]

Senior Officers Assume Control. In our judgment, a government dominated by senior or middle-grade officers would produce few, if any, dramatic policy changes. According to academic studies, previous military governments represented a partnership between officers on a ruling council who set policy and the civilian bureaucracy that implemented programs, and we anticipate a similar arrangement under a new

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military regime. Senior and middle-grade officers—most of whom, [redacted] are well-educated, politically sophisticated, and have at least some administrative experience—probably would attempt to curtail partisan politics by banning political parties, seek to blunt ethnic and regional rivalries with a government of national unity, and claim to be acting as caretakers in the interest of preserving national order. On pressing economic matters, we expect that a coup probably would delay an agreement with the IMF, but that ultimately senior officers would accept austerity measures in order to gain needed economic assistance. [redacted]

Lower Ranks Seize Power. In our judgment, the lack of resources, support, and organizational skill make a coup by junior officers and enlisted men a less likely alternative. We cannot discount entirely, however, the possibility of the lower ranks seizing power and anticipate that such a coup or coup attempt would be violent and probably would include the killing of many civilian leaders and senior officers. Even if successful, we anticipate that new military leaders quickly would face a series of attempted counter-coups, especially if the initial takeover was perceived to be a power grab by narrow tribal interests at the expense of other tribes. We concur with US Embassy and Defense Attache reporting that the leaders of such a coup initially would be likely to seek legitimacy by inviting more senior or established figures—including former military leaders—to join the group. [redacted]

We project that a regime dominated by the lower ranks with little education or practical administrative experience, like those that have come to power in recent years in Ghana and Liberia, would be apt to seek public support by making populist promises with little understanding of their impact or regard for the government's financial or administrative ability to implement them. In particular, this regime could feel pressed to scrap austerity measures while blaming scapegoats—including the United States—for Nigeria's economic troubles. We do not believe these policies would produce tangible economic improvements, however, and as a result the government could face growing protest from Nigerians at large, who are used to pursuing their own economic interests without government interference. [redacted]

Libyan and Soviet Meddling

Nigeria's large population, relative wealth, and prominent role in regional affairs make it a tempting but more difficult target for Libyan and Soviet meddling than West Africa's smaller and more vulnerable states. Historically, the Soviets and Libyans have had limited success weaning Nigeria's civilian or military leaders away from moderate and pro-Western stances or making inroads among Nigeria's tribally divided population. Indeed, even though the USSR was a strong supporter and arms supplier of the federal government during the 1967-70 civil war, the Nigerians kept the Soviets at a distance and cut even the arms relationship at the end of the war. Furthermore, the lack of either armed Nigerian exiles or an organized overseas opposition—groups particularly susceptible to foreign manipulation and control—has hampered Moscow's and Tripoli's efforts to gain a foothold in Nigeria. We believe, however, that there remains a potential for outside powers to exploit current economic difficulties and rising political tensions. Should civilian rule break down, we believe a military government dominated by naive and impressionable enlisted men or junior officers would offer the most conducive political climate for radical states bent on increasing their influence at the expense of Western interests. [redacted]

Although suspicious of Soviet and Libyan activities and intentions in Nigeria and West Africa, leaders in Lagos traditionally have preferred to maintain at least formally correct relations with Communist countries and Libya rather than to refuse to deal with them. We believe Nigeria has done so in large part to confirm its nonaligned image and strengthen its claim to be an independent regional power. The US Embassy has reported, for example, that the Shagari administration chose to minimize publicly a Libyan-financed coup plot it reportedly uncovered in April 1983 and to go ahead as planned with Qadhafi's state visit to Lagos that month [redacted]

Libya. In our judgment, Qadhafi views Nigeria's large Muslim population—concentrated in the north and accounting for perhaps as much as half the country's total population—as fertile ground for receiving his message of revolution. According to the

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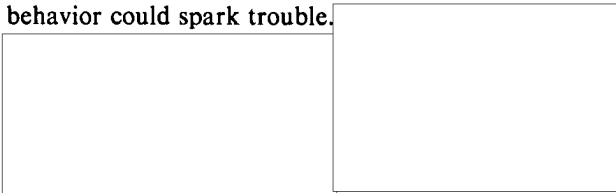
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US Embassy, Qadhafi sees Islamic fundamentalist sects and radical student groups opposed to Nigeria's secular government as most susceptible to his blandishments. These groups continue to proliferate in the north and some organizations now claim membership in the thousands but no one individual or group has rallied the majority of Muslims to their cause. The government is aware of the region's volatility, however, and the US Embassy reports that Lagos denied Qadhafi's request to visit the north during his visit in April in part out of fear that his unpredictable behavior could spark trouble.



[redacted] we concur with US Embassy reporting that there is little firm evidence at present that the vast majority of Nigeria's Muslims are attracted to Qadhafi's radicalism or that his past efforts have had much payoff. [redacted]

Soviet Union. In our judgment, Soviet economic interests in Nigeria—although moderate by Western levels—give Moscow an incentive to work with whatever government is in power. The US Embassy reports that the Soviet Union and other Communist countries view Nigeria as a relatively lucrative market for making hard currency sales of industrial goods and military supplies, although the recent economic downturn has reduced Nigeria's attractiveness. Some 5,000 Soviet technicians are helping to construct the \$2 billion Ajaokuta steelworks project, which represents Moscow's largest economic investment in black Africa. Militarily, the Soviets have taken advantage in the past of Nigeria's longstanding policy of buying equipment from diverse sources by selling Lagos MIG-21s and T-55 tanks as well as other weapons. US Defense Attache reporting indicates, however, that a good bit of unhappiness exists in the military over the quality of Soviet equipment and training. Moreover, the vast majority of Nigerian officers are trained at home or in the United States or the United Kingdom.



Although Nigerian politics revolve largely around ethnic rather than ideological issues, the US Embassy reports that the Soviets have developed clandestine ties with and provide some funds to left-leaning Nigerian labor and student leaders, as well as several politicians and journalists. The leftist leader of the Nigerian Labor Congress regularly touts a Marxist line on international issues, and the Embassy reports that the Yoruba-based Unity Party has a socialist-oriented radical faction with some members who have close ties to the Soviets and Cubans. The Embassy suspects, for example, that the Soviets may have had a hand in last spring's Unity Party disinformation campaign charging a CIA plot to kill Awolowo and another prominent Yoruba figure. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

In our judgment, Nigeria's economic performance at least throughout the remainder of the year will continue to fall short of Lagos's hopes and needs. As a consequence, we believe Nigeria's rulers will look to Washington to take more decisive action to help bail the country out of its current economic mess and will expect US treatment similar to that received by Mexico or—at least—Brazil. US Embassy reporting indicates that Nigerians believe Washington has an "obligation" to help preserve their American-style political system as well as to repay Lagos for support on numerous international issues, including its refusal to join the 1973 Arab oil embargo against the West. Requests are likely to include calls for Washington to press US banks to agree to generous debt rescheduling terms, possible emergency food aid, and intercession with the IMF on Nigeria's behalf. Lagos, for example, already has requested a \$150 million commodity credit to help tide the country over 1983, and we expect similar requests if spot food shortages reported throughout Nigeria spread. [redacted]

At the same time, however, Nigeria's strident nationalism and leadership ambitions in Africa make it difficult for Lagos to appear to be too dependent on or allied with the United States. We believe that if Washington appears unconcerned about Nigeria's problems or if aid packages do not meet Lagos's

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Comparison of US and Soviet Ties to Nigeria

US Ties

In our judgment, Nigeria continues to feel a close political affinity for the United States. Historically, Nigeria has been sensitive to how it is viewed by the United States, and, since the adoption of its US-style constitution in 1979, has seen US prestige as entwined with Nigeria's domestic fortunes. Despite the recent economic downturn, US economic interests in Nigeria remain substantial and among the largest in black Africa:

- *US investment in Nigeria (largely in the oil industry) has a total book value of \$300-350 million.*
- *Nigeria is the fourth-largest supplier of oil to the United States.*
- *Total US-Nigerian trade in 1982 was about \$8.6 billion; the value of US exports was about \$1.3 billion and the value of US imports about \$7.3 billion.*
- *The US trade deficit with Nigeria in 1982 was \$5.7 billion, second only to that with Japan.*
- *Nigeria imported about \$460 million worth of US food in 1982.*
- *American institutions, technology, and goods are the most favored in Nigeria. The Embassy estimates that over 30,000 Nigerian students currently are studying in the United States.*
- *The US military establishment is viewed as a model by Nigeria, and hundreds of Nigerian soldiers have received US military training. [redacted]*

Soviet Ties

Nigeria's relations with Communist countries, on the whole, are outwardly polite and correct, and in line with Nigeria's stated commitment to nonalignment. In general, Nigerian-Soviet links have not changed under civilian government, nor, in the judgment of the US Embassy, has Soviet influence increased appreciably in the past year. Indeed, the Embassy has noted a cooling of diplomatic and political relations since 1981:

- *Nigeria does not receive significant amounts of bilateral economic aid from Communist countries.*
- *The largest Soviet investment in Nigeria is the \$2 billion Ajaokuta steelworks that currently involves about 5,000 Soviet advisers and technicians. In general, Soviet and East European assistance is limited to teams of technical experts that provide assistance to agricultural, construction, and engineering projects.*
- *Total Soviet-Nigerian trade in 1982 was about \$385 million; the value of Soviet exports was about \$365 million and the value of Soviet imports about \$20 million.*
- *The Embassy estimates that about 2,500 Nigerian students are studying in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, with about 1,000 of these in the Soviet Union.*
- *Nigeria has made no major, recent purchases of Soviet military equipment but continues to include MIG-21 fighters and Soviet T-55 tanks in its military arsenal. The Soviets also continue to provide limited training for Nigerian pilots, although Lagos complains about the quality of both Soviet goods and training. [redacted]*

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expectations, Shagari could feel compelled to distance himself to some degree from the United States during his second term. In view of Nigeria's present economic straits, however, we do not foresee Lagos making direct threats against US economic interests or shutting off access to Nigerian crude oil. Nor does there appear to be a strong lobby within Nigeria's civilian elite that advocates closer ties to the Soviet Union or Libya, or that favors attempting to blackmail the United States and the West into providing more aid. In our view, Nigeria would be more likely to reduce its support for US-African policies, especially in southern Africa, and to counsel other African states to do likewise. [redacted]

US Defense Attache and Embassy reporting indicates that most senior and middle-grade officers are generally pragmatic and pro-Western in outlook. We believe that a government dominated by these officers would recognize that, in view of Nigeria's present economic straits, they could not afford to alienate Western aid donors or the IMF. Moreover, in our judgment, they also would recognize that any aid provided by Libya, the Soviet Union, or other radical states would not come close to matching the level or sophistication of economic assistance provided by the West. However, such a government could try to distance itself from the former civilian government and divert public attention from continued harsh economic times by blaming the United States and the West for the global recession. In our view, such rhetorical posturing probably would be undertaken in conjunction with a more outspoken and active stance against United States policy in southern Africa. [redacted]

We believe that a government controlled by the military's lower ranks would prove far more difficult for the United States to work with, usher in a prolonged period of domestic turmoil, and undermine US hopes for a stable Nigeria committed to playing a moderating role in African affairs. In our judgment, a government dominated by more populist-oriented and ill-educated soldiers would have great difficulty understanding or dealing with Nigeria's economic problems and would expect the United States and the

West quickly to come to their rescue with massive economic assistance. If their expectations were not fulfilled, we believe these soldiers might be tempted to turn to the Soviet Union or Libya in hopes of receiving an infusion of aid. [redacted]

We believe junior officers would quickly come to realize that the Soviets and Libyans were unable or unwilling to provide more than token economic help. We anticipate, however, that even then these officers would espouse a more radical anti-Western rhetoric in an effort to burnish their nonaligned credentials and to distinguish themselves from their more conservative civilian predecessors. Furthermore, even if Moscow and Tripoli failed to achieve real inroads, an unstable Nigeria would continue to serve Soviet and Libyan interests in that the United States could no longer count on the most populous country in the region to act as a stabilizing regional player and generally provide support for US policy initiatives in Africa. [redacted]

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