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Nigeria: Government Under Siege

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An Intelligence Assessment

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Nigeria: Government Under Siege

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An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [Redacted]
Office of African and Latin American Analysis, with
a contribution by [Redacted] Office of Central
Reference. It was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. [Redacted]

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Comments and queries are welcome and may be
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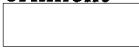
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**Nigeria: Government
Under Siege**



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Scope Note

This paper, which focuses on the short-term prospects for the current military regime, augments a series of broader assessments of the political, economic, and social forces contributing to instability in Nigeria.



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**Nigeria: Government
Under Siege**

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Key Judgments*Information available
as of 21 May 1986
was used in this report.*

Festering social tensions and a deteriorating economy threaten the survival of moderate President Ibrahim Babangida, whose generally pro-Western attitude serves US interests in the region. With Babangida in power—he assumed office through a bloodless military coup last August—the United States is ensured access to Nigerian crude oil as an alternative to Persian Gulf supplies. Representing black Africa's richest and most populous state, moreover, Babangida's government can sway opinion in Third World forums and thus be helpful to Washington.

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Babangida's political honeymoon ended abruptly last January when security forces discovered a large number of the military and civilians were planning a coup. As things now stand, we believe prospects for Babangida's holding power beyond the next six months to a year are tenuous. A successor regime, even if led by one of Babangida's inner circle, is likely to adopt more nationalistic and repressive policies. US interests would be more severely affected in the event of a coup by radical junior officers or Nigeria's disintegration through civil war, both unlikely outcomes in the short term but increasingly possible as instability mounts in Nigeria.

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The present regime's obsession with security has left other government affairs in disarray. It has so far been unable to reform the bureaucracy, which is faction ridden, corrupt, and an impediment to effective implementation of an austerity program. The government's most pressing challenge is the rapidly deteriorating modern economic sector, characterized by industries operating at barely 30 percent capacity, per capita food production below levels in 1970, shortages of basic commodity imports, inflation, and steadily rising unemployment.


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Babangida's efforts to forge a national consensus have failed or backfired, and the country continues to suffer from ethnic, regional, and religious factionalism. Although Babangida has tried to bring the southern regions into the political mainstream after 25 years of northern-dominated central governments, southerners continue to be wary of government favoritism toward the Muslim north. Northern tribal elites, however, fear their diminished role in the government could threaten their extensive economic interests. The regime's acceptance of full membership in the Islamic Conference Organization this year generated Christian concern that Nigeria was moving toward becoming an Islamic state; Christian demonstrations, in turn, sparked retaliatory Muslim violence. Growing religious


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conflicts have provided ample opportunity for additional Libyan and Iranian inroads into some northern Muslim groups. 


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Babangida's position is dependent on his continuing popularity with the military, which is by now dangerously divided and increasingly politicized. Tensions are particularly acute between the lower ranks, which feel they have been unfairly penalized by austerity cutbacks, and senior officers who have already profited from promotions, patronage, and kickbacks. Furthermore, officers of all grades are frustrated with the government's indecisiveness and with deteriorating standards of living. 


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In the near term—six months to a year—the regime probably will muddle through, in our judgment, but will become increasingly isolated as military and civilian discontent grows. The President probably has bought himself some time by acting promptly against coup plotters and by reinforcing his intelligence capabilities. Moreover, for the present the key Army troop units controlled by his inner circle probably can neutralize antigovernment activity by other military factions. However, Babangida's permissive style of rule is likely to encourage military restiveness and further ethnic, regional, and religious factionalism. His own inner circle of followers already shows impatience with the President's emphasis on consensus and human rights. 

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In the medium term—over the next one to two years—we believe there is a better than even chance that Babangida will be overthrown by senior or midlevel officers dissatisfied with his performance. His likely successors would probably impose an autocratic, heavyhanded rule to counteract what some of them view as Babangida's excessively open style. Lagos would probably adopt a more nonaligned and nationalistic position, firmly opposed to an IMF agreement and favorable to a go-it-alone strategy for dealing with Nigeria's profound economic malaise. 

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If, as we believe will be the case, Nigerian authorities remain incapable of halting the country's economic slide and unable to find a formula for national unity and social peace, the odds for the emergence of a radical government or, alternatively, for civil war will grow. 

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Chronology of Political Instability in Nigeria

Nigeria has undergone six military coups and plunged into major disorders several times in the past 25 years, including a civil war between the southeastern region and the rest of the country that cost over 1 million lives.

- October 1960 Independence from Britain. Civilian government modeled on British parliamentary system.*
- January 1966 First military coup. The Prime Minister and other Hausa-Fulani leaders murdered. Maj. Gen. Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Ibo, takes power.*
- July 1966 Second military coup. General Ironsi murdered. Lt. Col. (later Gen.) Yakubu Gowon, a Middle Belt Christian, assumes power.*
- July 1967–January 1970 Civil war. Eastern region under an Ibo military government breaks away, stressing the threat of genocide of the Ibo people. Biafra supported by a few African states. USSR becomes an important source of military equipment for Lagos. Lagos regime finally defeats the secession as starvation takes a heavy toll in Biafra.*
- July 1975 Bloodless military coup ousts General Gowon. Brig. Gen. (later Gen.) Murtala Muhammad, a northern Hausa Muslim, takes over.*
- February 1976 General Muhammad assassinated in failed military coup by Lt. Col. Bukar Dimka, a Middle Belter. Lt. Gen. (later Gen.) Olsegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba, in power.*
- October 1979 Return to civilian rule under President Shehu Shagari, a Hausa-Fulani Muslim, under American-style presidential system. Flagrant, massive corruption during peak of Nigeria's oil boom siphoned billions of dollars out of the country, left the economy in shambles.*
- December 1983 Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, a northern Fulani Muslim, takes power in a military coup, promising to clean up the mess. Authoritarian means fail to right the economy, but alienate the population.*
- August 1985 Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida deposes Major General Buhari and takes over.*

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Nigeria: Government Under Siege



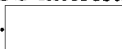
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Introduction

Six military coups and eight heads of state in 25 years have led many observers to conclude that Nigeria is ungovernable. Nigerians appear accustomed to dealing with their country's economic and political problems by replacing their central governments—perhaps at a quickening pace, as terms in office have diminished from former President Shagari's four-year effort at civilian rule (1979-83) to under two years for Major General Buhari (1983-85) (see inset). Within weeks of his own coup last August, President Babangida's military regime was under threat and its growing instability, in our judgment, indicates it will not last beyond next year—if that long. Babangida faces renewed coup plotting, an economy in crisis, and failure of his ambitious attempt to build broad-based support for the government.



This paper outlines the new regime's hopeful beginnings and assesses the efficacy of its style and its efforts to consolidate power. It will review the long-standing problems threatening Babangida's survival, project the likely character of a successor government, and consider the implications for US interests in the region if Babangida is overthrown.



Profile of an Unstable Regime

In our judgment, President Babangida's regime got off to a strong start but then suffered important reverses, several of its own making. The US Embassy reports that, as a result of these setbacks and in response to the inherent difficulties of governing a state with Africa's largest and most complex population, the regime has increasingly focused on security and self-preservation, leaving the business of governing the country in disarray.



Ambitious Start. President Babangida's military takeover last August was facilitated by widespread public anger over the authoritarian ruling style of his predecessor, as well as discontent over continuing

deterioration of the economy, according to Nigerian press and US Embassy reporting. To alter these trends, early in his administration Babangida committed himself to a program of sweeping political and economic reform. He adopted an open, populist approach, encouraging broad popular participation in the political process and a developing national consensus that would support a program of painful austerity measures. To build a constituency he gave government positions to ethnic factions often excluded by northern Nigeria's Muslim majority, which had dominated government since independence in 1960. At the same time, however, Babangida was mindful of the need to cultivate ties to the northern Muslim aristocracy. For example, he made the son of one of the highest Muslim officeholders in the north his aide-de-camp and brought other northerners into his inner circle. Setting a four-year timetable for a return to civilian rule, the President made a liberal human rights policy the keynote of the early weeks of his administration. He ended press censorship and granted scores of interviews that reaped enthusiastic coverage by Nigeria's normally cantankerous press.



Babangida's shrewd management of public relations generated considerable initial good will toward his presidency, which probably helped dampen factional opposition during the government's first few months, according to US officials and press reporting. In his official statements, Babangida played upon popular fears that unabated factionalism and coup plotting could destroy the national federation, as it did during the Biafran civil war (1967-70). Babangida's freedom of action, moreover, was unimpeded by civilian opposition groups, which, according to the US Embassy, were (and are) internally divided and not up to challenging his government. For example, US Embassy reporting notes the continuing public contempt toward the six political parties banned by the military in 1983, because the last civilian government was so flagrantly inefficient and corrupt.



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The Ruling Clique: A Narrow Power Base. Despite Babangida's efforts to promote a "military democracy" based on national consensus, [redacted]

Decisionmaking power in the regime is closely held by this inner group. [redacted]

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[redacted] Babangida's power and authority depend on a small group of officers who comprise his inner circle of advisers [redacted]. Previous governments had largely depended on strong ethnic, regional, and religious constituencies as well as on senior-grade military officers for support. Babangida's clique is composed mostly of Western-educated, middle-grade officers from a variety of Nigerian states and ethnic groups. All but one, however, come from the northern region, and even the single exception—a member of the Hausa tribe from a central state—often identifies with the Hausa-Fulani northerners (see map). [redacted] most members of the group have no independent political base, having earned their status through close association with Babangida when he was Chief of Army Staff from 1983 to 1985. [redacted]

[redacted]

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[redacted] Press and US

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Embassy reporting indicates that the majority favor self-imposed austerity and a go-it-alone strategy on economic matters, rather than further involvement with the international financial community—reflecting their militant nationalism. Their preoccupation with the security of the regime has been underscored by quick and harsh reaction to potential rivals, particularly in the military. [redacted]

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The leaders of this group [redacted] [redacted] were instrumental in persuading Babangida to abandon his habitual behind-the-scenes role in favor of taking over the government in the bloodless August coup, according to US Embassy reporting. They subsequently helped select those on the 28-man Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) and the 22-member Federal Cabinet who, together with the President, nominally run the government. [redacted]

The Honeymoon Ends. The regime's brief honeymoon ended abruptly, and its obsession with security took hold [redacted]

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[redacted] last December. The government rounded up more than 300 military and civilian suspects; 10 were convicted and shot in February, and about 40 were sent to prison. US Embassy sources indicate that the widespread defections in the military only three months into Babangida's presidency damaged the regime's credibility and shook the confidence of even his loyal supporters. Babangida subsequently reorganized and strengthened the civilian and military intelligence agencies [redacted]

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Babangida's inner circle is clearly driven by the desire to protect its power. [redacted] officers in the ruling clique command the key military positions from which effective attacks on the ruling government have been launched in the past: the 9th Mechanized Brigade and the Brigade of Guards that control the capital area; the 3rd Armored Division and the governorship of Kaduna State, key positions in Nigeria's northern tier of states; and the portfolios of the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Communications, and the Directors of Military Intelligence and of the National Security Organization. [redacted]

[redacted] that the President has hired eight British special service personnel to train members of his personal bodyguard and of the security guard for Dodan Barracks, the seat of government in Lagos. [redacted]

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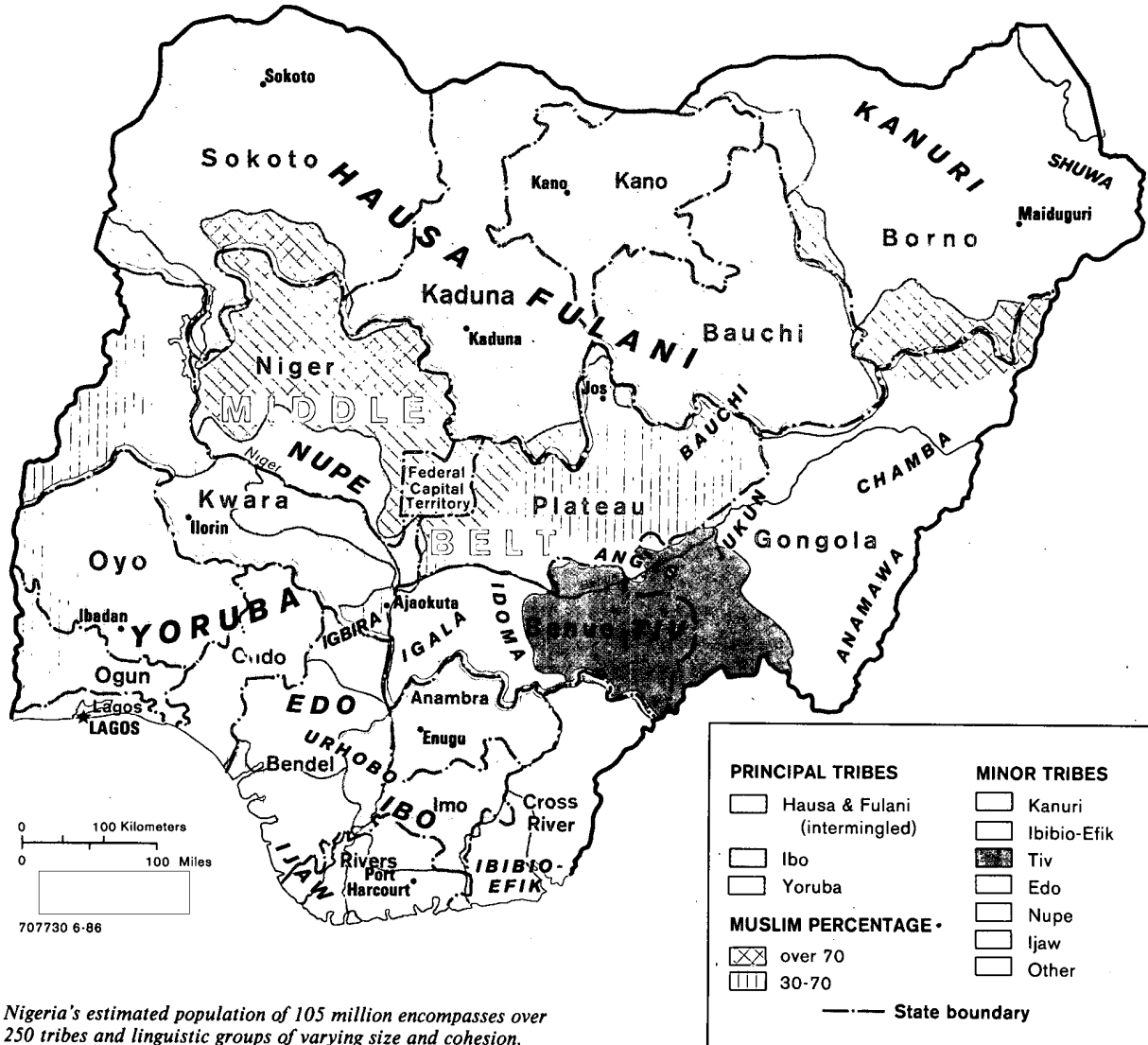
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Figure 1
Nigeria's Tribal and Religious Distribution



Nigeria's estimated population of 105 million encompasses over 250 tribes and linguistic groups of varying size and cohesion. Religion often reinforces ethnic and regional differences in a country that is about 50-percent Muslim, 35-percent Christian, and 15-percent animist. Three main tribal groups account for over 60 percent of the population. The largest group is the predominantly Muslim and rigidly stratified Hausa-Fulani of the populous, underdeveloped far north. On the whole, the Hausa-Fulani are poorer, more conservative, and have a lower level of education and literacy than the two groups in the south that were exposed earlier to British colonial rule and proved more receptive to Western cultural influences.

The next largest group, the mixed Christian and Muslim Yoruba, is found in the southwest and closely rivals the third-ranking Ibo in their degree of Westernization. The highly adaptive, individualistic, and overwhelmingly Christian Ibo in the southeast have migrated more than any other group, seeking work and advancement in other parts of the country.

Many of Nigeria's small tribes are found in the Middle Belt of central states, which have traditionally served as a buffer zone between the major groups in the north and south; this zone contains about 15 percent of the population. This is a religiously mixed area where Muslims, Christians, and animists coexist and where tribes vary widely in social structure and cultural patterns. The Middle Belt is Nigeria's least economically developed area. There are pockets of small and once predominantly animist tribes in the far north that have been exposed to Christian influence or culturally assimilated by the dominant Hausa-Fulani and the Muslim Kanuri, the second-largest group in the far north. Southern minority tribes, educated and mostly Christian, are found in the south-central and southeastern parts of the country.

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Foreign Policy Adrift

Nigeria's foreign policy machinery has been especially muddled, [redacted] since Babangida took power. Authority is divided among several ministries that frequently send their officials abroad on policy missions without the Foreign Minister's knowledge. Senior members of the regime have told US officials that neither Nigerian UN permanent representative Garba nor the Minister of External Affairs Akenyemi speaks for Nigeria on important foreign policy matters. The Foreign Minister—an impulsive, longtime academic critic of Nigeria's foreign policy—is highly unpopular within the bureaucracy, according to US Embassy sources, and open quarreling among senior officials impedes policy implementation. Some External Affairs officers also have access to Babangida directly, without going through the minister's office. [redacted]

[redacted] His early pledge to open Nigeria's land borders was unfulfilled for months because the Nigerians did not pursue negotiations, according to US Embassy reporting. Even now, the border with Chad remains closed, ostensibly to prevent a spillover of violence from the civil war there, according to press

The regime's preoccupation with self-preservation has led to a breakdown of government activity, [redacted] Normal government functions are foundering and, in our view, even less coordination now exists between government agencies than before. Moreover, corruption—the issue that brought down the last civilian government—continues to flourish, according to press reporting. [redacted]

[redacted] Meanwhile, import licenses essential to Nigeria's stagnating industrial sector have been held up interminably by bureaucratic delays, according to press reports. Externally, the regime's failure to make clear who is in charge of foreign policy has immobilized foreign

sources. Lagos also has vacillated on the issue of illegal aliens. The government has yet to decide whether it will allow refugees and workers from other states in the region to enter Nigeria as it agreed to do under the treaty of the Economic Organization of West African States. In the past few years, it has expelled thousands of aliens under conditions of great hardship, according to Embassy and press reporting. [redacted]

Lagos also has stalled on making any changes in its correct but cool relations with the Soviets. The USSR has sold Nigeria MIGs and undertaken its largest development program in Africa at the steel complex in Ajaokuta. The Soviets also provide technical training for several hundred Nigerians a year.

[redacted] The current regime also presumably is aware of the very poor track record of Soviet economic assistance to Nigeria and will probably be very selective about any expansion of bilateral economic ties. [redacted]

relations, according to US Embassy officials (see inset). [redacted]

Key Problems Unaddressed

We agree with US officials on the scene that, with the government in disarray, longstanding economic, political, and social problems are not being addressed, or even defined. The most pressing challenges facing the government include the almost bankrupt economy; chronic and festering regional, ethnic, and religious divisions; and an intensely politicized military. [redacted]

Looming Economic Crisis. In our judgment, Nigeria's financial crisis will grow worse during the next two years, as the country tries to service a \$19 billion foreign debt without benefit of external assistance.

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Plunging prices of oil (oil provides over 96 percent of foreign exchange) could reduce earnings to less than \$7 billion during 1986—from a peak of \$25 billion in 1980. The government almost certainly will continue its efforts to reschedule the country's \$4 billion medium- and long-term debt payments for 1986, because the 90-day debt moratorium agreed to by commercial creditors in London in March will not offset the decline in export earnings without a devastating cut in imports.

An accord with the IMF will be the government's solution of last resort because the move is considered by many Nigerian officials to be politically suicidal. Two previous governments have balked at the IMF's prerequisites to an accord: major devaluation of the naira, elimination of domestic petroleum subsidies, and trade liberalization. Nigerian press reporting indicates that Babangida sought a popular mandate to negotiate with the IMF by initiating a national debate on the issue during his early weeks in office. However, according to the US Embassy, opponents of the accord took over the debate, charging that the government would be unable to manage the loan either honestly or effectively. By December, a torrent of negative public opinion forced the President to turn down the IMF option. A senior Nigerian financial official later told the State Department that Babangida was the only member of the AFRC to vote in favor of the accord. Since then, Western governments have refused to reschedule official debts, and commercial bankers have cut off most trade credits.

Lagos's go-it-alone strategy, coupled with dropping oil revenues, has pushed the country to the brink of financial default. In the absence of a significant turnaround in the oil market, the modern sector will contract in 1986 for the fourth out of five consecutive years. To save foreign exchange, imports already have been cut drastically, from \$21 billion in 1981 to about \$8 billion last year, according to the financial press. US business analysts estimate that Nigeria's industry, which depends on imports for almost three-fourths of its material inputs, will be operating at barely 30 percent capacity. Unemployment is rising because of budget cuts, while lower levels of industrial activity and inflation have boosted prices by as much as 200 percent over the past two years (see Economic Indicators).

Social Discontent. Babangida's efforts to forge a national consensus have, in our judgment, exacerbated factionalisms already activated by mounting economic pressures. The many instances where Babangida's well-intended gestures have backfired have underscored the government's inability to correctly evaluate the consequences of its actions. For example, Babangida tried to dilute the Fulani-Hausa's traditional domination of the government by making gestures to bring the southwestern Yoruba into the political mainstream. In the process, however, the President created a wave of antipathy against the Yoruba, whose position in the economically privileged area of the country is a source of resentment. For their part, the Yoruba—nearly evenly made up of Christians and Muslims—still believe the government favors the north. The Christian Yoruba, moreover, have demonstrated against alleged government promotion of Islamic interests.

Babangida's decision in January to make Nigeria a full-fledged member of the Islamic Conference Organization (OIC) instead of retaining observer status was a similarly misguided effort, in our opinion, setting off a chain of protests from the Christian community. US Embassy reporting indicates Babangida probably joined the OIC in hopes of obtaining Arab economic aid and gaining favor with Nigeria's Muslim majority, which reacted violently to the Christian protests. The President belatedly turned the OIC membership issue over to a joint panel of Christians and Muslims, but US officials report that the Muslim northerners, urged on by Libyan and Iranian diplomats, have vowed to stand fast on retaining membership. The OIC controversy has been a "self-inflicted wound," in the words of a retired Nigerian military leader, that has raised doubts, even among his military supporters, about Babangida's capacity to negotiate Nigeria's intricate maze of factional politics.

We believe the difficulties of balancing religious interests in Nigeria will continue to be a key obstacle to stable government. Even as Christians protest government favoritism toward northern Muslims,

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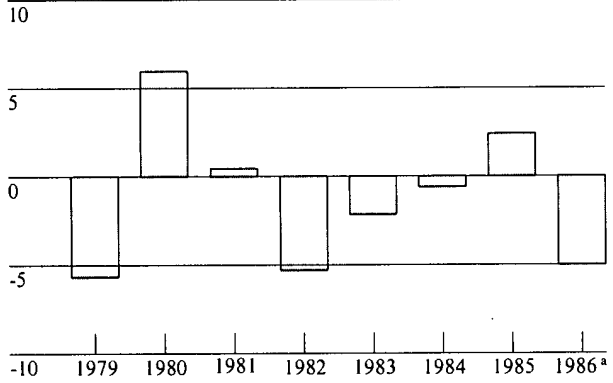
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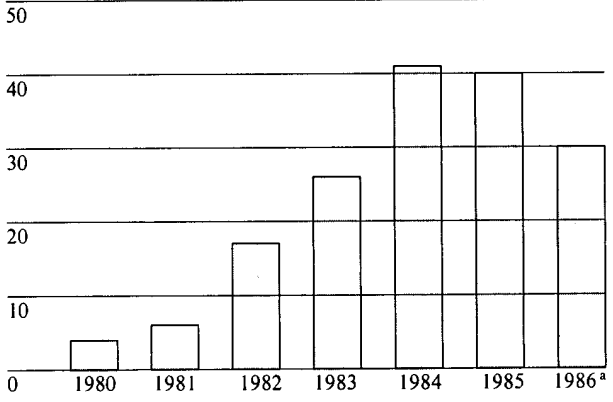
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Figure 2
Nigeria: Key Economic Indicators

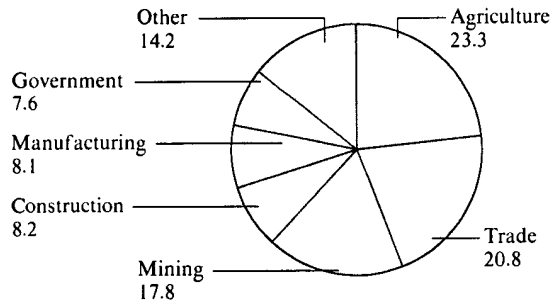
Real GDP Growth, 1979-86
Percent



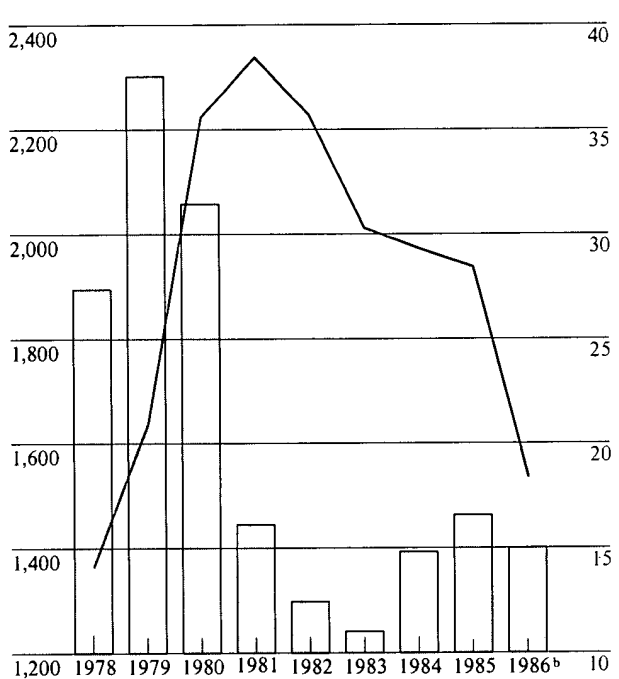
Debt Service Ratio, 1980-86
Percent



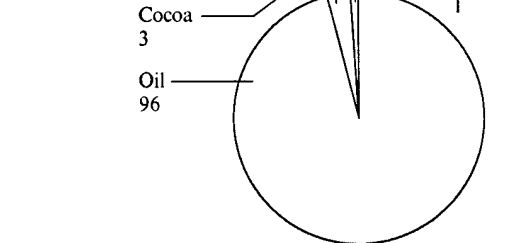
Composition of GDP, 1984
Percent



Oil Production, 1978-86
Thousand b/d



Composition of Exports, 1984
Percent



^a Projected.

^b Production: First quarter 1986 figures.
Price: First quarter 1986 spot price.

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northern elites worry that their exclusion from senior positions in the government threatens their economic interests, according to US Embassy sources. Northern states still lag behind the commercial, oil-rich south, and depend on Lagos to divert a disproportionate share of public funds their way, according to academic observers. Even though Babangida has surrounded himself with northern advisers, US Embassy sources indicate that northern elites believe his advisers are loyal to the President and not to their home region. The nationalist wing of the Fulani-Hausa "Kaduna Mafia"—a group of business, political, and religious leaders based in Kaduna—is particularly anxious and angry about what they allege is the southern bias of the new regime.¹ According to US officials, elements of this group have established contact with Libya, seeking financial and other support for religious and political activities. [redacted]

Religious and economic grievances are likely to pose serious security problems for the regime, particularly among the volatile urban populations of the northern Muslim cities that are most vulnerable to foreign radical meddling. US Embassy sources report that cuts in petroleum subsidies, which affect prices of consumer goods trucked from the south, will particularly affect northern cities—such as Sokoto, Kano, Maiduguri, and Kaduna—in states that are just emerging from the 1972-85 drought. According to the US Embassy, inadequate facilities for water, electricity, housing, and other services have been strained by rapid population growth and rural and alien migrants moving into urban areas in search of jobs. [redacted]

Nigerian cities, moreover, have become breeding grounds for radical Muslim fringe groups, such as the Maitatsine. Since 1980, these groups have been involved in several incidents that have taken thousands of lives and required Army intervention to restore peace. Press and Embassy reporting shows that Maitatsine cells have appeared in virtually every major

¹ Northern leaders also believe that the government has a pro-Christian bias reminiscent of colonial times because it adheres to a Christian calendar and has maintained diplomatic relations with the Vatican. Furthermore, they are angered that pressure from southerners has prevented the release of former President Shagari, a member of the powerful northern elite still in detention on charges of corruption after nearly three years without trial, according to the press. [redacted]

city in the country, and they will continue to tax the government's control over urban populations.² [redacted]

In our judgment, some of these Islamic groups are particularly open to infiltration by Libya. [redacted] the Islamic Trust, a northern-based Muslim association whose membership includes the nationalist wing of the northern political elite, has sought from Tripoli more than \$1 million in aid for the Muslim community. We do not know how much, if any, assistance has been received. For several years, nevertheless, the Libyans have pressed Lagos to allow them to open an Islamic religious studies center in Kano, the site of violent clashes between local sects, student radicals, and civil authorities, [redacted]

Iran also appears determined to spread its revolutionary ideology within Nigeria. Iranian diplomats and clerics are actively recruiting candidates for military and religious training in Iran and introducing revolutionary propaganda at the universities, according to US officials. The Iranians encourage Muslim leaders to demand an Islamic government in Lagos, [redacted]

[redacted] They also hope to establish a cultural center in the north that would give them direct access to the local Muslim community, [redacted]

Increasingly Divided and Politicized Military. We believe Babangida's attitude toward the military is spawning indiscipline, heightening the politicization of the armed forces, and thereby weakening the regime's ability to maintain public order. In line with his populist instincts, Babangida has encouraged the military to go well beyond its traditional political involvement, according to the US Embassy. [redacted]

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to act against him. The firepower available to Babangida's coterie also is likely to neutralize other military factions for the present. [Redacted]

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Apart from these political distractions, increasing fissures within the military are affecting the institution's integrity and discipline. US Embassy and [Redacted] indicates that the military is deeply factionalized along the lines of the broader society, and also has conflicting interests among junior, middle-grade, and senior officers. Press and Embassy reporting indicates, for example, that the lower ranks feel they are being unfairly penalized by austerity measures, such as pay cuts, when their superiors have greater opportunities to feather their nests. [Redacted]

In our judgment, however, Babangida's preoccupation with maintaining power while failing to address Nigeria's pressing problems will encourage military restiveness and ethnic, regional, and religious factionalism to flourish. Although coup plotting probably will surface periodically, we believe the regime can manage these threats as long as Babangida's inner circle of followers stays with him. US officials report, however, that even these officers are expressing impatience with the President's emphasis on consensus and human rights. Babangida probably will continue to handle controversial issues such as economic reform, as he did the OIC affair—referring them to committees and deferring action until public attention is distracted by other problems. The controversy over the OIC, for example, probably will be quelled by Nigeria's not participating in Council meetings, which will placate the Christians, while retaining membership, which will please the Muslims. [Redacted]

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Increasingly, majors and captains aspiring to high office are plotting to eliminate remaining senior officers, US Embassy reporting indicates. [Redacted]

The longstanding economic and social problems that have undermined every Nigerian regime since independence continue unabated. We believe the regime will be hard put to cushion the blow of oil price and production declines during the coming year. Standards of living will deteriorate as subsidy cuts and a 30-percent import tax boost inflation. Moreover, we believe that Muslim nationalists, envious of the south's prosperity, are likely to continue to harass enclaves of southern Christians in the north. Likewise, southerners will probably mount antigovernment demonstrations whenever they perceive regime favoritism toward the north. [Redacted]

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Babangida's moves in response to the December coup attempt also seem likely to aggravate military discontent. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted] the US Embassy reports, officers are reluctant to gather even for social purposes for fear of seeming to conspire against the regime. [Redacted]

Outlook

We believe President Babangida will be able to muddle through in the short term—six months to a year—but with declining support from the military, the bureaucracy, and the public. The President's decisive action against the December coup plotters and increased internal security and intelligence capabilities probably have limited the ability of opponents

As conditions in the country deteriorate and the government focuses on the defense of its position in the capital, civilian groups are likely to mobilize, forcing the regime into a harsh law-and-order mode that could quickly become counterproductive. Nigerian unions, until now weak and divided, might finally find common ground for action as industrial failures

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mount and the workers' plight becomes more desperate. Typically, urban protests against rising prices are likely, and violence by Muslim fringe groups, drawn from the poorest elements in the cities, will probably continue. [redacted]

In our judgment, these increasingly bitter social cleavages make Nigeria more vulnerable to subversion by radical regimes hostile to Babangida's pro-Western government. We expect Libya and Iran to use their diplomatic missions as bases from which to encourage Muslims to press for the transformation of Nigeria into an Islamic state. Their support not only could make Muslim leaders more intransigent in defense of their interests but also could incite Muslim violence against Christians. [redacted]

In the medium term—over the next one to two years—the government, in our view, might be overthrown by field- or senior-grade military officers either out of exasperation with Babangida's performance or to preempt an impending attempt by younger, more radical junior officers. Members of Babangida's inner circle would be best positioned for a successful coup. In power, this group of midlevel officers would probably impose autocratic, heavy-handed rule in an attempt to counteract what some of them view as Babangida's excessively open and permissive style. Moreover, they would probably put down threats to their position with increasingly repressive measures. [redacted]

Implications for the United States

US economic interests in Nigeria are considerable. Lagos continues to be an important source of crude oil for the United States and its Western allies, although, because of price and production fluctuations, Nigeria provided only 5.6 percent of US oil imports in 1985, down from a high of 13 percent in 1980. Nevertheless, if supplies of oil from the Persian Gulf were cut off, Nigeria could increase production from the present annual average of 1.5 million b/d to 2.2 million b/d within a few months to help meet Western needs, according to US Embassy estimates. Furthermore, exposure of US banks in Nigeria is over \$1 billion, according to US Federal Reserve data. US-Nigerian trade rose during 1985 to some \$3.1 billion, while Nigeria emerged as the fifth-largest importer of US wheat. [redacted]

Moreover, as black Africa's richest and most populous country, Nigeria can serve as a useful ally for the United States in Third World forums. In our judgment, as long as President Babangida remains in power Lagos will continue in its present moderate, pro-Western direction, despite sometimes nationalistic and anti-Western rhetoric. US Embassy officials report that Babangida hopes to bring Nigeria closer to the West and repeatedly seeks US advice and assistance. In return, he has offered to support US policies in southern Africa, according to US officials, and recently, despite Tripoli's efforts to bring pressure on him through Nigerian Muslim leaders, refused to denounce US antiterrorist action against Libya, according to US Embassy sources. [redacted]

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Another military coup led by members of Babangida's inner circle would probably herald a more nationalistic and nonaligned government. Joe Garba, Nigeria's stridently anti-American UN representative [redacted]

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[redacted] is closely related to several members of this military clique. The group, with its hard line toward dissidence, would probably rule with a heavy hand. [redacted]

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Such a regime, led by young, activist, midlevel officers, would be even less likely than Babangida to cope with difficulties involved in rescheduling Nigeria's foreign debt, in our view. These officers are firmly opposed to the IMF option and have been reluctant to undertake politically risky devaluation or increased austerity, according to US Embassy reporting. Their economic expertise is not extensive, and they are likely to follow autarchic, nationalistic economic policies, perhaps including renunciation of foreign debt. [redacted]

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A coup by junior officers would probably seriously jeopardize US interests. [redacted]

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[redacted] many of the lower ranking officers are heavily influenced by radical, Marxist propaganda. If,

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as we believe will be the case, Nigerian authorities remain incapable of halting the country's economic slide and unable to find a formula for national unity and social peace, the odds for the emergence of a radical government or, alternatively, for civil war will grow. A scramble for power between competing military factions would probably activate regional and ethnic loyalties, and violence could escalate on a national scale, pitting one region against another.

[REDACTED]

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In the event the Nigerian federation disintegrated into civil war, the outlook for US interests would be dim. Violence—like that during the Biafra war, which took over a million lives and destroyed the eastern region's economy—would probably spread throughout the country, damaging or isolating Nigeria's oil installations. Factions seeking arms and external economic support would probably solicit help from the USSR, Libya, or Iran, which would welcome the opportunity to try to install a radical government—or even an Islamic revolutionary state modeled on the Iranian experience. [REDACTED]

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