

THE STATE AND POLITICAL INCORPORATION IN NIGERIA
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On 1 October 1979 the Nigerian military, after nearly 14 years of rule, transferred power to a newly elected civilian government. There were more than a few echoes from 1 October 1960, when a colonial administration which had ruled Nigeria, in parts for almost a century, transferred power to an elected independent government. In both instances a cadre of rulers who set themselves apart from the competitive political process as arbiters attempted to serve as midwives for the birth of state institutions. They sought not merely to transfer power to new institutions but to establish public acceptance of their legitimacy.

The agenda of legitimation in each instance was remarkably similar, suggesting that this was seen as the only legitimate agenda. It called for the framing of a constitution, the shaping of territorial units, and the holding of a census and of elections. Issues outside the agenda, equally of interest, were those whose legitimacy was not in question: the role of the state in the economy and in society, the role of the law and courts, the role of public servants. Each of these remained unaffected by the transfer of power and presumably radical alteration of any of these lay outside the scope of effective authority of the new institutions.

What I propose to examine in this paper is the manner in which the colonial and the post-colonial state attempt to incorporate society for various purposes, but chiefly for those of control and legitimation. The recent revival of interest in corporatist models of society has focussed primarily on the interdependence of the state and economic peak groups in advanced capitalist societies (Schmitter 1974, Winkler 1976). Some observers have also noted the importance of regional incorporation as an additional dimension (Ionescu 1975, Cawson 1978 and 1979). Here I would argue that the actions of the colonial and post-colonial state,

at least in Nigeria, have tended to ensure that territorial, and hence ethnic, incorporation is much stronger than the forms of economic incorporation. This is ground well covered by those who see ethnicity as an instance of false consciousness fostered by colonial and post-colonial states to divert attention and energy from emergent class identity and mobilization. But arguments of this kind tend to overstress the extent of deliberate policy in colonial practice and understate the contextual variation of identities between, say, assertion of class identity in the factory and maintenance of ethnic linkages outside.

Rival systems of incorporation have coexisted within Nigeria since the earliest colonial period, and colonial administrative history can be read as a continuing battle between the forces of functional, primarily economic, incorporation based at Lagos and those of territorial incorporation in the North.¹ Prior to amalgamation in 1913, Northern and Southern Nigeria developed different approaches to native administration. Lagos and Southern Nigeria, with extensive European contact during the 19th century, saw administrative control follow the extension of trade, missions and railways, allowing for varied practice and, at least in Lagos, individualist assimilation of an educated African professional and entrepreneurial class. In the North, by contrast, an initial enclave of company rule was extended by military force under Sir Frederick Lugard over the complex state systems of the Hausa-Fulani emirates and Bornu. Lugard and his Residents elaborated a uniform model of local "native administration" which became known as "indirect rule" and Lugard, given the task of amalgamating North and South, chose to maintain them as separate administrations and to impose his own Northern model of incorporation on the South. His successor as governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, attempted to reverse the process by "opening up" the North to economic influences under a strong central administration, but won only a compromise

which left provincial administration under the two Lieutenant Governors (later Chief Commissioners). Successive governors, recruited from outside Nigeria, favoured central incorporation through the extension of functional departments into the provinces, while the provincial Residents in the North, led by their Chief Commissioner, remained guardians of incorporation through Native Authorities.

The emirate model of indirect rule refined traditional administration within the emirates by concentrating authority in the emirs and imposing a uniform tax system and native treasuries which reinforced territorial hierarchy and boundaries. Elsewhere, in "pagan" societies without centralized authority, chiefs were selected as agents of control and "civilization" and their authority over wide areas was supported. There were attempts to create a uniform hierarchy of provinces matched by "paramount chiefs" and elaborate historical traditions were concocted to legitimize these arrangements. The imposition of tax through artificial chiefs resulted, however, in the Warri and Aba tax riots of 1927 and 1929 and these led to a re-examination of the legitimacy of native institutions and a restructuring on the basis of local traditions and choice. In areas where Western education had penetrated, particularly in the southeast, this restructuring helped promote the formation of the first "tribal unions". These were later the areas which most actively took up the opportunity to establish elected local governments.

By the late 1930s the uniformity of the emirate model had been broken and there were a variety of forms of local political incorporation, depending on the interaction of pre-colonial political systems and colonial administrative requirements. The major emirates, which met the basic criteria of political stability, efficient administration, and financial solvency were isolated from external influences by their Residents and remained immune from reform. In areas outside pre-colonial states the impact

of the reforms of the 1930s varied with the extent of educational and economic penetration, but depended also on whether the size and location of a linguistic or cultural grouping was perceived as convenient for administrative recognition. Thus where a "pan-tribal" identity was too large to be encompassed within provincial boundaries, this identity became incorporated in economic terms, particularly among competing elites in the towns. This was the case of the Ibo and Yoruba, although inter-Ibo competition at Port Harcourt developed on lines determined by the administration's provincial and divisional boundaries. Where a "group" was recognized as being of convenient size for administrative incorporation on the emirate and later models, the development of a native authority structure and the later design of electoral constituencies promoted the emergence of ethnic units. This was most obviously the case with major groups in the Middle Belt - the Tiv, Idoma, Igala, Igbirra and Birom. Equally large linguistic/cultural groups such as the Gwari, Chamba and Jarawa, who lacked geographic coherence, were given no administrative recognition. Instead they were treated as peripheral to several provinces and NA's and their identity as ethnic units failed to develop.

Political institutions on a wider scale were slow to emerge. Lugard abolished the Lagos Legislative Council and when Clifford restored a Council in 1923 it contained explicit recognition of differential incorporation: nominated representation for European commerce, elective representation for Lagos and Calabar, representation by native authorities for the rest of the Southern Provinces, and token representation of the North through Residents. The Northern residents opposed extension of the Council's jurisdiction to the Northern Provinces and instead created in 1930 an Advisory Council of Emirs, the first institutional focus

for regional incorporation. When tentative constitutional planning began in 1939 the problem of "political development" was perceived as one of linking the legitimate local authority of the NAs with the Nigerian Legislative Council, and the Northern Advisory Council was the obvious model for a link. Lord Hailey's influential report of 1940 adopted regional councils as the appropriate formula for further political incorporation, but he was sharply critical of the separatism of Northern Residents and pointed out that there was "nothing natural" about the existing regions and that smaller units might prove more "functional".

Proposals for redesigning the regions had been put forward since the time of amalgamation, but the maintenance of separate administrative services in the North and South helped preserve a dual incorporation of the administration itself. (The standard quip was to the effect that, if the Nigerians were evacuated from Nigeria, the British in the North and South would go to war with one another). Although a division of the Southern Provinces between East and West was agreed upon by 1921, it was effected only in 1939 on grounds of communication problems and differences in native administration. Residents from the "pagan" Middle Belt of the Northern provinces were the only consistent proponents of a regrouping of provinces.

Nigerians themselves had become sufficiently aware of the potential for nationalism to articulate their own views on appropriate forms of incorporation. This had long been true of the Lagos elite, its press and its members in the Legislative Council, who claimed to speak for Nigerians generally. The Lagos elections to the Council were the first arena for competition among educated Southern spokesmen with rival claims to nationalist leadership and with rival formulae for incorporation. But popular mobilization in the mid-1940s was limited to urban centres and constitutional initiative lay in the hands of the colonial administration.

Sir Arthur Richards in 1944 chose to follow the Bourdillon-Hailey proposals for regional incorporation as the basis for national institutions. Since Northern resistance was seen as the main obstacle, Richards invited the Sultan of Sokoto to Lagos and persuaded him of the need for Northern participation in a national legislature, but this ensured that the opportunity for redrawing the regions was discarded and demands for consultation by educated Southern leaders were ignored. Thus the first full political institutionalization of Nigeria took place within the framework of regional councils, which delegated representatives to a national legislative council.

The first elections were for representatives to the regional councils, entrenching the regions as political arenas and encouraging the development of political parties shaped to these arenas. The fact that each region contained a single majority linguistic/cultural group - Yoruba in the West, Ibo in the East, Hausa in the North - helped to solidify ethnic mobilization through tribal unions and parties based on these unions. It also spurred the formation of "minority" ethnic federations and parties within each region as recognition of the new basis for political incorporation spread. The obvious strength of Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa mobilization during the 1950s led the first generation of political scientists to accept the rhetoric of "primordial" ethnicity and nationalism and to overlook the impact of incorporation by the state in the framing of arenas for mobilization.

Constitution-making during the decade prior to independence in 1960 was largely a matter of negotiating the terms of federation among leaders from regional delegations, solidifying ethnic incorporation through elections and bargaining within regional and national legislatures. While the leaders of the North, with a majority of Nigeria's population according to the 1953 census, held firmly to regional federation the leaders of the East, with least resources and greatest out-migration, supported national institutions and allocation. Awolowo's Action Group, based in

the West, consistently upheld "tribal" incorporation as the appropriate basis for regions and representation and championed the cause of the regional "minorities". Following the 1957 constitutional conference a commission of inquiry investigated the "fears of minorities" in the regions and recommended against the creation of new states advocated by minority separatist movements. The Action Group was warned by the British Secretary of State for Colonies that referenda on this issue would delay independence, and only after independence did the Western Region pursue this cause by hiving off the non-Yoruba Mid-West Region.

During the years of the First Republic, from 1960 until the military coup of January 1966, rival forms of differential incorporation created rising tension among the regions. The southern regions, with much more extensive incorporation into international commerce and Western education, controlled most avenues of employment including the public services, with Ibo and Yoruba elites competing openly for domination within the national universities and statutory corporations. The Northern Region, on the other hand, in alliance with southern factions, asserted an increasing measure of hegemony over the federal government and insisted on its regional share of senior posts and industrial development. It proved impossible to administer fairly the crucial rules of the game in elections and a national census, and the legitimacy of the constitutional disposition was thus undermined in the south and in the Middle Belt of the north. In the months before the first coup extensive areas of the Western Region and Tiv Division were in open revolt against their regional governments, at least tacitly supported by the Eastern regional government.

The military government of Major-General Ironsi destroyed its initial wide popular support through failure to prosecute the Ibo coup leaders and through promulgation, without consultation, of Decree 34, abolishing the federal system and unifying the federal and regional public services. This extreme form of national incorporation threatened the Northern elite and produced the first pogrom against Ibos in the

north, followed in July 1966 by the second coup. This coup, organized by Middle Belt NCOs, maintained a national military government under a Middle Belt officer, Gowon, but failed to win acceptance by the Eastern military government.

During the year between the second coup and the outbreak of civil war in July 1967, there were negotiations among regional delegations, each of which mooted the prospect of secession or a much weaker confederation. This was a prospect firmly opposed by the Mid-west Region and by the regional minorities, which were well represented in the higher echelons of the army and the federal public service, where they found better chances for promotion than in the regional services. In May 1967, in the face of impending secession by the East as Biafra and in order to support from the Eastern minorities and the uncertain West and Mid-west, Gowon announced the division of Nigeria into 12 states. Following colonial provincial boundaries, six states were fashioned in the North, and three in the East (hiving off the oil-bearing minority areas from the Ibos), while the Mid-west was left intact and the West lost only Lagos. The establishment of separate state governments and the appointment of leading figures from each state as civilian commissioners in the federal executive council enhanced the legitimacy of the military government, which was also aided in the south by Biafra's invasion of the Mid-west and West.

Prosecution of the civil war mobilised support for the national state, and the creation of new states at first dissolved the tensions which had divided the First Republic. No longer was the Northern Region in a position to dominate the others; instead cross-cutting alliances among the states became increasingly likely. As for the aspirant elites of the three large ethnic groups as well as the minorities, the establishment of the new state governments created enough new jobs to keep a new generation occupied. The army itself, absorbing a large reservoir of unskilled young men, recruited on a state basis, constituted a "13th state" (First 1970: 352-362).

However, the arenas of competition for jobs and for the allocation of resources within the new states quickly created new "minorities". For instance, in the North Central State comprising Katsina and Zaria Provinces, two major emirates with the great bulk of the population but relatively little Western education were combined with the many small non-Muslim groups of southern Zaria, some of which had received a heavy dose of Christian mission schooling. The southern Zaria elite took a substantial share of public service posts in the state but sought to improve their negligible political influence by mobilizing a "Nerzit" group identity and promoting the formation of a Nassarawa State, reviving an old "pagan" province of Lugard's time.

On 1 October 1970, a few months after the end of the civil war, Gowon announced a disengagement programme under which the military government would oversee the eradication of corruption, settlement of the issue of creating more states, preparation and adoption of a new constitution, conduct of a national census, organization of genuinely national political parties, and organization of elections and the installation of elected governments in the states and the federation. This was a charter which would legitimate six further years of military rule (Dare 1975). Momentum for reform, however, proved difficult to sustain. The 1973 census produced figures which were even more suspect than the discredited 1963 totals. Lack of substantial progress on other portions of the programme and evident corruption in federal and state military governments sapped public acceptance of the regime. Gowon's announcement on 1 October 1974 that his government was fully committed to the principle of creating more states merely undermined the existing state governments and provoked separatist agitation without advancing settlement of the issue (Yahaya 1978: 203-4).

The coup which replaced Gowon and the state military governors in July 1975 was made in the name of Gowon's 1970 programme, and energetic prosecution of reforms gave the Murtala Mohammed and Obasanjo governments broad authority. Apart from corruption, the states issue was the first

to be tackled, through the appointment of an advisory panel with a five-month deadline. One of the members of the Irikefe panel has analyzed the proponents of change, their proposals and arguments, and the decisions reached by the panel and the government. Those seeking realignment were "primarily movements by elites seeking to consolidate their influence in their own localities [and] an opportunity to share booty" (Yahaya 1978:220). Given this fact, most of the "principles" and arguments put forward concerning the underlying validity of provincial or linguistic boundaries, improved balance among and within states, cultural incompatibility and relative neglect can be taken as self-serving rhetoric. On the other hand, there were genuine cases of territorial imbalance and neglect within states.

The panel gave more weight to considerations of political demand rather than to viability, seeking to create "states which would be acceptable and so have legitimacy in the eyes of their inhabitants" (Yahaya 1978:216). In doing so they revived the traditions of native administration reform of the 1930s. The military government, in accepting most of the panel's recommendations and announcing the creation of 19 states out of the former 12, emphasised the need for stability. It allowed only a short period for limited boundary readjustment and did not take up a recommendation that the federal government maintain responsibility for development of "depressed" areas within states. The government thus opted for a "definitive" solution which would remove the framework of incorporation from the political agenda.

The constitutional and electoral arrangements which have since been established have further entrenched the 19 states. The electoral system requires parties to organize in at least two-thirds of the states and the president, to win by popular election, must receive 25% of the vote in two-thirds of the states. In addition the federal Senate, with equal representation from each state, is given substantial powers. These provisions make it much easier to form coalitions of state elites than to mobilize mass support across state boundaries.

Paradoxically, however, the political reincorporation of Nigeria into 12 and then 19 states, by strengthening the legitimacy of the national state, fulfills a necessary condition for economic corporatism at the national level. This proceeded under the military regime as the state took a more active interventionist role (Collins 1974, Turner 1976). If functional incorporation develops further it is likely to take place only outside the system of political incorporation and in this respect it is notable that the new Nigerian Labour Congress, unlike its factional predecessors, has eschewed all links with the new political parties.

Footnotes

1. For citations of documentary evidence concerning the colonial period see Ballard 1971 and 1972.

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