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# Is Democracy A Feasible First Step Toward The Political Modernization Of Third World Countries? The Case Of Nigeria

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IS DEMOCRACY A FEASIBLE FIRST  
STEP TOWARD THE POLITICAL  
MODERNIZATION OF THIRD WORLD  
COUNTRIES? THE CASE OF NIGERIA

ORUWARIYE

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Is Democracy a Feasible first step toward the Political  
Modernization of Third World Countries? The Case of Nigeria.  
(TITLE)

BY

Alfred Oruwariye

**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
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M.A. in Political Science

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1990  
YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

August 13, 1990  
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August 13, 1990  
DATE

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MASTERS THESIS

Research Topic: Third World Political Modernization  
Research Question: Is Democracy a Feasible first step toward the  
Political Modernization of Third World  
Countries? The Case of Nigeria.

By, Alfred Oruwariye  
May, 1990

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### The Research Problem

The determination of an ideal system of government for politically developing new nations continues to be a subject of considerable controversy around the world. Many African nations, as well as other Third World nations, have adopted the system of democracy and representative government after they are granted independence by colonial rulers. Other nations have adopted Soviet-style communist political systems, while some others are ruled and continue to remain under military governments.

This paper poses a two-part question; Is the immediate introduction of democracy following independence a feasible first step toward the political modernization of newly emergent countries? If democracy is not a feasible first step, what is a feasible alternative path that newly emergent countries must follow in order to become politically modernized states, that is, states where authority is legitimized, the source of power is centralized, and where political participation is broad and widespread?. Authority is legitimized when it is widely recognized and accepted by its subjects. Authority created through democratic processes is usually legitimate authority. Centralized source of power means governmental power obtained from a single, secular source, usually

the national constitution, as opposed to power obtained from diverse traditional sources.

Using the case of Nigeria, which unsuccessfully introduced democracy and representative government immediately following independence in 1960, this thesis will attempt to provide answers to these questions by examining the reasons for the failure of democracy in Nigeria. On the basis of these reasons, this thesis will propose and discuss minimum standards necessary for the survival of democracy and representative government in Nigeria.

In light of the fact that the early introduction of democracy in Nigeria failed to be a feasible first step toward an effective process of political modernization, this paper will make an argument for a military government as an alternative form of government for Nigeria, at least at the early stages of the process of modernization.

### Methodology

This thesis will be descriptive and analytical in methodology. The prospectus will be the introductory chapter of this thesis. Chapter two will briefly trace the history of representative governments in Nigeria from the late period of British colonization to the grant of regional autonomy by the British government to some of the regions of Nigeria, to the grant of national independence and self-rule in 1960. It will also examine the structure of the two republics, as well as their administrative set up, and describe



how they differed from one another.

Chapter three will identify and analyze the reasons for the failure of the two republics, such as electoral fraud and malpractices, violence resulting from such electoral malpractices, governmental corruption, embezzlement, and general financial mismanagement among public officials.

In chapter four, this thesis will propose minimum prerequisite standards necessary for the survival of democracy and representative government in Nigeria. These standards will include a basic socio-cultural transformation of the Nigerian society through widespread rigorous public education. The prerequisite standards will also include basic political development in the form of societal disengagement from the tenets of traditionalism, the centralization of the source of authority for government, and an effective political institutionalization in the Nigerian society. Finally, chapter four will discuss basic economic developmental prerequisites necessary for the survival of democracy in Nigeria. These will include the industrialization of the present predominantly agrarian economy, urbanization of the predominantly rural population, and the creation of wealth sufficient to enable the country to afford the minimum financial costs necessary to sustain democratic institutions.

Chapter four will also introduce the idea of a period of maturation for newly modernizing nations, a period during which these countries must be let alone to grow older and mature. During this period, these countries may work towards attaining the

prerequisite standards for the survival of democracy, without being pressured by established democracies like the United States.

Chapter five will make a case that argues for military government as a feasible form of government for newly modernizing countries at the early stages of modernization, that is, during the period of maturation discussed in chapter four. In the case of Nigeria, the argument for the military will essentially be based on the past performance of Nigeria's military regimes in governing the nation, as well as tackling the nation's diverse problems. With statistics, it will be shown that the military has demonstrated self-discipline in governing the nation, and has exercised restraint and thrift in spending the nation's domestic as well as foreign exchange resources.

The final section of this paper will summarize the main points of the thesis, and draw conclusions.

### Review of Literature

Since independence on October 1, 1960, to the present, the young nation of Nigeria has been under almost alternating civilian and military regimes. A total of two civilian governments and six military councils have ruled Nigeria since the British relinquished their control of the country almost twenty nine years ago.

The two republics failed in their bid to ameliorate the

gigantic economic, financial, social, and even tribal problems that haunt the country, disabling it not only from modernizing politically, but also from finding a foundation from which a strong economy may be built, and which would in turn support the survival of democracy and representative government.

A large volume of literature on Nigeria's political affairs is available in various African affairs journals. In tracing the historical background of Nigeria's two republics, chapter two of this thesis will utilize information mainly from various publications in Africa Report, an African affairs journal, published by the African-American Institute, New York.

Africa Report, as well as many other African affairs journals, have kept detailed accounts of political developments in Nigeria since the early part of colonial rule.

Reasons for the failure of the two republics are reported by West Africa magazine, published by West Africa Publishing Company, London, England, as well as Africa Report in many of their early 1960s publications. African Studies Review, a collection of articles written by various authors, and published by the African Studies Center at Michigan State University, featured an article in the September, 1973, publication, which discussed tribalism in Nigeria. Tribalism is one of the major problems that faces Nigeria in it's drive towards a tribally and ethnically integrated, as well as politically modernized state.

The discussion of the prerequisite standards necessary for the survival of democracy in Nigeria is supported by the writings of

various authors, including the former President of Nigeria under the first republic, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. In an article in Foreign Affairs magazine, Dr. Azikiwe discussed some of the necessary qualifications that politicians should possess in order to enhance the survival of democracy and representative government.

Another writer, Samuel P. Huntington, in his book titled "Political Order in Changing Societies", points out the differences between "Old Societies" and "New States". Huntington argues that, at independence, the United States was a new state, but historically an old society, and that the problems of government and political modernization which contemporary modernizing states face differ fundamentally from those which ever confronted the United States after it obtained its independence from Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Huntington's argument supports the idea of a period of maturation for newly independent nations which this thesis proposes and discusses in chapter four. The argument for the period of maturation for newly independent nations is also supported by Cyril E. Black's research on the differences in the rates at which various countries took to modernize. Black's research showed that the modernization of Europe and North America was spread over several centuries, the average period of modernization for each country being 73 years, while the average period of modernization for contemporary modernizing countries was only about 25 years.<sup>2</sup>

A collection of articles in Claude E. Welch's book titled "Modernization", examined various aspects of modernization in contemporary modernizing nations. Of special significance was an

article by Richard H. Pfaff, which dealt with the processes of disengagement from traditionalism in Turkey and Iran.<sup>3</sup> Another important article by a group of scholars from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, also dealt with the transitional process in modernizing nations.<sup>4</sup>

A research publication by Seymour Martin Lipset in the American Political Science Review extensively examined some social requisites of democracy. Of special significance were several tables prepared by Lipset, showing the relationship between various social requisites of democracy, and democratic stability in many First, Second, and Third World countries.<sup>5</sup>

Statistics obtained from several sources, including the World Almanac and Book of Facts, Keesings Record of World Events, Africa, an African affairs magazine, West Africa magazine, and Foreign Affairs magazine, are utilized in arguing for an interim military government during the period of maturation that Nigeria must undergo towards it's preparation for democracy and representative government.

An important insight into the potential role that the military could play in the political modernization of newly emergent states was offered by Professor Lucian W. Pye in his article titled "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization". Professor Pye contends that armies are the most modernized structures in developing nations, and that the great stress placed on professionalism and discipline, coupled with basic technological and industrial skills that members of the army possess, could be

instrumental in the process of modernization of newly emergent states.<sup>4</sup>

Claude Welch, in his book titled "Military Role and Rules", also examined the potential role of the military in the modernization process in newly modernizing nations. Welch's book also examined the special role of "guardianship" played by the Nigerian military in Nigerian politics.

Samuel Decalo and Ruth First offered constructive criticisms of the roles played by the military both in African politics, and in politics in other countries. In an article in the Journal of Modern African Studies, published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England. Decalo and First argued that the armies lack of ideology and developmental strategies, and their tendency to increase military budgets following the seizure of power, could be dysfunctional to an effective modernization of developing countries.

Important statistics on world military expenditures and budgets is obtained from a publication by the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. This publication presents important data on military expenditures, Gross National Products, military expenditures as percentages of Gross National Products, percent yearly change in military budgets, and the size of the armed forces of all countries of the world.



## Chapter 2

### History of Representative Government in Nigeria

On May 23, 1957, in a conference held in London, England, featuring prominent Nigerian political elites and British colonial officials, it was determined that Great Britain would grant Nigeria its independence in 1960. The conference, which was referred to as the "Independence Conference", was attended by the Premiers of the Northern, Eastern, and Western regions of Nigeria, as well as the British Colonial Secretary, Allan Lennox-Boyd. The leaders also agreed that a senate was to be created in the interim to function alongside the already existing British-created House of Representatives, which was to be expanded from a 192 to a 320-member House.<sup>7</sup> This was the point in Nigeria's political history when an integrated representative system of government began, that is, a system that consisted of both a Senate, and a House of Representatives, which together for the first time in the history of Nigeria, provided an avenue of political representation for all sections of the nation.

Also, following the conference, regional self-government was granted both for the Eastern and Western regions. The Northern region was to obtain regional autonomy in 1959. These agreements at the London Conference, covering, among others, the set-up of additional political institutions, and the grant of regional

autonomy, set the stage for the much awaited national independence.

On December 12, 1959, in preparation for a post-independence government, nationwide elections were held in Nigeria's 312 electoral constituencies to elect members of the House of Representatives. Members of the Senate were not elected in these nationwide elections, but were instead appointed by each of the three regional governments.<sup>8</sup> The Senate, unlike the House of Representatives, was based on equal representation for all regions.

On October 1, 1960, amidst jubilation and celebration, Nigeria was granted its independence by the British government. For the first time in the history of the country, the Nigerian people obtained the full responsibility of determining the political destiny and economic future of their country.<sup>9</sup>

#### Structure of the Two Republics

The first republic (1960-1966), and the second republic (1979-1983), had remarkable differences in characteristics. Before independence was granted to Nigeria in 1960, the structure of Nigeria's political, economic, and social institutions was determined by the British colonial government. Nigeria's first three constitutions, the Richards constitution of 1946, the Macpherson constitution of 1951, and the Lyttleton constitution of 1954 - under which independence was granted, were written by the British.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Nigeria's first republic was modeled

after the British parliamentary system. Although the names of the legislative institutions were similar to those under a presidential system of government, there was no executive presidency.

Leadership of government was divided between the Prime Minister, and the Governor General - the ceremonial Head of State and Government. Most of the executive power, however, belonged to the Prime Minister, who was chosen by the party winning the majority of seats in the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister formed the cabinet, made up of ministers and advisers, who, together, constituted the government. The primary duties of the Governor General were ceremonial, including the welcoming of foreign dignitaries visiting the nation.

During the first two years of the first republic, 1960-1962, the power relationship between the central government and the regional governments was similar to a confederacy. The central government was relatively weak, while the regional governments had more discretionary powers. This power relationship during the first two years was caused by the British government, when, in 1957 and 1959, the British colonial government separately granted autonomy or semi-independence to each of the three regional governments of Nigeria. After independence, and during the early years of the first republic, the regions were reluctant to give up many of the autonomous powers they had received in 1957 and 1959 from the British government. For example, unlike members of the House of Representatives who were regionally elected, members of the Senate continued to be regionally appointed by the various

regional governments.<sup>11</sup>

Political parties under the first republic were highly ethnic-based. Nigeria was a federation of the three regions of Northern, Eastern, and Western Nigeria. The East and the West together, which made up less than a quarter of the country's land area, but had nearly all the trained leadership, money, industry, and cash crops, were referred to jointly as the South. The Western region's 8 million people consisted largely of the Yoruba ethnic group, the East's 9 million were largely Ibo, and the North's 22 million people were largely Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups.<sup>12</sup>

Almost inevitably, three main political parties sprang up, one centered on each region. The Action Group Party, led by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was predominantly Yoruba, and controlled the Western region's House of Assembly. The National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons, NCNC, led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a graduate of Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, was predominantly Ibo, and governed the Eastern region. The Northern Peoples Congress, NPC, which was predominantly Hausa and Fulani, controlled the Northern region's House of Assembly.<sup>13</sup>

The second republic (1979-1983) was modeled after the U.S.-style presidential government with an executive presidency. Nigeria's newly formed constitution No.4, 1979, provided for the office of president and commander-in-chief of all armed forces, and also, like the first republic, a legislature, consisting of a House of Representatives, and a Senate.

Political parties under the second republic were not ethnic-

based. A total of five inter-ethnic major political parties was registered by Nigeria's Federal Electoral Commission to contest the 1979 general elections ushering in the second republic. These were the National Party of Nigeria, NPN, led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who later became president, the Peoples Redemption Party, PRP, led by the Late Alhaji Aminu Kano, the Great Nigerian Peoples Party, GNPP, led by Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim, the Unity Party of Nigeria, led by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and the Nigerian Peoples Party, NPP, led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. Both Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe were prominent party leaders and participants in the first republic.<sup>14</sup>

This brief historical background on the emergence of representative government in Nigeria, and the structure of Nigeria's previous two republics offers us important information as to the differences in set-up between Nigeria's form of representative democracy, and the various other parliamentary and presidential democracies found in other parts of the world.

Furthermore, as information in this chapter shows, it is clear that Nigeria's path to instituting democracy and representative government was one that did not take into account the significance of the basic social, political, and economic developmental prerequisites necessary for the survival of democracy. Chapter Four will discuss these prerequisites in detail.

## Chapter 3

### Causes of Failure

The reasons for the failure of the first republic were attributed primarily to electoral malpractices, violence, regionalism, tribalism, corruption, financial mismanagement, and waste resulting from short-sighted planning.<sup>15</sup>

Regionalism and tribalism were a significant cause of the demise of the first republic. Incidents of tribalism, regionalism, and ethnic favoritism were so common that they were fast becoming a normal standard of relationship among the Nigerian people.<sup>16</sup> Each of the four semi-autonomous regions under the first republic competed for the biggest slice of the national development pie, throwing up new factories as fast as possible. The key objective of every regional government was to build a federal government-sponsored factory, preferably in a town or area that needed a political boost. Whether the plant was needed, or could ever become viable often appeared to be of secondary importance.<sup>17</sup>

Many of these factories were built by European contractors and businessmen, who carried out the feasibility studies for such factories, and arranged credit for the regional governments to build these factories.<sup>18</sup>

The Eastern region pioneered this kind of development. The hometown of the former regional governor boasted two factories, a



brewery, and a ceramics factory. Both lost money, and continued to survive only on federal government subsidy. At Portharcourt, in the Eastern region, a glass factory lost over \$100,000 a month, and was temporarily closed for a long period of time.<sup>19</sup>

In the Northern region, the parts for a new cement factory were hauled across the Sahara Desert at enormous expense, assembled, and was immediately beset with various problems. Due to these problems, which were technical and economic, the cement produced was noncompetitive.<sup>20</sup>

A new textile plant in the Western region had every thing but electric power to start the expensive machinery. A special electric power generator was needed to run the plant in the absence of reliable public electric power supply, thereby adding to the already expensive capital cost.<sup>21</sup>

Eventually, many of these plants were written off as total losses. The surviving plants were estimated to have cost twice as much as similar plants built at more realistic sites. In addition, the price tags for these projects were inflated by heavy financing costs. Interest rates were high, and plants were required to pay off all borrowed money fully usually in five to six years of operation. Necessary subsidies from the regional governments, or from the federal government, plus the fixed labor costs that remained when the plants slowed down production for inevitable repairs and alterations, strained annual budgets, and siphoned off much needed developmental capital.<sup>22</sup>

In 1963, in an obvious case of tribalism, the regional

government of Northern Nigeria, which did not have enough qualified Northern Nigerians to fill all vacant posts in it's civil service, instead of employing qualified Nigerians from other regions of Nigeria, employed foreign workers. The Northern regional government explained that if qualified Nigerians from other parts of the country were employed, they would be difficult to replace with Northern Nigerians when the Northern Nigerians became qualified for the vacant civil service positions. By contrast, an expatriate could easily be replaced by a Northern Nigerian. Northern Nigeria is predominantly made up of Hausa and Fulani tribes, whereas other parts of the country consist of various other tribes.<sup>23</sup>

Cases of self-enrichment, embezzlement, and financial mismanagement, were common during the first republic. One of the most significant reasons for the continued military intervention in Nigerian politics is financial mismanagement and waste among political office holders. A large number of major government projects were unnecessary, wasteful, and exorbitant in price. However, in a representative democracy such as Nigeria, the government is almost compelled to undertake such "white elephant" projects in order to reward party loyalty and patronage which are necessary ingredients for elections and reelections of politicians.

A good example of waste during the first republic was the 4.5 million dollars spent on two successive national population censuses conducted in 1962, and again in 1963. In 1962, a nationwide census was taken as a first step toward reapportioning

the number of regional seats in the federal House of Representatives. Before the census, there was a general feeling in the South that the census will confirm the South's claim that it's population was larger than the North's. If this were the case, the redistribution of representatives to the federal legislature would result in the Northern region having fewer legislators than both the Eastern and Western regions combined.

Consequently, Southern legislators could coalesce their parties to form the national government. When the 1962 census figures were released, however, much to the Southerners' surprise, the Northern region had about 52% of the nation's total population.<sup>24</sup>

The census figures were rejected by the Eastern regional government, accusing the Northern region of inflating their population. Due to general public outcry about the authenticity of the census results, the federal government ordered a fresh census in 1963, which cost the nation an additional 2 million dollars.<sup>25</sup> The 1963 census results had the Northern region with an even higher figure of 53.3% of the total population.

In 1963, amidst severe poverty and unemployment in the nation, the civilian government proposed and subsequently built a new and second parliament building at a cost of about 2.5 million dollars at 1963 value.<sup>26</sup> This, apparently, was poor economic planning, and an example of financial mismanagement given the fact that the total budget for the financial year was only 800 million dollars.

Financial self-enrichment through the embezzlement of public

funds was seen as a privilege that came with electoral victories among politicians in the first republic. In October, 1962, one of the prominent participants in the first republic, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was charged with embezzlement of over 4 million dollars of public funds from the National Investments and Properties Company of Nigeria. Chief Awolowo had allegedly used the funds to enrich his Action Group Party.<sup>27</sup>

Also, on February 22, 1966, four ministers and a parliamentary secretary in the suspended government of Western Nigeria, together with an Action Group Party leader, were charged with and subsequently convicted on two-counts of conspiracy and embezzlement of about \$63,000, property of the Western Nigerian Marketing Board.<sup>28</sup>

The most notoriously violent region in the federal republic was the Western region. Charges of election rigging often resulted in bloody violence in the West.<sup>29</sup> The region, which was a strong hold of the Action Group Party, attracted federal government involvement following continued intra-party disagreements and rivalry in 1963 which resulted in a physical confrontation at the regional House of Assembly. Reports confirmed that Assembly proceedings were halted by scuffles and flying chairs. Police twice used tear gas to disperse the brawl, and finally, locked out the squabbling legislators from the Assembly premises.<sup>30</sup>

Faced by what he described as an explosive situation, the federal Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Belewa, called an extraordinary session of the federal parliament on May 29, 1963.

The federal parliament passed a motion suspending the regional government of Western Nigeria, and declared a state of emergency in that region.<sup>31</sup>

In 1965, following a defeat in the regional elections to the West regional House of Assembly, the Action Group Party charged electoral fraud.<sup>32</sup> There was widespread revolt in all parts of the Western region as arson, riots, and murders were reported almost every where.<sup>33</sup> The Action Group Party, which was the dominant party in the Western region, and heavily favored to win the election, lost a large majority of the Western House of Assembly's seats to a faction of the party led by Chief Akintola.<sup>34</sup> Chief Akintola broke away from the Action Group Party following the 1962 intra-party disagreements. Similar violence was not uncommon at other regional Houses of Assembly.<sup>35</sup>

Charging corruption, ineptitude, financial mismanagement, regionalism, and tribalism, on January 15, 1966, in a highly coordinated swoop between midnight and dawn, an undetermined number of junior and middle grade army officers kidnapped and murdered Prime Minister Tafawa Belewa, and his Finance Minister, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh.<sup>36</sup> They also seized key communication facilities in the capital city, including the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, set up road blocks to the international and domestic airports, assassinated both the Western and Northern regional governors, and arrested a number of cabinet ministers in all four regions, as well as in the federal capital.<sup>37</sup> This marked the end of the first republic, and the birth of military rule in Nigeria.

Between 1966 and 1979, Nigeria remained under various military governments, and in October, 1979, after many elaborate preparations, the military handed over power to the politicians. Hence, October, 1979, marked the birth of the second republic.

Inspite of all the electoral controversies, and the ensuing violence that partly brought down the first republic, the second republic started with similar controversies, although, compared to those in the first republic, the resulting violence was relatively minimal. Reports of election rigging and ensuing legal tussles ushered in the second republic.

The biggest controversy that erupted during the 1979 general elections was over the results of the presidential elections. The 1979 constitution provided that a victorious first-ballot candidate for president of the republic demonstrate popular national support by capturing the largest number of votes, and also obtaining 25% of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of the now 19 states of the federal republic.<sup>38</sup> In the event that no one candidate satisfies both parts of this requirements, an electoral college, consisting of members of all national and state legislative bodies, would select the president among the first and second best contestants by simple majority vote.<sup>39</sup>

The election results had Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the NPN presidential candidate, winning by 770,000 votes over his closest rival, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the UPN. Shagari also secured 25% of the votes cast in each of twelve states, but only 19% in the 13th state. In a highly controversial ruling, the Federal



Electoral Commission liberally interpreted the "each of at least two-thirds of the 19 states" requirement to mean twelve and two-thirds, rather than thirteen states.<sup>40</sup>

Contending that the NPN candidate had satisfied both requirements by obtaining a majority of the total votes, and 25% of the votes cast in 12 of the 19 states, as well as 25% of two-thirds of the votes cast in the 13th state, the Electoral Commission declared Alhaji Shehu Shagari the winner of the presidential election. Amidst the ensuing controversies and debate, Chief Awolowo, the second best candidate by the election returns, filed suit in federal court challenging the interpretation of the twelve and two-thirds rule.<sup>41</sup>

From the moment the politicians took power, they behaved as if they were invulnerable and accountable to no one. For weeks and months after inception, the National Assembly preoccupied itself with its own salaries, benefits, and its own special housing. Ministers, governors, and other political office holders wasted no time in reaping huge profits from the award of inflated contracts and import licenses.<sup>42</sup>

One of the most wasteful projects undertaken by the new civilian government was the construction of a new federal capital territory. In December, 1979, the Minister for the new federal capital territory announced a time-table for the development and construction of the new federal capital territory to be built from virgin land. The price tag for this project was estimated at 9.271 billion dollars.<sup>43</sup>

The federal capital territory project, also known as the Abuja project, was widely perceived by many Nigerians as an avenue for awarding contracts for political patronage and reward.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, most of the contracts subsequently awarded were highly inflated. Daily reports of contractual kickbacks and financial fraud surrounded the Abuja project. In March, 1984, 20 million dollars was reported as missing from the accounts of the Federal Capital Development Authority.<sup>45</sup>

Senators and members of the House of Representatives flew around the world on shopping sprees. The richest of the politicians bought private jets and magnificent homes in London and New York. Gold Rolex watches and expensive Mercedes Benz cars became common place, as politicians, with no other known sources of income, became fabulously rich.<sup>46</sup> Incredibly, political

corruption grew more massive and shameless even as national income plunged, and the economy went into recession. In February, 1984, the new head of the federal military government reported that the second republic turned a 929-million-dollar-credit-balance in 1979 -at the time of the previous military government's departure, into a 6.3-billion-dollar-deficit in 1982, and a slightly reduced 5.3-billion-dollar-deficit in 1983.<sup>47</sup>

As Nigeria's foreign exchange reserve dwindled from the high cost of maintaining the second republic, and as oil income dropped due to world oil price fluctuations, the nation's credit with foreign suppliers was exhausted, thereby reducing most of its import capacity. This had devastating effects on both industrial

production that was heavily depended on foreign imports, and consumer prices. Unable to import raw materials and spare parts, factories were forced to retrench to fractions of their capacity. Tens of thousands of workers were laid off, and goods produced by these factories soared in prices and became scarce. Even more seriously, prices of basic food stuff jumped to exorbitant limits as inflation took its toll on the economy. A World Bank study in 1983 in Plateau state in Nigeria, showed price increases in basic food stuff. Between 1979 and 1982, the price of Sorghum rose by 125%, the price of Corn by 95%, and the price of Millet rose by 36%.<sup>48</sup>

As time for reelection approached in 1983, conditions grew worse than ever. Monies were directed towards reelection campaigns for politicians. The massive rigging of the 1983 elections, and the electoral fraud associated with the results of the elections were the decisive reasons for the fall of the second republic. As at the time of the military intervention in December, 1983, Nigeria's foreign debt had reached a staggering 30 billion dollars.<sup>49</sup>

These repeated failures of democracy, at least in the context of Nigeria's political history, show that some necessary basic social, political, and economic conditions associated with the existence and stability of democratic societies were not addressed before democratic system of government was instituted in Nigeria. Chapter Four discusses in more detail the various social, political, and economic conditions.

## Chapter 4

### Conditions Necessary for the Survival of Democracy

Basic conditions associated with the existence and continued survival of democratic societies have been, and continue to be, a leading concern for Political Scientists. For purposes of this paper, democracy shall be defined as a political system which provides regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials of a nation. It is a social means of resolution of the problem of societal decision-making among conflicting interest groups through ensuring that the governed influence governmental decisions through their ability to choose among alternative contenders for public office.

Undoubtedly the most widely practised, and probably the most effective method of governing modern nations, democracy affords the governed an opportunity to express their opinion through free speech and free press, and elect governmental leaders through popular elections. Democracy also subjects governmental officials to "checks and balances," in order to ensure accountability, and curtail power abuses, as well as secure governmental responsiveness through reelections.

However, democracy does not always survive in nations where it is introduced. The reasons are numerous, the most prominent of which are lack of basic socio-cultural, political, and economic

development among newly independent Third World nations. Hence, it is possible that certain basic social, political, and economic conditions could be attained by newly modernizing countries, before democracy could be successfully introduced and the road to a politically modernized state begun.

#### Basic Socio-cultural Conditions:

Socio-cultural conditions prevailing in a nation before the introduction of democracy could determine, to a large extent, the survivability of democracy. After independence from Great Britain, the United States of America, probably the biggest and most successful democracy in the world today, was a new state, but socially an old society. America obtained its independence under a society with customs, conventions, and social practices imported from seventeenth century England, and early American settlers who fought and obtained America's independence from Great Britain were mostly British people.<sup>50</sup>

Hence, America began its process of political modernization with a people that had accepted existing Western democratic values, a people that understood the meaning and importance of democracy and political participation. Western democratic values accepted in seventeenth century England included the notions that all men stood equal before the law, that is, the Rule of Law, that public policy should be determined and political leadership selected by democratic forms, and that the source of governmental authority should be centralized in the Legislature, or Parliament, which is

the representative of the people.<sup>51</sup>

With such values and beliefs brought in from England, the American society, at the start of its process of political modernization, had accepted democratic forms for the organization of political power, and had recognized the significance of existing Western democratic values and principles.<sup>52</sup>

Most contemporary Third World modernizing nations, including Nigeria, are young traditional societies which are just starting to modernize their societies. These societies, unlike the United States, did not begin their process of political modernization under politically knowledgeable and educated polities. Consequently, the electorate and the mass population in these young modernizing societies lack a clear understanding of the meaning and importance of free and fair elections, and of democracy and political development in general.

This gap in historical experience has made the United States, the prime example of a successful democracy, and the one nation which many newly modernizing nations emulate in forming their models of the ideal path to successful modernization, peculiarly blind to the significance of education and other basic socio-cultural conditions to the successful institution of democracy in newly modernizing nations.

Education expands the human mind and broadens people's outlook. Educating people on the meaning and importance of democratic values and principles would enable them understand the

need for norms of tolerance, social responsibility, and discipline. Education also helps restrain people from adhering to extremist political philosophies, as well as improves their capacity to make rational electoral choices.

In a study conducted in 1957 by Seymour Martin Lipset of the University of California, Berkeley, on social requisites of democracy, he found that the better educated the population of a country, the better the chances of survival for democracy. Lipset classified many European and Latin American countries according to degree of democracy, and compared this information to their levels of education. (See table on next page)

## European/English-speaking Nations

## Latin American Nations

Stable  
DemocraciesUnstable Democracies  
and DictatorshipsDemocracies &  
Unstable  
dictatorshipsStable  
Dictatorships

Australia  
Belgium  
Canada  
Denmark  
Ireland  
Luxemburg  
Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
U.K  
U.S.A

Austria  
Bulgaria  
Czechoslovakia  
Finland  
France  
W. Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Italy  
Poland  
Portugal  
Rumania  
Spain  
Yugoslavia

Argentina  
Brazil  
Chile  
Colombia  
Costa Rica  
Mexico  
Uruguay

Bolivia  
Cuba  
Dominican Rep.  
Ecuador  
El Salvador  
Guatemala  
Haiti  
Honduras  
Nicaragua  
Panama  
Paraguay  
Peru  
Venezuela

Source: Lipset, Seymour Martin. March, 1959.  
Some Social Requisites for Democracy  
The American Political Science Review  
P.74

The "most democratic" of all the nations were those that were classified under Stable Democracies, including, among several others, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Next were Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships, comprising, most notably,



of West Germany and France, followed by Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships made up of Latin American nations, notably Argentina and Brazil. The "least democratic" according to Lipset's classification were those nations that had stable dictatorships, all of whom were Latin American nations, most notably Cuba and Nicaragua.<sup>53</sup>

Using four indices of education, namely, percent literate of total population, primary education enrollment per 1,000 persons, post-primary education enrollment per 1,000 persons, and higher education enrollment per 1,000 persons, Lipset found that the "more democratic" countries of Europe, classified as Stable Democracies, have almost entirely literate populations, the lowest literacy rate among them being 96% of total population. The "less democratic" European nations had an average literacy rate of 85%, while Latin American democracies and unstable dictatorships had an average literacy rate of 74%. The "least democratic" nations classified as Stable Dictatorships had the lowest literacy rates, the average literacy rate among them being 46% of total population.<sup>54</sup>

Total educational enrollment measured by primary, post-primary, and higher education enrollment per 1,000 persons was also consistently related to the degree of democracy.

# Relationship between Education and degree of Democracy

Degree of Democracy	Percent Literate	Primary Education Enrollment Per 1,000	Post-primary Education Enrollment Per 1,000	College Per 1,000
Stable Democracies	96	134	44	4.2
Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships	85	121	22	3.5
Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships	74	101	13	2.0
Stable Dictatorships	46	72	08	1.3

Source: Lipset, Seymour Martin. March, 1959.  
Some Social Requisites for Democracy  
The American Political Science Review  
P.76.

Educational data from other economically impoverished areas of the world also support the finding that democracy is related to literacy. In the Middle East, Lebanon, one of the nations that had maintained democratic institutions since World War II, was also found to be by far the best educated in the Arab World, its literacy rate being 80% of total population.<sup>55</sup>

In the Far East, the two nations which have maintained democratic institutions since 1945 without any large

anti-democratic opposition, Japan and the Phillipines, are also among the world's leaders in educational attainment. The Phillipines is second only to the United States in percentage of total population attending high school and college, while Japan has a higher level of educational attainment, especially in the area of science and technology, than many European states.<sup>56</sup>

These findings about the relationship between education and democracy support the proposition that the higher a nation's rate of literacy, the more likely that nation is to believe in democratic values and principles, and support democratic practices. Hence, a high level of educational attainment can reasonably be said to be a necessary pre-condition for the survival of democracy.

The significance of favorable socio-cultural conditions in enhancing the survival of democracy in Nigeria was stated by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the former President of Nigeria under the First Republic. In an article titled "Essentials for Nigeria's Survival", Dr. Azikiwe stated that "the failure of parliament and democratic government should not be blamed on the form, organization, and administration of the system, but on the politicians who ran the affairs of the country, and that only men and women of good character, education, and discipline should be elected to parliament".<sup>57</sup>

In 1987, Nigeria's literacy rate was reported to be 42% of total population. Primary school attendance was also 42%.<sup>58</sup> It is, therefore, possible that 30 years ago in 1960 - the year

Nigeria instituted democratic system of government, Nigeria's literacy rate may have been well below 42% of total population. With such a low literacy rate of 42%, which is, in fact, lower than the average literacy rate of 46% for Stable Dictatorships, it was unlikely that democracy could have survived for very long in Nigeria.

### Basic Political Development

As stated above, most contemporary Third World modernizers are traditional societies which are still in the process of breaking ties with traditional customs and practices for more modern and scientific methods of societal development. Consequently, conspicuously missing in these societies are those elements of basic political development which characterize the societies of established stable democracies of the Western World. More specifically, Western stable democracies are characterized by societies which have a reasonable and effective sense of identification with the history and territory of the state concerned. There is widespread popular interest and involvement in the political systems of these societies, political roles are allocated in accordance with standards of achievement rather than ascription, and judicial and regulatory techniques are based on predominantly secular and impersonal systems of law.

Basic political development in Third World modernizing nations could proceed in two steps as follows:-

- (i) The weakening of traditional sources of authority, followed by an increased centralization of authority in the state.
- (ii) The creation of a politically organized state, consisting of differentiated and specialized political institutions which could foster widespread participation in politics, and widespread popular interest and involvement in the political system.

Basic political development entails a dramatic shift from traditional sources of authority to modern, single, secular, national political authority. Samuel Huntington argues that tribal chiefs, kings, and princes, etc., must gradually give up their power to modernizing leaders in order for the process of political modernization to begin.<sup>59</sup>

Although the process of transfer of political power from traditional sources to modernizing leadership could be very difficult, prolonged, and sometimes very violent, many political scientists have suggested different approaches to the process. Claude Welch suggests that transformation could be approached either through direct legislation against communalism or tribalism, as is common in many African states, or through a deliberate accommodation of traditional beliefs and practices, in which tradition itself is eventually undermined and transformed.<sup>60</sup>

It can reasonably be assumed that this first step of basic political development, that is, shift from traditional sources to modern sources of authority, has in fact been achieved by many contemporary modernizing nations.

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Next is the creation of a powerful government, and the centralization of authority in that government to enable it to institute reform. The importance of creating effective authority and building strong governments before the introduction of democracy in modernizing countries is undermined by America's peculiar historical experience. America was born with a legitimate government which operated under political practices imported from seventeenth century England. Therefore, Americans did not have to worry about government-building, a problem which affects most contemporary modernizing nations. According to Samuel Huntington, the typical American modernizer's idea of government-building is not the creation of authority and the accumulation of power, but the limitation of authority and the division of power through such devices as separation of powers, checks and balances, competitive political parties, regular elections, bill of rights, written constitutions, and federalism.<sup>41</sup> Hence, the American modernizer presumes the existence of established legitimate governments in all modernizing countries, whose powers he then finds necessary to limit through democratic processes.

Authority has to exist before it can be limited, and it is legitimate authority, according to Huntington, which is missing in most modernizing nations.<sup>42</sup> James Madison, stating the importance of effective authority in government, said that "in framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control

itself".<sup>43</sup> The primary political problem in modernizing societies is not the creation of liberty, but the creation of legitimate public order without which there can be no liberty.

In a study conducted on societal disengagement from traditionalism in Turkey and Iran, Richard Pfaff found that in both Turkey and Iran, the influence of Islamic religion so greatly affected traditional society that authoritarianism, not democracy, was necessary to bring reform. Both Ataturk of Turkey, and Reza Shah of Iran utilized military authoritarianism in disengaging with traditionalism and instituting reform. Beginning 1925, Ataturk exercised effective military and political control over all of Turkey, introduced secular reforms in both the legal and social spheres of society, and effectively reduced the influence of traditionalism in Turkey's political life.<sup>44</sup> In Iran, Reza Shah asserted his authority over the country before beginning any attempts at modernizing it. In June, 1925, Reza Shah introduced compulsory military enlistment for national service, and by 1926, most of Iran was under Reza's control, and reforms, although less effective than Ataturk's, were introduced in Iran.<sup>45</sup>

The second step in the process of basic political development is the formation of a politically organized state, consisting of differentiated and specialized political institutions, which could foster widespread participation in politics and widespread popular interest and involvement in the political system.

A politically organized state is a state which has effective arrangements for the maintenance of order, the settling of

disputes, selection of governmental officials, and thus the promotion of community among two or more social groupings. Nations are typically made up of numerous social groupings, including ethnic, territorial, religious, economic, and even status groups. According to Samuel Huntington, the degree of community in a complex society depends upon the strength and scope of its political institutions.<sup>44</sup> As social groupings become more varied, political institutions have to become more complex and authoritative. This element of development is scarce in many twentieth century modernizing societies. Thus social forces have grown stronger in these developing nations, while political institutions such as parliament, public authorities and executives, and political parties, have remained weak, fragile, and disorganized. Consequently, in most modernizing nations, elections, for example, have only served to enhance the power of disruptive social forces, and have often destroyed the structure of public authority. For elections to be meaningful, there has to exist in society a certain level of political organization and institutionalization.

Following independence from Britain, the United States continued basically the same political institutions which it had inherited from Britain, and which suited the American society. Most Latin American countries, on the other hand, maintained feudal social structures after independence. Attempts at immediately superimposing republican political institutions imported from the United States and revolutionary France left Latin America with weak



governments. Until the twentieth century, Latin American governments lacked the power and authority to modernize Latin American states.<sup>47</sup>

It is, therefore, necessary that the process of basic political development in modernizing states proceed by first weakening the traditional sources of authority, followed by the centralization of authority in a single, secular state, and then the formation of politically organized states, through the creation of political institutions which attract widespread participation in politics, and widespread popular interest and involvement in the political system.

In the specific case of Nigeria, thirty years after independence and the introduction of democracy, traditionalism remains a source of authority in some parts of the country. In Northern Nigeria, where Islam remains the predominant religion, Islamic law, also known as Sharia Law, to a large extent governs judicial processes, and Sharia courts operate alongside secular courts. Traditional leaders, such as Emirs in Northern Nigeria, still possess vast influence over the political behavior of Northern Nigerians. The continuing influence of traditionalism on the political life of Northern Nigeria, therefore, disables the long time survival of democracy in that part of Nigeria.

In terms of the formation of an authoritarian state capable of undertaking the modernization of Nigeria, the early introduction of democracy after British colonization caused the division and limitation of authority rather than the concentration of authority

in government in Nigeria. Hence, Nigeria's governments have remained weak and unstable since independence, resulting in unstable democracy in the country.

In terms of the formation of a politically organized state as well as political institutionalization, Nigeria is far from done. Nigeria is a highly ethnically heterogeneous society, and changes in the complexity of society has outpaced changes in the strength and complexity of political institutions. Political parties in Nigeria still remain, to an extent, ethnic based, and are frequently factionalized by intra-party disagreements.

#### Basic Economic Development

The state of economic development of a country could determine to a great extent the survivability as well as stability of democracy in that country. In a society where the mass of the population live in abject poverty, it is difficult to develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the ideologies of irresponsible political extremists and remain politically intelligent. According to Seymour Martin Lipset, a society characterized by a large impoverished mass and a small favored elite would result in either oligarchy, which is dictatorial rule by a small upper class, or in tyranny, which is popularly based dictatorship.<sup>40</sup>

In many big and stable Western democracies, such as the United States and Great Britain, society regularly saves and productively

invests a sufficient volume of its resources, while the growth of the national economies of these countries outpace population increases. Centuries of economic planning and development have led to widespread industrial development and prosperity, and much economic stability. Consequently, these societies are characterized by a high standard of living, high per capita income, sufficient social amenities, relatively low unemployment rates, and relatively close gaps between the rich and the poor classes of society.

Unlike the United States and Great Britain, contemporary modernizing Third World nations possess predominantly agrarian economies. In Nigeria, for example, 54% of the current labor force is employed in the agricultural sector. Only 19% is employed in the relatively very small industrial sector of the economy.<sup>69</sup> The standard of living in Nigeria is low, per capita income is relatively low, social amenities are insufficient, there is a high unemployment rate, and the society is divided between a large impoverished mass, and a small wealthy upper class. Hence, most of the factors that theoretically lead to the failure of democracy are present in the Nigerian society, as well as in many modernizing Third World Nations.

According to Edward Shills, economic development in a nation means industrial development, urbanization, and a high standard of living measured by per capita income, etc.<sup>70</sup> Lacking in contemporary Third World modernizing nations is basic economic development in the areas of industrialization, urbanization, and wealth.

Industrialization: Only when industrial technology is fairly well advanced could a society begin to produce the necessary forms of mass media, such as newspapers, radios, and televisions, on a scale large enough to match the widespread political, economic, and social activities that accompany the introduction of democracy. Although many developing nations have mass media in the form of newspapers, radios, and televisions, etc. they do not have them on the scale that we find in all modern advanced democracies.

The process of industrialization is characterized by the construction of new factories, building of roads, railways, and harbors, and research into the use of agricultural products for industrial purposes. All these are excellent means of increasing society's rate of employment, and hence, people's interest in political actions that affect them economically, as well as politics in general.

Seymour Martin Lipset used two indices of industrialization namely, percentage of labor force in agriculture, and per capita energy consumption, to compare the relationship between industrialization and the degree of democracy in several European and Latin American countries. (See table on next page)

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# Relationship between Industrialization and Degree of Democracy

Degree of Democracy	Percent of Labor Force in Agriculture	Per Capita Energy consumed (metric tons of coal)
Stable Democracies	21	3.6
Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships	41	1.4
Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships	52	0.6
Stable Dictatorships	67	0.2

Source: Lipset, Seymour Martin. March, 1959.  
Some Social Requisites for Democracy  
The American Political Science Review  
P.76.

As can be seen from this table, countries with the lowest percentage of labor force engaged in agriculture, and presumably, also with the highest percentage of labor force engaged in industry, have the most stable democracies. On the other hand, countries with the highest percentage of labor force engaged in agriculture, and presumably, the lowest percentage of labor force engaged in industry, also have the most stable dictatorships.

The same applies for per capita energy consumption. The most stable democracies consume more energy per capita - 3.6 metric tons of coal, than the most stable dictatorships - 0.25 metric tons of coal.

The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1989, reports Nigeria's

percentage of labor force in agriculture as 54% of total labor force in current employment.<sup>71</sup> Hence, going by Lipset's classification, Nigeria fits closest to countries with democracies and unstable dictatorships, which characteristically have an average of 52% of their labor force engaged in agriculture. Indeed, in concurrence with Lipset's finding, since independence in 1960, Nigeria's governments have alternated between democracies and unstable military dictatorships.

Urbanization: The second element of basic economic development lacking in Third World modernizing nations is urbanization. Urbanization is an important element in the process of political modernization. Some authors argue that the social basis of a modernizing coalition or leadership lies in the city, especially in the urban skills of those modernizing elite who have acquired Western habits.<sup>72</sup>

Seymour Lipset contends that the complex of skills and resources which characterize modern industrial economies are commonly found in cities.<sup>73</sup> Again, using three indices of urbanization, namely percentage of total population in cities over 20,000, percentage of total population in cities over 100,000, and percentage of total population in metropolitan areas, Lipset compared the effect of urbanization on the degree of democracy in various European and Latin American countries.

# Relationship between Urbanization and Degree of Democracy

Degree of Democracy	Percent in cities over 20,000	Percent in cities over 100,000	Percent in Metropolitan Areas
Stable Democracies	43	28	38
Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships	24	16	23
Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships	28	22	26
Stable Dictatorships	17	12	15

Source: Lipset, Seymour Martin. March, 1959.  
Some Social Requisites of Democracy  
The American Political Science Review  
P.77

From the table above, it can be seen that although there are some deviant cases, it is generally true that European stable democracies, on the average, have a higher percentage of their total populations living in urban areas than Latin American stable dictatorships, which have the smallest percentage of total population living in urban areas. The deviant cases among Unstable Democracies and Dictatorships, otherwise referred to as European Dictatorships, consist of East European communist countries, which, like many developing nations, have predominantly rural populations. In 1985, Nigeria's urban population was 23% of total population.<sup>74</sup> In Lipset's classification, this, again, places Nigeria closest to the category of "Democracies and Unstable Dictatorships"

Wealth: The third element of economic development lacking in Third World countries is wealth. With democracy comes a proliferation of government services, and therefore, higher administrative costs associated with the provision of such services. The number of legislative and executive institutions increases under a representative democracy, which adds to the cost of running the system. Under the presidential system, two Houses of Congress must be maintained, constituted by several hundred legislators. These legislators must be remunerated for their services, usually on salary scales which are relatively high, and often come with liberal fringe benefits. The executive branch contains the executive office of the president, which, in some countries, spreads into scores of presidential advisory offices and bureaus, with accompanying millions of employees. In the United States, for example, the executive branch has almost 3 million employees, and 2 million military personnel, directing and operating programs that cost close to 800 billion dollars a year.<sup>75</sup>

These costs associated with the maintenance of democracy and democratic institutions can barely be afforded even by wealthy nations like the United States, which is, indeed, presently in heavy budget deficits. According to Dr. Azikiwe, former president of Nigeria under the First Republic, "it is apparent that only affluent nations are capable of assuming the financial obligations to which the member states of a democratic federation are committed".<sup>76</sup>

The wealthier nations of the world tend to be industrialized



nations, although there are non-industrialized nations, like Saudi Arabia, which are also wealthy. Hence, aside from its other benefits to democracy, industrialization could also help accumulate wealth for developing nations, which in turn, will result in a relatively higher per capita income, and probably also result in a higher standard of living for society.

The more the wealth of a country, the easier it can afford the cost of running a representative democracy. Also, the higher the net income of people, and hence, their net purchasing power, the better the chances of their receptivity to democratic norms of political tolerance. For example, if the loss of political office is not seen as major economic loss for power groups, then they are less likely to resort to extreme measures in seeking to secure or retain office. The poorer a nation, the greater the likelihood of nepotism and favoritism to friends and family. Nepotism is a practice that disables the efficient running of bureaucracies, an essential institution of modern democratic states. Seymour Lipset found that the higher the per capita income of societies, the higher the degree of democracy in those societies.<sup>77</sup> For the year 1949, the average per capita income for Stable European Democracies was \$695, for European Dictatorships it was \$308, for Latin American Democracies it was \$171, and for Latin American Dictatorships it was only \$119.<sup>78</sup>

The extremely wide disparity in income between Nigeria, with a 1989 estimated population of about 115.3 million, and the United States, with a 1989 population of 247.5 million people (which is

only about twice the population of Nigeria), is worthy of note. Nigeria's gross national product for 1985 was \$53 billion, and its per capita income was \$790. The United States' gross national product for 1985 was \$4.2 trillion, and per capita income was \$13,451, over 17 times that of Nigeria.<sup>79</sup> Such low levels of income in many Third World nations are not sufficient to finance the relatively expensive costs that are associated with the introduction of democracy, and the running and maintenance of democratic institutions.

Finally, the pace at which twentieth century modernizing nations undertake the process of political modernization has been cited by some authors as one of the reasons for political instability in those nations.<sup>80</sup> The differences in the rates of change can be seen in the lengths of time which various countries took to modernize. The modernization of Europe and of North America was spread over several centuries. For the first modernizer, England, the process was spread over a period of 183 years, between 1649 and 1832. For the United States, the process lasted 89 years from 1776 to 1865. For 13 other countries, including Canada, France, Australia, New Zealand, and several other West European countries, which began the process of modernization between 1789 and 1815, the average period was 73 years. However, for 21 of the 29 Third World countries which began the process of modernization during the first quarter of the twentieth century, the average was only 29 years.<sup>81</sup> For Nigeria, the process of modernization has lasted just over 29 years since independence in

October, 1960.

A group of scholars from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who studied the transitional process to modernity in various modernizing societies, found that the scale of change necessary in modernizing societies required the passage of time. They concluded that "the process of modernization intrinsically requires a long time, even if society's leaders give to its constructive dimensions all their energy and attention".<sup>82</sup>

Since the introduction of democratic government does not appear to be a feasible first step toward political modernization in Nigeria, and the various conditions necessary for the survival and stability of democracy remain elusive in Nigeria, it is reasonable to argue that Nigeria, as well as other newly independent modernizing Third World nations, undergo, as a first step toward effective political modernization, a period of maturation and initial basic development. During this period, these countries should be free from foreign pressure in order to work toward consolidating the various necessary pre-conditions for the introduction, survival, and stability of democracy. Based on the time period required by modernized societies for their processes of modernization, the period of maturation and initial basic development should spread over a period of no less than 80 years after independence of the modernizing nations.

The question that inevitably arises, however, is that since democracy does not appear to be a feasible first step toward the modernization of Nigeria, as well as other newly independent Third

World modernizing societies, what form of government is a feasible alternative, at least at the early stages of modernization?

Chapter 5 argues for military government as a feasible alternative, especially in the case of Nigeria.

## Chapter 5

### A Case for the Military

As was discussed in chapter 4, one of the elements of basic political development necessary in transitional societies is the creation of a powerful government, and the centralization of authority in that government to enable it to institute reform. Many political scientists have argued that authority has to exist before it can be limited through democratic processes, and that it is legitimate authority which is missing in many modernizing societies. Richard Pfaff found in his study on societal disengagement from traditionalism in Turkey and Iran, that the influence of the Islamic religion so greatly affected traditional society in Turkey and Iran that authoritarianism, not democracy, was necessary to effectuate reform in those societies.<sup>63</sup> There is similar immense influence of traditionalism in many transitional societies today. In Northern Nigeria, for example, Islam remains a strong influence on political behavior on many Northern Nigerians, and also remains a threat to secular government. In most other parts of Nigeria, religion has far less influence on political behavior.

Military governments are, arguably, one of the better sources of authoritarianism. Before going any further, it is important to understand that in evaluating the potential role that the military

could play in the political development of modernizing nations, it is necessary to avoid excessive bias fomented by Western stereotypes of the military in developing nations as foes of liberal values, and as destroyers of civilian authority. This will ensure an objective evaluation of the potential role of the military in the modernization of newly independent Third World nations.

The military plays a decisive role in many transitional societies today. In evaluating the role of the military in the political development of new states, Edward Shils stated that "military rule is one of several practicable alternatives when parliamentary democratic regimes falter".<sup>4</sup> The likely social origins of members of the military in transitional societies, the nature of their profession, their training, and the context in which they operate contribute important elements to their potential for leadership toward modernization.

In the area of basic socio-cultural development, the military could effectively serve as an agent of social change. Armies provide a sense of national identity, which is a social-psychological element of national unity, and a highly necessary condition in nations attempting to integrate diverse ethnic and tribal groups as in the case of Nigeria. Armies are the most national institutions in transitional societies. Men and women of varying regional and ethnic backgrounds are brought together, given a common experience, and trained to think of themselves as Kenyans, Sudanese, or Nigerians. This sense of

national identity tends to be strongest in countries which have been involved in extensive external hostilities.<sup>85</sup>

As agents of social development, armies could also serve as a vehicle for public education. In Turkey, the Turkish Army had 11,000 officer cadets engaged in activities supporting the government's program against illiteracy in 1962.<sup>86</sup> The Turkish Army recruited about 200,000 young illiterate Turkish villagers into its training program each year. These young men and women were taught how to read and write, how to handle simple tools and equipment, and also about basic hygiene and public health. They also learned about the symbols and institutions associated with modern republican political life, and when they returned to their villages after training, they put their new knowledge to work, teaching other villagers at home about what they have learned, thereby accelerating the process of modernization in Turkey.<sup>87</sup>

In Malaya and the Philippines, the army has played important roles on training people on how to handle, operate, and maintain motor vehicles, as well as other types of machinery.<sup>88</sup> In the West, armies played very significant roles in the process of Western industrial development by providing essential technical training, and in some cases, even direct services to the process of industrialization. In Germany, for example, a large number of non-commissioned officers were trained by the German Army to serve as foremen in German steel mills and various other developing industries.<sup>89</sup> In the United States, the Corps of Engineers assisted in significant ways in the development of the Western part

of the United States, and also, after the Civil War, army veterans helped provide considerable industrial skills and knowledge that formed the basis of much of U.S. industrial development.<sup>90</sup> Prior to World War I, mandatory army training in Japan helped provide a reliable supply of qualified manpower, which, in turn, contributed to the growth of an industrial society in Japan.<sup>91</sup>

Finally, as agents of socio-cultural development, armies could instill personal discipline in public life, which will minimize random and unpredictable behavior among members of society. In many developing societies, indiscipline has been cited as one of the most common causes of corruption among public officials and members of government. The army's distinctive attributes of discipline and orderliness could be brought into public political life, in order to raise standards of conduct in the realm of public administration, and also to promote one of the most basic aspects of political development, namely, the growth of responsible and representative politicians. In 1984, Nigeria's military government launched a social program, called the "War Against Indiscipline" (WAI). The object of this program was to attempt to eliminate as much as possible the pervasive corruption, indiscipline, and disorderliness that was common among politicians and government officials, as well as the rest of the Nigerian society. Utilizing the mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, and newsmagazines, etc., the government relentlessly educated the public on the importance of patriotism, personal discipline, orderliness, and selflessness, to the smooth running



of the country, as well as to an eventual return to democracy and civil rule.<sup>92</sup> To a considerable extent, the program realized its goals.

In the area of basic political development in modernizing nations, military governments are, arguably, one of the better sources of authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is an element of political development which is necessary in creating governmental authority in tradition-bound societies. As Samuel Huntington has observed, authority has to exist before it can be limited through democratic processes, but authority continues to be in scarce supply in traditional societies.<sup>93</sup> As was mentioned in chapter 4, in Turkey and Iran, under Ataturk and Reza Shah, respectively, military authoritarianism helped establish effective authority in government, and helped set these societies in motion toward political modernization.

Professor Lucian Pye argues that military governments could be instrumental in the process of societal disengagement from traditionalism. According to Professor Pye, the nature of the army profession requires that those who join the army be trained to have the image of "a good soldier". The "good soldier", Pye argues, is to an extent a modernized man.<sup>94</sup> The fact that the new army recruit must move away from his traditional civilian habits, and adjust to the more impersonal world of the army indicates the potential significance of army training to societal disengagement from traditionalism.<sup>95</sup>

In some modernizing countries, basic army training has been

extended into civilian society. As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Japan, prior to World War I, had a policy of compulsory army training for all young adults, which, aside from preparing these young adults for potential manpower needs in newly emerging Japanese industries, also made them shed their traditional modes of thinking and behavior. In Nigeria, the military government under General Yakubu Gowon, formed the National Youth Service Corps program (NYSC) in 1973. The NYSC is a federal government program that mandates all new college graduates to serve the federal government for a period of one year immediately after graduation.<sup>64</sup> All participants are remunerated for their service, and at the end of the service year, an NYSC certificate is awarded. The NYSC certificate is a prerequisite for all state and federal government employment, as well as employment by private establishments which receive federal or state government funding. As part of the service, participants undergo a period of basic army-style training in which they are taught the fundamentals of self-discipline, survival in adversity, endurance, and psychological security.<sup>65</sup> Army training is thus consistent with the direction taken by the basic process of societal disengagement from traditionalism.

In the realm of basic economic development in modernizing countries, the likely social origins of members of the military, their technical training, and the nature of their profession could contribute important elements to their potential capacity for economic modernization of transitional societies. In terms of their social origin, a large majority of military officers come

from middle and lower middle class backgrounds in transitional societies. As leading members of a class that is not nearly as well off as it's Western equivalents, the military in transitional societies is usually opposed to the maintenance of the status quo, and is highly disposed toward economic change as part of the modernization process, whose culmination it sees in terms of a sizeable and economically established middle class."<sup>8</sup>

The social origin of military men, thus, predisposes them toward economic modernization, a necessary condition for political stability in modernizing societies. On the other hand, politicians, as for example, Nigerian politicians, who usually come from the upper middle class, are less inclined toward economic development of the rest of the middle class. These politicians are usually more interested in maintaining the present economic status quo largely for their own gain."<sup>9</sup> This results in an economic impoverishment of the middle and lower middle classes who constitute the mass of many transitional societies, and hence, in democratic instability in the rest of society.

Furthermore, armies, by their very nature, are usually modern rather than traditional structures. Members of the army are organized by function, and advance according to seniority and job performance, rather than by connection with high officials, friends, or people in positions of significance. Hence, modern armies usually have the configuration of industrial-type entities. Industrial-type entities are characteristically instinct with the spirit of rapid technological development. Also, the high

proportion of officers assigned to staff functions in modern armies, and recent revolutions in military technology, have caused army leaders in modernizing countries to be extremely sensitive to the degree of economic and technological underdevelopment in their countries.<sup>100</sup> Hence, the nature of the military profession, to an extent, predisposes army leaders in transitional societies toward rapid and rigorous economic development in their societies.

Still in the area of basic economic development, technical training usually received by members of the army could be instrumental toward economic modernization in transitional societies. Military training became an important source of technical assistance to underdeveloped countries during World War II, when native troops were mobilized by colonial armies. This resulted in more manpower in underdeveloped countries being exposed to technical training and organizational discipline. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, it is estimated that nearly half a million Africans were mobilized during World War II.<sup>101</sup> Most were given basic training appropriate for modernization, while others received training for simple technical skills.

In attempting to keep pace with global military technological advancements, armies in transitional societies have had to establish all kinds of specialized departments. In Burma, for example, the army has a special Engineer and Signal Corps, special sections on chemical and psychological warfare, and even a historical and archeological section.<sup>102</sup> The Burmese army also maintains its own economic enterprises, including manufacturing

plants, and departmental stores.<sup>103</sup> As a result, the military develops a pool of trained managers and technicians, who are available for employment by public and private industries after retirement from the army.

In the case of Nigeria, the military has been instrumental in effectuating various social, economic, and political developmental efforts, which have, in one way or the other, facilitated the periodical survival of democracy at various times in the nation's political history.<sup>104</sup> History has shown that the soldiers are more self-disciplined than the politicians in managing the nation's scarce financial and natural resources. Nigeria's military governments have, at various times, cut down on luxuries, extravagancies, and governmental waste mainly associated with civilian regimes.<sup>105</sup> They have exercised thrift in spending the nation's financial income, and have dispensed justice without fear or favor. Supporters of the military argue that the military is a national, unified, disciplined, and efficient organization, with a repository of managerial and technical skills sufficient to run developing countries. Armies officers are viewed as apolitical, dedicated to rapid socioeconomic change, and intolerant of the sterile infighting, corruption, and mismanagement of resources that is common among politicians. As a result of these attributes, the army could be the most effective organization in combining maximum rates of modernization with maximum levels of stability and control.<sup>106</sup>

African military interventions are commonly caused by a

perceived failure of political elites to resolve national economic problems, as well as by corruption, governmental inefficiency, and frequent political dishonesty and strife among politicians. Widespread government corruption is the commonest charge by army officers moving against their civilian counterparts.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, in Nigeria, the military, charging economic failure, waste, self-aggrandizement, and widespread government corruption, seized power from the civilians for the second time in 17 years on December 31, 1983.<sup>108</sup> Two months after taking over power, in a move that reiterated their dedication to stamping out corruption, and maintaining a well disciplined political environment, the soldiers set up military tribunals to bring all corrupt ex-government officials to trial.<sup>109</sup>

In another move specifically directed at reducing financial waste, the military government under General Mohammed Buhari cutback on the number of ministries for both the federal and state governments. The large number of ministries, according to the government, were unnecessary since the functions performed by several of the ministries were similar enough for the ministries to be merged. Federal ministries were, therefore, reduced from 25 to 18, while state ministries were restricted to only 9 from 15.<sup>110</sup>

In 1979, at the end of the 13-year rule by the first military regime, the economic legacy of the military acquired by the civilians was impressive. The military handed over to the civilians an economy where output had increased three-fold over the past 13 years, where local ownership of industry had become the

dominant characteristic of the economy, where domestic production of raw materials for industries had become reality rather than an illusion, and where a sense of direction prevailed in agriculture, transportation, communications, and in various other sectors of the economy. The external public debt of the federal military government as at 31st March, 1978, stood at a relatively low 789 million dollars.<sup>111</sup> As at the time the civilians left office five years later in 1983, the external debt stood at a staggering 30 billion dollars.

In the area of exchange control, the military government, in 1984, took significant steps to reduce the importation of unnecessary luxury items. The importation of luxury items such as champagne and pre-bottled spring water was banned, while specific limits were put on directors fees, consultancy fees, technical fees, and management fees, all a favorite game of multinational corporations.<sup>112</sup> Basic Overseas Travel Allowance was cut from \$500 to \$100, import license applications were being checked far more rigorously than before, hundreds of phony import-export agencies were shutdown, and the government demanded that manufacturers switched to local-resource-based manufacturing.<sup>113</sup>

In other efforts at reducing indiscipline and waste in Nigeria, the military government directed a substantial part of its War Against Indiscipline Program at the oil industry. The oil industry, Nigeria's primary source of foreign exchange, was clearly riddled with corruption. In March, 1983, Oil Minister, Dr. Tam David West, stated that the country was losing one million dollars

a day to smugglers of oil products from Nigeria. Three months later in June, 1983, after further investigations, that figure was changed to an even higher 80 million dollars per month.<sup>114</sup> The new military government passed, among other decrees, a decree that called for the death penalty for offenses related to the sabotaging and smuggling of any form of oil products from Nigeria.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company reported savings of over 700,000 barrels of oil per day, which, without efforts by the military government, would have been lost to smugglers.

Another aspect of Nigeria's military governments which had a financial advantage for the country is the relatively small size of the military's law making body, the Supreme Military Council. A total of 19 army officers and civilians compose the Supreme Military Council. These are the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the Chiefs of Army, Naval, and Air staff, the Inspector-General of Police, the Attorney General, and several other army and civilians ministers.<sup>116</sup> Compared to civilian legislatures, which are usually composed by several hundred legislators, the Supreme Military Council is a relatively small law making body. As a consequence, the cost of legislating is heavily reduced by military regimes, since the sheer number of law makers is far fewer compared to the number of law makers under civilian governments.

Although estimates vary, according to a progress report by the new military government in 1966, savings from the simple removal of parliamentarians, ministers, corporation chairmen, and various



other officials associated with representative democracy, could amount to about 5 million dollars at 1966 value.<sup>117</sup>

Furthermore, although the Supreme Military Council is not an elected body, it's membership reflects the regional and ethnic diversity of the nation. Hence, to an extent, the Supreme Military Council is regionally representative. Decisions in the Supreme Military Council are reached by the democratic process of simple majority vote. Hence, the Supreme Military Council is generally regarded as a quasi-democratic body. Decisions by simple majority vote guard against absolute dictatorial behavior by any one single army officer, including the Head of State.

Claude Welch suggests that the Nigerian military's active role in promoting social and economic change in the country is compatible with the interests of the country's relatively more politicized middle class, and that the growing political maturation of especially the urban middle class, and the social mobilization of the lower class will gradually cause Nigeria's military to shift from their present role of reformer toward some form of guardianship.<sup>118</sup> This will result in a less active role of the military in Nigeria's political environment.

## Criticisms

In spite of the potential role that the military could play in the political modernization of transitional societies, critics of the military have cited various limitations of the military in the modernization process.<sup>119</sup> In the case of Nigeria, critics argue that Nigeria's reformist military regimes tend to be interested in economic growth primarily as a means of modernizing and expanding the military establishment, and that social reform measures that do not directly promote economic growth and industrialization are unwelcome.<sup>120</sup>

Samuel Decalo argues that the army's lack of ideology and developmental strategies is dysfunctional to the constructive development of transitional societies. According to Decalo, once in power, an internal settling of accounts within the army results in increased military budgets, and that immediate promotions for the major participants in the coup has been a constant universal practice by military officers.<sup>121</sup>

Although in some cases of military intervention military budgets have increased following the coup, it is important to understand that such increases may not necessary have been significant enough to offset the many benefits that are likely to ensue from the military involvement in the process of development of these societies. In Nigeria, for example, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency reported that between 1966 - the time of the first military intervention, and 1968, military expenditure as a

percent of Gross National Product first rose from 1.2% in 1966 to 1.7% in 1967, and then actually dropped to 1.5% in 1968.<sup>122</sup>

Other critics of the military charge that military rule neither brings economic development nor social change. Ruth First argues that corruption among the army ranks is no less than civilian corruption, and that the interests of the officers lie in the retaining or increasing of the military's share of the budget. First further asserts that the army is interested in steadying the state when it shakes under stress because the army itself has such a high stake in the budget and the economy.<sup>123</sup>

#### Successes

In spite of all the arguments against military rule, military governments have historically had some success in disengaging modernizing nations from the tenets of traditionalism, and have set them on the path to modernity. A striking example was in Turkey where Ataturk's military authoritarianism was highly instrumental in moving Turkey from a tradition-bound society, to a point in political development where representative democracy essentially became feasible in Turkey's process of political modernization.<sup>124</sup> For 35 years following the birth of the Turkish Republic, an uninterrupted civilian supremacy was maintained despite the

important role which the military played in founding that republic.<sup>125</sup> An important reason for this democratic stability was Ataturk's success in establishing and maintaining a clear division between military and civilian leadership once the republic had been found. Military officers who took up posts of political authority were obliged to resign their commission, and military men who chose to remain in uniform were barred from partisan politics.<sup>126</sup>

Although in May, 1960, the Turkish army overthrew the elected government of Premier Menderes, and ended the 35-year uninterrupted democratic stability in Turkey, the point being made here is that Ataturk's military authoritarianism was highly instrumental in disengaging Turkey from traditionalism, and his subsequent military policies ensured democratic stability for a considerable period of time.

## Summary and Conclusion

The importance of political modernization to the overall development of newly emerging countries can hardly be overemphasized. The realization of democratic ways, and the practice of representative democracy enables newly emergent countries to provide regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials of a nation. Regular free and fair elections serve as a social means of resolution of the problem of societal decision-making among conflicting interest groups by ensuring that the governed can influence governmental decisions through their ability to choose among alternative contenders for public office.

Democratic institutions and practices cannot be expected to emerge spontaneously following the passing of colonialism, and the achievement of independence by these newly emerging nations. Following independence, majority of newly emerging countries have no doctrines nor strategies for action, no criteria of priorities or sense of appropriate programs to guide them in their struggle towards the realization of politically modernized states.

In Nigeria, following independence in October, 1960, without clear notions as to the stages that must be passed through in order to realize effective democratic ways, the instant introduction of democracy and representative government proved to be a huge failure. Two republics, in 1960 and 1979, respectively, were beset by corruption, ineptitude, self-aggrandizement, regionalism,

tribalism, electoral fraud and malpractices, embezzlement, and general financial mismanagement. All these were attributable to lack of adequate basic preparation necessary before the introduction of democracy.

The survival and stability of democracy could be enhanced by the effectuation of various basic developments in society. Basic socio-cultural development in the form of rigorous education will broaden people's outlook, enable them understand various norms of social responsibility, and help restrain them from adhering to extremist political philosophies. Education will also improve people's capacity to make rational political choices. General evidence shows that the more educated nations of the world also have the most stable democracies.

Basic political development entails a dramatic shift from traditional sources of authority to modern secular sources of authority, and the centralization of authority in the state. Basic political development also entails the creation of a politically organized state made up of numerous political institutions capable of attracting widespread participation in politics, which would enhance the survivability of democracy when introduced.

Basic economic development in the form of industrialization, urbanization, and the creation of wealth, could support the survival of democracy. Industrial technology would enable modernizing societies to produce the necessary forms of mass media such as newspapers, radios, and televisions, etc., on a scale large enough to match the widespread political, economic, and social

activities that accompany the introduction of democracy.

Industrialization would also, in turn, help enhance the creation of wealth - an ingredient that would enable modernizing nations afford the relatively high cost of maintaining democracy and democratic institutions. Urbanization would help produce the source of skills and resources that are necessary to maintain modern industrial economies.

Since the introduction of democracy immediately following independence has proven to be a non-feasible first step toward the modernization of newly emergent countries, the question then arises as to what form of government would be feasible at the early stages of modernization. In light of historical evidence, the military would be an effective modernizing force in transitional societies at the early stages of modernization. Military authoritarianism has been effective in disengaging transitional societies from the tenets of traditionalism. The basic technical training usually received by military men could also be useful in the process of economic modernization of transitional societies, and certain specialized army departments, such as chemical and biological warfare departments possess technological capabilities which may be useful in the process of industrial development in modernizing societies.

Various critics of the military charge that military governments are no less corrupt than civilian governments, and that the lack of ideology by the military, coupled with the military's preoccupation with economic development primarily aimed at

protecting the military's corporate interests, have the potential of stifling developmental efforts in modernizing countries.

The critics of military governments apparently ignore the fact that there are advantages and disadvantages associated with various forms of government at various stages of the modernization process in transitional societies. In this writer's opinion, the benefits that transitional societies stand to gain from military rule outweighs the shortcomings that may result. Besides, the period of military government is suggested only for the period of maturation of transitional societies which was earlier discussed.

In spite of all these criticisms, military rule has been beneficial to many transitional societies. As opposed to the past, realistic standards of judgement are now being employed in many quarters in evaluating the potential role of the military in the process of modernization of newly emergent states. In the United States, for example, one of the most important reasons for a tendency in some quarters to regard certain types of military rule as favorable to American policy interests is the fact that army rule proposes firmer policies against communism and communist insurgencies in newly independent nations. Newly independent nations are more vulnerable to communist influence and various other extremist political philosophies, especially at the early stages of transition to modernity.



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