

same. The Northern People's Congress (NPC), in coalition with the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), forms the Federal Government.

Nigeria's Federal system gives considerable power to the regional government; the Federal Government is responsible for certain defined subjects, with the regional governments empowered with all others except those on a concurrent list upon which both Federal and regional legislation are permissible. In the event of inconsistencies between Federal and regional legislation, Federal law prevails.

The Federal Parliament is composed of a House of Representatives and a Senate. The House of Representatives consists of 312 elected members—174 elected from the northern region, 73 from the eastern region, 62 from the western region (including the newly established midwestern region), and 3 from Lagos. All are directly elected by universal adult suffrage, except in the northern region where women do not have the vote. Each member represents a constituency of about 100,000.

The Senate now is made up of 112 members chosen from each of the regions, nominated by their regional governments subject to the vote of a majority of their respective legislatures, 4 members from Lagos, and 4 special members named by the President; but composition of the Senate is likely to be changed following establishment of the midwestern region government.

The courts of Nigeria are independent of the other branches of government and range from the native authorities courts to the Federal Supreme Court. Ultimate appeal is to the Privy Council. Throughout most of the northern region and in certain other areas the lowest court is called a native authorities court or customary court. Its findings are based primarily upon native custom rather than the English common law, which is the basic legal system in Nigeria.

Despite the political rivalry generated by the fact that the Federation of Nigeria is composed of several distinct regions, the country demonstrates considerable national unity. No one region is overwhelmingly richer or better endowed than another, and north and south have, to a degree, common economic interests. Most important is the development of a national feeling and the statesmanship of Nigeria's political leaders.¹

HISTORY

The early history of European exploration and trade in the region now called Nigeria parallels that of other colonies on the coast of west Africa. Following the Napoleonic wars the British expanded their legitimate trade with the interior of Nigeria. In 1885 British claims to a sphere of influence in Nigeria received international recognition at the conference in Berlin, and in the following year the Royal Niger Company was chartered. The charter was revoked in 1899, and in 1900 the company's territory came under Government control. It was the Government's efforts to suppress the slave trade as well as the furtherance of commercial interests that consolidated the British position in Nigeria. In 1914 the colony and protectorate of Nigeria was formally inaugurated. The first and most famous Governor of a united Nigeria was Sir Frederick Lugard, who guided the country through the World War I period.

In 1922 the first elected African legislators were included in a council for the colony (Lagos) and southern part of the protectorate. In 1943 three Africans were appointed to the Executive Council. Following World War II successive evolutionary constitutions legislated by the British Government established Nigerian self-government on a representative, federal basis. Under the constitution, each of the federation's regions retains a substantial measure of internal self-government; the powers of the Federal Government are in the fields of defense and security, foreign relations, and commercial and fiscal policy.

The primary political problems facing Nigeria currently arise from the fact of the country's movement from colonial status to independence. Such a transition is fraught with difficulties for any area; in Nigeria the situation is complicated

¹ A military coup was staged Jan. 15-16, 1966. Constitution abrogated; Federal and regional legislatures suspended; offices of President and Ministers abolished. Supreme Military Council and Federal Executive Council rule through military governors in each region (renamed zones). Civil service operating under permanent secretaries.