

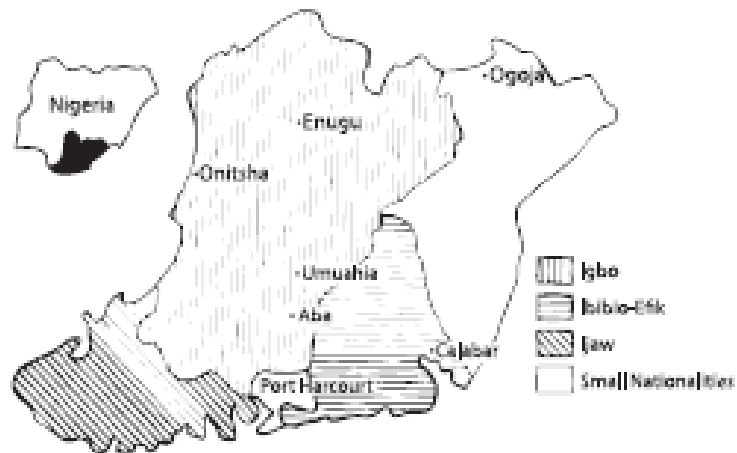
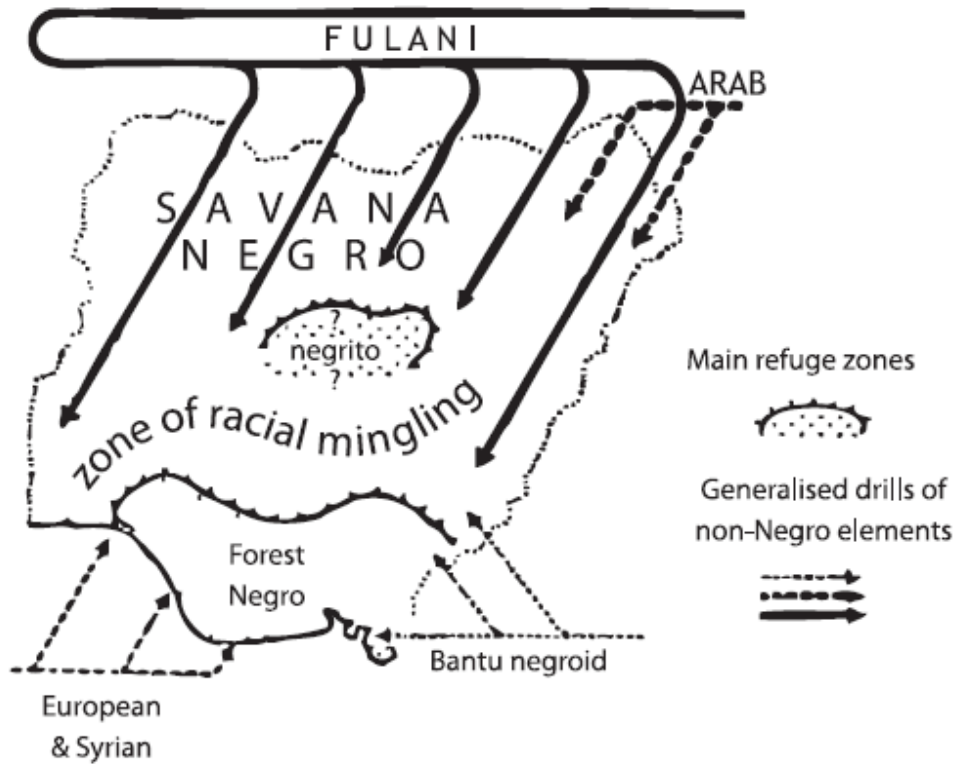
The Roots of Political Instability in Nigeria

By E. C. Ejiogu, PhD

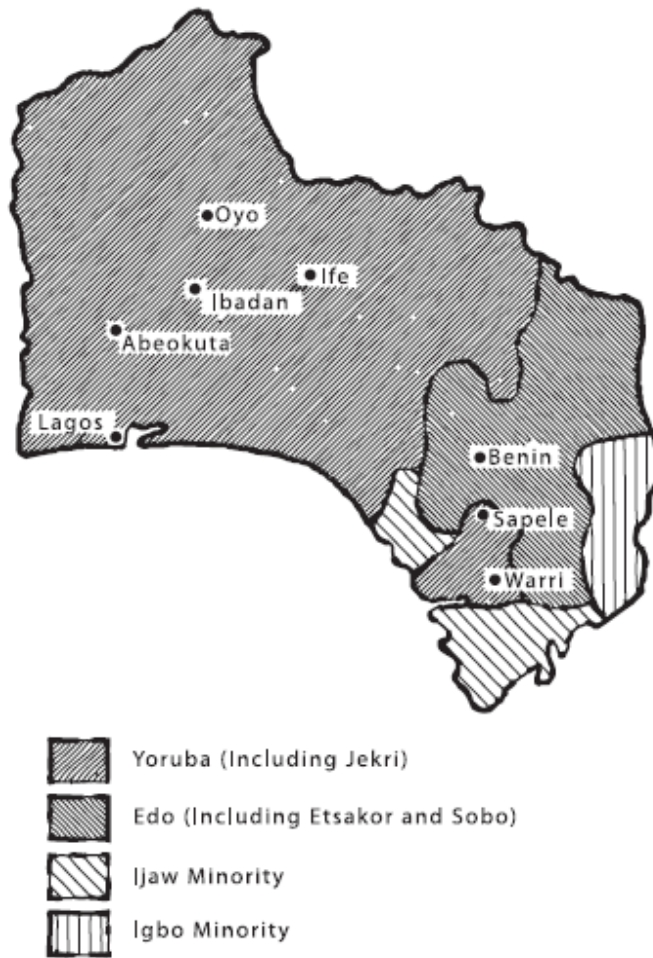
Good afternoon to you all. I must thank all the HSRC personnel, especially Dr. Kwandi Kondlo, and his staff in the D & G programme, and of course the HSRC itself for hosting this event. *The Roots of Political Instability in Nigeria*, which is also the title of my book slated for release in July 2010 by Ashgate Publishing, is an in-depth account of why the supra-national state that British colonialism built to encompass parts of West Africa's Niger basin and the distinct nationalities that inhabit them continues to experience political instability and abysmally low governmental performance.

The nationalities that inhabit the parts of the Niger basin that became Nigeria do so in a non-co-terminus manner. That fact is evident in *Maps 1-5*. Of all the nationalities, the Igbo who inhabit the lower southeast, the Yoruba who inhabit the lower southwest, and the Hausa-Fulani who inhabit parts of the upper Niger basin, are more populous than the others. Much of the discourse in the book revolves around these three more populous nationalities for reasons that derive from their big population size in respective terms. One must quickly add that the big share of Nigeria's population that the aforementioned three nationalities claim since the 1951-2 national census does not at all detract from the political and economic relevance of the other nationalities that constitute Nigeria. The other quick footnote is that none of the nationalities was displaced from its *homeland* by colonialism.

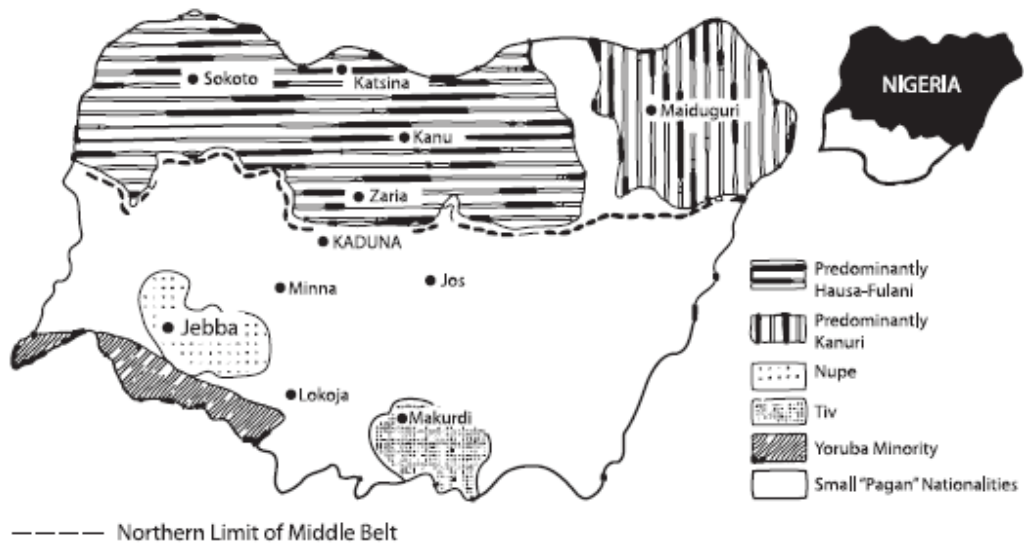
Map1: The role of geography in the racial make-up of inhabitants of the Niger basin. Note the role of the rain forest and the broken terrain of the Middle Belt as refuges for the forest Negro and Negrito groups respectively.



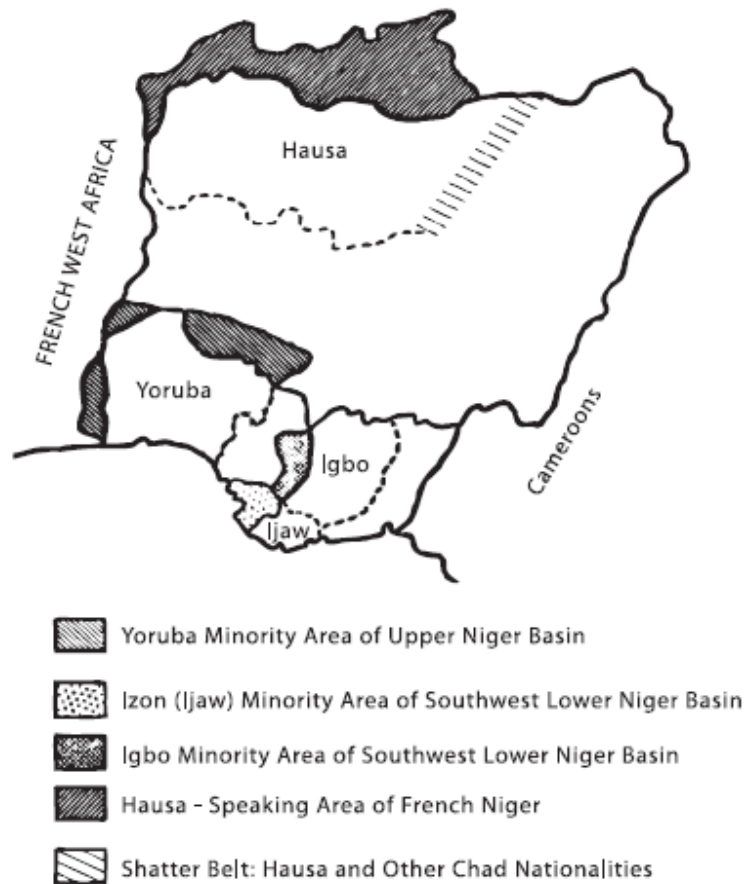
Map2: Showing the Igbo and some of the other nationalities that inhabit southeast lower Niger basin. Source: Coleman (1958: 29).



Map3: Showing the Yoruba and some of the nationalities that inhabit southwest lower Niger basin. Source: Coleman (1958: 26).



Map4: Showing the upper Niger basin and the nationalities that inhabit it. Source: Coleman (1958: 19).



Map 5: Showing the trans-regionalism that resulted from European intervention in the Niger basin. Source: Coleman (1958: 17).

Inherent in the distinctiveness that characterizes Nigeria's nationalities are certain internal socio-cultural variations that impacted their political development before colonial conquest, during colonial rule, and ever since the end of *de facto* colonial rule. Of course, their internal variations impact and continue to impact political development in Nigeria, the supra-national state that colonialism built them into.

The logical sequel to the mention of the distinctiveness and internal variations that characterize the nationalities is to mention that I employed **congruence theory**, a theoretical framework propounded by Harry Eckstein for political inquiry, for the first time here, a non-European case to illuminate those internal variations in the nationalities and their impact on politics in and amongst them. My findings have tremendous policy implications in Africa where external state building left several Nigeria-type states.

Briefly put, **congruence theory** posits that political (in)stability in a polity is a function of the degree to which the authority patterns of its governmental and segmental units are *congruent* with one another and *consonant* within themselves. *Figure 1* captures the congruence theory diagrammatically in its brief essence.

By definition "an authority pattern is a set of asymmetric relations among hierarchically ordered members of a social unit that involves the direction of the

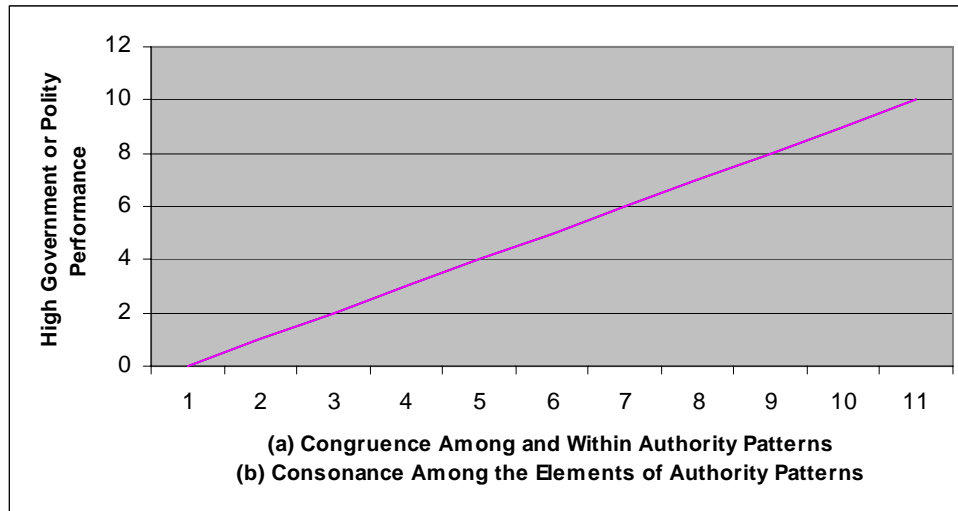


Figure 1: The graph/index of congruence and consonance between and amongst authority patterns in social units. Note: The ideas here are derived from Eckstein (1969).

unit” (Eckstein 1973: 1153). The mention of a ‘social unit’ in this definition calls the following three complimentary issues about the definition to mind. (i) A ‘social unit’ itself depicts a group of “individuals that may be regarded as collective individuals” (Eckstein 1973: 1153) who exist as members and “are perceived as ranked in levels of superiority and inferiority” (Eckstein 1973: 1153) as a result of their ‘hierarchically ordered’ positions. (ii) There is ‘*direction*’ in social units. (iii) “The *direction* of a social unit involves the definition of its goals, the regulation of conduct of its members, and the allocation and coordination of roles within it” (Eckstein 1973: 1154).

The gem of Eckstein’s **congruence theory** is the theoretical framework that Eckstein jointly derived therefrom with Ted R. Gurr, which I called the Eckstein-Gurr Scheme or E-G Scheme for short. As a tool, the E-G Scheme can be used to disaggregate authority patterns in any social unit in terms of their six component elements—(a) ‘influence relations among super-ordinates and subordinates’ in a society, (b) ‘inequalities among’ super-ordinates and subordinates in society, (c) certain “static” aspects of structures of super-ordination (their conformation, or

Influence Relations Dimensions	Values	Aspects/Components	Indices/Indicators
Directiveness (General)	1. Regimented (+) 2. Mid Point 3. Permissive (0)	1. Coverage: (i) Comprehensive (ii) Restricted 2. Latitude: (i) Specific (ii) General 3. Supervision: (i) Close (ii) Loose 4. Sanction Threshold: (i) Severe (ii) Lenient	Laws, Policies, Customs, Traditions, etc.
Participation	1. Participant (+) 2. Non-participant (0)	Channels + Use (i) Open [facilitated](+) (i) Voluminous(+) (ii) Closed (0) (iii) frequency [impeded] formally (iv) intensity provided, (v) strenuousness normatively of modes, variety of modes tolerated, unsanctioned, feasible.	Group actions, direct personal actions, indirect personal actions.
Responsiveness (Overall)	1. Autocracy(+) 2. Mid Point 3. Alterocracy	1. Definition of problems and issues 2. Deliberation 3. Resolution 4. Implementation 5. Sanctioning 6. Feed back	Representative institutions, possibility of over-ruling the leadership, possible removal of the leadership
Compliance (Dispositions)	1. Submissiveness (+) 2. Allegiance 3. Indifference (0) 4. Opposition 5. Insubordination	Determinants of compliance behavior: (a) General legitimacy perceptions—can dispose people to comply (b) Specific cost calculations (i) General illegitimacy perceptions (ii) specific cost calculations—can dispose people to defy	Creative acts of participation such as revolts, riots, resistance, etc.

Figure 2: Tabular representation of the E-G scheme showing the four dimensions of influence relations, their respective components and their applicable indices/indicators.

“anatomy”) in society, (d) ‘certain’ “dynamic” aspects of such structures (their processes, or “physiology”) in society, (e) ‘the manner in which members of society are recruited into super-ordinated positions’, (f) ‘and the bases of legitimacy perceptions’ in a social unit amongst members.

The E-G scheme posits that authority relations involve ‘super-ordinate’ actors or *Super-actors* and their ‘subordinate’ counterparts or *sub-actors*. In social units, the association of individuals who belong to these two categories of actors conote ‘*direction*’, i.e. “people who direct and are directed, and their interactions” (Eckstein and Gurr 1975: 53). The interactions that take place between *Super-actors* and *sub-actors* have components or ‘dimensions’ to them. The aggregate totals of those ‘dimensions’ of the interactions that take place between these two categories of actors in any social unit is four. All four components “involve flows of “influence” among [the individuals in the two categories, as well as]: attempts to affect behavior and actual effects of the attempts” (Eckstein and Gurr 1975: 53) in social units. Those four “dimensions of influence [are:] *Directiveness, Participation, Responsiveness, and Compliance*” (Eckstein and Gurr 1975: 53).

Briefly defined, *Directiveness* is “the extent to which leaders attempt to influence the behavior of members of social units by means of directives” (Eckstein and Gurr 1975: 53). In society, *Directiveness* would encompass formal laws, policies, informal customs, traditions, mores, norms, etc. that are used to regulate the conducts and affairs of people, groups, and organizations. In autocratic political systems, the *coverage of Directiveness* is *comprehensive*, but *restricted* in the converse. Its *latitude* is *specific* in autocracies, but *general* (leaves room for discretion to members of society) under democratic systems. In autocracies, the *supervision of Directiveness* is *close*, but *loose* in democracies. The *sanction threshold of Directiveness* is *severe* in autocracies, but *lenient* (calibrated) in democracies.

Participation indicates that interactions between leaders and members of society do not simply amount to one-way street relationships in which all non-leader members are mere passive actors who simply receive and follow directions. In most if not all real world social units, there are bound to be some sub-actors who may be passive followers of directions, and there may also be some who may “generally attempt to influence the directive activities of superiors” (Eckstein and Gurr 1975: 60). In democratic systems, there are *channels of Participation*, that are *open, facilitated* and people utilize them *intensely* and *voluminously* through group actions, direct and indirect personal actions, etc. to influence their leaders in the direction of their affairs. In autocratic systems even when *channels of Participation* exist, they are *impeded*, and people expose themselves to enormous risks to create their own *channels* somehow, and embark on creative acts of participation that usually subvert the system.

Responsiveness is the logical consequence of *Participation*. It is indicated by representative institutions, possibilities of recall and over-ruling leaders, etc. Participant members of society seek to influence the way their leaders direct their affairs; and responsive leaders are disposed to be influenced by them and seek out “inputs” from them.

If all things were to be equal, the logical flip side of “the directive leadership is the complaint followers” (Eckstein and Gurr 1975: 71). But then, nobody should assume that every subordinate actor will simply go out of his or her way to comply with whatever directives that emanate from the super-ordinates without cost-benefit calculations. Depending on how the other three dimensions configure in

society, when it comes to the *Compliance* dimension, people can be *submissive*, *insubordinate*, or *indifferent* to directives as the case may be. They can also show *allegiance* or stand up in *opposition*.

Analysis of Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani authority patterns, and the authority patterns of the Nigerian supra-national state benefited from a detailed examination of 'influence relations among super-ordinates and subordinates' and 'the bases of legitimacy perceptions' by subordinate individuals in each case and its component units.

I found that with the exception of the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo, Yoruba, and almost all the other nationalities that inhabit the Niger basin had evolved deeply democratic authority patterns across time before colonial conquest. This finding is even true about the Hausa before the rise of the Habe kings amongst them in the mid-fifteenth century. In fact, the *jihad* of 1803-1904 that brought the Fulani to power in Hausaland was preceded by the despotic system of rule that the Habe kings had already enthroned in Hausaland. The Fulani made a simple but calculated move to adopt the Habe ruling classes who they ousted from power together with their despotic authority patterns and proceeded to enhance them in the autocratic system of rule they established to run the Caliphate Empire that they built in the wake of their *jihad*. By fusing culturally and politically with the Hausa after they conquered them, the Fulani established a precedence that I'm yet to find elsewhere whereby conquerors made the conscious decision to adopt the language and culture of those they conquered and became one nationality known in this case as the Hausa-Fulani. Devoid of all the democratic traits that characterize the authority

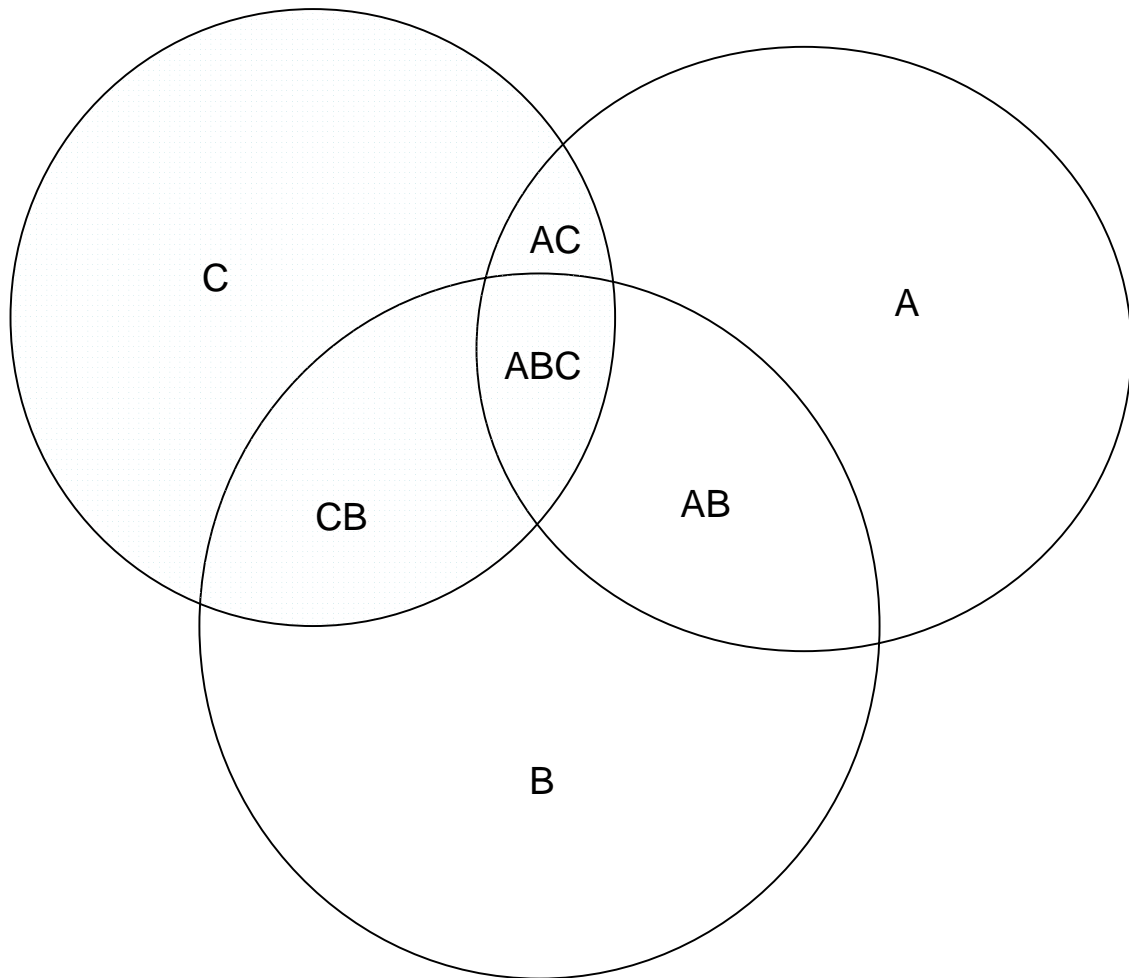
patterns evolved by the other nationalities that inhabit the Niger basin, society in post *jihad* Hausaland and the rest of the areas that came under the sway of the Fulani-dominated Sokoto Caliphate Empire functioned on the basis of an entrenched patron-client system in which *submissiveness* was the norm. Of course *indifference*, *opposition*, and *insubordination* did prevail therein too.

When the British government resolved to colonize the Niger basin and its inhabitants, Frederick Lugard who it assigned to spear-head the conquest and imposition of classical colonial rule in the upper Niger was quick to notice the autocratic characteristics of the Hausa-Fulani authority patterns right after he routed their forces on the plains of the city of Sokoto in 1904. As the first High Commissioner of the Protectorate Government of Northern Nigeria, he adopted the Hausa-Fulani rulers as allies and co-opted their autocratic authority patterns into the equally autocratic regime that he cultivated in the Protectorate.

Meanwhile, his counterparts who were assigned to accomplish similar task in the lower Niger wasted no time to dismantle Crown colony rule in the Yoruba kingdom of Lagos where returnee ex-slaves, their descendants, and indigenes who emulated them and embraced western education, culture and new commerce, formed a vital bridgehead for the projection of British authority in a manner that proved *consonant* and *congruent* with Yoruba authority patterns.

My research reveals that the four main policies that the British used to build the Nigerian supra-national state were formulated and implemented to preserve and extend Hausa-Fulani authority patterns to the rest of the nationalities. They are the Indirect Rule policy, colonial education policy, the policy that guided the

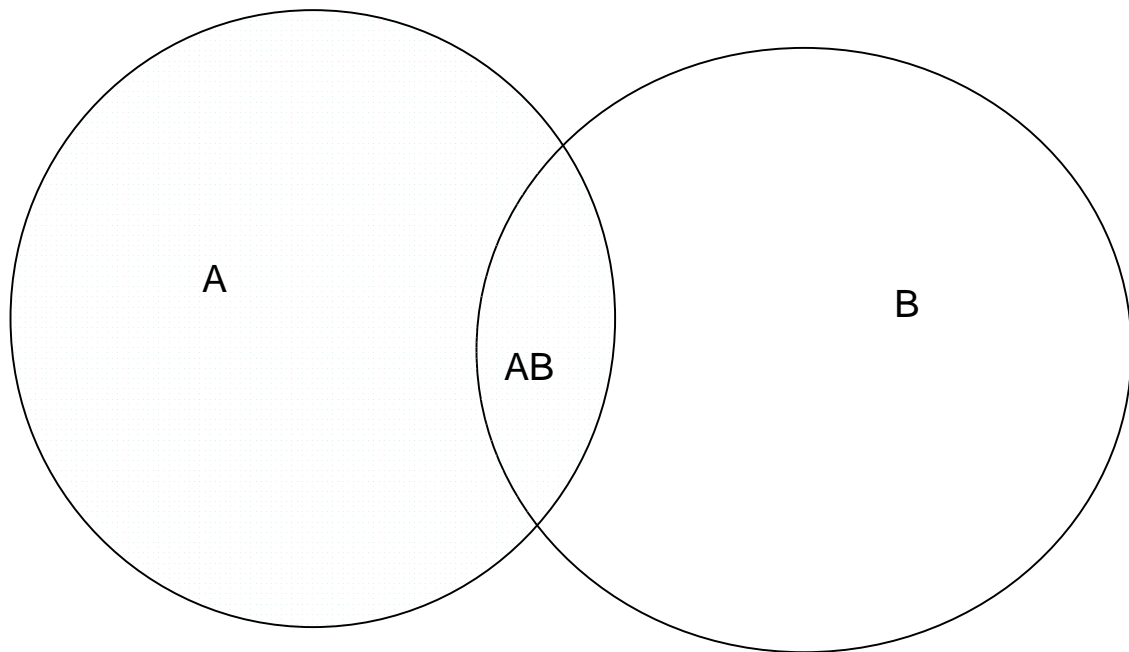
recruitment of indigenous men into the military, and the Amalgamation policy of 1914.



Key

1. A = African
2. B = Islamic
3. C = European
4. AB = Islamic-African
5. AC = Euro-African
6. BC = Euro-Islamic
7. ABC = Euro-Islamic-African

Figure 3: Overlap of civilizations culminating in the worldview cultivated in the products of western education in Hausaland. Source: John Paden (1986: 7).



Key

- 1. A = African
- 2. B = European
- 3. AB = Euro-African

Figure 4: Overlap of civilizations culminating in the worldview cultivated in products of western education in the lower Niger. Source: Adapted from Paden (1986)

In the north, Indirect Rule recognized and enhanced the Hausa-Fulani rulers and the institutions and structures of their rule. It subverted indigenous patterns of rule in the south by creating institutions and structures that mirrored what obtained in the Caliphate and appointed individuals arbitrarily to man them. Of course there was immediate and sustained widespread resistance to all of that in southern nationalities. Christian missionary agencies that were the harbingers of colonial education were kept out of the Caliphate on the grounds that they would pollute the conservative Islamic culture which provided ideological support therein for autocratic rule by the Fulani. Instead, colonial administrators took direct charge

and restricted access to western education by the generality of the people on the one hand, but ensured on the other hand that the sons of the ruling classes received exclusive British-style public school education.

In the south where society is structured and normatively operates democratically, although the missionary agencies took free reign to undermine indigenous cultures, individuals and groups were free to and did embrace western education with enthusiasm. The Amalgamation of 1914 was the wrench that disposed all the nationalities to the same autocratic rule on the aegis of the supra-national state.

Recruitment into the rank and file of the army was consciously determined to favor the so-called martial tribes of the hinterland in the upper Niger. Official policy by the War Office in London institutionalized exclusive recruitment of Hausa speakers into the rank and file and the adoption of Hausa language as the official language of the army. The underlying motive of course was to produce a military whose personnel lacked affinity with lower Niger nationalities and of course residents of the colonially-created urban centers, who were deemed troublesome because of their anti-colonial tendencies from the earliest stages of classical colonial rule. It is interesting to mention that most of those urban centres were in the lower Niger. In the upper Niger residential patterns in the urban centres were officially segregated into the so-called *sabon-garis* (strangers' quarters) to keep civil servants, traders, clerks, etc. from troublesome lower Niger nationalities apart from upper Niger indigenes. Such a military when deployed to quell anti-colonial uprisings would and did so ruthlessly. The resultant army was composed

predominantly of illiterates and Hausa speakers in the rank and file, and commanded by British officers and NCOs.

One analyst observed that the 'preference by the British for a culture and the recruitment of speakers of a language that discouraged literacy in Western technology and education into the army produced a legacy of an educational and technological vacuum' that helped to spawn serious political consequences in the polity after colonialism. From that legacy came a social cleavage in the army, which deepened with the outbreak of World War II when the need for skilled personnel gave rise to the recruitment of Igbo and men from other southern nationalities with the requisite Western education qualifications and skills as tradesmen, drivers, mechanics, clerks, and so on into the rank and file. Within a few years after the end of WW II, the army was transformed from an exclusive force of northern Hausa-speaking and illiterate "pagan tribesmen" commanded by British officers and NCOs into one that was composed of artillery units and infantry battalions. In 1949, the only three indigenous men in the officer corps were from southern nationalities, 80% of the rank and file were illiterate Hausa-speakers from the north, and the rest were literate and skilled tradesmen who were mostly either Igbo or from other lower Niger nationalities.

The paradox here is that, while this cleavage in the army continued to serve Britain's imperial cause quite well even up until the end of colonial rule, it helped open Nigeria up for continuing political instability.

This social cleavage evolved further under Hausa-Fulani political control sequel to British entrustment of power to them. On the eve of political

independence when the departure of British officers and NCOs opened up the officer corps to indigenous men with western education, I found that each nationality's response was a function of its authority patterns, and the implications of the outcome on political instability in Nigeria is rather grave to say the least.

Amongst the Igbo, Yoruba, and the other nationalities whose democratic authority patterns don't hinder equal opportunity participation in all realms of life, enlistment into the officer corps was the personal choice of young school leavers who enlisted. Their personal narratives and published accounts indicate that their decision to enlist derived from their personal zeal and convictions as free-thinking citizens. On the other hand, their counterparts from the north where patron-client cleavage is the hallmark of the practice of authority in society responded to the elaborate campaign mounted by prominent Hausa-Fulani politicians and leaders, including Ahamadu Bello, the Sarkauna of Sokoto himself. Events showed that those of them who enlisted regarded themselves as members of cohorts whose allegiance was primarily skewed towards their civilian patrons and senior colleagues from the north.

The Balance Sheet

My findings give me cause to subscribe to Eckstein's assertion with regard to relevance of congruent and consonant authority patterns to political stability and high governmental performance that: "Men are able effectively to perform political roles if their previously learned norms and behavior substantially prepare them for such roles and if the norms and practices demanded by their concurrent social roles

do not create strains or painful ambivalences and contradictions with their political ones". The attitude and disposition that political actors show in the practice of authority is a reflection of the type of authority patterns that obtain in the society that constitute the cradle of their socialization.

From my research, I can assert that more often than not, supra-national states experience a lot of political instability because of the clash of authority patterns that derive from the diverse entities that are held together to constitute them by the threat or actual use of violence. I discerned that there was a high degree of political instability even in the Caliphate Empire that Usman dan Fodio and his Fulani kinsmen built which incorporated Hausaland and beyond. In fact, the Caliphate Empire experienced high political performance only in mostly its core Fulani areas. I didn't find any shift from that pattern even during colonial rule in Nigeria from the Protectorate era until the Amalgamation and after.

I didn't make a similar finding amongst the Igbo, or the Yoruba. Apart from the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba is only other group in the Niger basin that evolved large political organizations. Igbo polities were village-based. The Old Oyo Empire which encompassed mostly Yoruba polities that shared similar authority patterns was largely stable. In deed, Old Oyo only began to experience the instability that led to its ultimate disintegration beginning from the late nineteenth century when an *Alààfin* made power grabs that undermined his legitimacy and set off a serious power situation because they violated the democratic tenets of Yoruba authority patterns.

The stiff and sustained resistance beyond the wars of conquest against the British that I found in the other nationalities was absent in the core Caliphate where there was match in authority patterns between colonialism and Hausa-Fulani rule. Sequel to colonial conquest in the entire Niger basin, armed revolts, riots, strikes, etc. by almost all the nationalities except of course the Hausa-Fulani, were frequent and regular up until the late 1950s. The Igbo who strongly refused to succumb to colonial conquest paid dearly for what was called their truculence. As late as 1894, the Protectorate Government of southern Nigeria adopted a policy to mount punitive expeditions against recalcitrant Igbo communities every dry season to break their resistance. The policy lasted into the 1930s.

My research indicates that political instability in Nigeria is not a post-colonial affair as orthodox studies claim. In fact, it shows that political instability in Nigeria entered another phase when colonial rule ended in 1960. British delivery of political power to the Hausa-Fulani through the rigged 1951-2 census and the 1959 elections didn't help matters. Instead, they provoked the January 15, 1966 military coup which many still label an Igbo coup simply because of the preponderance of Igbo officers in the parade of plotters.

My research doesn't that label. The antecedents and utterances of the coup-makers at the time and thereafter don't indicate that their intention was to switch Hausa-Fulani hegemony with Igbo hegemony. In fact, I found that given the configuration and dynamics of Nigerian politics, and of course the composition of the army and its officer corps at the time, the composition of the plotters in terms of nationality couldn't have been otherwise. The ranks of major, captain, lieutenants,

and second lieutenants that furnished the main plotters and their assistants were dominated by Igbo. The number of Yoruba in these ranks who were involved tallies statistically with their share in the plotters and assistants. As a matter of fact, the total number of Yoruba in the army at independence in 1960 was a mere 700. In a situation where northerners in these ranks owed their enlistment in the army to the same political leaders who were viewed as running the state badly, it would be unrealistic to expect them to share the extensive disaffection in the country against the central government which was dominated by the Northern People's Congress, NPC, that prompted the coup. If the British were still ruling and everything in the country and the army remained the same, my speculation from my research is that the coup may still have taken place.

The July 1966 counter 'coup' was quite different. In deed, its protagonists conceived it primarily as a revolt to avenge the deaths of their benefactors who died in January and to excise the north from the rest of Nigeria. Pressure from elsewhere and circumstances later prevailed on them to change their original motive and change it into a coup.

The demographic information gleaned from the executions that followed the abortive coups of 1976 and 1986 further underscore issues raised in the book on the roots of political instability in Nigeria. Also, that information shows that the absence of Igbo involvement in both attempts indicates that they are yet to be integrated in the corps. Furthermore, it shows that the predominance of officers from non-Caliphate north in the parade of those who were implicated and executed for their involvement in both attempts underscore the myth of a monolithic north.

The Nigeria-Biafra war, the 1990 abortive coup attempt, the raging low intensity war in the Niger Delta give glaring credence to the main argument in the book, i.e. that the clash of authority patterns in Nigeria and amongst its constituent nationalities continues to spawn political instability in the polity.

Conclusion

One cannot make a credible claim that everything has remained the same in and amongst the nationalities. A lot has changed in the nationalities, but what changed is not good enough to resolve uncompleted state building amongst them. For one, since the 1970s, significant proportions of members of the elite classes from amongst the Igbo, Yoruba and the other nationalities have been subscribing to the sort of patron-client practices that characterize influence relations amongst the Hausa-Fulani. Call that opportunism on their part, but they believe that it is a convenient way to curry favor from the nationality that continues to control state power in Nigeria. They feather their personal nests by so-doing, although they fail to carry their respective nationalities along, and Nigeria continues to limp along, corrupt and politically unstable. The only viable solution to political instability in Nigeria will come through the resolution of the question of uncompleted state building amongst the nationalities that constitute it. That way, their respective authority patterns will be factored into a viable federal arrangement which will allow each one irrespective of its population size the autonomy to direct certain aspects of their affairs without let or hinderance.

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