



# HISTORY OF STATE CREATION IN NIGERIA



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Long before the creation of the entity called Nigeria, the territory consisted of numerous politically autonomous societies - chiefdoms, kingdoms, feudal aristocracies, and acephalous states-that existed independently and had established their own indigenous systems of administration. Examples include the Benin Empire, Kanem Bornu Empire, Sokoto Caliphate, and Oyo Empire. These Empires and Kingdoms had established contact with one another and with other peoples, through trading activities.

British trade expansion and consequent colonial rule brought with it the capturing of Lagos in 1851 and its annexation in 1861 via the Lagos Treaty of Cession, and establishment of the Oil River Protectorate in 1884. British influence, in terms of trade, mission and politics, increased gradually in the Niger area over the 19th century, but Britain did not effectively occupy the area until 1885. Other European powers acknowledged Britain's power over the area in the 1885 Berlin Conference. Late 19th century and early 20th century Lagos was also a centre for educated West African elites who were to play prominent roles in the development of Pan-Africanism as well as Nigerian nationalism.

## **AN INFORMAL FEDERATION**

By the end of the 19th century, Britain began an aggressive military expansion in the region. A protectorate was declared over northern Nigeria in 1900 and Nigeria became a British protectorate in 1901.

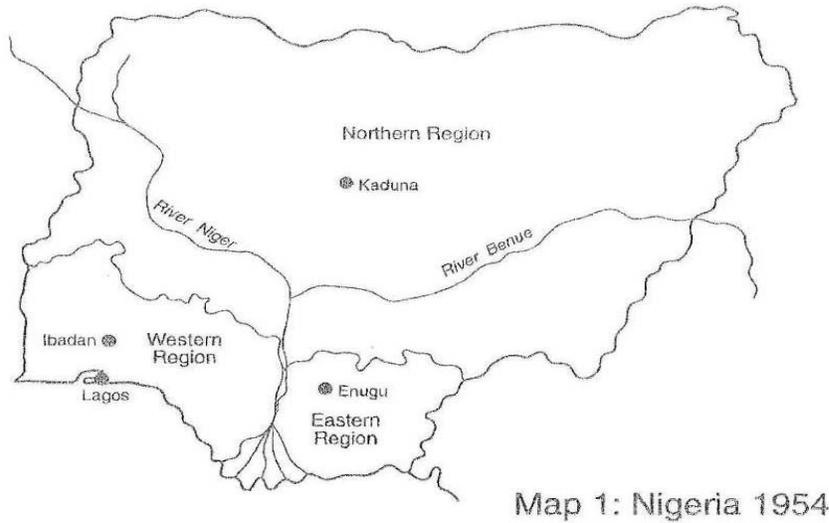
Despite the loss of sovereignty, the strong political and cultural traditions of these societies initially enabled many to accommodate nominal British rule with little change in their way of life. Before 1900, Northern Nigeria was administered by the Royal Niger Company. The colony and the Protectorate of Lagos including its Yoruba hinterland were under the British Colonial office. The whole of the Bights of Benin and Biafra including their hinterlands were under the Niger Coast Protectorate. By 1900 the three separate Protectorates were placed under the colonial office. They remained three separate Protectorates until 1906 when the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos and the Niger Coast Protectorate were amalgamated as the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. What was to become Nigeria was now administered as two separate Protectorates. In 1912, Sir, Fredrick Lugard was appointed the local head of the two units, an

appointment by which “the process of informal Federation was speeded up.” According to Professor Afigbo, (Cited in Nwodo, 2010), “throughout this period, the British saw Nigeria as a loose Federation of two different cultural and administrative worlds. On the cultural side, the south was, throughout the period, seen and characterized as pagan and barbarous. As a result it was subjected to the sustained propaganda of the agents of Western Christianity and Western Civilization. Within two decades or so, it was dotted all over with schools and churches. Politically and administratively, the South had notoriety for indiscipline and unmanageability.” It was subjected to the harsh realities of direct colonial rule. On the other hand, in the North, the colonizers ruled the people indirectly through their traditional rulers. In this way, the North was sheltered from the harsh realities of colonial rule and subjugation. The policy of indirect rule which was invented by Lord Lugard “made the masses respectful and subservient to their Chiefs and the Chief respectful and subservient to the colonial overlord. It spared the North the contentiousness, rowdiness and litigiousness of the South. It also made the North inward-looking and suspicious of the outsider especially if he came from the South (Nwodo, 2010).

The British dependencies of Northern and Southern Nigeria were merged into a single territory in 1914, and a legislative council, initially with limited African representation was created in 1922. Traditional native rulers, however, administered various territories under the supervision of the colonial authorities.

## **A FORMAL FEDERATION**

In 1947, a federal system of government was established under a new Nigerian constitution introduced by the United Kingdom. This system was based on three regions: **Eastern, Western** and **Northern**. The idea was to reconcile the regional and religious tensions as well as to accommodate the interest of diverse ethnic groups: mainly the Ibo (in the east), the Yoruba (in the west) and the Hausa and Fulani (in the north).



**Source:** [http://www.waado.org/cgi-bin/wilberforce\\_conference/map1.jpg](http://www.waado.org/cgi-bin/wilberforce_conference/map1.jpg)

The Richard's Constitution in 1946 and the subsequent Macpherson Constitution in 1951 consolidated the tripartite basis of national power and Nigerian Federalism. One effect of these developments was the "superimposition on the old duality, a new and no less dangerous trinity – the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba as the only ethnic nationalities worthy of consideration in the emerging Nigerian political scene. To the colonial administrators, a mention of the problem posed by the Hausa- Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo was usually believed to exhaust the problem of Nigerian Colonial administration. The other minor ethnic nationalities might as well not exist. As far as the British were concerned, it was largely the inter-relationship of these three major ethnic nationalities that constituted Nigerian politics.

The dichotomous division of Nigeria between the North and the South (culturally and administratively) gradually began to affect the mental orientation of the people as it engendered social contempt, prejudice and resentment between the north and the south. "The North looked down on the South as uncivilized, pagan, undisciplined, rowdy and nakedly materialistic. The South returned this contempt with compliments regarding the North as feudalistic, conservative, uneducated (in the Western sense and, therefore, illiterate) and as the pliant tools of the imperial master."

The division and social contempt which was engendered by the developing resentment and prejudice between the North and the South finally exploded into the open over Enahoro's motion

for self-government which was rejected by the North and supported by the South. The event ended up in the Kano riots of 1954 which was a bloody North-South confrontation. The North/South orientation once planted by the colonialists, has survived as a major factor in any balancing of power in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It has always been a factor in every electoral contest for Prime minister or for President of Nigeria.

The sixty years of Britain's colonial rule in Nigeria were characterized by frequent reclassifying of different regions for administrative purposes. They were symptomatic of the problem of uniting the country as a single state. The whole elaborate facade of constitution-making from 1946 to 1958 was an attempt to work out a stable Federal balance between the three regions or to put it more starkly, between the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo". (Nwodo, 2010).

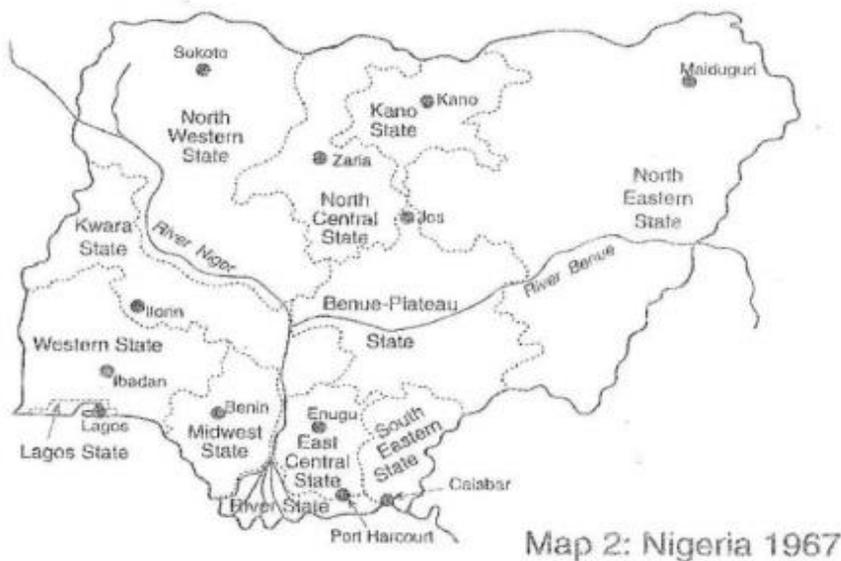
## **INDEPENDENT NIGERIA**

### **1960-1975**

However, the sixty years of colonial administration gave way to self-rule when Nigeria gained independence on October 1, 1960 as a federation of three regions (Northern, Western, and Eastern) under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary form of government. Under the constitution, each of the three regions retained a substantial measure of self-government. This was further solidified in October 1963, when Nigeria altered its relationship with the United Kingdom by proclaiming itself a Federal Republic. **Nnamdi Azikiwe**, the last Governor General, became the country's first President. A fourth region (the **Midwestern Region**) was established that year. From the outset, Nigeria's ethnic, regional, and religious tensions were magnified by the significant disparities in economic and educational development between the south and the north.

On **January 15, 1966**, a group of army officers, consisting mostly of the Ibo peoples, and led by **General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi**, overthrew the central and regional governments, killed the prime minister, took control of the government, and got rid of the federal system of government to replace it with a central government with many Igbos(Easterners) as advisors. This precipitated riots and many Ibos were killed in the process. In July of the same year, a group of northern army officers revolted against the government, killed General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, and appointed the army Chief of Staff, **General Yakubu Gowon** as the head of the new military

government. The subsequent massacre of thousands of Igbo in the north prompted hundreds of thousands of them to return to the southeast, where increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment emerged. In a move that gave greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups, the military divided the four regions into 12 states. However, the military governor of the Eastern Region (Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu) refused to accept the division of the Eastern Region, and declared the Eastern Region an independent republic called **Biafra**. This led to a civil war between Biafra and the remainder of Nigeria. The bitter and bloody war started in June 1967, and continued until Biafra surrendered on January 15, 1970 after over 1 million people had died.



[http://www.waado.org/cgi-bin/wilberforce\\_conference/map2.jpg](http://www.waado.org/cgi-bin/wilberforce_conference/map2.jpg)

S/No	STATES	DATE CREATED	PRECEEDING ENTITY
1.	North Eastern State	27 May, 1967	Northern Region
2.	North Western State	„	Northern Region
3.	Kano	„	Northern Region

4.	Kaduna,	„	Northern Region
5.	Kwara	„	Northern Region
6.	Benue-Plateau	„	Northern Region
7.	Lagos	„	Western Region
8.	Western State	„	Western Region
9.	Bendel	„	Midwestern Region renamed.
10.	East Central State	„	Eastern Region
11.	Cross River	„	Eastern Region
12.	Rivers	„	Eastern Region

Following the civil war, reconciliation was rapid and effective, and the country turned to the task of economic development. Foreign exchange earnings and government revenues increased spectacularly with the oil price rises of 1973-74. On July 29, 1975, Gen. Murtala Mohammed and a group of fellow officers staged a bloodless coup, accusing the military government of Gen. Yakubu Gowon of delaying the promised return to civilian rule and becoming corrupt and ineffective. General Muhammed replaced thousands of civil servants and announced a timetable for the resumption of civilian rule by October 1, 1979. Mohammed also announced the government's intention to create more new states and to construct a new federal capital Abuja, in the center of the country. “He quickly set up the Justice Ayo Irikefe Panel to look into the issue of State creation in the country. The panel received about 32 demands for new States. It was based on the memoranda submitted to the government by the Panel that the number of States was raised to 19, on 3rd February, 1976. The nineteen States were Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Bendel, Cross-River, Anambra, Imo, Rivers, Kwara, Benue, Plateau, Borno, Bauchi, Gongola, Sokoto, Niger, Kano and Kaduna”.(Iginla,2014)

General Muhammed was assassinated on February 13, 1976, in an abortive coup. His chief of staff, **Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo**, became head of state. Obasanjo adhered meticulously to the schedule for return to civilian rule, moving to modernize and streamline the armed forces and seeking to use oil revenues to diversify and develop the country's economy. Seven new states were created in 1976, bringing the total to 19.

S/No	STATES	DATE CREATED	PRECEEDING ENTITY
1.	Sokoto	03 February, 1976	North western State
2.	Niger	„	North Western State
3.	Borno	„	North Eastern State
4.	Gongola	„	North Eastern State
5.	Bauchi.	„	North Eastern State
6.	Benue	„	Benue-Plateau State
7.	Plateau	„	Benue Plateau State
8.	Oyo	„	Western state
9.	Ogun	„	Western state
10.	Ondo.	„	Western State
11.	Anambra	„	East central state
12.	Imo.	„	East Central State
13.	Abuja	“	Niger

Nigeria returned to civilian government rule in October, 1979, electing Sheu Shagari as the President of the Second Republic. But the elections were marred by violence and allegations of widespread vote rigging and electoral malfeasance led to legal battles over the results.

### **1983-1996**

On December 31, 1983, the military overthrew the Second Republic. **Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari** emerged as the leader of the **Supreme Military Council (SMC)**, the country's new ruling body. He charged the civilian government with economic mismanagement, widespread corruption, election fraud, and a general lack of concern for the problems of Nigerians. He also pledged to restore prosperity to Nigeria and to return the government to civilian rule but proved unable to deal with Nigeria's severe economic problems. The Buhari government was peacefully overthrown by the SMC's third-ranking member, Army Chief of Staff, **Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida**, in **August 1985**, who later promised new elections. President Babangida promised to return the country to civilian rule by 1990; this date was later extended until January 1993.

When General Ibrahim Babangida took over power in 1985, the clamour for States creation was loud. He therefore set up the Political Bureau, headed by Dr. S.J. Cooley to look into the demands by the people for the creation of more States in. The Bureau recommended the creation of six new States – Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Katsina, Kogi, Saruana and Wawa. It was based on the recommendations of the Bureau that the Federal Government in September 1987 created two more States – Akwa-Ibom and Katsina – thus, increasing the number of States in the country to 21

<b>S/No</b>	<b>STATES</b>	<b>DATE CREATED</b>	<b>PREVIOUS ENTITY</b>
1	Akwa Ibom	23 September, 1987	Cross River
2	Katsina	„	Kaduna.

In creating the two States, General Babangida announced that the demands for new States will no longer be tolerated. However, in August 1991, the regime back-paddled and created nine new States which brought the number of States to thirty (30). The nine States were Abia, Enugu, Delta, Jigawa, Kebbi, Osun, Kogi, Taraba and Yobe.

<b>S/No</b>	<b>STATES</b>	<b>DATE CREATED</b>	<b>Preceding entity</b>
1.	Adamawa	27 August, 1991	Gongola
2.	Taraba.	„	Gongola
3.	Enugu	„	Anambra
4.	Edo	„	Bendel (Renamed)
5.	Delta	„	Bendel
6.	Yobe	„	Borno
7.	Jigawa	„	Kano
8.	Kebbi	„	Sokoto
9.	Osun.	„	Oyo

10.	Kogi	„	Kwara
11.	12. Abia	„	Imo

The agitations for States creation seemed to have doubled when **General Sani Abacha** came to power in 1993. Thus, following the recommendations of the National Constitutional Conference (NCC) on the need to create more States, General Abacha set up a Committee for States creation, Local Government and boundary adjustment, headed by **Arthur Mbanefo**. The Committee received a total of 85 requests for new States. Thus, on the occasion of the Country's 36th Independence Anniversary on 1st October, 1996, General Abacha announced the creation of six new States. The new States retained the old principle of North and South divide and were spread equally across the six geo- political zones into which the country was divided for the purpose of rotational presidency. The States were Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Gombe, Nasarawa and Zamfara

S/No	STATES	DATE CREATED	PREVIOUS ENTITY
1.	Ebonyi,	01, October, 1996	Abia and Enugu(part)
2.	Bayelsa,	„	Rivers
3.	Nasarawa,	„	Plateau
4.	Zamfara	„	Sokoto
5.	Gombe	„	Bauchi
6.	Ekiti	„	Ondo

In the historic June 12, 1993 presidential elections, which most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest, early returns indicated that wealthy Yoruba businessman **M.K.O. Abiola** had won a decisive victory. However, on June 23, Babangida, using several pending lawsuits as pretence, annulled the election, throwing Nigeria into turmoil. More than 100 persons were killed in riots before Babangida agreed to hand power to an "interim government" on **August 27, 1993**. Babangida then attempted to renege on his decision. Without popular and military support, he

was forced to hand over to **Ernest Shonekan**, a prominent nonpartisan businessman. Shonekan was to rule until new elections, scheduled for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since early 1993, Shonekan was unable to reverse Nigeria's ever-growing economic problems or to defuse lingering political tension.

### **FURTHER STATE CREATION? LESSONS FOR THE SOUTHWEST.**

There are still agitations for the creation of new states in Nigeria. An example is seen in the recommendations of the CONFAB in 2014, that 18 new states should be created in Nigeria to bring it to a total of 54 states.

Many of the agitations for state creation have undertones of division, politics, ethnicity or religion. The same ethnic factors which initially ignited the demands for states creation has continued to torment the country. Thus, ethno-regional interests are usually mobilized to campaign for States creation and development and these agitations have been persistent and seemingly endless.

Although 'pro-state-creation' agitators argue that state creation would allow for more inclusive government and bringing the government closer to the people. Instead, reality shows that continuous States creation in Nigeria over the last 50 years is a failed strategy towards bringing government closer to the people and achieving national development. Rather, Nigeria needs a repositioned and strengthened local government system, an orientation to enlighten Nigerians on the need for peaceful co-existence and constitutional amendments to ensure a true Federal system where the other levels of government will control a substantial amount of their resources.

States creation has not only failed to solve the problem of ethnic minorities or even the ethnic majorities, but it has also become a veritable tool with which a string of unitarist leaders have dealt a fatal blow to the Nigerian Federalism. In other words, successive Nigerian leaders, driven by the desire to privatize political power with the attendant primitive accumulative tendencies, have systematically undermined the structure of the Nigerian Federal system by creating States in an exercise designed as it were to weaken the so-called federating units, vis-a-vis the central government. (Iginla, 2014) The struggle to get access to the national cake, rather than for national/state development, has been the driving force for many of the agitators for state creation. At this critical time when existing states are struggling to sustain, pay its bills and remain viable,

the need to cut down on the cost of running government as the only way out to ensuring availability of more money to fund capital project and generation of employment cannot be overstressed .more states would mean more debts.

On the argument that creation of states would bring with it employment opportunities, there is the need to realize the funding for the new states would come from the same Federal Government Revenue Account. From that back drop that Nigeria is at a point where it needs to explore austerity measures, the money that would have been used to fund the new states can be used to revive our industries to create job opportunities to unemployed youths, more revenue for the government and also reduce costs of governance.

So far, state creation has been unable to solve the fundamental issue of institutional inefficiencies.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **DAWN COMMISSION: REGIONAL INTEGRATION RATHER THAN FURTHER DISINTEGRATION**

The situation in the country calls for collaboration and not further division. Thus, DAWN commission was established to serve as a regional front for the states of the southwest. In the operations of the Commission to nominate the issue and find the pathway to progress and sustainable development, it was realised that “the fundamental causes of low national competitiveness remains: notably a neo-unitary form of government, absence of enabling political and economic governance structure, abandonment of regional approach to development, monolithic export/revenue base, entitlement mentality of the States, with a revenue sharing model that is completely pro-consumption, and that negates all known tenets of local competitiveness.” (DAWN Commission, 2015)

For the states that already exist, the proposed best strategy is to play down on all divisiveness and present a collective regional front in the best interests of the people as it is no longer fashionable for states to operate as units. Southwest states, just like other states in the country, are vulnerable alone, but stronger and able together.

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