

Nigerian Elite Consolidation and African Elite Theories: Toward an Explanation of African Liberal Democracy

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I.

Barely a decade and a half after inter-elite conflict brought down Nigeria's First Republic, intra-elite collaboration has succeeded in transforming the subsequent political system from a conventional military regime into Africa's most fully articulated liberal democracy. In the process, the Nigerian dominant classes have evolved from a fractious, ethno-centred and self-seeking series of groupings into a relatively cohesive, autonomous and self-confident stratum capable of regulating its internecine conflicts while pursuing its collective interests as against the interests of other social strata. These developments, set against a background of ethno-nationalism, civil war, a burgeoning economy based on oil revenues, and intensive political centralisation, make Nigeria Black Africa's most intricate socio-economic formation. This very complexity defies analysis within the paradigms of conventional elite theories and urgently calls out for a broader, more differentiated theoretical instrument with which to comprehend the objective and subjective role of elite formation and consolidation in a developing neo-colonial capitalist African state.

The large body of literature on Nigeria which has emerged as the country made the transition to civilian government and its economic strength increased has so far been largely descriptive and atheoretical – a mass of observations and facts in search of a theory. Such a theory, surely, would as a minimum have to account for Nigeria's evolving neo-colonial capitalist economic structure and the constellation of elite interests and forces within it,¹ rather than merely ranking or classifying various ruling groups in terms of external criteria. For this reason, a number of extant theories about African elites may be rejected out of hand as unfruitful, namely:

- Western-centred structural-functional theories which effectively exclude notions of class antagonisms or class struggle and concentrate instead on concocting categories predicated on status, rank and behaviour,²

1 I have already made an initial attempt in this direction: »Political Economy, Political Class and Political System in Recivilianized Nigeria« Boston University, Walter Rodney African Studies Seminar, Working Paper # 47, 1981, which admittedly wants for reliable, hard empirical data on income distribution and class composition.

2 On this, see Yolamu R. Barongo, »The Study of Development and Political Change in Nigerian Society: The Need for a Dialectical Orientation« in William D. Graf (ed.), **Towards a Political Economy of Nigeria: Critical Essays**, Benin City and Cambridge U. K., forthcoming (1981).

- pluralist theories of intra-elite competition, again Western formulated, which start from assumptions of basic system consensus and relative group autonomy,
- ethnic reductionist theories which see membership in tribe or ethnic group as the determining factor in African politics, as well as the closely related
- cultural pluralism theories which tend to absolutise ethnic awareness and ethno-centred politics into a generalised and permanent determining factor, and
- generally home-grown theories of African socialism (as associated with Senghor, Sekou Touré, Mooya or Nyerere) which deny even the existence of classes by asserting that class divisions have not been part of traditional African society and therefore need not exist in the present, if only African societies can organically link up with the past.³

It is evident, therefore, that this chapter advocates a political economy approach to elite theory-building. Rather than presenting a preformulated theory and fitting Nigerian elite structure and behaviour neatly into it, however, the chapter will critically examine these structures and processes in the light of some political economy partial theories and approaches in order to suggest some elements of a more comprehensive but not yet formulated theory. Here one might bear in mind Gavin Williams' injunction that: »The central problems facing Nigeria, like all other societies, are no respecters of the conventions and conveniences of academia«, and that one may go beyond a critique of a specific neo-colonial form in order to analyse neo-colonial capitalism as a system.⁴

II.

Historically, Nigerian elites have been a **faulted bourgeoisie**⁵ in the sense that their social position, economic pre-eminence and even values and personalities were shaped by colonialism. In this of course the Nigerian elites' experience is by no means unique: throughout Africa colonialism has had profound and permanent effects on social and economic life. Frantz Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah, among others, have pointed this out. This is especially true of those African states which have persevered in the neo-colonial capitalist mode of production and whose elites have thus had no revolutionary, systemtransforming *raison d'être*.

The modality of British administration was designated as indirect rule. In terms of its effects on subsequent class-formation, this meant the superimposition of a ›higher‹ or ›na-

3 For a critique of all these, and other, theories, see Stephan Katz, **Marxism, Africa and Social Class: A Critique of Relevant Theories**, Montreal 1980, ch. 1.

4 Gavin Williams, »Introduction« to G. Williams (ed.) **Nigeria: Economy and Society**, London 1976, pp. 1–2.

5 I use the term ›faulted bourgeoisie‹ in much the same way as Ralf Dahrendorf, in a different context, talks about a ›faulted nation‹. See his **Society and Democracy in Germany**, London 1967, p. 64. Although one has reservations about applying the term ›bourgeoisie‹ in the contemporary African context – since for Marx it refers to the owners of the means of production; whereas in Africa ownership is qualified by state and foreign control, as will be discussed presently – one accepts current usage which seems to equate bourgeoisie with ›non-traditional dominant classes.‹

tional political authority – colonial government – upon the various indigenous emirates, kingdoms and tribal chieftancies. Indirect rule thus thrived upon and derived its effectiveness from the perpetuation of inter-regional and inter-ethnic differences. For the emirs' and chiefs' authority rested, in this system, upon their capacity to maintain intact their ethnic-group cohesiveness, tribal customs and distinctiveness from adjacent groups. Indirect rule tended to reinforce the most conservative elements among traditional ruling systems whose horizons were not likely to transcend the limits of kinship group or tribe. Moreover, it distorted the traditional rulers' fundamental basis of authority. Among the Yoruba, for example, who had evolved a kind of limited constitutional monarchy, derived from a broad cultural heritage, which was subdivided into units based on family, lineage and clan, colonial rule enhanced the chiefs' powers and backed these with force. Whereas traditionally the Yoruba chiefs had had to 'earn' their right to govern through wisdom, fairness and efficiency (and could be de-stooled if they contravened these norms), they were enmeshed by colonial might and shielded against any popular pressure from their people. The predictable effects of this process were often corruption, irresponsible rule and outright authoritarianism. In the East the dilemma of indirect rule was even more palpable: since the segmented Igbo family groups seldom had an institution of chieftancy, the colonial administrators had to resort to creating it. A whole new class of 'warrant chiefs' was thus invoked. Naturally such chiefs seldom enjoyed the legitimacy and popularity of more 'organic' rulers and depended for their continuing authority upon the coercive powers of the colonial administration.

These developments point to a first fundamental defect of early Nigerian elite-formation: while indirect rule was begun in order to serve and promote the capitalist interests of the mother country, its continuation largely depended on the cooperation of local authorities whose power was rooted in precapitalist forms of social organisation, so that the capitalist structure of extraction and its administrative superstructure depended on the maintenance of traditional societies whose existence was daily undermined by the workings of colonial capitalism. Yet the system of indirect rule could not accommodate the social and economic changes precipitated by colonial capitalism; on the contrary, it merely continued to bolster by decree the waning power of the chiefs whose role increasingly came that of enforcer, backed by the colonial regime's law, administration and coercive power. The traditional rulers' objective function came to be that of agent of social discipline facilitating colonial plunder of their territory. The nature of that plunder naturally varied according to the specific interests of the coloniser, but included: establishment of mono-crop or mono-mineral enclaves, disarticulation of regional economies, neglect of social infrastructures, wage exploitation and, above all, export of surplus value.

As colonialism enlarged its scope, the British administrators, lacking European manpower reserves which would have been furnished, say from a white settler population, were increasingly forced to train 'indigenes' for lower-level administrative positions or for rank-and-file soldiering and policing. Basic education was provided by the churches and missions who also occasionally arranged higher education abroad for those who showed

special promise or could afford it. Meanwhile, the artificially induced desire for manufactured goods promoted trade and commerce, which was largely dependent upon overseas suppliers.

Contrary to theories which suggest the formation of an entirely new class of indigenous administrators and traders attendant upon these developments, it is apparent that the chiefs, emirs and obas, and their kin, as the mediating agency between the colonisers and the people, were best placed to capitalise on the opportunities afforded by colonial rule. Their sons and (sometimes) daughters were sent to mission schools or for education abroad. They or their kin staffed the administrative positions opened to indigenes. They engaged in plantation farming, mining and trading – albeit in a subordinate role – and in this way accumulated comparatively large amounts of capital and expertise. Of course only a minority of traditional rulers and their kin actually entered the colonial capitalist economy in this fashion; and not only traditional rulers' kin achieved positions in the administration or in business. But these general patterns of early elite formation have continued through time and do help to explain the origins of Nigeria's faulted bourgeoisie.

The major criteria of pre-independence elite-formation therefore can be summarised as wealth, education and traditional authority. Embryonic Nigerian elites, despite their ethnic, political, religious and sectoral differences, had, and still have, high incomes, westernised life styles, advanced education, special privileges such as private schools and trips abroad, and enhanced life prospects; and possession or enjoyment of these things is what distinguishes them from the 'masses'. They also share in common – given national economic dependency on foreign capital and know-how and the corresponding absence of internally generated sources of wealth and power – the fact that they must cohere around the state apparatus. For the state, under colonialism (and neo-colonialism) was the principal employer, the by far largest source of finance and therefore the vehicle for the most rapid accumulation of wealth, status and power. More will be said about this presently.

Thus the distance between the rulers of Nigeria and the masses was immense, even prior to independence. Yet it was this elite which guided the nation as a whole into the postcolonial era. Their goal in shedding the British administration was merely to replace it. Relatively well-placed in the bureaucracy or in control of local or regional power centres, and in possession of the skills and means (literacy, command of English, wealth, connections) needed to prevail, the Nigerian colonial elite realised well in advance that the top positions in the leading institutions would accrue to them with the departure of the colonial masters, and so negotiated independence by degrees, with the least possible disruption of colonial institutions. Independence thus amounted largely to a negotiated settlement – a gentlemen's agreement – between the colonial administration and the emergent Nigerian elites. This fact may account for the popular phrase about Nigeria having produced not political martyrs, but successors. Independence, then, entrenched the ruling structure produced under colonialism and further increased the already well-developed elite-mass distinction.

But the struggle to convince the colonial administration to hand over political power had

necessitated some measure of involvement and participation of the masses, since they could lend it the aura of legitimacy and popular support needed to persuade the coloniser to effect the transfer as soon as feasible. This popular support derived not only from a widespread desire for ›liberation‹ and ›self-rule‹; it was also purchased with promises of a better way of life and more material abundance after the departure of the British – promises which could only be kept if the system of rewards was drastically modified. Any such modification would of course be inimical to the interests of the successor elites whose overriding concern was to preserve the postcolonial status quo, with themselves in its commanding positions, as intact as possible. In other words, the masses who had been mobilised and politicised on behalf of a universal goal – national independence – now had to be depoliticised rapidly in the service of particularist ends – elite domination.

III.

From the preceding discussion, two things may be inferred about the Nigerian bourgeoisie:

1. As an essentially non-productive successor elite removed from direct ownership of the means of production, it was compelled to look to the state apparatus as its primary source of elite-formation and -consolidation.
2. As a non-revolutionary class lacking a historical *raison d'être*, it had to seek out and deploy ersatz ideologies in order to retain a mass following and to forestall social reform. Primary among these was the ideology of ethnicity or ›tribalism‹.

These two imperatives must be considered in their interrelationship: as a **dialectic of ethnicity and class struggle**.

Colonial statism, organised according to the principle of indirect rule, had consciously sought to prevent the formation of a national bourgeoisie. It created instead a series of regionalised and tribalised bourgeoisies who could be managed according to the strategy of divide and rule. Economic power, thus held diffused, could not coalesce into a political power capable of challenging the sole ›national elite‹, namely the colonial administration. Hence the Nigerian bourgeoisie was rendered incapable of fulfilling the historical role played by its European counterparts: the development of the forces of production.

Instead, Nigeria's postindependence elites of necessity gravitated toward the state in order to use it to achieve economic and social power. For unlike earlier European and North American elites, whose political pre-eminence generally mirrored their pre-existing wealth or social status and whose state was, in a real sense, their state, postcolonial Nigerian elites were merely the recipients of a socio-economic system and state structure created by and for the metropolitan power. In order to re-deploy it – rather than transform it – in their own interests, they had to seize control of the system's centre: government, civil service and military. This solution became all the more compelling, since the peripheral socio-economic structure had underdeveloped those groups who might have constituted a counterweight to a statist elite: there are few organised working-class movements, few business associations, and still fewer defence agencies of rural interests.

The relations prevailing in neo-colonial capitalist African states such as Nigeria, in other words, may be seen in terms of an inversion of the Marxian concepts of base and super-structure. If in advanced capitalist countries political power derives in the main from economic structures and relationships, the equation in Nigeria is reversed: »It is rather political power (which here also means administrative and military power) which creates the possibilities of enrichment and which provides the basis for the formation of an economically powerful class, which may in due course become an economically dominant one.«⁶ Here the problems of conceptually coming to grips with postcolonial elite statism point to the need for more adequate theory. The forms, if not the fact, of exploitation, for example, are not identical in such systems to those prevailing in advanced capitalism. As Claude Ake suggests:

In Africa much of the exploitation is done not by individual capitalists, but by state acting as a powerful entrepreneur, establishing businesses, hiring wage labour, and ruthlessly extracting surplus value from its subjects. Many of those who exploit the proletariat do not themselves own the means of production; but they control the power of the state which is used to control the means of production and to carry out exploitation.⁷

Possession of political power thus represents the **conditio sine qua non** to the good life: status, security, honours, benefits and, above all, wealth. Since wealth was thus largely a function of government office, politics centred around competition for top positions and political activities were geared to gaining access to state power and the revenue allocation and patronage dispensation connected with it. Successful appropriation of state resources, achieved by the manipulation of marketing board surpluses, capitation taxes, export levies and a variety of other devices, could enrich the state elites, enhance their security of tenure – and lead them to seek power by all means available.

These contradictions of the postindependence state elites might have been mitigated, however (1) had political independence been accompanied by economic independence, and (2) had the dominant classes been able to constitute themselves as a coherent and self-aware stratum. But the Nigerian bourgeoisie were unable or unwilling to overcome the inherent structural dependencies and defects of colonialism, so that (1) neocolonial capitalist relations persisted, thus perpetuating the elites' dependence on foreign capital and forcing them to remain firmly within the orbit of the (peripheral) state, and (2) the successor elites, lacking a real, dynamic, mass-based and progressive function, turned to latent, regressive and colonial-induced tribalist appeals.⁸

6 Ralph Miliband, **Marxism and Politics**, London & Oxford, 1977, p. 109.

7 Claude Ake, »Explanatory Notes on the Political Economy of Africa« in **The Journal of Modern African Studies**, 14, I (1976), p. 3.

8 That tribalism originated under the colonial system of indirect rule and economic sectoralisation is at least implicit in the discussion so far, and cannot be demonstrated in detail here. Robin Cohen posits a high degree of »congruence between inter-class and inter-ethnic relationships in his »Class in Africa: Analytical Problems and Perspectives« in **Socialist Register 1972**, London 1972, p. 244. Further see Okwudiba Nnoli, **Ethnic Politics in Nigeria**, Enugu 1978, esp. p. 111 et seq. Conceptually useful is Archie Mafeje, »The Ideology of Tribalism« in **The Journal of Modern African Studies**, vol. IX, No. 2 (1971), pp. 253–56.

Setting aside for a moment the implications of neo-colonialism, the resort to ethnicity introduced a series of contradictions into the political life of the First Republic which ultimately debilitated it and led to its collapse. In the segmented national society, the elites' power base was confined to regional or ethnic-group support because colonialism had prevented the emergence of national leaders and had encouraged tribalism in a number of ways. Yet Nigeria's survival and development as a viable nation-state depended on the evolution of efficient, integrative national institutions at the centre capable of sustaining stability and progress. Furthermore, access to the decisive powers of patronage and distribution could be gained only via the central institutions. In this situation, the emergence of 'national' leaders and parties was all but impossible, and the federal government became essentially a loose, potentially antagonistic coalition of particularist elites based upon mutual advantage.

If the process of elite-formation was thus contingent upon the several elites' capacity to concur on essential programmes and development plans, the demands of their various constituencies for immediate tangible rewards – government contracts, new projects, better roads and other infrastructures, positions in the bureaucracy, scholarships, etc. – subjected them to a crosspressure to divert government resources to the ethnic and kinship groups whose support was needed to stay in power. Such diversions, within the context of scarcity, had to be accomplished at the expense of other elites' constituencies. Elite coalitions at the centre therefore tended to be factious, devious and highly competitive. Where ruling groups realise that the extension of their power and influence are de facto limited by the ethnic, linguistic or geographical composition of their reservoir of popular support, they will logically seek to maximise that support in order to further their bargaining basis within the national or regional coalition, with the ultimate goal of dominating it. In the absence of a well defined social-class consciousness, or even a charismatic leader with an appeal transcending region or ethnic group, ethnicity presents itself as the most effective, most readily available ideological appeal to mobilise and retain as many of one's constituents as possible. Of this phenomenon, Yolamu Barongo writes:

What is usually regarded as 'tribalism' by Western writers is no more than a reflection of the underlying conflicts among groups over the allocation and possession of material resources. In competing for resources ethnic or 'tribal' identity and solidarity are merely used by the elite members of ethnic groups as a means of mobilizing groups for corporate action against other groups, usually for the purpose of achieving personal interests of the elites such as political power, jobs and other material rewards.⁹

The natural corollaries of these complementary processes of elite factionalism and ethnic politics are stalemate, immobilism and hence ossification of political life.

A basically insecure and unstable position is common to the elite groups who are domi-

9 Yolamu R. Barongo, »Ethnic Pluralism (in Nigeria) and Democratic Stability: The Basis of Conflict and Consensus,« paper presented to 5th annual conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association, April 1978, mimeo., p. 9.

nant in such a system. Since their power base was segmented, and complete domination of society and economy therefore out of the question, exclusion from power on the basis of shifting coalitions or even military coups was an omnipresent spectre. This was especially so in the regionalised and decentralised constitutional structure of the First Republic. Exclusion, however, would have meant loss of all the hard-won advantages already mentioned. Thus, »the major activity of the ruling groups . . .« may be seen as »an attempt to redress the insecure position they find themselves in«,¹⁰ and the principal means by which they did this was the utilisation of public resources to cement intra-elite cohesion. The elites may be roughly subdivided into politicians, the »intendant« class of civil servants and administrators, and a commercial-national bourgeoisie of traders, contractors, land speculators, independent professionals, etc. Solidarity among these disparate groups developed on the one hand from their utility to one another, and on the other from a common awareness that their self-enriching activities must be carried on to the detriment of the broad majority. Thus contracts were awarded to ruling-party supporters, contractors contributed to parties or individual politicians, civil servants were large shareholders in contracting companies, government-owned banks financed the ruling parties and granted loans to party stalwarts, public corporations became syndicates for patronage dispensation, policies such as Nigerianisation of the civil service or indigenisation of foreign-owned businesses brought promotions and wealth only to a tiny elite class, government projects were used to create opportunities for private investment, and virtually all transactions involved obligatory payments of »dash« all round. Enrichment accrued to all members of the elite stratum, and the wealth thus generated – and invested in shares, real estate, consumer goods or squirreled away in banks at home or abroad – went a long way toward ameliorating the elites' chronic feelings of insecurity. On the other hand, however, the elites could hardly afford to alienate themselves from their sources of mass ethno-regional support, whose life situation was so different from their own. The connection could be sustained partially through patronage (which was limited), partly through charisma and the personalisation of politics (which did tend to be effective at the communal level), but primarily through calculated ethno-nationalist appeals:

A symbiotic relationship develops between politicians, who wish to advance their own positions, and their »people«, who fear political domination and economic exploitation by a culturally distinct group allegedly organized for these ends. A politician thus gains a tribal power base by successfully manipulating the appropriate cultural symbols and by articulating and advancing his people's collective and individual aspirations (which he himself probably helped to arouse).¹¹

Stable government and with it, an effective spoils-distribution system and growing wealth and prosperity are evidently all in the long-term interests of the elite class. Yet their appeals to ethnic sentiments and resentments, by fragmenting and dividing society, pre-

10 Cohen, *Op. Cit.*, p. 248.

11 Richard Sandbrook, *Proletarians and African Capitalism: The Case of Kenya 1960-72*, Cambridge 1974, p. 11.

vented the realisation of these aims. Instead of working toward national unity and integration, which their educational skills and power positions might have equipped them to do, the political elites became a major agency of divisiveness and fragmentation. Or to recall Professor Dudley's terms, they failed to respond to their foreseen role of ›conflict managers‹ and degenerated instead into ›conflict generators‹ or »the chief proponents and purveyors of parochialism and particularistic values«¹² in Nigerian political life. Ethnic politics, thus utilised by the political class to conceal other intra-societal antagonisms, such as class struggle and maldistribution, contains its own dysfunctional dynamic. If class struggle – whose emergence the elites had to prevent at any cost – calls into question the legitimacy of the prevailing socio-economic system **within** the polity, then communal conflict is the more invidious, for it challenges the boundaries and continued existence of the nation-state itself. Secession and/or civil war are its logical ultimate outcomes.

These acute and unresolvable – within the neo-colonial capitalist framework – contradictions, as is well known, manifested themselves in the immobilism, punctuated by recurrent crises, which preceded military intervention in January 1966. Political immobilism by itself need not have precipitated such a drastic change, had it not reflected economic stagnation which the growth-dependent dominant classes could not tolerate. But growth – even, balanced growth – was hindered by the dependent character of the Nigerian bourgeoisie whose prosperity had lost all connection with their capacity to develop the forces of production and who were by now compelled to seek political office and/or foreign alliances to further their own interests. These interests, moreover, were inimical to continued national development, for the economic redistribution and nationalisation of some of the means of production, which further development demanded, could not be realised by the system-immanent, technical-incremental change of which the bourgeoisie were only capable.

IV.

Thus the military – itself a part of the neo-colonial capitalist elite (although harbouring as well a considerable precapitalist ethos) – intervened and forcibly removed the main contradictions of the Nigerian ruling classes. It suspended the political parties as the main instigators of elite conflict and reduced the old political class to a subordinate role. In its place it substituted a new ruling alliance between the more national, rational and technocratic elite groups: the army and the civil service. Over time these groups became increasingly allied with and penetrated by representatives of indigenous business and multinational corporations.¹³ Centralist by organisation and outlook, relatively unhampered by

12 Billy J. Dudley, **Instability and Political Order: Politics and Nigeria in Crisis**, Ibadan 1973, p. 35.

13 On this ›triangular elite alliance‹ see Gavin Williams and Terisa Turner, »Nigeria« in John Dunn (ed.), **West African States: Failure and Promise**, Cambridge–New York–Melbourne 1978, p. 153; and Terisa Turner, »Commercial Capitalism and the 1975 Coup« in Keith Panter-Brick (ed.), **Soldiers and Oil: The Political Transformation of Nigeria**, London 1978, p. 166–67.

local/regional claims and pressures, guided at least partly by ideals of nationalism and national greatness, and standing to further their own careers considerably, the military-civil service coalition promptly set about ›correcting‹ Nigeria's factional, divisive and therefore dysfunctional system of elite interaction by means of far-reaching, comprehensive – but not revolutionary – programmes of consolidation and centralisation.

To be sure, the military government first had to reproduce within itself and finally enact the major socio-economic, sectoral and ethnic tensions produced by intra-elite conflict after independence. Coup and counter-coup riots, massacres and civil war were the outcomes of this process. Seen from Timothy Shaw's ›radical perspective‹, the succession of more or less violent intra-military personnel shifts in 1966, 1975 and 1976 – and by extension recivilianisation in 1979 – was however merely »reflective of fractional shifts within the local bourgeoisie and constitute[d] stages in the evolution of social forces in this particular part of the semi-periphery.«¹⁴

The ›fractional shift‹ in the intra-elite balance of power which military intervention precipitated represented a relative aggrandisement of the strength of the ›intendant classes‹¹⁵ (military, civil servants, administrators) at the expense of the more narrow political class of locally or regionally based politicians and their clientele of traders, contractors, land speculators and the like – the main propagators of tribalism and regionalism. This is not to suggest that the latter groups were excluded completely from the ruling circles. Only their relative power declined, so that they became junior partners in the elite coalition rather than codetermining principals. Many of the old politicians, for example, retained government posts as civilian commissioners or as members of consultative bodies such as Gowon's ›Leaders of Thought‹, or as co-opted members of State¹⁶ cabinets. And certainly many sectors among the business bourgeoisie carried on as before. But the nature of the comprador classes did change somewhat: as the civil service's powers grew in proportion to state intervention in the economic society, many middlemen, whose function had been to ›mediate‹ between foreign interests and local political leaders, were now made redundant, since » ›statist‹ compradors thus were able to exclude local middlemen and in effect replace some triangular relationships with bi-lateral ones«.¹⁷

14 Timothy Shaw, »Nigeria's Political Economy: Capitalism, Constitutions and Contradictions« in **ODI Review**, No. 2 1980, p. 80.

15 A term coined by Cohen, **Op. Cit.**

16 For reasons of convenience, ›State‹ refers to a component unit of federalism, while ›state‹ refers to the national political structure.

17 Terisa Turner, »Multinational Corporations and the Instability of the Nigerian State« in **Review of African Political Economy**, 5 (1976), p. 69.

V.

These fractional shifts within the bourgeoisie represent, in retrospect, the beginning »nationalisation«¹⁸ of the Nigerian elite in so far as the leading groups now looked increasingly to the system's centre for the realisation of their interests and goals, rather than to local or regional subsystems. This tendency was enhanced by the conclusion of the civil war which lent a renewed impetus to national unity and above all, during the 'seventies, by massive oil revenues which were appropriated and disbursed by the centre.

Thus the Nigerian economy, directed by a more nationally-oriented bourgeoisie and reflecting its interests, entered after 1970 into a period of qualitatively new development beyond its »robber baron phase of regionalised, tribalised and centrifugal commercial capitalist competition«.¹⁹ The state played and plays a special role in this scheme of things. Claude Ake's term »statism«, I. V. Sledzevsky's characterisation »a special stage in the development of state capitalism« and Peter Waterman's conceptualisation »the period of peripheral capitalist industrialisation«,²⁰ are all attempts to define and comprehend this new era of growth.

The state's role in the Nigerian political economy ought not to be misinterpreted as some variety of state socialism, much less as evidence of a »mixed economy«.²¹ Rather, state economic intervention has been a conscious means of, first, generating continued economic growth and, second, appropriating the surplus value for the power elite. Since the former, growth, has absolute priority – because the latter, private appropriation, is its precondition – the state occasionally must impinge on the interests of this or that sector of the bourgeoisie. But this is only a manifestation of state capitalism's *raison d'être*: the coordination and, if necessary, the overriding of particularist elite interests in the long-term collective interests of the elite class as a whole. In order to ensure this necessary growth, the state first assumes control over the most dynamic sectors of the economy (oil) then creates or extends the infrastructure of extraction (transport, communications) while simultaneously eroding independent State sources of revenue-raising (abolition of separate taxation, derivation, and in particular marketing boards) and integrating all sectors and regions by means of a comprehensive process of national planning (Five Year Plans) combined with revenue allocation by the centre which helps to overcome excessive regional imbalances. The private appropriation of the surplus thus generated follows quasi-automatically by the passive technique of failing to change the existing class structure and system of resource distribution.

18 I have considered this process at greater length elsewhere: »The »Nationalisation« of the Nigerian Political Class and the »Particularisation« of the Second Republic,« paper presented to 7th annual conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association, May 1980.

19 Peter Waterman, »Capitalist Development, Labour Control Strategy and the Working Class Movement in Nigeria« in Graf (ed.), *Op. Cit.* (forthcoming).

20 See, respectively, Ake, *Op. Cit.*; I. V. Sledzevsky, »Entwicklungsprobleme des Staatskapitalismus im Nigeria der siebziger Jahre« in *asien-afrika-lateinamerika*, vol. 2, no. 7 (1979), p. 277; and Waterman, *Ibid.*

21 As the constitution makers of the Second Republic would have it, when they suggest that the mixed economy ideology is the appropriate one for Nigeria as against »foreign« doctrines of socialism.

Active state involvement in the economy then further enhances the process of elite consolidation. The state's economic role becomes more intensive and extensive, entering into such key spheres as banking, insurance, imports, foreign exchange and basic production, and especially into those areas in which Nigerian entrepreneurs lack experience and/or financial backing. In particular, the state moves into the ›structure-forming‹ spheres of the economy, namely those – crucial – branches of industry with a high capital intensity and gradual capital circulation.²² This concentration on basic industries demonstrates the foreseen role of state capitalism as a motor for economic development with the object of creating an independent industrial base characterised by extensive import substitution and sustained attempts at technology transfer.

This context of state capitalism – the conversion of publically created profits into private hands, **as if** the state sector were privately owned – defines the function of the much-misinterpreted state policy of economic nationalism of ›indigenisation‹. Indigenisation, or the state-decreed transfer of ownership of selected enterprises and industries from foreigners to Nigerians, as part of a state-capitalist strategy of further development, does not address the important **structural** problems of the Nigerian economy such as regional imbalances in the distribution and utilisation of human and natural resources, massive urban-rural and upper class-lower class income differentials, and discrepancies between the public and private sectors. Rather, it is »an attempt to secure a certain position for growing elite or private entrepreneurs whilst at the same time preserving the dominant place for foreign capital elsewhere in the industrial sector.«²³ Thus indigenisation policies have fostered an »indigenous ›capitalism‹ within a framework of continued dependence on foreign enterprise in many sectors.«²⁴

The fact that the takeover of, or achievement of equity in, foreign enterprises has been accomplished by the state on behalf of private capital, has meant that those elites closest to the state machinery who either own capital or have access to the – largely state owned – lending institutions are by far the greatest beneficiaries of indigenisation.²⁵ But the transfer of ownership/control to Nigerians has not increased productivity or economic performance; it has only led to the evolution of a kind of ›drone capitalism‹²⁶ dependent still upon the state and foreign capital.

The social classes whose fortunes are so interwoven with this economic structure have been aptly called an ›auxiliary bourgeoisie‹²⁷ existing in the bureaucratic, managerial and

22 Sledzevsky, *Op. Cit.*, p. 273.

23 Paul Collins, »The Policy of Indigenization: An Overall View,« in *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, vol. IX, no. 2 (January) 1975, p. 144.

24 Paul Collins, »Public Policy and the Development of Indigenous Capitalism: The Nigerian Experience« in *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, vol. XV, no. 2 (July) 1977, p. 127; further see his »The Political Economy of Indigenisation: The Case of the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree« in *The African Review*, no. 4 (1976), p. 493 *et. seq.*

25 As suggested by E. O. Akeredolu-Ale, »Some Thoughts in the Indigenization Process and the Quality of Nigerian Capitalism« in Nigerian Economic Society (ed.), *Nigeria's Indigenisation Policy: Proceedings of the November 1974 Symposium*, Ibadan 1974, p. 69.

26 As coined in *Ibid.*, p. 68.

commercial sectors. The auxiliary bourgeoisie consists, first, of Nigerian who have bought shares in the large public companies (Schedule 2, 1972; Schedules 2 and 3, 1977). Upper-level civil servants in particular, with their better access to credit and information and their direct links with foreign companies, have become the »core of the emergent shareowning class.«²⁸ Second, leading Nigerian executives of foreign-owned companies have also acquired large shareholdings in public companies – often through stock options and special bonuses – especially in the companies which employ them. They are joined by, third, a number of large-scale businessmen and relatively wealthy professional people – but seldom by top military personnel who tend to prefer the »quick-gain« sectors such as contracting.²⁹ A fourth auxiliary category derives from Nigerians employed in the smaller foreign private companies which were not made public corporations and hence not subject to direct government surveillance. The social antecedents of these share-owners is somewhat more heterogeneous and includes »top civil servants, professionals, big businessmen, some military officers, traditional rulers' families, former politicians, state commissioners and employees and distributors of companies selling the shares.«³⁰ Thus Collins rightly sees as one of the major effects of indigenisation »a tightening nexus between government and foreign capital«, which he describes in this way:

On the one hand important sections of the bureaucratic and managerial bourgeoisie have been coopted as shareholders, while on the other chosen members of the commercial bourgeoisie have secured a niche in the alien-dominated distributive network and therefore tied in, as satellites, through the latter's monopoly of supplies and credit. The state must now protect even more the interests of foreign capital in which the local bourgeoisie has a stake.³¹

It is thus evident that indigenisation's primary social function is to improve the position of the national bourgeoisie. It is neither productive nor redistributive. As such it lends support to Gavin Williams' thesis that:

The development of neo-colonial capitalism substituted imports of intermediate and producer goods for imports of consumer goods. This consolidates rather than undermines dependence on foreign suppliers, since production, as well as consumption, now depends on foreign experts.³²

Economic centralisation was paralleled by an interrelated process of political centralisation. (It has already been demonstrated that any conventional base-superstructure analysis does not apply in the African context.) The creation of 12, then 19 States in place of the former four regions broke down the ethno-regional power blocs and, coupled with enhanced revenue control at the centre, ensured that each State would in effect become a client of the federal government, forced now to look to the centre for leadership, economic planning and overall development. At the same time the States' former independent legislative powers, as embodied in the old concurrent lists, were arrogated by the centre.

27 Collins, »Public Policy . . .«, *Op. Cit.*, p. 141.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 143.

32 Gavin Williams, »Nigeria: A Political Economy« in Williams (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 29.

The proliferation of States set off a rapid growth in the civil service establishment as the total number of governments increased from 5 to 13 and finally to 20. Absolute numbers of civil servants, already swollen from the post-independence Nigerianisation of the bureaucracy, expanded still further with the growth of the ›politically relevant‹ population, which increased the quantity of demands placed on the system, and with the extension of the civil service into remote and rural areas in line with the policy of development administration. The civil service machinery was made to reflect the principle of federal supremacy. A sustained effort was undertaken to recruit leading personnel into the federal service, which was now considered primary. Among other incentives, the federal bureaucrats were offered higher wages and better conditions of service. For the first time, Nigerians from all over the federation were attracted into the national civil service in large numbers: southern based civil servants who saw the federal apparatus as the best avenue to enhanced career prospects, since it was expanding more than twelve times as rapidly as the State bodies, and ›progressive‹ northern bureaucrats who saw in federal penetration into the North a source of new opportunities for advancement as well as a means of undermining the power of encrusted traditional authorities and thus of accelerating the process of development. And a number of intergovernmental administrative institutions – e. g., the Nigerian Council for Science and Technology, the Medical Research Council, Agricultural Research Council, Natural Resources Research Council – were » . . . created ostensibly to provide avenues of Federal-State consultation and cooperation but actually to provide additional pressure points for integration and federal dominance.«³³

The inflation of the state apparatus in this manner certainly suggests the applicability of the ›overdeveloped postcolonial state‹ theory. But it would be misleading to attribute this overdevelopment to the colonial administration – even granted that the colonised country's administration is essentially an extension of the ›overdeveloped‹ metropolitan coloniser's political system – since colonialism, in its search for profit maximisation, tends instead toward minimal administrative expenditure, as the policy of indirect rule clearly shows.³⁴ Rather, post-independence pressures and elite responses to them have led to the ›overinflated‹ Nigerian state.

However that may be, the inflating state and expanding economy objectively require a high degree of elite cohesion for a number of reasons:

First, the military's pre-eminent position is structurally undermined over time. Lacking any system-transforming ›mission‹, by nature unresponsive to popular opinion and demands, and internally cross-pressured as a result of its accession to political power, the military government – every military government from 1966–1979 – was under a strong compulsion to ›return to the barracks‹ after its immediate post-coup ›corrective‹ objecti-

33 Olatunde J. B. Ojo, »Federal-State Relations 1967–1974« in *Quarterly Journal of Administration*, vol. 10 (January) 1976, p. 116.

34 The ›overdeveloped state‹ theory is set out in Hamzi Alavi, »The State in Postcolonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh« in *New Left Review*, 74 (July-August 1972), pp. 59–81; and is qualified by W. Ziemann and M. Lanzendörfer, »The State in Peripheral Societies« in *Socialist Register 1977*, London 1977, pp. 143–177.

ves had been accomplished. Once the Gowon regime had reasserted national unity through the successful conclusion of the civil war, the creation of a new system of federalism and the centralisation of power, and had laid the groundwork for a more functional national capitalism, it lost its historical *raison d'être* and had to face a rising opposition from within. For it had no effective conflict-resolving capacity, lacked the dynamism necessary for mass mobilisation to promote further development and above all its existence set limits on the rising capitalist classes' opportunities for expansion and profit-realisation.

Second, conflict within the military itself developed largely from out of the 'dual constituency' of the military leadership, namely the interests and objectives of the 'politicised' group of governors, cabinet members and others directly involved in government – never more than 100 officers at any one time – and the great majority of the ranks who remained outside the political system locking in. Cohesion was initially not a problem: fighting the war and providing more benefits and amenities to the military ensured solidarity. But during peacetime the 'political' officers became progressively alienated from their original military constituency as they were integrated into the ruling class and engaged in the latter's self-aggrandising and often corrupt practices – 10 of the 12 State governors under the Gowon regime were eventually found guilty of gross misappropriation of funds – while the non-governing military both deplored the resultant declining prestige of the army and frequently engaged in intense competition for lucrative political appointments. Thus far from their popular image as a united moral force operating 'above politics', the Nigerian military were, in fact, rent by a number of internal political cleavages. The vehemence of intra-military conflict is underlined by Martin Dent who writes that »of the 300 or so officers with regular commissions in January 1966, something like 60 have been killed by their brother officers in the course of carrying out coups or executed following unsuccessful coups.«³⁵

Third, conflicts were also produced within the governing coalition of military officers and civil servants. As the bureaucrats moved into policymaking, rather than policy-executing, positions, they too had become 'politicised' and highly visible. As in the case of the military, the civil service also developed an internal contradiction between those who desired to maintain the politically neutral, efficient and rationalised organisation, and those who sought an even greater voice in political decision-making and with it a greater share of government 'outputs'. In the absence of popularly chosen political mediating agencies, the civil service, as it moved toward increasing political involvement, came into direct conflict with the military itself:

The increasing visibility of the civil service and the perception among elites and nonelites in Nigeria that the civil service was a political actor made the civil service more vulnerable to the housecleaning that a new military leadership undertook in 1975. The civil service was now part of the political fray and thus fairer game. As some civil servants feared, the political activity of civil servants weakened the civil service as an institution. Some high level servants who were close-

35 Martin Dent, »Corrective Government: Military Rule in Perspective« in Panter-Brick (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 131.

ly linked with the Gowon regime were not tolerated by the Mohammed regime. Low level civil servants and high level ones too became convenient scapegoats for a military regime itself vulnerable to charges of corrupt practices.³⁶

Fourth, antagonism within the ruling classes developed also as those groups who, although now constituting an integral part of the socio-economic elite, did not enjoy a corresponding share of political power. In particular the class of large entrepreneurs and indigenous managers of multinational corporations – also the beneficiaries of indigenisation – sought to rectify this imbalance between economic and political power to compensate for the top civil servants' inside track in the indigenisation sweepstakes and to gain access to other sources of state largesse. Moreover, as the postwar political economy expanded and adapted in the ways discussed above, it objectively required a broader basis of participation and decentralisation of resource allocation, as well as adaptable institutions to contain and resolve intra-elite conflicts. The Gowon regime, beholden as it was to a narrow-based clique of top military officials, civil servants and big businessmen both Nigerian and foreign, could not realise such reforms, since doing so would have undermined the power base upon which it rested. The old political classes with their greater responsiveness toward popular regional and sectoral needs, increasingly appeared a desirable alternative to the remote military government. Pressures for the return to power of these groups could not be abated even by overt attempts to 'buy off' the bourgeoisie with indigenisation measures or with massive raises in public (1974) and private (1975) sector employees' salaries and emoluments.

If to these inter-related contradictions – intra-military conflicts, intra-bureaucracy differences, civil service- military and civil service-business rivalries, and growing ossification of the conflict-resolving capacities of government – one adds factors of gross mismanagement (ports congestion, botched 1973 census, inflation, deficient infrastructures), corruption (cement scandal, events in Benue-Plateau State) and a general weariness of military rule among the population, then the reasons for the third military coup in 1975 and its subsequent course of recivilianisation are apparent. The Mohammed/Obasanjo regime, a self-styled 'corrective' transitional government, set out to inject efficiency, honesty and therefore resiliency into Nigerian political life. Within the parameters of these objectives, the regime was remarkably successful. It was able to resolve, or at least ally, a number of intra-elite contradictions by setting a firm timetable for military withdrawal from politics, while at the same time increasing the army's preeminence within the ruling coalition. The latter goal was largely achieved by the expedient of a thorough purge of the bureaucracy, by further reducing the State governments' powers in favour of heightened centralism, and by embarking on an anti-corruption, pro-discipline crusade throughout the nation.

36 Henry Bienen with Martin Fitton, »Soldiers, Politicians and Civil Servants« in *Ibid.*, p. 52–53.

Entirely committed to its self-image as a transitional regime, the Mohammed/Obasanjo government evolved into »a kind of symbiosis between bourgeois constitutionalism and military-civilian martial powers.«³⁷ In this way it effectively paved the way for a greater rationalisation of the elite structure. The army resolved most of its internal tensions while remaining one of the major ruling groups with its privileges intact; the civil service withdrew from its overtly political role; the national bourgeoisie obtained a substantial share of political power; and a new group of professional politicians, organically linked to the latter two groups, re-entered the elite coalition. As intended, the political apparatus has remained a conflict-enacting and -regulating agency whose aim ». . . is to rationalize the purchase of state favor and the conversion of public resources to private advantage, not to eliminate it.«³⁸

In view of the pronounced system-immanent character of the military itself, it is understandable that the civilian successor regime should display marked affinities with it. For, as is well known, departing military governors will seldom transfer power to civilians whose outlooks, socio-economic antecedents and political **Weltanschauungen** are too dissimilar to their own, since they will be concerned about policy reversals, loss of perquisites or even possible trials, retributive acts, etc.³⁹ No doubt such concerns were multiplied by the appearance in Ghana and Liberia during the terminal stage of military disengagement in Nigeria of the rank-and-file putsches led by Jerry Rawlings and Samuel Doe. Thus the military aimed at shaping and influencing the transition to civilian rule at every important stage. For example, the February 1976 creation of seven new States, the 1975–76 Local Government reforms and the 1977 Electoral Decree all represented military pre-emption of decisions which, strictly speaking, ought to have been taken within the new civilian governmental process (meaning also within the terms of reference of the Constituent Assembly). Similarly, the head of state, convening the constitution-making body, virtually prescribed a presidential structure, a system of federalism, public accountability, a multi-party system and in general, a liberal-democratic constitutional order,⁴⁰ while proscribing the adoption of »any particular philosophy or ideology« from the constitution.

37 Klaus Hutschenreuter, »Einige Grundzüge der Fortbildung der politischen Systeme sowie des Staats- und Verfassungsrechts in Ländern Afrikas und Asiens mit kapitalistischer Entwicklung« in **asien-afrika-lateinamerika**, vol. 3 (1980) no. 8, p. 434.

38 P. Collins, G. Williams, T. Turner, »Capitalism and the Coup« in G. Williams (ed.), **Op. Cit.**, p. 191.

39 On this see the two articles by Claude Welch Jr., »Praetorianism in Commonwealth West Africa« in **Journal of Modern African Studies**, vol. X, no. 2 (July) 1972, p. 213; and »The Dilemma of Military Withdrawal from Politics: Some Considerations from Tropical Africa« in **African Studies Review**, vol. 17 (April) 1974, p. 231. See also, following Welch, L. O. Dare, »The Dilemma of Military Disengagement: The Nigerian Case« in **Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies**, vol. 16, no. 2 (July) 1974, p. 297 et. seq.

40 This may be inferred from Murtala Mohammed's address to the Constitution Drafting Committee's opening session, 18 October 1975, reproduced in **Report of the Constitution Drafting Committee Containing the Draft Constitution**, Lagos 1976, vol. I, p. xli-xlii.

VI.

Thus recivilianisation and elite-consolidation are the two sides of a single process. The implementation of a liberal-democratic political structure complements the neo-colonial capitalist economic system, and helps to vitiate a number of long-standing contradictions which have been discussed above.

1. Liberal democracy allows a functional interaction between elite agglutination and still-operative intra-elite conflicts. On the one hand, Nigerian elites have a collective interest in maintaining the neo-colonial capitalist basic order and securing it against any challenge from below. In this sense, one may speak, with Richard Sklar, of a 'fusion of elites'. The diverse elites in Nigeria, he argues, whether from business, public or private administrations, politics, the professions or prominent traditional elites, do represent different kinds and sources of power.

Yet they identify with one another more firmly and in more ways than they do with their respective institutional bases or organisational activities. They appear to unite and act in concert – consciously so – on the basis of their common interest in social control, and this may be identified as the wellspring of class formation.⁴¹

The notion of political and economic domination by the elite classes as a whole, as against the masses, has recently gained currency in Markovitz' and Sklar's⁴² attempts to conceptualise African elites as, respectively, an 'organisational bourgeoisie' or a 'managerial bourgeoisie' transcending all previous intra-elite cleavages such as modern-traditional, national-comprador, local-nationwide, technocratic-political and so on. But on the other hand – since state power and resources are finite – intra-elite competition persists, e. g., between dependent finance and industrial capital, or between regional capitals, so that the centre government has been converted into an arena for **limited** conflict-resolution of this kind. The multi-party system, the multiplicity of States and the structure of federalism provide the necessary institutional sensitivity and responsiveness to these pressures.

2. Since the Second Republic thus perpetuates elite rule and seeks to forestall substantial social change, it requires decisive and occasionally authoritarian leadership. But a permanent check must be provided against the dysfunctional exercise of such power. The presidential system presents itself as the appropriate means of resolving this contradiction. Klaus Hutschenreuter rightly sees the Nigerian and Ghanaian presidential democracies . . .

. . . as an example of how, on the one side, large sectors of the ruling bourgeoisie recognise the necessity for a strong hand, a powerful leadership, but on the other side endeavour to counteract, by means of constitutional safeguards of a bourgeois-democratic nature, any possible abuse of power, any tendencies (frequently evident in the past) toward the championing of group or

41 Richard L. Sklar, »The Nature of Class Domination in Africa« in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 17, 4 (1979), pp. 537–38.

42 See Irving Leonard Markovitz, *Power and Class in Africa*, Englewood Cliffs N. J. 1977, p. 208–09; and Sklar, *Ibid.*, p. 546.

sectoral interests at the expense of the interests of the relatively broad, forming new class. Further, these recent constitutions demonstrate an attempt normatively to confine the exercise of state power to pro-capitalist principles, partially mitigated by national or social reformism.⁴³

3. Considered in the light of (1) and (2) above, ethnicity becomes a more complicating and problematic ingredient in the politics of elite rule. The collapse of the First Republic demonstrated that unbridled tribalism threatens the structure and boundaries of the state itself. For this reason both military and civilian elites have consistently admonished against its re-emergence. General Obasanjo warned at the height of the recivilianisation exercise: »Political recruitment and subsequent political support which are based on tribal, religious and linguistic sentiments contributed largely to our past misfortune. They must not be allowed to spring up again.«⁴⁴ The appeal was echoed by the five »licensed« political parties, the mass media and the university dons. A number of provisions aimed at overcoming ethnic politics were anchored in the 1979 constitution, e. g., requirements that political party support must be nation-wide, that ethnic discrimination in any form be outlawed, that the federal cabinet include at least one member from each State, and that the personnel composition of all public agencies, save the armed forces, reflect »the federal character of Nigeria«. But despite all these measures, ethnicity could not be simply wished (or legislated) away. The persistence of the neocolonial capitalist order with all its contradictions provides no real basis for the extirpation of ethnic sentiments which are, after all, its product. In the absence of a system-transforming *raison d'être*, the agglutinating elites still depend, for their mass following and legitimacy, on an ethnic support bloc. The mass social bases of the new political parties reveals this. Besides, the perseverance of ethnicity, albeit now more functionally channeled, continues to retard the growth of popular awareness and to hamper class formation from below across ethnic boundaries, a tendency entirely in the interests of the elites. The 19-State federal structure helps to suspend this contradiction by providing an outlet for socio-cultural ethnic pluralism while sustaining the political-economic centralism which benefits the now »nationalised« bourgeoisie.

4. And finally, recivilianisation also has managed to resolve – or at least put into abeyance – a series of persistent elite-related problems. The state's more effective mediating capacities, for example, have all but eliminated the zero-sum quality of Nigerian politics, in as much as all factions perceive that losing an election does not mean losing everything. Indeed, there is evidence that an official opposition is already forming up and coming to terms with its status. Gradually too, the capitalist bourgeoisie appears to be prevailing over communal and feudal remnants, as can be seen in the 1976 Local Government reforms, government land policies (Land Use Decree, **et. al.**), and the elimination of the House of Chiefs from the political scene.⁴⁵ And the new political system has

43 Hutschenreuter, *Op. Cit.*, pp.439–40.

44 *West Africa*, 2 October 1978, p. 1937.

45 On this see Uzodinma Nwala, »Ideological Dependency and the Problem of Autonomy in Nigeria« in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, XIV, 1–2, p. 61.

provided a number of necessary points of system access for younger, aspiring elite members. The 19 State civil services, the expanded federal civil service, the still-overbloated military, the new party bureaucracies and the patronage posts linked to them, all ensure the cooptation of a new generation of trained Nigerians.

VII.

In terms of its central purposes – consolidation of the elite-formation process, maintenance of the neo-colonial capitalist order, production of legitimacy for both of these – the Second Republic has so far been demonstrably successful. Rather than an overwhelming number of competing political parties, the system has produced a manageable five relatively stable, system-maintaining political formations which could well be further reduced by the end of the current electoral period. Although the elections did demonstrate that the parties are still largely dependent on an ethnically-defined mass basis, the national electoral machinery and constitutional provisions prevented any reversion to the structural factionalism of the First Republic.

But, as this article has sought to demonstrate, the abiding contradictions in the ruling classes' situation have not been eliminated, only suspended. Their pre-eminence rests now as before on the subordination of the urban and agrarian masses and the perpetuation of the have-have not dichotomy in society. These in turn depend on continued economic growth, a growth which hitherto has failed to develop the productive forces of the economy. Thus the Second Republic harbours a number of potentially corrosive 'antitheses': the possibility of class formation from below with further industrialisation, the eventual depletion of oil reserves, a resurgence of dysfunctional ethnicity or a reversion to system-destroying intra-elite conflict.