

**Dictators, Democrats, and Government Performance
In an African Country**

**Chapter 5:
Social Identity and Political Inclusion**

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**A. Carl LeVan
Ph.D. Candidate
Political Science Department
University of California, San Diego
<http://dss.ucsd.edu/~clevan>
clevan@ucsd.edu**

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian politics unfold at the intersection of geography and identity. The British decision to unite disparate colonial territories in 1914, the description of the country as a “mere geographical expression” by nationalists in the 1950’s, and the resurgence of violent secessionist movements in the early 21st century are all manifestations of this uneasy nexus. The previous chapter outlined a conceptual framework which includes the possibility of “informal” vetoes. Here I establish a relationship between cultural identity and political leverage. I argue that the northern and southern regions can exercise informal, regional vetoes. This occurs when one region is under-represented and political actors have both incentives to appeal to sub-national preferences and the means to coordinate them. Thus this chapter outlines the logic of regional vetoes and the circumstances under which they emerge.

Nigeria’s cleavages range from broad regional distinctions to narrow lines of ethnic and even sub-ethnic identities. The more discrete cleavages compete for distinct representation and demand particularistic payoffs, activities which undermine the delivery of public goods. However demands expressed through these smaller cleavages are unable to impose transaction costs sufficient to exercise an effective veto. This problem can be overcome when organizations or institutions coordinate these preferences. Political elites have incentives to organize at the subnational level when their region is acutely under-represented in the policy process.

In this chapter, I first point out that studies examining the impact of social heterogeneity typically focus on outcomes other than government performance. Many studies are pessimistic about the ability of plural societies to achieve economic growth or to prevent civil conflict. A rather different argument claims that one must explore the incentives for the politicization of identities in order to link diversity to different outcomes. Second, I describe various avenues for organizing sub-national identities and explain the historical basis for the politicization of social differences. Nigeria’s political institutions sustain at least three cleavages: regions express the country’s broadest difference, between north and south; “zones” provide a looser construction of cultural solidarity within each of those regions; and states serve as a still narrower unit of identity, often reinforcing ethnic distinctions. Third, I explain how sub-national identities influence the emergence regionally-based veto players. I describe competing philosophies of representation in Nigeria and develop an identity matrix to illustrate the relationship and proportions of three basic identities. Regions must possess both cause and capability to exercise a veto. Existing veto players benefit from the persistence of discrete identities because they can co-opt subnational interests and exacerbate coordination problems within regions. In the fourth section I provide an example of a regional veto in action.

HOW DOES SOCIAL DIVERSITY IMPACT PERFORMANCE?

Numerous studies attribute Nigeria’s governance failures to the politicization of cultural identities (Joseph 1991; Momoh and Adejumobi 2002). Since the number of ethnic groups does not change during the time-series covered by my data, this suggests that the mere presence of diversity is an inadequate explanation for the variation in performance documented in Chapter

2.¹ In this section I outline the little that we know about the impact of social heterogeneity on governance, including efforts to isolate the effects of social diversity on different outcomes.

Research has generally focused on three logically appealing effects of diversity. The first concerns the likelihood of civil conflict. As ethnic conflicts threatened countries ranging from Rwanda to Yugoslavia in the 1990s, scholars began to question the conventional wisdom about the causes of civil violence (Gurr 2000; Mamdani 2001). Much of this literature now argues that ethnic and religious diversity does not by itself increase the likelihood of civil war (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 75-90; Young 2002, 532-56). Even the troubling case of Nigeria's civil war, a brutal war for ethnic secession, illustrates how the social meaning of ethnicity can shift substantially. Before the war, Igbo identity implied marginalization and untrustworthiness. After the war these stereotypes instead signaled to non-Igbos self-sufficiency and commercial ingenuity. Within a few short years, Igbo identification was first used to justify violence and then used to facilitate a civil reconciliation within the broader Nigerian nation (Anthony 2002).

A second research emphasis concerns whether diversity affects political stability. Some scholars suggest that ethnic diversity impedes stability, regardless of regime type (Przeworski 2003, 114-144). Others claim that stable polities are possible in plural societies when the government takes various measures to accommodate differences and manage social tensions (Lijphart 1977; Lijphart 1996). Electoral institutions and federal structures are other potential mechanisms for promoting political stability in divided societies (Horowitz 1985; Reynolds 2002; Sisk and Reynolds 1998). Reynolds argues for example that the type of executive (president or prime minister), the electoral system, and the majoritarian nature of institutions all shape the degree of political inclusiveness in divided societies. Inclusiveness predicts the likelihood of "positive democratization," including political stability and ethnic accommodation (Reynolds 1999). The central debate within this approach is whether political outcomes are better served by transcending social cleavages or by institutions that deliberately (and "fairly") represent them.

Government performance is a third, more neglected dependent variable. Africa's development problems are often attributed to colonial manipulation of ethnicity or traditional authority structures.² Studies that examine the consequences of ethnicity and social diversity on post-independence government performance are contradictory. Leading Africanists blame low growth, low school enrollment and budget deficits on ethnic fractionalization (Easterly and Levine 1997, 1203-50).³ Some cross-regional studies measuring performance in terms of economic growth, corruption and the quality of policy are similarly pessimistic (Alesina et al. 2003, 155-94). Others claim that ethnic "dominance," rather than diversity, undermines performance (Collier 2003, 149-177). Fish and Brooks argue that heterogeneity neither stifles

¹ Estimates for the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria range between 250 and 434; these figures vary due to different definitions of ethnicity (Egbokhare 2001, 39-48). Posner's measure of ethnic diversity notes that the number of groups does change for some African countries since 1960 but Nigeria's does not (Posner 2004, 849-63).

² Few studies examine how social heterogeneity impacted post-colonial government performance specifically. This is not to argue for de-linking historical processes or to ignore colonialism's enduring impact. My point here is simply that the range of post-colonial strategies for dealing with ethnic and social diversity is related to the variety of performance outcomes. Human agency is a reality of the post-imperial experience.

³ Easterly has recently revised his earlier views regarding the effects of ethnicity. His new findings suggest that ethnicity only negatively impacts economic performance when institutions are weak (Easterly 2001, 687-706).

economic performance nor makes conflict more likely (Fish and Brooks 2004, 154-66). Unfortunately, they do not explain divergent outcomes among plural societies in their sample.

A few scholars have sought to fill this gap by accounting for divergent outcomes across plural societies. One study attributes differences to the varying structures of ethnic groups. It argues that centralized traditional authority improves delivery of health care and education (Gennaioli and Rainer 2004). In a study of Kenya and Tanzania, Miguel compares divergent performance records in these two societies with similarly heterogeneous compositions. He attributes outcomes to their different nation building experiences: Tanzania's post-independence ideology generated social capital by promoting a national identity. This helped resolve collective action problems, thereby enabling the delivery of public goods. In Kenya, by contrast, ethnic diversity is correlated with lower funding of public goods. Ethnic diversity undermines government performance when socialization processes fail to reinforce a national identity (Miguel 2004, 327-62; Miguel and Gugerty 2005).

There is no reason why the mere presence of social diversity should inspire civil war, promote political instability or impede government performance. Because the number of Nigeria's ethnic and religious differences is essentially constant in my sample, it would be difficult to claim that the effect of social pluralism in Nigeria is always negative. The mere existence of heterogeneity does not undermine government performance. What does change in Nigeria, however, are the ways in which governance structures either transcend or reinforce social difference. In the next section I describe three different cultural bases of politics. I also explain the historical basis for geographic coordination of political claims through subnational units.

SUBNATIONAL IDENTITIES AND POLITICAL CLAIMS

In this section I describe how colonialism reinforced Nigeria's identities by organizing them into geographically distinct voices. The essential bargain of Nigeria's nationhood rests on a "regional" balance between north and south, the broadest cultural distinction. Politics also incorporate more discrete bases of identity. "Zones" represent cultural groupings within each region. Even though they do not officially exist in constitutions or other founding documents, political differences often reflect zonal cleavages. Finally, a number of states exist within each zone. Together these political units form the building blocks of representation and coordinate political preferences. After summarizing the historical basis of Nigeria's subnational units, I describe how these cleavages persist culturally and behaviorally.

Historical Bases of Ethno-Regionalism

The organization of Nigeria's many cultures on the basis of regional territories began under the British. Colonial rule over Nigeria started in 1861 when Lagos fell. The British divided the territory into northern and southern protectorates. At first they applied indirect rule only to the north where they had defeated the Sokoto Caliphate in the late nineteenth century, then resurrected its hierarchies to facilitate indirect rule (Sen 2002, 119-32). One administrator described the logic of indirect rule this way: "Our aim is to rule through existing chiefs, to raise them in the administrative scale, to enlist them on our side in the work of progress and good government. We cannot do without them. To rule directly would require an army of British magistrates," (Crowder 1978, 173). Indirect rule meant that the Emir forfeited his sovereignty

but secured protection from his rivals through the British. Under Native Administration, the British Governor-General described local chiefs “not as independent but as dependent Rulers.”

After the amalgamation of north and south in 1914 the British applied the same principles to the remainder of the country but with less success. Unlike the Hausa and Fulani rulers in the north, the traditional rulers in the predominantly Yoruba west had less success with imposing direct taxes. Indirect rule ran into even greater difficulties in the east. Only a few chiefs in the Niger Delta were appropriate British conduits and groups such as the Igbo and Ibibio had consensual and highly decentralized forms of governance. The absence of a clear hierarchy inspired the English to create the much hated “warrant chiefs” who became the target of famous rebellions against colonial authority (Afigbo 1972; Crowder 1978).

These three broadly distinct responses to indirect rule by Nigeria’s major ethnic groups were countered by administrative strategies that reinforced regionalism (Afigbo 1991, 13-29; Sklar 2004). Even after the extension of indirect rule to the whole country, governance of the regions remained distinct in practice through British “divide and rule tactics” such as regulating travel, keeping settlements segregated and keeping missionaries out of the predominantly Muslim north (Abernethy 1969). The 1939 division of the south into two more administrative regions meant that each of the three political sub-units of the country had a dominant ethnic group. As of the early 1950s, the Hausa and Fulani made up about 53 percent of the North, the Yoruba made up 83 percent of the West, and the Igbo counted for 70 percent of the East (Coleman 1958). The British created assemblies for each of these regions in 1946 to give the Native Authorities a voice in governing. But their role was based on a weakly federal distribution of power and they essentially depended on the consent of the center. Increasing regional autonomy as a step towards eventual independence became a rallying cry of the nationalists and the 1954 constitution accommodated them by granting the regions more authority. The question of ethnic minority under-representation went unaddressed though, even after a commission during the transition to independence highlighted the problem.

The Persistence of Ethno-Politics

On the surface, the independence government appeared to inherit a colonial tripartite structure where one large ethnic group dominated each region. But the reality was more complex, as (at least) three social cleavages survived. The largest one manifests itself in the cultural divide between north and south. Slightly smaller cleavages exist within each region, in what Nigerians call “zones.” By 1963 the government was recognizing cultural groups through the creation of states. Each of these three cleavages has persisted.

First of all, national political structures reinforce the historical and cultural differences between north and south. To this day, the most basic cleavage in Nigeria lies between the predominantly Muslim north and the majority Christian south. The drafters of the independence constitution agreed in 1959 that Islam could govern certain areas of civil law. This placated northern demands and codified an historic national compromise. The north bargained on the issue at the time because Islam encouraged the reality and the perception of northern unity. Not only did the north want to portray itself as a viable cohesive political community, its leaders (such as Ahmadu Bello) feared that an orthodox Islamic path at odds with free markets would limit economic development (Mohammed 2005, 147-164).

Forty years after independence, a northern governor challenged this founding constitutional pact. The results illustrate the ongoing relevance of regional distinctions. In 1999 Governor Ahmed Sani announced Zamfara state's adoption of shari'a (Islamic law) for both civil and criminal matters. The state legislature made the new provisions compulsory for all Muslims in the state. "Without shari'a there is no Islam" explained the governor. "We are Muslims and must live and die as Muslims."⁴ Within months, eleven more northern state legislatures enacted Islamic criminal codes. Christian minorities in the north panicked. Thousands of people were killed in riots between Christians and Muslims in the north and reprisal attacks in the south.

Significantly though, the fault lines on shari'a in 1999 were more regional than religious, as had always been the case. In part this stems from cultural and theological distinctions between Islam in the north and south.⁵ In the south the calls for shari'a among the millions of Yoruba Muslims were largely muted, as they had always been. For example, when the shari'a issue arose during the 1979 constitutional debate, and again in the 1990s, Christian and Muslim elites in the southwest displayed restraint and moderation (Suberu 1997, 401-425). This was again evident by 2000, when all 17 southern state governors issued a statement pledging unity and temperance.⁶ In the north, the religiously and ethnically mixed "Middle Belt" states on the edge of the region expressed profound discomfort with shari'a. Elites there openly complained that shari'a was "ethno-political" and had nothing to do with religion.⁷ Eager to avoid alienating these states on the fringe of the north, many states decided to take a less orthodox path compared to Zamfara's (Paden 2004, 17-37).⁸

In sum, north/south cleavages persist, despite millions of Muslims in the south, a few majority Muslim states in the north that did not adopt shari'a, and variation of religious traditions in the north. The southern governors found a consensus position defending secularism. Meanwhile, northerners found their own basis for compromises which preserve Muslim traditions and regional solidarity. Regional identities trumped religious identity, ultimately motivating moderation in each region.

The second layer of subnational identity exists at the zonal level. In the north this began with the colonial administration's practice of recognizing the distinct histories of the Sokoto and Borno empires of the north. Thus even though the British formally organized the north as a single colonial unit, they varied their political strategies in the region. Paden takes this as evidence that Nigeria's geo-political "zones" existed in the political imagination long before politicians explicitly identified with them as such (Paden 1997, 243-264). Three northern zones have since developed distinct dispositions. The northeast and the northwest have largely retained caliphate traditions, while the north-central zone is more mixed (Sklar 2004, 39-60).

⁴ Mikail Mumuni, "A Zealot's Dream Come True," *TELL*, November 8, 1999, p. 31.

⁵ As one expert on Yoruba politics sums it up: "In the South, Islam is a personal and family religion...in the north, Islam is a civilization – a system of authority and a fount of the law" (Sklar 2002, 333-348).

⁶ Ben Charles-Obi, "We Demand Fiscal Federalism," *TELL*, January 22, 2001, pp. 36-38. At this summit held by the southern governors, they signaled that shari'a might be acceptable if it clearly only applied to Muslims.

⁷ Special Report, "The Middle Belt Revolt," *TELL*, March 27, 2000, pp. 20-22.

⁸ Zamfara's governor ended up pleading with business interests, many of whom were not indigenous, to stay within the state by promising that shari'a would only apply to Muslims (Mohammed 2005, 147-164).

Distinct zonal identities have persisted in the south as well. The southeast is predominantly Igbo and fought the Biafran Civil War of secession. Igbos today for example, are agitating for a new state on a zonal basis, since the southeast has only five (rather than six) states. Ethnic minorities prevail throughout the south south, where oil has dominated political discussions since the 1960s. The success of militant movements agitating for “resource control” during the Fourth Republic is due at least in part to their ability to broadly fashion their messages, appealing to minorities throughout the zone. In the southwest Yoruba traditions dominate. Despite significant sub-ethnic differences, there are striking similarities in voter preferences throughout the zone in the federal elections of 1959, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, and 2003. This attests in part to the ongoing influence of pan-Yoruba political organizations. Though zones exist nowhere in the constitution, they play a central role in the ethnic balancing of politics (Sklar et al. 2006, 100-15).⁹ The zonal system is thus as an attempt to aggregate culture in a unit somewhere between regional identity and ethnicity by clustering groups on a geographical and cultural basis. This is portrayed in Table 1, with the present makeup of zones, states, and some of the ethnic groups in those areas.

Table 1: Nigeria's Geopolitical Zones (Six Zone Configuration)

Zone	States	Some ethnic groups
Northwest	Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Kaduna	Hausa, Fulani, Gwari, Attakar, Ayu Binawa, Jaba, Kandara, Kafanchan, Kanuri, Zuru
Northeast	Borno, Yobe, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa	Hausa, Fulani, Idoma, Kanuri, Gwon, Junkun, Jongo, Tarok, Tikar, Wagga, Tula
Middle Belt (North Central)	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau, Niger	Tiv, Igala, Idoma, Ufia, Gwandara, Yoruba, Fulani, Hausa, Kulele, Maba, Mada, Pyapum
Southeast	Anambra, Ebonyi Imo, Enugu, Abia	Igbo, Mbeme
South-South	Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers Akwa Ibom	Edo, Anang, Ibibio, Itsekiri, Urhobo, Efik, Okoi, Ukwani, Ododop, Yache, Ikwerre-Igbo
Southwest	Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo	Yoruba, Awori, Egun, Ebira, Ijo

Source: Nigeria: A Complete Factfinder (2002)

A third level of subnational solidarity exists at the state level. Even before independence, Nigeria’s colonial regions faced pressure to create new states. One type of demands for statehood arose within large ethnic groups. For example, four major Yoruba sub-groups can each alternately claim membership within a Yoruba “nation,” or they can emphasize discrete sub-ethnic identities. Lagos State was created in 1967, and Oyo and Ondo States were created in 1976. Osun State, home to the sacred Yoruba city of Ife, was excised from Oyo State in 1991, creating a political boundary between cultural communities.¹⁰ During the Second Republic the Ijebu Yoruba agitated for their own state too. Elites who previously spoke eloquently for unity, now declared: “As Yorubas we admit linguistic and Cultural affinity with our brothers and sisters...but for self-preservation and economic, social and industrial progress we hold the view

⁹ For additional discussion about the shared cultural characteristics of the zones, see Paden (2004).

¹⁰ None of this is to suggest that these states are ethnically monolithic or that the reasons for their creation were not complex; Lagos for example was a cosmopolitan capital with its own cleavages between indigenes and settlers.

that we would rather stay on our own and be masters of our destiny.”¹¹ Another more common type of demand arose from minorities who sought to dilute the power of the ethnic majorities. State creation in these instances has sought to accommodate minority demands for representation at the center. Over time, this has progressively increased the number of states because each community stands to benefit from the substantial oil revenues available for disbursement by the center (Agbese 2004, 237-261; Suberu 2001).

In sum, Nigeria’s political map accommodates different dimensions of cultural identity. States, zones, and regions each possess some claim to community and serve as a basis for political solidarity. The next section describes how units that correspond to larger cleavages are capable of exercising greater leverage. While states and zones are part of a game of ethno-regional balancing, only regions can impose a veto on policy. I identify the circumstances necessary for this to occur. Such vetoes are critical informal players in Nigeria’s ethnopolitical landscape.

IDENTITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

In this section I describe the logic behind informal, regional vetoes and specify the conditions for their existence. First, I outline Nigeria’s competing philosophies of representation. This includes a brief discussion of the “federal character” tradition, which promotes fairness in federal appointments. Second, I use an identity matrix to illustrate how different identities represent cleavages varying in scale. Larger cleavages are capable of imposing greater transaction costs, giving them more bargaining leverage. Only the country’s regions, whose interests bind Nigeria’s fragile federal bargain together, possess sufficient leverage to exercise a veto. I argue that a policy process which substantially under-represents one region’s interests creates incentives for a regional organizing. This also requires a means for coordinating region-wide interests. Third, I show how these multiple layers of federalism actually serve the interests of policy makers at the center. Small political units representing discrete identities offer inexpensive options for cooptation and also reduce the likelihood of a regional veto emerging. These two intuitions turn much of our understanding of Nigerian federalism on its head.

Representation and Political Inclusion

Social identity and political representation at the center are inextricably bound in Nigeria, as they are in much of Africa. Government cabinets in Africa are on average larger than elsewhere in the world. They also increased in size as sub-Saharan democratized, growing on average from 19.1 to 22.6 portfolios between 1979 and 1996 (van de Walle 2004, 29-63). The reason for this may lie in Africa’s diversity and there is evidence to suggest that ethnically divided societies are more likely to have large inclusive cabinets (Reilly 2005, 159-171). But Africans have also built institutions that transcend these differences, as experiments with one party states attest.

Nigeria’s strategies for dealing with its pluralism reveal a latent tension in its leadership selection: some institutions are designed to cut across social cleavages while others reinforce the saliency of cultural identities. Examples of the former include the Single Member District-plurality electoral system adopted by every democratic regime. Some authoritarian regimes recognized the value in this approach too, as when Babangida created two political parties along

¹¹ Statement issued by the Movement for the Creation of Ijebu State, February 9, 1982. Note that Oyo State voted against Awolowo’s party several times between 1959 and 1983, fearing Ijebu domination (see Laitin 1986, 121-23).

ideological rather than sectional lines. This approach has roots in liberalism, which suggests that majority rule poses little threat to minorities as long as individual rights are protected.

At the same time, Nigerian institutions attempt to assure ethnic and geographical diversity in federal institutions. This approach to social heterogeneity has its origins in philosophical traditions emphasizing group rights and theories of multiculturalism.¹² Nigeria's solution here is the "federal character" tradition, a principle of governance which attempts to balance representation of different identities (Amuwo, Agbaje and others 2000). Federal character first appeared when the Constitutional Drafting Committee (CDC) in 1976 declared that government should "recognize the nature and character of the peoples within their area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty to such peoples."¹³

But well before the coining of the term, governments practiced the federal character principle. Nigerian efforts to guarantee representation for particular groups extend as far back as the colonial era. At a conference in 1950 concerning the new House of Representatives, the north demanded equal representation with the south as well as a specific formula for sharing ministerial positions (Paden 1997, 245). A compromise entitled each region in the tripartite system to eight seats in the federal cabinet. After the fall of the First Republic in 1966, the military adopted ethnic quotas to promote Igbo advancement within the military. The 1979, 1989, and 1999 constitutions all codify federal character, declaring its applicability to the composition of government and its agencies.¹⁴ Specifically, in promoting equal representation federal character is meant to ensure "that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government."

The objective of federal character is to achieve balanced representation at the center by requiring national political leadership to reflect social diversity. Nigeria's numerous institutional architects hoped that balancing authority would increase political stability and reduce the impetus for civic violence. Meanwhile, the application of Nigeria's liberal tradition produces political institutions that transcend the sectional interests at work in these balancing acts. The next sub-section explains the logic behind regional vetoes and identifies the conditions under which they appear. The successful application of the liberal tradition weakens the incentives for a regional veto. Paradoxically, the multicultural approach ends up serving the interests of the center by increasing the available avenues for cooptation.

Identity Repertoires and Political Leverage

The awkward political bargain between north and south on which Nigeria rests means that neither region can rule the country by itself. Every government since independence has either acknowledged this in its appointments – or paid the price. Every regime has therefore to some extent institutionalized a commitment to demographic balancing. In what follows, I explain why only a region can exercise a veto, and doing so requires a substantial expression of regional

¹² Kymlicka et al. attempt to reconcile this tradition with liberalism, arguing an individual rights regimen can fail to protect minorities making other representative devices necessary (Ejobowah 2004, 301-316; Kymlicka 1999).

¹³ Cited in (Ejobowah 2001).

¹⁴ See the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic at section 14(3)(a); the 1989 Constitution of the Federal Republic at Section 15; and the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic at Section 14(3). See *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria* for the definitive history of federal character (Ekeh and Osaghae 1989).

unity. This implies a degree of pan-ethnic solidarity that is difficult to achieve when large segments of the region have been co-opted or are represented in the policy making process.

To illustrate the relationship between regions, zones and states, I construct an identity matrix for Nigeria. Posner uses this technique to compare the relative electoral gains of Zambian politicians when they make appeals along one social cleavage compared to another. The country’s “tribes” represent smaller shares of the population compared to four large national language groups. Depending on the party system in place, politicians formulate political appeals along the cleavage that will help them construct a minimum winning coalition (Posner 2005). Although I do not make predictions about when political actors adopt one identity over another, I do claim that such choices shape the complexity of the coordination problems that result. In particular, political coalitions constructed from identities that represent smaller population shares face greater coordination problems. Incumbents aim to capitalize on these problems.

Table 2 is an identity matrix for Nigeria where x_i represents the regions (north and south), y_i represents states, and z_i represents the ethno-regional zones. Regions capture the largest population share while states capture the smallest.¹⁵ This is thus representative of a four zone, 19-state system such as the one in place in 1979. By portraying the subnational units abstractly, we can account for changes in the number of states and zones over time. Every such change since independence has attempted to maintain balance as the cardinal principal of federal organization. Thus the balance between north and south remains constant, and the number of states in each zone is approximately equal.

Table 2: Identity Matrix for Nigeria

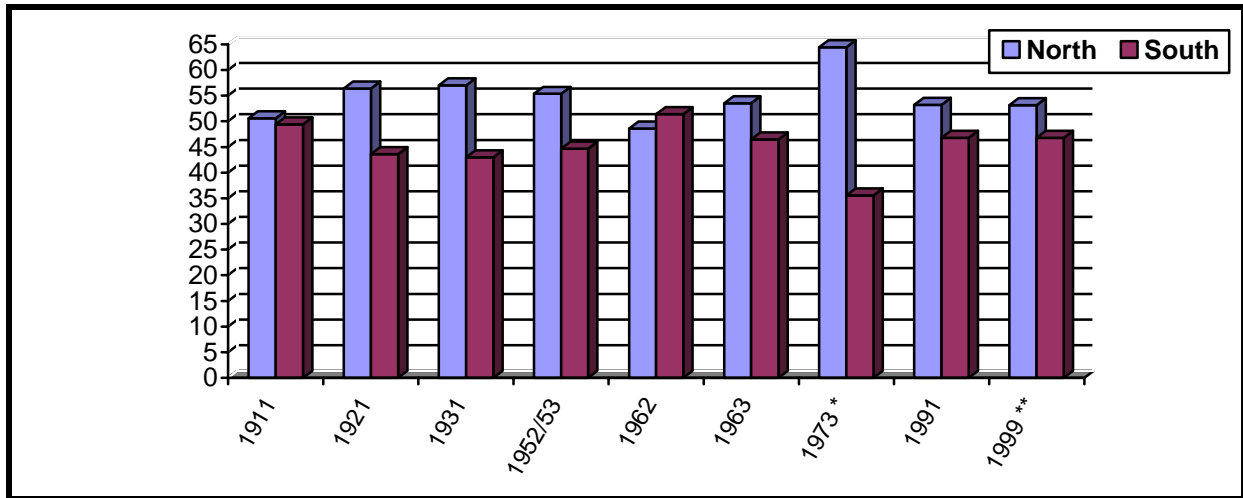
	x_1	x_2
z_1	$y_{1, 2, \dots, 6}$	
z_2	$y_{7, 8, \dots, 11}$	
z_3		$y_{12, \dots, 15}$
z_4		$y_{16, \dots, 19}$

A basic rule of governance, derived from the multicultural tradition, expects policy making to reflect a distribution of support from both regions. The experience during Nigeria’s censuses also support the idea of regional equity. When some censuses reported unexpectedly rapid population growth in only one region, this led to political paralysis and demands for political equity – even if the census contained known demographic inaccuracies (Suberu 2001). This is not to say that either region has monolithic preferences, or that preferences remain stable over time. However

¹⁵ Readers familiar with Nigeria will notice the omission of local government areas. LGAs are clearly more discrete units of difference than states, meaning they capture some relevant cultural distinctions. The number of LGA’s has steadily increased over time, granting explicit recognition to many of these distinctions. In addition to insurmountable data problems, their exclusion is justified on other grounds: First, LGAs have less direct contact with the federal government in making policy. They have no distinct mechanism comparable to the governors (or the ministers) for organizing their interests. Second, the inclusiveness of federal offices are not measured against the number of LGAs represented in appointments. The relevant units are some combination of zone, state, and region.

no policy can advance in the face of one region united against it; Nigeria’s national existence rests on this federal bargain. Figure 1 displays the northern and southern populations, illustrating the approximate balance between the regions.

Figure 1: North/South Population Distribution (as percent of national)



Source: Various sources cited in Suberu (2001), except where noted.

* The 1973 results were immediately rejected as not credible. For an analysis of how they were “demonstrably manipulated,” see Suberu 2001, pp. 150-154.

** Figures from the Independent National Electoral Commission’s 1999 federal constituency Delimitations; these are based on 1991 census projections, plus several new states.

Using the abbreviations from the identity matrix, this rule dictating a balance of leverage between north and south can be expressed as:

Equation 1: regional balance: $x_1 \approx x_2$

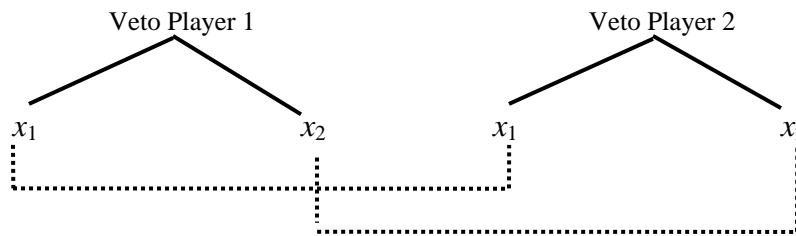
States or zones may attempt to impose a veto on the federal policy process. But unlike regions, none have the leverage to succeed on their own. This is not to say that all zones (or states) possess equivalent levels of influence over policy, or that their political capital does not change over time. For example, the center depends heavily on oil revenues from the south-south and this arguably increases the zone’s political influence. Militant demands by surprisingly effective guerrilla organizations in recent years highlight this possibility (Eberlein 2006, 573-96; Watts 2004, 50-80). But in general, transaction costs vary with the subnational unit in question. In the overarching logic of Nigeria’s federal bargain, the population proportions represented shape the perception of ethno-regional balance. The legitimacy of the policy making process thus depends in large part on such perceptions of inclusion. Population proportions are visible in Appendices 1 through 3, where I attach census figures to the zones, states and regions under four zones and then the current six zone structure. A comparison of transaction costs that each of these units can impose on the policy process is expressed in Equation 2:

Equation 2: transaction costs: $x_i > z_i > y_i$

Regardless of the number of states and zones, Equation 2 remains valid. This affects bargaining because the leverage of any single subnational unit depends on the overall number of zones and states. If one entire zone out of four sought to extract concessions from the policy process, it could impose a greater cost than if one zone out of six did so. Even if all zones are not “created equal” in terms of political influence, it is more difficult in principle for a government to impose an unpopular policy on 30 percent of the population than on 10 percent.

The number of subnational units also impacts bargaining by shaping the coordination problems present. The improbability of a regional veto increases correspondingly with the number of political units. The rules of each regime aim to create policy actors that transcend Nigeria’s regional cleavages. Institutional actors, such as a military council or a legislature, can play this role. Partisan vetoes, a stable set of preferences generated by institutional vetoes, can also cut across regional cleavages. These efforts reflect the liberal tradition. Alternatively, regime rules can attempt to balance regions’ presumably distinct interests. If the regime fails in either one of these regards, this creates incentives for a regional veto to emerge. Figure 2 illustrates the scenario in which a regional veto will not emerge because the existing veto players both cut across the regional cleavages.

Figure 2: Each Veto Player Cuts across Regional Cleavages



Unlike institutional or partisan veto players, regional vetoes are a manifestation of informal institutions because they are not “officially” specified as political actors. Yet their broad identities are a reality of national politics. In the next sub-section, I explain how zones and states have persisted as alternatives to regions in part because they serve the interests of the center. In particular, they provide politically appealing strategies to limit inclusion.

Capitalizing on Coordination Problems

Since states are entitled to grants from the center, scholars of federalism argue that the revenue allocation system drives the demand for new states. This system reduces incentives for generating revenues locally. Instead, it encourages subnational communities to agitate for distinct representation through the creation of new states (or local government areas). Each community demands its a share of the “national cake” (Amuwo, Agbaje and others 2000; Gana and Egwu 2003; Onwudiwe and Suberu 2005).

However the creation of new subnational units also serves the interests of political actors at the center in at least two ways: First, veto players want the policy process to appear inclusive without suffering too large of a payoff loss. Taking the views of discrete subnational groups, for example y rather than z , allows them to buy off excluded societal interests at a lesser cost. From the center’s point of view, Equation 3 presents a cheaper strategy than Equation 4:

Equation 3: $x_i + \{y_i, y_j \notin x_i\} \succ \{x_1 \cap x_2\}$

Equation 4: $x_i + \{z_i \notin x_i\} \succ \{x_1 \cap x_2\}$

Second, by taking discrete identities into account, new subnational units help policy makers at the center reduce the likelihood of a regional veto appearing. This is illustrated below with a comparison of two potential informal vetoes in Figure 3. From the perspective of existing veto players, more zones (z) mean more coordination problems for societal interests who aim to exercise a regional veto. Buying off a handful of select states (y) would exacerbate these coordination problems even further.¹⁶ In this way, incumbents can limit access to the policy process and coopt political actors who might attempt to organize at the subnational level.

Figure 3

A regional veto that requires coordination of two zones

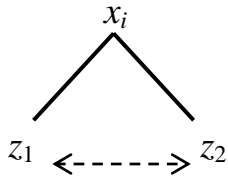
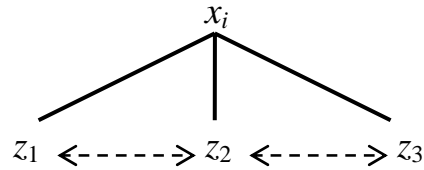


Figure 4

A regional veto that requires coordination of three zones



These two intuitions have three important implications. First, they offer new insights into Nigerian federalism. The existing literature on the subject characterizes the creation of new states as a local demand resulting from the revenue allocation system. By refocusing scholarly attention on regimes, regional veto players reveal how the creation of additional subnational units also serves the interests of political actors bargaining at the center, and not just locally based ethno-regional interests. Dividing up the “national cake” is therefore more than just a local response to centrally-controlled fiscal resources. A second, related implication concerns the relationship between political institutions and social diversity. Scholars in the political culture tradition claim that inclusive governance stems from personal rule in Africa, where weak political systems make cooptation cheap (Hyden 2006). I have shown instead that inclusion based on discrete identities reduces the costs of cooptation. Inclusion allows even “strong” political systems to pursue low cost co-optation strategies.

¹⁶ Note that this is entirely consistent with the cultural account of inclusive governance: “Transaction costs in systems of personal rule...tend to be very high,” according Hyden. “Nurturing the myriad reciprocal relations on which it rests takes a lot of personal energy and resources” (Hyden 2006, 104).

Third, the notion that new subnational units serve the interests of the center suggests that minimum winning coalitions are inadequate. Even if a government has enough regional support to satisfy the regime's rules for inclusion, it still pays off additional political actors because it hopes to weaken their ability to coordinate a regional veto. This inclusion of other actors means that inclusive governance requires some measure of surplus membership. This rule is entrenched in norms of politics regardless of regime type and rooted in Nigeria's colonial history. Oversized cabinets throughout Africa further suggest that Nigeria is far from unique in this regard.

Summary

I have claimed that Nigeria's policy process involves actors whose interest aggregation often blurs the boundaries between formal and informal political institutions. A region can exercise an informal veto when two conditions are met: First, it must be under-represented in the policy process; and second, some mechanism must help coordinate subnational preferences. Incumbents benefit from discrete representation because it is cheaper to pay off small political units, such as states, which represent a smaller share of the population than zones or regions. This also serves incumbents' interests by exacerbating the coordination problems that regional interests need to overcome in order to exercise a regional veto. An implication is that the politics of inclusion benefits politicians at the center rather than the subnational communities clamoring for distinct representation. States and zones may attempt to impose a veto on their own but ultimately they cannot impose sufficient transaction costs on policy makers. The capacity of regions to do so stems from the historic federal bargain binding the interests of north and south. The next section demonstrates the logic of an informal regional veto with a recent example.

AN ILLUSTRATION: THE "RESOURCE CONTROL" REBELLION

A clear illustration of a regional veto in action should apply the above criteria as clearly as possible. This means that zones, states, and regions should all appear as identifiable subnational actors. Organizations and political mechanisms to coordinate their shared grievances should be visible. The collective leverage of the region, compared to smaller units, should also be distinctly greater. This leverage should ultimately result in a policy reversal. During the Fourth Republic, when new policies threatened the rights of certain states to offshore oil earnings, each of these characteristics of a regional veto appeared.

In his first term President Obasanjo vigorously argued for the Federal Government's exclusive right to the proceeds of offshore oil. The stakes were high since revenues from drilling off the coastline of the six south-south states account for most of Nigeria's revenue. The Obasanjo administration's attorney general filed a suit in 2001 arguing that offshore petroleum deposits belonged to the Federal Government. The following year, a landmark decision by the Supreme Court upheld the Federal Government's "onshore/offshore dichotomy."

The Court's decision infuriated the south-south states. Under an elaborate revenue sharing arrangement, these states in particular benefit from additional federal grants when the source of federal revenue originates in their state. One governor accused Obasanjo of blackmail and another hinted at secession, commenting that the lawsuit could threaten the peace and unity of the entire country. Numerous ethnic minority groups from the area protested that the major ethnic groups at the center sought to deprive them of "resource control."

The collective articulation of these grievances by south-south governors marked a turning point. They accused President Obasanjo of renegeing on a promise to resolve the legal status of offshore oil through negotiation.¹⁷ Strategizing with a civil society organization, the South-South People's Conference, one governor said the bill is "the desire of the people of the south-south geopolitical zone."¹⁸ The National Assembly sided with the states, unanimously passing legislation codifying the governors' position, extending states' rights to oil out to the continental shelf. President Obasanjo vetoed the bill and as late as December 2002 warned legislators that "resort may even be taken to war to resolve the claims and counter-claims" with neighboring countries that would result from the Assembly's bill.¹⁹ In early 2003 the Supreme Court delivered the president another victory on a related issue, upholding his prerogative to modify the military decree (still in effect) that governed allocation of federal revenue to subnational units.²⁰ Fresh from these triumphs, Obasanjo then inexplicably reversed himself.

The president suddenly sought compromise on the resource control issue for at least two reasons. The first stems from his political ambitions. Obasanjo's challenger in the presidential election only weeks away had announced his support for abolishing the onshore/offshore dichotomy. Packed rallies in the south-south greeted the opposition candidate's speeches enthusiastically, particularly since the candidate hailed from the north where political elites had urged President Obasanjo to stand his ground.²¹ When the opposition party's regional director for the south-south was killed many suspected political assassination (LeVan et al. 2003, 30-47). Not only was he sympathetic to resource control, he had decamped from the ruling party after accusing his home state governor of ruling with a heavy hand.²²

In the 1999 election Obasanjo won all of the south-south states but now all six of the governors and the states' legislative delegations in the National Assembly were furious with him. His party's support was slipping in the region according to at least two polls (Kew 2004, 139-173) and numerous press accounts. With the 2003 election rapidly approaching he brokered a compromise with the governors that extended the territory of the littoral states. Within hours the Senate President announced that the Assembly would not override the president's veto. This saved the president from an embarrassing loss and also closed up an emerging rift within his party, which held most of the governorships and comfortable majorities in the House and the Senate.²³ Obasanjo's support grew in the south-south, earning him between 84 and 98 percent of the votes in those states during the presidential election a few weeks later. It would seem that the president calculated that the political support from the south-south states was more important than the revenue the Federal Government would retain by insisting on its position.

¹⁷ Adegbenro Adebajo, "Battle Cry in the South-South," *TELL*, March 12, 2001, pp. 32-34.

¹⁸ Austin Ogwuda and Sola Adebayo, "Oil Dichotomy Bill: Ibori Backs Clark," *Vanguard*, January 21, 2003.

¹⁹ Rotimi Ajayi et al. "Why I won't sign Oil Dichotomy Bill – Obasanjo," *Vanguard*, December 12, 2002, p. 1. A separate aspect of the 2002 Supreme Court decision overturned the Federal Government's authority to deduct various expenses from oil revenues before calculating the distribution of the money to subnational government.

²⁰ A recent account by one of the states' lawyers provides a detailed explanation of the case (Egede 2005, 73-93).

²¹ See for example, Efem Nkanga, "Buhari in Akwa Ibom, Promises to Abrogate Onshore/Offshore Dichotomy," *This Day*, April 10, 2003, p. 4. A U.S. Embassy official responsible for monitoring the ANPP campaign offered the description of "packed rallies" in the South-South.

²² Dominik Umosen, "Odili is a Dictator," *TELL*, July 9, 2001, p. 28.

²³ "Obasanjo, 6 Governors Reach Agreement," *This Day*, February 6, 2003. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Senate President's home state of Ebonyi had been pressing the federal government to explore its oil potential for two years.

However the other reason why the president reversed himself stems from a tactical error: the attorney general’s original lawsuit was filed against *all 36* states. Thus even though the south-south states arguably had the most to lose, other littoral states in the southern region were natural partners in a political coalition. Five states in the Southwest zone in fact filed a separate suit in which they demanded back payments owed to them under the federal government’s revenue allocation mechanism (Suberu 2004, 61-83). The Supreme Court ultimately rejected this case too. But this extended the offense across the southern region. The Yoruba president had lost every state in the southwest in 1999 by large margins, as Table 3 illustrates. Ironically, many Yoruba felt under-represented. President Obasanjo could neither afford to alienate the southwest again, nor could he count on the atomization of inter-state politics.

Table 3: Presidential Election Results in the Southwest, 1999

State	ANPP/AD	PDP
Ekiti	73.15 %	26.85 %
Lagos	88.07	11.93
Ogun	69.83	30.17
Ondo	85.37	16.63
Osun	76.47	23.53
Oyo	75.29	24.71

Source: Independent National Election Commission

The voices of political elites and civil society organizations in the south-south were united on the issue. The littoral states of the southwest, who also articulated demands on a zonal basis, formed a natural ally. The fact that the Senate President was from the Southeast may also be significant here, even if only circumstantial; Igbos complained loudly that the executive branch had orchestrated multiple impeachments against several Senate Presidents. In the end the southern governors as a whole, backed by civil society organizations, broadly sympathized with demands for “resource control.” They played a crucial role in arbitrating a political solution to the legislative stalemate.²⁴ After coordinating zonal complaints, the southern region exercised a veto not formally specified in any institution.

In the story of the onshore/offshore dichotomy, the states initially coordinated on a zonal basis. The south-south possessed the strongest zonally-based claim due to the states’ shared demands for “resource control.” But the southwest also had resource complaints with the federal government – and these states expected to benefit from any offshore rights due to recently discovered oil reserves off its coast.²⁵ The governors organized preferences across the region in order to exercise a veto based on these claims. The south, after complaining and then coordinating, ultimately succeeded in reigning in a controversial new policy.

²⁴ The governors’ positions are discussed in W. Adeyemo, “You’re Greedy,” *TELL*, September 24, 2001, pp. 34-35.

²⁵ Ebonyi in the southeast also had high hopes for the future: In 2001 the state petitioned the federal government to allow development of oil deposits near Afikpo. See *Alexander’s Gas and Oil Connections* Vol. 6, No. 2 (Jan. 2001).

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter I argued that the number of veto players affects government performance. In this chapter I identified the factors that determine whether informal vetoes will emerge. Referring to the geopolitical organization of Nigeria dating back to the colonial era, I construct an identity matrix to illustrate the different scale of these various identities. I argue that a balance between north and south is a constant in the country's tradition of ethnic balancing. For this reason neither region can be substantially excluded from policy making without increasing the likelihood of a regional veto. If a regime produces formal veto players that cut across regional cleavages, then subnational actors face fewer incentives to organize a regional veto.

Informal rules are a reality of Nigerian politics. For example, nowhere does the constitution describe the existence of geopolitical "zones." But political coordination often unfolds along these lines. Zones exist in the political imagination of subnational communities and in the strategic calculus of the more "formal" Nigerian political actors. Mostly recently, the 2007 election demonstrated the power of unwritten rules and the critical importance of regional balance. The ruling party and indeed most of the country overwhelmingly agreed that the new president had to come from the north, since outgoing President Obasanjo was a southerner.

Taken together, my two chapters argue that political actors have a self-interest in maximizing their payments by preventing the addition of other players to the policy process. But they also must comply with political institutions and traditions that promote inclusion based on ethno-regional differences. This politics of inclusion ultimately has consequences for government performance. Producing public goods requires overcoming the kind of bargaining problems exacerbated by a policy process with multiple veto players. Moving toward a test of this theory, the next chapter operationalizes formal and informal veto players. Utilizing operational definitions from the literature and evidence gathered during field research, I identify all of Nigeria's veto players since 1960.

**APPENDIX #1:
Population Distribution among Four Zone Structure (1979)**

NORTH				SOUTH			
		Population	% of zone			Population	% of zone
Northwest	Kaduna	6,115,000	26.25	Southwest	Bendel	3,671,000	15.83
	Kano	8,625,000	37.03		Kwara	2,587,000	11.16
	Niger	1,782,000	7.65		Lagos	2,537,000	10.94
	Sokoto	6,771,000	29.07		Ogun	2,555,000	11.02
					Ondo	4,071,000	17.56
			Oyo		7,770,000	33.51	
	Northwest	23,290,000	28.16		Southwest	23,190,000	28.03
Northeast	Bauchi	3,628,000	24.19	Southeast	Anambra	5,365,000	25.27
	Borno	4,472,000	29.81		Benue	3,621,000	17.06
	Gongola	3,887,000	25.91		Cross River	5,188,000	24.44
	Plateau	3,022,000	20.15		Imo	4,472,000	21.06
					Rivers	2,581,000	12.16
	Northeast	15,000,000	18.13		Southeast	21,230,000	25.66
TOTAL NORTH		38,300,000	46.30	TOTAL SOUTH		44,420,000	53.70

Based on 1979 population estimates

Figures may not add to 100 due to rounding

Note: Zonal membership here based on definitions provided
by the Federal Office of Statistics (2000)

**APPENDIX #2:
Population Distribution among 30-State, Six Zone Structure (1991)**

NORTH				SOUTH			
		Population	% of zone			Population	% of zone
Northwest	Kano	7,469,522	25.36	Southwest	Lagos	7,359,797	32.80
	Kebbi	2,659,103	9.03		Ogun	3,000,069	13.37
	Kaduna	5,059,348	17.18		Ondo	4,866,158	21.69
	Katsina	4,824,578	16.38		Osun	2,774,353	12.36
	Sokoto	5,746,536	19.51		Oyo	4,438,568	19.78
Total Northwest		29,455,656	25.75 %	Total Southwest		22,438,945	19.61 %
Northeast	Adamawa	2,701,459	17.66	Southeast	Abia	3,006,191	21.70
	Bauchi	5,593,340	36.56		Anambra	3,594,947	25.95
	Borno	3,260,102	21.31		Imo	3,195,353	23.07
	Taraba	1,943,927	12.71		Enugu	4,055,043	29.28
	Yobe	1,799,336	11.76				
Total Northeast		15,298,164	13.37 %	Total Southeast		13,851,534	12.11 %
Middle Belt	Benue	3,539,157	21.71	South South	Akwa Ibom	3,097,624	17.99
	Kogi	2,761,000	16.94		Delta	3,330,148	19.34
	Kwara	1,990,527	12.21		Cross River	2,457,026	14.27
	Niger	3,000,069	18.40		Edo	2,792,173	16.22
	Plateau	4,258,199	26.12		Rivers	5,540,057	32.18
Total Middle Belt		16,026,749	14.26 %	Total South-South		17,217,028	15.05 %
TOTAL NORTH		*60,780,569	*53.13 %	TOTAL SOUTH		53,507,507	46.77 %

*Figures include Abuja, Federal Capital Territory

**APPENDIX #3:
Population Distribution among 36-State, Six Zone Structure (1998)**

NORTH				SOUTH				
		Population	% of zone			Population	% of zone	
Northwest	Jigawa	3,237,123	12.01	Southwest	Ekiti+	1,728,603	4.88	
	Kano	7,263,952	26.95		Lagos	6,947,019	19.60	
	Kebbi	2,328,604	8.64		Ogun	2,660,240	7.50	
	Kaduna	4,255,091	15.79		Ondo	2,568,555	7.25	
	Katsina	4,824,578	17.90		Osun	2,460,586	6.94	
	Sokoto	2,726,651	10.12		Oyo	19,087,007	53.84	
	Zamfara+	2,313,046	8.58					
	Total Northwest	26,949,045	22.79		Total Southwest	35,452,010	29.99	
Northeast	Adamawa	2,366,388	17.38	Southeast	Abia	2,169,622	15.59	
	Bauchi	3,303,309	24.26		Anambra	3,227,830	23.19	
	Borno	2,927,178	21.50		Imo	2,792,845	20.07	
	Gombe+	1,718,815	12.62		Ebonyi+	1,671,654	12.01	
	Taraba	1,723,722	12.66		Enugu	4,055,043	29.14	
	Yobe	1,574,699	11.57					
Total Northeast	13,614,111	11.51	Total Southeast	13,916,994	11.77			
Middle Belt	Benue	2,099,171	15.66	South South	Akwa Ibom	2,758,299	18.52	
	Kogi	2,477,836	18.48		Bayelsa+	1,327,488	1,327,299	
	Kwara	1,765,053	13.17		Delta	2,952,928	19.83	
	Nasarawa+	1,394,190	10.40		Cross River	1,606,114	10.78	
	Niger	2,795,108	20.85		Edo	2,475,893	16.62	
	Plateau	2,429,898	18.13		Rivers	3,722,739	25.00	
Total Middle Belt	13,405,898	11.34	Total South-South	14,893,461	12.60			
TOTAL NORTH	*53969,054	*45.65%	TOTAL SOUTH	64,262,465	54.35%			

Calculations Based on 1998/1999 Constituency Delimitations
*Figures include Abuja, Federal Capital Territory with population of 445,339
+indicates a new state created in 1996

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