

## NIGERIA

**Dates of Elections:** 7 July 1979 (Senate)  
14 July 1979 (House of Representatives)

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the Parliament established by the 1979 Constitution\*.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The bicameral Parliament of Nigeria, the National Assembly, consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The Senate comprises 95 members, 5 from each of the country's 19 States.

The House of Representatives has 449 members; a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 46 represent each State.

All parliamentarians have 4-year terms of office.

### **Electoral System**

Every citizen of Nigeria who has attained the age of 18 years and resides in the country at the time of registration of voters for an election may be so registered.

All Nigerian citizens who are at least 21 years of age are eligible for election as members of the House of Representatives; the qualifying age for the Senate is 30 years. Persons owing allegiance to a foreign State, the insane, undischarged bankrupts, those under sentence of death or imprisonment for an offence involving dishonesty exceeding six months, and persons who—within the previous 10 years—have been convicted and sentenced for an offence involving dishonesty or found guilty of a contravention of the Code of Conduct are disqualified for election to the National Assembly. The office of parliamentarian is incompatible with employment in the public service of the Nigerian Federation or of any of its States, membership of another legislature, and membership of certain commissions or other bodies established by the Constitution or other law.

For election purposes, Nigeria is divided into single-member districts (Senate) and constituencies (House of Representatives). Parliamentarians are elected according to simple majority vote.

By-elections are held to fill National Assembly seats which fall vacant between general elections.

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XIII* (1978-1979), p. 22.

## General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In 1975, the military regime—which had governed Nigeria since 1966—announced a programme to restore democracy and civilian rule by October 1979. Starting in 1976, this was marked by a revision of the State structure, the election of local government councils, the formation of a Constituent Assembly to debate a new Constitution, the lifting of the ban on political activity and the promulgation of a new Constitution in November 1978.

In July and August 1979, elections were held for the National Assembly as well as for the State Assemblies, the State Governorships and the Federal Presidency. Of the five political parties which qualified for registration with the Federal Electoral Commission, two of them—the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and the United Party of Nigeria—fielded parliamentary candidates in all constituencies. NPN proved to be the most successful, capturing the greatest number of seats in both Houses, and its leader, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, was elected President. The NPN ultimately gained a working majority in the House of Representatives by forming a parliamentary alliance with the Nigerian People's Party (NPP).

Mr. Shagari's Cabinet—which, under the Constitution, must be approved by the Senate—was sworn in by 14 December; it had both NPN and NPP members. On 1 October, the military Government handed over power as scheduled, and the new Constitution came into effect.

## Statistics

### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the National Assembly

Number of registered electors. . . . . 48,000,000 (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats in the Senate	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives
National Party of Nigeria . . .	36	168
United Party of Nigeria . . . .	28	111
Nigerian People's Party . . . .	16	78
Greater Nigeria People's Party	8	43
People's Redemption Party	7	<b>49</b>
	95	<b>449</b>