

NIGERIA

Dates of Elections: 20 August 1983 (Senate)
27 August 1983 (House of Representatives)

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in Parliament on the normal expiry of the members' term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament*

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

The Senate comprises 96 members, 5 from each of the country's 19 States and one from the Federal Capital Territory.

The House of Representatives has 450 members; a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 46 represent each State, **while** the Federal Capital Territory has one Representative.

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.

All National Assembly candidates must be supported by 10 qualified electors of their constituency and deposit a sum of N = 200 (approximately US\$300), which is returned if the candidate is successful or obtains at least one-half of the votes cast for the winning candidate.

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.

*Situation prior to the coup d'Etat of 31 December 1983.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The election dates were announced on 23 March 1983. As four years earlier, presidential, gubernatorial and legislative polling were scheduled on consecutive Saturdays.

Although the various political groups in contention published manifestos, the campaign centered more on personalities and ethnic loyalties than on issues, and the three major parties - the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the United Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) - differed little in their programmes. Nevertheless, there was widespread concern about the country's economy, facing problems with the drop in demand and price of Nigerian oil, which makes up the largest part of export earnings.

The five-stage voting resulted in increased NPN representation across the country. Riding the coattails of President Shehu Shagari's victory for a second four-year term, the NPN gained 24 more Senate seats and 138 additional ones in the House of Representatives.

On 10 November, an almost entirely new 29-member Cabinet, as finally approved by the Senate, was sworn in. On 31 December, however, President Shagari's civilian Government was overthrown in a military coup d'Etat led by Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, and the National Assembly was dissolved*.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors65,300,000 (approx.)
Voters25,400,000 (approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats in the Senate	Number of Seats in the House of Representatives
National Party of Nigeria (NPN) . . .	60	306
United Party of Nigeria (UPN) . . .	16	51
Nigerian People's Party (NPP) . . .	12	48
People's Redemption Party (PRP) . .	5	41
Greater Nigeria People's Party (GNPP)	2	
	95*	446'

* Plus one vacancy.

** Results unavailable as to four remaining seats.

*See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 18.