

## Historicizing the Development and Intensification of the Nigerian Navy between 1956-1958

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**Abstract:** This paper examined the establishment of the Nigerian Navy and the circumstances surrounding its origin. It narrated the history of the first two years of Nigerian Navy stating the real objectives behind its formation. The research also studied the sources, as well as the nature of its early development within the first two years of its existence. The research in addition analysed the impact of the British or colonial government on the creation of the Nigerian Navy. The study relied heavily on documentary data and lightly on oral data. The oral data were based on unstructured interviews with few former senior naval officers; and the documentary data were sourced from colonial government annual departmental reports, correspondence, books and magazines. The oral data were transcribed for analysis. The documentary data were subjected to textual and contextual analysis. The researcher found out that the emergence of the Nigerian Navy was the result of interplay of forces such as the ex Royal naval officers, Nigerian nationalists and the colonial administrators.

**Keywords:** Origin, Colonial, Royal Navy, Naval Power

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In March 1955, the Chief Secretary of the Federation of Nigeria, Sir Ralph Grey, told the House of Representatives that the colonial government was considering the establishment of a naval force (Federation of Nigeria 1956)<sup>[1]</sup>. The proposal for a naval force was submitted to the Secretary of State, who gave his approval in principle and remarked that:

The transfer of routine marine functions from the Nigerian Marine to the Ports Authority provides a favourable and possibly unique opportunity of carrying out project which has been under consideration at intervals for close on a generation (Federation of Nigeria 1956)<sup>[2]</sup>.

A working committee was set up under the direction of the Chief Secretary to prepare detailed plans on what the naval force would look like. For the Colonial Office, the Federation of Nigeria had reached a stage in which it was appropriate to establish a force for its maritime security within its territorial waters. For the British, it was expected that the new naval force would take over certain marine duties which must be carried on by or on behalf of the colonial government but which were not appropriate for the Nigerian Ports Authority that was established on the 1 April 1955.

The white paper on the naval force proposed that those duties not appropriate for the Nigerian Ports Authority should be entrusted to a new force which should be a uniformed and a disciplined force, and which should be associated with a naval volunteer reserve (House of Representatives 26 March, 1956)<sup>[3]</sup>. The proposed duties not appropriate for the Nigerian Ports Authority and expected to be transferred to the new naval force are:

- (a) the maintenance of the Eastern Preventive Sea Patrol;
- (b) the undertaking of hydrographic surveys outside port limits at the direction of the Federal Government;
- (c) the manning of vessels; and
- (d) the maintenance of a seaman's training establishment in which Nigerian seamen can be trained not only for the force, but also for the Nigerian Ports Authority, for

the Federal Government and later for merchant shipping lines (Colonial Government 1956)<sup>[4]</sup>.

It was proposed in the white paper that titles of ranks appropriate to a naval force would be authorised as against the old civilian ranking system of the Marine Department. However, before 1955, ports installation in Nigeria underwent extensive modernisation. This made it necessary to bring in port and railway experts to Nigeria to look at the possibility of bringing the Marine Department under the control of the railway <sup>[5]</sup>. This arrangement was soon found unsatisfactory. Instead, the colonial administration preferred that more emphasis should be shifted to ports control-related duties. The 1954 Ports Authority Ordinance was then proposed which brought forth the Nigerian Ports Authority showing where the first priority of the colonial administration lay.

All along, the colonial administration did not consider it necessary to establish a proper naval force. Even though it must be said that the 1914 gazette had in mind a navy-related contingent, a commercial organisation with some naval content was instead put in place. This was because the colonial administration considered it the duty of the Royal Navy to give naval protection to Nigeria, and that the Marine Department was adequate to safeguard the security of the ports and the coastal approaches, as well as provisions for the Royal Navy warships whenever they came to West Africa for patrol. This was the situation until 1955 when the Marine Department was transformed into the Nigerian Ports Authority.

The final decision to establish a naval force can be traced to the Colonial Secretary's statement to the House of Representatives on the 1 March 1955, culminating in the winding up of the Marine Department into the Nigerian Ports Authority on the 1 April 1955. However, ex-Royal Navy officers who were formerly under the Marine Department were opposed to a civilian organisation like the Nigerian Ports Authority. Captain F. W. J. Skutil, the last Director of the Marine Department and the first expatriate to head the Navy when it was finally formed, wrote in his log book to show his unhappy posture that:

The fatal 1<sup>st</sup> April 1955 came around, and by virtue of the Port Ordinance 1954, all officers and men of the Nigerian Marine were seconded to the Nigerian Ports Authority; old Marine Headquarters lost its dignity and was invaded by stores manager, Traffic Assistance....<sup>[6]</sup>

When the Nigerian Ports Authority was established, the entire Marine Department was seconded to it. Pressure was put on the colonial government internally by the ex-Royal Naval officers of the marine section of the Nigerian Ports Authority to rescind the decision of having a civilian organisation as against the officers' preference for a military force. This protest, it must be said, was driven by the ex-mariners' personal egos as former naval officers rather than their true and genuine love for a Nigerian naval force.

This, however, was not the case for some Nigerian nationalists, who, during the debate in 1956 on the need to have a navy, seemed to understand clearly what they wanted for the new naval force. Some Nigerian members of the House of Representatives discussed extensively on the Nigerian Naval Service. The Nigerian Navy that emerged from the period of transition was one that materialized from the ideas of some of these Nigerian nationalists. What some of the nationalists wanted was a full-fledged navy with the capability and relevant organisational structure to ward off any attempt to undermine the nation's security, territorial integrity, and maritime interests. In the course of debating the bill, they strongly advocated what they called a 'real navy'. Maitama Sule said he would like Nigeria to have "a Navy which can be justifiably proud and which is worthy of this great country <sup>[7]</sup>" In his contribution, Jaja Wachuku showed his disapproval by saying, "What do we see here - it is just the old Marine Department changing name and nothing more"<sup>[8]</sup>, and T.A. Ajayi regarded it as ridiculous that "we are going to have a Navy which is capable of plying on the Nigerian Lagoons and River Ogun and no more!<sup>[9]</sup>" M.A. Sanni opined that "If we are to have a Navy, we should not just have a nominal Navy. The substructure of the Navy should be quite strong to pave the way for stronger superstructure <sup>[10]</sup>." K.O. Mbadiwe stressed the necessity for having a navy and air force, in addition to the standing army <sup>[11]</sup>. G.O.D. Eneh summed up the Nigerian vision: "Without a strong navy Nigeria will never hope to be a country worthy of its name on the continent of Africa <sup>[12]</sup>."

Some of the parliamentarians were supportive of the Bill on the floor of the parliament. A parliamentarian as Adamu Danguwa, who supported the Bill, prayed that "the Nigerian Naval

Force will be warriors of God and men's friend [13]." However, T.T. Solaru differed from the existing views when he asserted that "there are countries in the world that have no navies [14]". Solaru mentioned Switzerland, Norway and Sweden in this category. The Minister of Transport, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, provided an insight into the decisions made in the white paper. The minister spoke on the condition of the people who can work in the Nigerian Naval Service. The people who live mainly in the creek and the delta areas were mostly accustomed to jobs in the littoral areas of Nigeria and would form a greater percentage of the employed staff [15]. Balewa said, this group of people had been prominent as "staff of the Marine Department which was now the Nigerian Port Authority" [16]. The minister agreed with Solaru on the cost of maintaining the armed forces. He asserted that "navies cost a lot of money and there is hardly any country which can produce sufficient funds for a navy....[17]"

The statement of policy put forward by the government for the establishment of the Nigerian Naval Force in 1956 was presented before the House of Representatives on 26 March 1956 as Sessional Paper No. 6 [18]. With the approval of the Sessional Paper No. 6 to establish a naval force, the secondment of most of those ex-marines earlier seconded to the Nigerian Ports Authority was reversed. Thus on 1 June 1956, the Naval Service commenced operation with eleven assorted ships and crafts. On the 3 August 1956, the first Nigerian Navy Bill was passed by the House of Representatives and assented to on 5 September 1956 by Sir James Robertson and became known as Ordinance No. 28 of 1956. The Nigerian Navy was formally and legally established as a 'Force' in accordance with the Nigerian Navy Ordinance of 1956 in May 1958 [19]. This means its name was changed from the Nigerian Naval Service to the Royal Nigerian Navy. At its inception in 1956, the Naval Service adopted the Royal Navy logo for the obvious reason that the service was still seen by the colonial masters as an appendage of the Royal Navy.

Until May 1958, the force operated as a government department because of the difficulty of allocating available men among the three organisations (Nigerian Port Authority, Inland Waterways, and Naval Service) that replaced the Marine Department, and also because there was not yet a legislation governing the establishment of a naval force. The absence of legislation to cover the granting of ranks and the imposing of discipline and all the necessary arrangements to give legal backing to the ideas set out in the white paper meant that the Navy should be run as a government department; although right from the beginning, the Navy's mode of operations and its customs were those of a naval force and not of a government department. The ordinance provided for the following roles for the Naval Force:

- The naval defence of Nigeria within its territorial waters;
- Hydrographic survey to the extent that the Government of the Federation may require;
- Maintenance of the customs laws of Nigeria; and
- Training in maritime and naval duties [20]

The new navy was a coastal navy in role and duty at its inception. The 1956 Nigerian Navy Ordinance constitutes the origin of the roles and duties of the new navy. For instance, the first role presumed coast-guard duties for the Royal Nigerian Navy because it only had to protect three nautical miles from the coastline [21]. The Royal Navy (British Navy) would be the force that safeguarded Nigeria's territorial waters against any external aggression [22]. The Royal Nigerian Navy also had the role of charting Nigeria's littoral space. The paradox of the hydrographic role given to the navy was that it only had to delineate a littoral area of just three nautical miles. However, the inadequacy of nautical charts to permit ships access to a new port was a hydrographic deficiency that would affect the whole economy of Nigeria [23]. As much as adequate charting is for international waters such as the Straits of Gibraltar or Malacca [24]. Littoral nations such as the United States of America and Britain are in the 'satisfactory' range level of adequacy in its hydrographic survey [25]. But it is nations like Nigeria that are being adversely handicapped by the lack of adequate hydrographic data and charts. The ability to develop the littoral areas of Nigeria is prerequisite to maintaining and improving the country's economy. This role linked the Royal Nigerian Navy to the Nigerian state. The navy's other responsibility was to maintain the custom laws associated with the colonial maritime economy. Finally, it was the navy's role to train other maritime organisations; the training institution like

*Quorra* was used to train organisations such as Nigerian Ports Authority, Inland Waterways and the Merchant Navy. The choice of a new naval force was an important turn-around in the history of Nigeria's maritime environment. In layman's language, the Navy was established to protect those resources contained in Nigeria's maritime environment and to fend off any threat to them.

### 2. MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN NAVY, 1956-1958

The manpower that was made available to the newly established naval service in 1956 was derived mainly from three sources, namely, the Marine Department, the Nigerian Ports Authority and the Inland Waterways. The officers were mostly made up of British personnel [26]. It is worth remarking that apart from being employed in the marine environment which exposed them to ships and harbour crafts, port operations and dockyard services, those Nigerians who formed the nucleus of the naval ratings were not used to naval operations. On the other hand, Britain did not second its serving officers to the Naval Service [27]. Virtually all the British expatriate staff were either retired Royal Navy personnel or simply marine professionals, many of whom had inadequate background or the necessary officer-role they were expected to perform [28]. As part of the general restructuring of the Nigerian Armed Forces before independence, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1958 which designated the Nigerian Naval Service as the Royal Nigerian Navy. This was to reflect the Independence Constitution which recognised the British monarch as the Head of State to be represented by the Governor General [29].

However, the British began to train some Nigerian personnel in the Nigerian Marine Seaman Training Establishment, *Quorra*, under its new name of the Nigerian Navy Training Establishment, HMNS *Quorra*, on the 1 November 1957 [30]. The original *Quorra* buildings were in Apapa Dockyard, and were therefore vested in the Nigerian Ports Authority [31]. In consequence, for the Navy, it was necessary to move to what was known as the Old Port Depot and convert and adapt buildings there to re-establish the Training Establishment [32]. Towards the end of 1957, *Quorra* 1, which had been converted to the accommodation block was fully completed and provided sleeping, messing, eating and toilet facilities for 100 Junior Ratings [33]. *Quorra* III, which comprised a library/reading room and three lecture rooms, one of which was used as cinema and strip film projection room, was completed also in 1957 [34]. The training block, a new block which housed the Commanding Officer, the Assistant Training Officer and the instructors was completed and occupied on 16 December 1957 [35].

Although the Training Establishment could accommodate 100 Junior Ratings, the first intakes were sixty to ease the strain on the administration, as both the officers and four out of the six instructors were new [36]. The first intakes to be trained were divided between the three organisations formed from the Nigerian Marine: the Nigerian Naval Force, the Inland Waterways Department, and the Nigerian Ports Authority [37]. Included in the Nigerian Ports Authority entry were four engineer cadets and four deck cadets. All were expected to work with the Merchant Navy under the auspices of the Joint Scheme sponsored by the Nigerian Ports Authority and the leading shipping companies [38]. With the exception of the prospective Merchant Navy cadets who would only serve for three months, the basic course for all other Junior Ratings was six months [39]. At the end of six months, the junior ratings serving with the Inland Waterways Department and the Nigerian Ports Authority returned to their organisations while the Junior Naval Ratings were required to undergo a further three months training in purely naval subjects [40]. All branches of the Navy undergoing the basic course did the extra three months adopted only for the Nigerian Naval Service [41].

The basic course provided elementary training in seamanship, all forms of visual signalling, boat work under oars, sail and power and parade training [42]. In addition to the instruction which was given ashore, HMNS *Challenger* was converted to act as a sea-going tender to *Quorra* and could take up to twenty ratings away for short cruises along the Nigerian coast [43]. Also added to HMNS *Challenger* for the training of ratings at *Quorra* was a twenty-seven feet sailing whalers, two gigs, two seventeen-feet sailing dinghies and a sixteen feet motor boat, *Nymph*, all attached for training purposes [44].

The training of other organisations (personnel) was partly one of the ways proposed for the Navy to earn revenue for the government. The Navy was expected to be a revenue-earner and as such plans were put in place for it to achieve this objective. For the Navy to be revenue-earning, the Navy would train boys from the Nigerian Ports Authority, merchant navy and other government institutions so as

to enable it to collect fees to meet up with the cost of training its own boys. For the smooth administration of the Naval Service, a store and cost section was created in 1957 [45]. On April 1, 1957, the accounting department became self-accounting [46]. It must be said that the Naval Service, just like the Marine Department, was still being treated like a department before an Act of Parliament established a full-fledged naval force in 1958. In that same year, Captain Skutil, the first director of the service retired from the force.

### 3. INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN NAVY, 1956-1958

These are the names of the fleet that the Nigeria Naval Service started off with: *Pathfinder*, *Petrel*, *Challenger*, *Chaser*, *Valiant*, *Frances*, *Trojan*, *Beecroft*, *Jade*, *Nymph* and *Penelope* [47]. The first structure of any naval force is a naval base. Towards acquiring the first naval base for the organisation, talks were held by the defence branch of the governor-general's office with the Ministry of Transport and the Nigerian Ports Authority on the terms for the conveyance of the site of the naval base from the Nigerian Ports Authority back to government [48]. A sum of £15,000 was agreed upon as compensation and the site was formally transferred back to the government with effect from April 1, 1957 [49]. In 1957, a base development plan was drawn indicating the sites for the proposed jetty, slipways, workshops, and stores, also including buildings already being converted for use by the Naval Service [50]. Land space was also made for the planned expansion of the Navy.

The architectural plan was favourably commented upon by the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic and South America, Ian Campbell, who was then in charge of Nigeria. The first instalment of funds was voted for at its inception and the plan was passed to the consulting engineers, Messrs Coode and Partners, London, to prepare the detailed drawings and estimate of costs within the fund available for the naval service [51]. The plan made provision for a jetty capable of berthing a vessel of 2,500 tons with twenty feet of water at low water alongside refuelling, procuring freshwater and battery-charging facilities, and provision of sheltered mooring in the camber for small crafts [52]. Provision was also made for two slipways, one of 700 ton capacity and the other of 250 ton which can be built as at when required. All workshops were to be of the 'Arcon' type of construction, which can be extended as required, in accordance with a pre-arranged siting on the development plan [53].

The buildings known as *Quorra I*, *Quorra III* and the Training Office Block, all of which form part of HMNS *Quorra*, the Naval Training Establishment, were completed and occupied in November 1957 [54]. Two large areas were cleared, levelled and planted out with grass to form a parade ground, and a large flagstaff erected in the site [55]. The Post and Telegraph office and the installation of the wireless station which provided communication between the naval headquarters and ships either by radio telephone or wireless telegraphy were also completed [56].

The Hydrographic Department is one of the oldest departments in the Nigerian Navy, and it was established to fulfil one of the roles of the Naval Service, i.e., to produce charts for Nigeria's waterways [57]. It was also charged with the publication of nautical information and data for the use of mariners. The staff disposition for officers working for the Hydrographic Department was nine [58]. As at 1957, the department was yet to have any dockyard, or repair facilities, hence the refit of its vessels was to be done by external outfits. One of the naval ships, *Pathfinder*, was re-commissioned in 1957 and was able to visit Bonny in that same year. The department performed the following hydrographic survey works for the Nigerian Ports Authority between 1956 and 1958: Lagos harbour, Opobo River (Imo River entrance), approaches to Lagos, Escravos River, Forcados River, Nun River, Bimbia River, Burutu and Benin River [59]. Hydrographic survey work was also done for The Shell D'arcy Petroleum Development Company in 1957 in Bonny and Calabar River [60]. Although this was not a hydrographic survey work in its true sense, it was a series of oceanographical and meteorological observations carried out over three months, with a view to finding out how and why the bar at the entrance to the Bonny River formed and the weather that can be expected in Bonny vicinity under the worst conditions which occur during the rains [61]. The public works department erected the security fences and gates in 1958 [62]. A canteen for use of the staff was completed in 1957 which provided food services for the personnel of the Naval Service [63].

The work done by the hydrographic branch was a source of revenue for the Navy. Through its vessels, it made charts and arranged for the provision of those aids to navigation which were important to ocean-going and coastal ships. The Navy made income by billing organisations such as Nigeria Ports Authority and Shell D'arcy Petroleum Development Company, which sought to do business with the

Navy [64]. The income proposed for the Hydrographic Department in 1957 was 75% of the total cost of operating *Pathfinder* (a ship used by the department for the purpose of survey) [65]. In 1957, it was believed by the colonial government that the naval force could be operated at a minimal cost if revenue could be generated from ventures such as the vessels attached to the Hydrographic Department [66].

Improvements were also made to the inherited naval fleet during the period between 1956 and 1958. For instance, *Valiant* was completed by her builders, Messrs Yarrow & Co., Glasgow, and it arrived on July 8, 1957 on Nigerian shores [67]. *Valiant* was specially designed for the use of the governor-general for official tours of inspection on the rivers [68]. *Pathfinder* was readjusted to enable it receive her armament, a 40mm Bofors gun; and the provision of additional accommodation for her crew, was completed in 1957. *Penelope* was designed as a sea-going vessel, and would be capable of working independently from the parent vessel *Pathfinder*[69]. *Penelope* had accommodation for two surveying officers and four recorders in addition to the ship's complement. *Penelope* was stiffened forward to carry a 40mm Bofors gun and strengthened and suitably fender to be used as an armed boarding vessel in connection with the Port Examination Service in time of war [70]. Although the vessel was primarily a sea-going vessel her design also enabled *Penelope* to use the inland water ways if necessary. The first naval training ship was the *Challenger*. The *Challenger* was adopted for the new role of a sea-going tender to the training establishment *Quorra*[71].

#### 4. WHY THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT TOOK LONG TO ESTABLISH A NAVAL SERVICE

The sea constitutes some five-seventh of the earth. Its uses have been diverse: first for navigation, commerce, and fishing; later for discovery, conquest and maintenance of colonies; and now, with new technologies, for exploitation of living and non-living resources, including fisheries, petroleum and gas, and polymetallic nodules and other hard minerals. In addition, the sea is used for generation of power from tides, winds, and ocean thermal energy conversion; establishment of off-shore terminals, installations, and artificial islands; conducting marine scientific research; transportation of goods for export and import; and national and global security[72].

Nigeria's location at the corner of Africa in the Gulf of Guinea, within the South Atlantic Ocean, is very strategic. The Nigerian sea frontier extends from Longitude 002° 49'E with a coastline of 420 nautical miles. As a maritime nation, she needs the sea for these four purposes:

- passage of goods and people, that is sustenance of commercial activities;
- passage of military forces, for diplomatic purposes and in the event of war, as a base for engaging the adversary's land, air and sea targets;
- exploration and exploitation of resources in or under the sea; and
- Preventing hostile military access into its jurisdiction [73].

The question of jurisdiction and control for engaging in and regulating the different uses of the sea has varied with the knowledge of the sea and the reconciliation of interests of its users. This has been the situation from the past centuries to 1958. The navy has been the instrument for pursuing these interests at sea and it is still the same to some extent today. It must be said here that the Nigerian maritime environment was limited to three nautical miles before 1958 as with other nations of the world [74]. With this in mind, it is necessary to put into context the decision to establish a navy in 1956 and why it took some time before the colonial government established a naval force.

It is, however, significant to say that since there was no real external threat to the Nigerian maritime environment, exploitation of the Nigerian coastal areas (by the British) remained unhindered, and there was no need to have a purely disciplined security outfit. Apart from minor illegalities such as smuggling and piracy, nothing threatened the colonial administration on water. Threats against the colonial administration came mostly through the Nigerian land space. In fact, the security of the Nigerian waterways was in the hands of both the Marine Department and the Royal Navy; this is to say that the protection of the maritime borders of Nigeria was of major priority to the colonial administration. An attack on the Nigerian maritime border was regarded then by the British Empire as an affront on the territorial integrity of the Empire.

For Britain, the Nigerian maritime environment was the most significant influence in the pursuit of her objectives. The Nigerian maritime environment was the arrowhead of the colonial economic

system; coupled with the fact that Nigerian peoples during the period of British rule had an implied belief in their security from the sea. They had a formidable force in the Royal Navy to protect them from the threat of other nations. The influence of the Royal Navy was a deterrent to other nations. The British dominated the seas of West Africa and, as such, Nigerian's felt no threat from the sea.

Putting this into historical perspective, the early period of colonisation showed how important the Nigerian maritime environment was, judging from the fact that the coastal peoples of Nigeria were one of the first that fell to the superior power of the Royal Naval Force. For this reason, the British Empire had access to the interior of Nigeria. The Nigerian maritime environment was an important heritage, which was why it took the British a long time to relinquish their stranglehold on Nigeria because of how vital it was to colonial rule. It was in 1955 that the colonial Marine Department transformed into the Nigerian Ports Authority, which later added two other organisations – Nigerian Naval Service and Nigerian Inland Waterways as the successors to the old Marine Department in 1956.

### 5. NIGERIANISATION OF THE NIGERIAN NAVY

In accepting the Statement of Policy of the Government of the Federation on the Nigerianisation of the Federal Public Service and the Higher Training of Nigerians, 1956-60, published as Sessional Paper No.4 of 1956, the House of Representatives approved the creation of the post of a Nigerianisation officer who would perform the following functions:

- (a) take charge of the training, for which provision is at present included in the Draft Estimates for 1956-57 under the head for the Chief's Secretary Office;
- (b) supply material for consideration by the standing committee on training recommended by the salaries commissioner in paragraph 179 and 180 of his report and act as Secretary of that Committee;
- (c) give effect to those recommendations of the Imrie-Lee Report on Training within the Public Service which are accepted by the Government;
- (d) maintain continuous contact with the ministries and the Head of Federal Department on the subject of "in-service" training and on the prospective requirements of each Department for trained staff;
- (e) in consultation with Nigeria's students officers overseas, advise the Public Service Commission on the availability, immediate or future, of trained Nigerians, whenever vacant posts or the renewal of contracts are under consideration by the commission; and
- (f) provide the Ministry of Social Services with information needed if educational awards are to be made to the best advantage of the country and determining the number of school leavers required annually to build up and maintain the Nigerianised Public Service [75].

On March 1, 1957, F.C. Nwokedi, Assistant Commissioner of Labour, was appointed to officiate as Nigerianisation Officer [76]. One of the departments under the Nigerianisation Officer was the new Naval Force. It must be said that the new Naval Force was at its infancy and desired the quick intervention of the Nigerianisation Officer. Between 1956 and 1958, the new Naval Service had under its payroll thirteen overseas pensionable personnel appointed as officers [77]; it had seven contract officers (British) appointed also in the officer cadre [78] whilst there were only three Nigerian officers appointed as at 1958[79]. The Nigerian officers were two marine engineers, and one Executive Officer (accounts)[80]. One of those Nigerian officers later became the first indigenous naval officer to become the Chief of Naval Staff in 1964. He was Vice-Admiral Joseph Edet Akinwale Wey. In 1958, he became a sub-lieutenant (engineering). After this appointment, he spent another year at the London County School of Technology for Marine Engineers. He was commissioned a lieutenant in the Nigerian Navy in 1958 with retrospective effect from 1954[81].

The Nigerian Naval Force started operation in 1956 after the Nigerian Ports Authority was established in 1955, and for one reason or the other very few senior Nigerian officers from the NPA opted to serve with the new naval force [82]. It became apparent after the interaction between the

Nigerianisation Officer and the departments under his jurisdiction that the most urgent need of the Federal Public Service, including the Naval Force, was the training of Nigerians in engineering and science subjects. There was then a great dearth of candidates with the necessary educational qualifications for direct entry into universities or other institutions of higher learning in these fields. The training of Nigerians for technological posts in the various public services was also found to be very deficient.

For the new Naval Force, the senior engineering offices required an engineering degree in diesel or steam engines, and the deck officers required a Masters Mariners Certificate<sup>[83]</sup>. There was an arrangement between the Royal Nigerian Navy and the British admiralty for a programme for the training of cadets in the United Kingdom in 1958. The first batch of cadets was nine in number<sup>[84]</sup>. They were supposed to work in the different branches within the Navy, i.e., seaman, engineering, electrical and supply. The sending of the cadets to the United Kingdom was in spite of the fact that the Nigerianisation office had been warned that the increased birth rate of the 1940s in the United Kingdom would lead in the next few years to a restriction of places available to overseas students in universities and other educational establishments of higher learning <sup>[85]</sup>.

Also in order to recruit Nigerian officers for the force, the Nigerianisation office put out vacancies for professional and technical posts peculiar to all departments under its control as at 1957. For the Naval Force, the following positions were declared vacant for only Nigerians: Marine Officer, Marine Instructor, Marine Engineers, Assistant Marine Instructor and Assistant Hydrographic Instructor <sup>[86]</sup>. The recruitment policy then was to ensure that

No overseas officer is recruited for a post which can be satisfactorily filled by a Nigerian and secondly, that where no Nigerian is available for immediate employment, arrangements are made for one to be given the necessary training to enable him to take over the post from the contract officer <sup>[87]</sup>.

These were some of the measures used in attracting Nigerian officers into the new force. The pattern for recruitment was applicable to every department under the Nigerianisation office.

### 6. IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE ON THE NEW NIGERIAN NAVY

It is clear from the above that the initial plan of the British after the decision to wind up the Marine Department was for the organisation to be transformed into or replaced by a mercantile establishment. The creation of a naval force was in fact a reluctant endeavour. It is however imperative to say that the Nigerian Navy was established by the colonial government. For the colonial administration, the naval force would take over certain marine duties which were vital to the colonial government but which were not appropriate for the newly formed Nigerian Ports Authority. The Nigerian Naval Service commenced operation on 1 June 1956 <sup>[88]</sup>.

Knowledge of the above background of its establishment is necessary if one is to appreciate some of the basic problems of the Nigerian Navy. Apart from being officered mostly by retired British personnel, the Nigerian Navy took off without a warship. It had to make do with second hand survey boats and harbour craft it inherited from the old marine group<sup>[89]</sup>. The Royal Nigerian Navy relied on old British ships which were being phased out of service. Of course, at the time, it was not expected that the Nigerian Navy should perform any role beyond that of a coastal force. Although from the 1956 statement of policy, the intention of the colonial government was clearly stated in the two policy phases the British mapped out as a blueprint for the future development of the naval force.

For the colonial government, the force would be developed into a fully armed service equipped and trained for duty in war whenever the second phase of the development plan began. The duties assigned to the force for the second phase are:

- (a) to carry out training and exercises in mine watching, mine sweeping, anti- submarine work, gunnery etc.;
- (b) to assist where necessary in internal security duties;
- (c) to provide fishery protection;
- (d) to provide air/sea rescue services; and
- (e) to train a Naval Volunteer Reserve <sup>[90]</sup>.



For this second phase, the force would be organised for rapid expansion in the event of war into a service capable of cooperating with and, in some respects, replacing the Royal Navy in patrolling Nigerian territorial waters, conducting the Port Examination Service and exercising the naval control of merchant shipping [<sup>91</sup>]. However, the aspirations, of the second phase is beyond the immediate financial capacity of the Government and would have to be carried out, if approved, as and when the Government's financial resources did permit [<sup>92</sup>].

So the thought of building a navy to respond to the challenges of the complex modern system of threats was not a priority, and also the founders of the Nigerian Navy lacked the required fund, available fund for the service in 1956 was \$205, 090 [<sup>93</sup>]. Also, by arrangement with the British Admiralty, a few coastal defence vessels would be given to the Nigerian Naval Service.

### 7. NIGERIA IMMEDIATELY AFTER BRITISH RULE TO THE COUNTERCOUP

At independence, Nigeria existed as three regions, each dominated by a political party based on the support of the majority ethnic community in the region. Thus, there was a Hausa-Fulani-dominated Northern People's Congress (NPC) government in the North, a Yoruba-dominated Action Group (AG) government in the West, and an Igbo-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) government in the East. From 1954 to the first coup of 1966 there was rivalry among the two southern parties (AG and NCNC) to win a political alliance with the NPC and thus share political leadership at the centre<sup>94</sup>. Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe, as leaders of their parties, stood for elections to the central House. The Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, however, chose to remain in his northern power base and to leave his deputy to represent the NPC in Lagos. Awolowo had sought support for the AG from the ethnic minorities in the East and North by championing the course of creating more states. As Awolowo remarked,

I feel confident that our wishes in this regard will be readily granted after our victory at the polls, and three new states will come into existence accordingly before October 1, 1960. If the Middle Belt State is to be created, the merging of Ilorin-Kabba Divisions with the Western Region is *ipso facto* a forgone conclusion<sup>95</sup>.

Consequently, he incurred the bitter resentment of leaders of the NPC and NCNC. It was against this background of deep-rooted distrust and conflict among Nigerian politicians that Nigeria became independent on October 1, 1960<sup>96</sup>. Nigeria was governed by an NPC-NCNC coalition with Dr Azikiwe (NCNC) as Governor-General and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (NPC) as Prime Minister.

The Action Group, although well-organised at the initial stages became enmeshed in a crisis of personalities. A conflict arose between Awolowo and Ladoke Akintola, the deputy leader of the party. Awolowo in 1959 surrendered the premiership of the Western Region to Akintola in the hope of becoming the Prime Minister of Nigeria. It was the Action Group's failure to secure some kind of alliance with the other political parties that revealed a portent for the future. Azikiwe and Awolowo's dislike for each other was profound that it would have been a mere illusion that these two would come together under one umbrella<sup>97</sup>. Azikiwe and Awolowo represented two strands of the nationalist movement: Azikiwe was unabashedly capitalist while Awolowo believed in a social welfare state, which is understandable for a man who claimed to have been influenced while as a student in London by Harold Laski<sup>98</sup>. With the NPC, the cooperation with the AG might have been successful but for Awolowo, who then had contempt for the NPC leadership and particularly for its autocratic leader, Ahmadu Bello, the scion of the ruling Sokoto dynasty and the representative of the seemingly arrogant and uncompromising attitude of the Northern elite who tended to look at their southern colleagues with a lot of scepticism and watch every step made by the southerners with a lot of distrust<sup>99</sup>. Ahmadu Bello expressed his suspicions thus:

When I went to Lagos in 1949, I met for the first time, and saw in action, Nigerian politicians of the calibre of Dr Azikiwe, I began to see that we in the North would have to take politics seriously before long<sup>100</sup>.

The events before and shortly after independence clearly gave an indication those political enemies have been made from the east and north. Awolowo's federalist ideas seemed to be singing beautiful songs to the minorities whose reawakening were not in the interest of the other political parties. The political situation, however, was more complex for Awolowo than expressed. On the eve of the 1959

Federal election the NPC and NCNC agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other regions, but the AG stance was to intensify its support for ethnic minority agitation for more states in the Northern and Eastern Regions<sup>101</sup>. The NPC-led government responded in 1961 by proposing to create a Mid-West state around Benin City out of the non-Yoruba minorities of the West<sup>102</sup>.

The crisis which split the Action Group into two first originated between Awolowo and Ladoke Akintola. Among those who supported Awolowo were Anthony Enahoro, Jonathan Odebiyi, Bola Ige and Lateef Jakande and many others<sup>103</sup>. Akintola's supporters included Sanya Dojo Onabamiro, Akin Osuntokun, Akinola Maja to mention a few<sup>104</sup>. The Ooni of Ife, the Governor of Western region, held a meeting with the two factions in an attempt to reconcile the Awolowo and Akintola groups. Rotimi Williams, who was the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice in the Western Region, also set up a reconciliation committee for the two factions<sup>105</sup>. After the two reconciliation attempts, the committee decided to refer the matter to the National Executive Council of the Action Group. Akintola was alleged to have been found guilty of the charges of mal-administration, anti-party activities, disloyalty and gross indiscipline<sup>106</sup>. A new premier was appointed to replace Akintola. The new premier was D.S. Adegbenro, the parliamentary leader in the House. Akintola, however, filed a motion in the High Court at Ibadan challenging the legality of his removal from office<sup>107</sup>.

The two factions of the Action Group were refused police protection in any meeting in the Western House of Assembly. Unfortunately, the second attempt to hold the meeting resulted in uproar and the Prime Minister then intervened by declaring a state of emergency. In his broadcast, Balewa declared that,

No responsible government of the federation could allow an explosive situation such as that which now exists in the Western Nigeria to continue without taking adequate measures to ensure that there is an early return to the Region of peace, order and good government<sup>108</sup>.

Awolowo did not think the intervention of the central government was justifiable:

It was a gross misuse of power for the federal government to declare a state of emergency; when the Western Region was peaceful and no circumstances warranted it<sup>109</sup>.

Awolowo, the Action Group leader and thirty of his supporters were charged later with plotting to over-throw the federal government. Awolowo and others were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. In 1962, Awolowo and many of his leading followers were imprisoned on charges of treasonable felony.

The announcement of the results of the 1963 federal census in February 1964 further heightened ethnic tension. The figures which were published by the federal government on February 25, 1964, the Northern Region's population was put as 29,777,986, while the Eastern Region had 12,388,646, the Western Region recorded 10,278 500 and that of Mid-West and Lagos were 2,533,337 and 675,353, respectively.<sup>121</sup> These figures were based on the 1963 national census, the only one taken between 1953 and 1973. The total was estimated to be 55,558,163. The population figures given after the census exercise showed that the North had more than half of the nation's population. The South believed that the figures were rigged and manipulated.

The 1963 census precipitated a partial but major boycott of national elections and brought the country to the verge of crisis. However, after some changes were made, the figures were finally accepted by the Western Region, the North and the Federal government<sup>110</sup>. On 18 May 1964, the Eastern and Mid-Western governments brought actions in the Supreme Court against the federal government of Nigeria<sup>111</sup>. The substance of the action was that the figures accepted by the other region would do incalculable injustice and injuries to the allocation of seats to the Eastern Region in the House of Representatives in Lagos. They lost the case on the grounds that they failed to convince the court on the number of seats they should have in the House of Representatives, so that the court can help the East and Mid-West enforce their wish. The census led to a new alliance between the NCNC, the AG and the small opposition parties of the North which together formed the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA)<sup>112</sup>. They opposed the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), composed of the NPC and the NNDP, in the 1964-65 election.

Although there was widespread violence and vote-rigging, the elections were not cancelled, and the NNA claimed to have won in the Western Region. After a few days of crisis, Azikiwe and Balewa patched up a federal government of NNA and UPGA (but not AG) members<sup>113</sup>. The 1965 election in the West became a political battle between the Akintola-led Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP) and Adegbenro led UPGA (AG). For the chief ally of the NNDP, the NPC, an AG victory in the Western Region was least desirable. As the UPGA had feared, the election result gave victory to Akintola's NNDP. As a result, widespread discontent, frustration and disillusionment were felt over the election in the Western Region. Protests and demonstrations broke out and were expressed in riots, looting and arson. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, supported Akintola and drafted Federal security forces of mostly Hausa soldiers and anti-riot police squad to sustain Akintola's unpopular regime in power<sup>114</sup>. It was in this turbulent situation, when the government of the Western Region seemed to have lost the power to govern and the Balewa administration seemed not to want to exercise its overall responsibility of maintaining law and order that the military struck in 1966.

On the night of January 14, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu addressed Nigerians.

Our enemies are the political profiteers, swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten per cent, those that seek to keep the country permanently divided so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIPS of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles<sup>115</sup>.

The coup would have been a success in the North but for the incident that happened in Kano. Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, who was then in charge of the 5<sup>th</sup> battalion of the Nigerian army stationed in Kano, played a decisive role in ensuring the collapse of the coup in the North<sup>116</sup>. Ojukwu refused to succumb to Nzeogwu's pressure but instead gave his support to General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi<sup>117</sup>.

Their southern counterparts might have been successful on the night of January 14-15 but for the narrow escape of General Ironsi. It was at a party in the Lagos home of Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari that Ironsi was slated to be arrested or killed that night. Ironsi was at the Maimalari party and later went to another party aboard the Elder Dempster mail boat *Aureol* at Apapa. When he finally got home, it was Lt. Colonel James Pam, who warned him that something was happening within the Nigerian Army<sup>118</sup>. Pam was shot later by the dissident soldiers<sup>119</sup>. At Ikeja, Ironsi, who had risen through the ranks, was able to manoeuvre and got to his aide, and loyal soldiers who in turn changed the course of the coup. The coup had been foiled and the leaders unable to make the change they desired for the country. Power now had to fall on the laps of a man who was not among the original coup planners. Major General Aguiyi Ironsi became the first Nigerian military leader<sup>120</sup>.

Military governors were appointed in the four regions. The situation Ironsi (who indeed was not part of the coup) found himself overnight was one that called for a deft and sincere leadership. To start with, he, following the coup, had not canvass for political power but only agreed with the consensus of the military hierarchy that in order to align with the citizens, the politicians should step out of power for the military. And out of that same consensus, power was bestowed on Ironsi through a decree<sup>121</sup>. In the decree promulgated to effect these changes, the Federal Military Government was empowered to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria or any part thereof, with respect to any matter whatsoever<sup>122</sup>. The Nigerian Armed Forces took over the government of the Federation, and a military government was established. Certain sections of the constitution were suspended, all political activities were banned, and the federal and regional legislatures suspended. The decision to take over from the civilians was arrived at in a senior officers meeting that included Major-General J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi, Lt. Col. Francis Fajuyi, Lt. Col. Victor Banjo, Lt. Col. Jack Gwon, Lt. Col. George Turbo, Major Patrick Anwunah, Commodore Wey and Lt. Col. Hilary Njoku<sup>123</sup>.

The response and involvement by western Region in these developments was minimal. The crises in the Western Region had left the region void of a true leader with genuine followership. The leaders of the Western Region such as Awolowo had been imprisoned and those who were free remained quiet watching the proceedings in the country. The stance of the West to remain aloof allowed the struggle for political power to be two-pronged the East versus the North. Ironsi was slow in crushing the counter coup since it was anticipated in military circles. However, the coup planners were not as

sluggish as Ironsi. They had the following grudge against Ironsi: Decree 34, the feeble way Ironsi handled the January coup-planners; the killing of the Sarduana and Maimalari, and many of those killed during the first coup. Ironsi was captured and killed together with the governor of the Western Region, Lt. Col. Adekunle Fajuyi and many others both civilian and military<sup>124</sup>.

According to Raph Uwechue's reconstruction,

General Gowon, then lieutenant colonel, was General Ironsi's chief of staff when the 'rebels' kidnapped the general along with Lt. Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi from the latter's home. Brigadier Ogundipe, as General Ironsi's next in command had assumed provisional leadership of the army. He believed Gowon was on his side and sent him as a member of the Federal party appointed to negotiate with the 'rebels', then under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Murtala Mohammed. Gowon came back riding high on the back of the 'rebels' to assume command of the army and the leadership of the military government<sup>125</sup>.

The principal figure in the July (Counter) coup was Lt. Col. Murtala Mohammed. Some other views suggested that the coup originated in the lower ranks of the army, and that Murtala Mohammed and some other Northern officers only joined in after matters were under way so as not to leave sergeant-majors in control of the troops<sup>126</sup>. The primary factor that determined the choice of Gowon as Supreme Commander seems to be his moderate and conciliatory character, which must have made him acceptable to most of the dissidents, coupled with the fact that he was from the North and spoke Hausa, although he was of Middle Belt origin<sup>127</sup>. Gowon's immediate and obvious appeal was that he was the most senior Northern officer. Even though he had Southern senior officers like Brigadier Babafemi Ogundipe, Commodore Adewale Wey of the Nigerian Navy, and Colonel Robert Adebayo. Three lieutenant-colonels, W. Basse, Ime Imo, and Njoku had greater seniority than Gowon. In spite of all this, Gowon became the new leader of Nigeria on August 1, 1966.

### 8. DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE NIGERIAN NAVY, 1958-1966

By May 1959, the Royal Nigerian Navy had begun to expand its fleet and shore facilities. A new naval base known as HMNS *Beecroft* was started in 1960, while six ships were further transferred to the Royal Nigerian Navy by the Royal Navy. HMS *Hare* was transferred by the Royal Navy to the Nigerian Navy and renamed HMNS *Nigeria*<sup>128</sup>. Among the six ships transferred with HMNS *Nigeria* were HMNS *Kaduna*, HMNS *Calabar*, and HMNS *Sapele*, all seaward defence motor launches<sup>129</sup>. These ships joined HMNS *Pathfinder*, a survey vessel, HMNS *Challenger*, a motor launch, HMNS *Penelope*, another survey vessel and HMNS *Valiant*, the Governor-General's official yacht. All were previously inherited from the Nigerian Marine. At the beginning of 1960, the Royal Nigerian Navy started with the following Nigerian Naval Officers: On the executive branch, Lieutenant Nelson Bossman Soroh was the only Nigerian Officer. In the engineering branch, the Navy had Lt. Nathaniel A. Pearse, Lt. Edet Akinwale Wey and Warrant Engineer Officer A. Coker. In the Supply branch were Lts. A. Akinloye, O.Z. Chiazor, S/Lts. S. Duyile, B. Martin and A. Oni<sup>130</sup>. The rest of the officers were retired Royal Navy Officers. The Indian Navy training team joined in 1962<sup>131</sup>. As a matter of fact, the total number of expatriate officers serving with the Royal Nigerian Navy was twenty-four<sup>132</sup>. Most of the foreign officers were now staff officers and a few assigned to training duties. Gradually, the number reduced and by the end of 1964 most ships came under the command of Nigerians<sup>133</sup>. The force since 1957 had been engaged in massive recruitment of Nigerian citizens into the service but this did not bear fruit until 1960 when more Nigerians began to join the Navy<sup>134</sup>.

The Royal Nigerian Navy was involved in Nigeria's diplomatic row with the Cameroons in 1960. In order to maintain Nigeria's territorial sovereignty over Southern Cameroon, which was part of Nigeria, HMNS *Nigeria* (HMNS *Hare*) was assigned the duty of transporting the soldiers of the Nigerian Army and officers. For this reason, naval officers and army officers met on board HMNS *Nigeria* and shared their peculiar organisational experiences. On the ship, were men such as Lieutenants (army) Jack Gowon, Michael Ivenso, Patrick Amadi, and Gabriel Okonweze<sup>135</sup>. On 23 February 1960, there was a ship's exercise off Victoria (Cameroon)<sup>136</sup>. On December 1, 1960, Lt. Soroh took over command of HMNS *Kaduna*<sup>137</sup>. He took over the command of the ship from Lt. Cdr. Nelson Walting thereby making him (Lt. Soroh) the first Nigerian that took over the command of a naval ship<sup>138</sup>. However, the problem with the Cameroons was resolved diplomatically. Eventually, on February 11 and 12, 1961, a plebiscite was held in the British Cameroons to determine the wishes of

the inhabitants of Northern Cameroon and Southern Cameroon. The population of Northern Cameroon voted to join Northern Nigeria while the population of Southern Cameroon voted to join the Republic of Cameroon<sup>139</sup>.

On September 30, 1960 (at 11.59pm), it was a naval rating 'Ordinary Seaman' Akano who brought down the British Union Jack, a symbol declaring Nigeria as independent<sup>140</sup>. Even though the Navy was small in size, a naval rating was given this honourable duty. It is generally accepted within military circles that when it comes to such ceremonials, the Navy was looked upon as the best for parade ceremony<sup>141</sup>. The Royal Navy, for instance, has always been at the forefront during parades in Britain; thus the choice of a naval rating was not regarded as an anomaly. The officer who led the ceremonial parade to usher in Nigeria's independence was Lt. Onwura Zonyeuno Chiazor. Chiazor was also first ADC to Nigeria's Governor-General, Nnamdi Azikiwe<sup>142</sup>.

Chiazor joined the Nigerian Navy from the Canadian Navy. He was persuaded by the Nigerian government to join the Nigerian Naval Force. He was not from the 'old marine' or any other Nigerian organisation. He was trained in the Royal Canadian Navy, where he had his Queen Commission in 1956. The fact still remained that he was serving on board the Royal Canadian Navy Flagship when the Nigerian government through the Governor-General, Nnamdi Azikiwe, requested that he came back to Nigeria to help build the Nigerian Navy<sup>143</sup>.

Chiazor was court-martial and found guilty for failing to comply with the Commodore's Temporary Memoranda Nos. 188 dated 21 May 1963 and 252 dated 31 December 1963<sup>144</sup>. Three officers: Commander H. Akinloye, Lt. Cdr. Chiazor, and Lt. Samuel Duyile were charged with misappropriation of naval funds<sup>145</sup>. This incident could be regarded as the Navy's first major controversy after independence. All the officers were dismissed and within the Navy a lot of uproar among officers was provoked by the court martial. The officers protested their treatment to the Federal Court of Appeal to claim their innocence. Rotimi Williams assisted by Abraham Adesanya stood the appeal for the petitioners<sup>146</sup>. The Federal Court of Appeal dismissed four counts and upheld two counts<sup>147</sup>. These two counts were on negligence. The court martial brought up all sorts of insinuations of ethnic or deliberate organisational intention to ruin the careers of the three officers. However, this was dismissed out-rightly by such men as Sub. Lt. Akin Aduwo (later became the Chief of Naval Staff in 1980).

I was at their court martial. It was not as if they wanted to ruin their career because he is Igbo or Yoruba. There was nothing like tribalism. The ship had comradeship<sup>148</sup>.

In fact, for people like Aduwo, the Navy was an obscure force just known to mostly southerners. For him, there was nothing like tribalism, or sectionalism within the Navy. Aduwo, commenting on the relationship among officers, described it "as one that was cordial and having a sense of comradeship"<sup>149</sup> and so there was no problem among officers. This was disputed by Chiazor. For him, naval officers had tribal loyalties like their political pay masters<sup>150</sup>. Also, there were divisions along career recruitment lines, that is, those who were recruited from the 'old marine' versus those that did not come from the old marine. Chiazor, in particular, attributed this to why he was dismissed from the Navy in 1964.

The Navy was devoid of problems such as hatred from the Nigerian people as was the case with the Nigerian Army. The Army was seen as an oppressive tool because of the role it played during the colonial period. The Navy until 1980 was unable to attract enough northerners to join it. According to Aduwo, "Sokoto State had no naval officer until 1980"<sup>151</sup>. This imbalance in favour of the south in the early recruitments of the Navy did not come to haunt the institution as it was with the Army. In the case of the Nigerian Army, it was part of the reasons that the nation fell into a civil war.

In 1964, Commodore Edet Akinwale Wey became the first indigenous Nigerian officer to become the Chief of Naval Staff<sup>152</sup>. He was then the most senior Nigerian naval officer. He took over from Rear Admiral A. Kennedy, a British officer. It was an appointment Aduwo described as "an aberration but intentionally made only to satisfy the politicians"<sup>153</sup>. For Aduwo, Wey was an engineering officer and should not have been made the Chief of Naval Staff<sup>154</sup>. Navies all over the world are controlled administratively by the executive group or the seamen, so they are expected to become commanding officers of their ships and as such the Chief of Naval Staff. The peculiar (Nigerianisation) situation of

1964 allowed this position to be given to an engineering officer, something which would be most unlikely in the later period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the choice of Wey was popular with the politicians. The politicians were not ready to be drawn into issues of who really was appropriate to command the Navy. Admiral Wey commanded the Navy from 1964 to 1973<sup>155</sup>.

Prior to 1966, the British government withdrew Royal Navy ships which were on a long-term lease to the Nigerian government. Among the withdrawn ships was the country's only frigate, HMNS *Nigeria*, the former HMS *Hare*. The Royal Nigerian Navy placed order for the new flagship for Nigeria in 1962 with the Dutch shipbuilding yard of Wilton Fijenoord in Schiedam, Holland. The Dutch government decided to present the *Queen Wilhelmina*, which was in their reserve fleet, to the Nigerian government<sup>156</sup>. This was to help the Royal Nigerian Navy to train her officers and men prior to the commissioning of the new frigate (NNS *Nigeria*). The commissioned *Queen Wilhelmina* became NNS *Ogoja*<sup>157</sup>, and immediately became the new flagship. For a replacement for HMNS *Nigeria*, the country purchased from the Wilton Fijenoord of Holland the frigate also called *Nigeria*. The ship was commissioned on 21 September 1965 (it was bought for £3,500,000)<sup>158</sup>. In addition to the acquisition of the new NNS *Nigeria*, the Navy acquired two additional old Seaward Defence Boats (SDBs), namely, NNS *Benin* and NNS *Ibadan*, from Vickers Shipyard in the United Kingdom on 1 July 1966<sup>159</sup>. Apart from a new SDB, NNS *Enugu*, ordered new for the Navy in 1960, Nigerian naval ships consisted of old ex-Royal Navy ship and NNS *Ogoja*, an old ex-US Naval Patrol Boat handed to the Nigerian Navy by the Royal Dutch Navy as a part of the procurement of the Nigerian Navy's first frigate NNS *Nigeria* on order from a Dutch shipyard in 1964<sup>160</sup>. NNS *Ogoja* was a corvette, with a length of 185ft, carrying the following armament: 1x3" gun, 4x40mm Bofors, 6x4mm Oerlikons and A/S Equipment.<sup>161</sup> NNS *Enugu* also was an SDB, with a length of 110ft, carrying an armament of 1x40mm Bofors and A/S Equipment<sup>162</sup>. NNS *Sapele* and NNS *Calabar* were twin in outlook: they were minesweeping motor launches with a length of about 112ft and carrying an armament of 2x20mm Oerlikons and minesweeping gear<sup>163</sup>. NNS *Challenger* was a Patrol Motor Launch, carrying an armament of 1x40mm Bofors<sup>164</sup>. NNS *Penelope* was a survey vessel; its length was 79ft and carried an armament of 1x40mm Bofors<sup>165</sup>. The first and only land craft before 1966 was NNS *Lokoja*; its length was 188ft and it carried an armament of 2x20mm Oerlikons<sup>166</sup>. Nigeria did not build any of these ships.

Prior to 1966, naval officers had a cordial working relationship with the politicians who were at the helm of affairs<sup>167</sup>. The relationship between officers and their political masters was based purely on professionalism. This working link between the politicians and naval personnel however related to loyalty from the officers and sometimes jealousy and envy; all of this became apparent within the internal structure of the Navy and Army during the two coups of 1966. The Navy did not play a major role during the coups but supported their army counterparts by endorsing the two military administrations.

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