

## **THE 1914 AMALGAMATION: PRE-CURSOR TO MISCONSTRUED UNITY IN POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

The 1914 Amalgamation is central to the controversies and contentions between the peoples of Northern and –Southern Nigeria. The unsolicited union enthroned seemingly intractable religious and ethnic problems in Nigeria’s socio-political and economic life. As a consequence, the political landscape of Nigeria overwhelmingly began to witness destructive clannish/ethnic and religious activities that are inimical to national development. Similarly, skewed constitutional developments during the colonial era bequeathed a deleterious political structure to Nigeria. The Arthur Richard’s Constitution of 1947 constitutionalized regional politics in Nigeria and created the bases of the future development of the Nigerian polity. This paper focuses on the 1914 Amalgamation and the numerous challenges that make forging a strong unity between northern and southern Nigeria elusive. The paper submits that Nigeria as presently constituted faces an imminent implosion and possible division if the structural errors foisted on the ethnic nationalities since 1914 are not consciously addressed. The method adopted was historical narrative. It was approached thematically and analytically, while presentation was chronological.

Keywords: 1914 Amalgamation, Ethnicity, Regional Power Shift, Post-colonial Nigeria.

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## **Introduction**

This paper examines the challenges that face post-colonial Nigeria as a result of the hobbled amalgamation of the ethnic-nationalities that birthed Nigeria in 1914. Crowder noted that Nigeria had emerged in 1914 after a thousand years of convergence of different ethnic groups in a geographical region coined Nigeria by Flora Shaw (later lady Lord Lugard)<sup>1</sup>. Since the colonial amalgamation, the unity, peace and development of Nigeria have greatly been undermined by the challenges of ethnicity, religious conflicts, nepotism, prebendal politics, among others. The political elites have continuously manipulated ethnic and religious concerns to satisfy their self-seeking political interests. The amalgamation imposed myriad challenges on the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural peoples of Nigeria. The different groups so amalgamated had migrated and settled in different parts of Nigeria for different economic, cultural and religious concerns without nursing dubious ethnic sentiments against one another in the pre-colonial era. Ikenna Nzimiro had observed and rightly too that

For several centuries there were internal migrations from one community to the other with the result that no particular ethnic group in Nigeria can claim full homogeneity, that is, there is no particular group that can claim hundred percent blood of its stock and by extension claim over a region.<sup>2</sup>

O.N. Njoku writes that the different peoples in pre-colonial Nigeria had lived with less ethnic consciousness. There seems to be consensus among scholars that ethnic consciousness is a product of colonialism and therefore, unknown to pre-colonial Nigerian peoples.<sup>3</sup> The above view may not be totally correct, but it does appear that colonial rule, especially the 1914 amalgamation, sparked off-ethnic and religious cleavages between the people. The obvious fact is that conflict and competitions did exist between groups in pre-colonial Nigeria. However, it is to be stressed that conflict was not a dominant element in inter-group relations<sup>4</sup> as it is prevalent today. Some scholars have argued though, that there were

minor conflicts between groups, but where these occurred, had nothing ethnic about them.<sup>5</sup> According to Shillington, where competition and conflict between groups had existed, it was for political power or economic advantage rather than simply because they were of different tribes.<sup>6</sup> This assertion was supported by Asiwaju, who stressed that in pre-colonial Nigeria, although distinct cultural areas, as localities of people, existed, they “did not constitute the units for active socio-political or group awareness”.<sup>7</sup> In the same clime, Usman concurs claiming that group political alignments were determined by concrete social and economic interests and circumstances, and not affinities of kinship and language, as the historical tribalism myth would have us believe in recent literature. He concludes that the contemporary “tribes” and ethnic groups in Nigeria, as concepts and units of political action today, never existed in any real historical past of the peoples of this country.<sup>8</sup>

With the contraption of 1914, the foundation of sectional and ethnic coloration of politics in Nigeria was laid. Subsequently, the British administrative marriage of convenience forced the diverse peoples of the northern and southern protectorate to be hobbled together.<sup>9</sup> The British recognized the hitherto existing political structure in Nigeria and adopted a divide and rule system indealing with the different groups so amalgamated. The system of administration adopted for the different ethnic nationalities ensured there was competition between the North and the South. Through the political creations such as indirect rule and warrant chiefs, the British weakened the groups in their favour. According to Kesselman, this dual standard left a conflictive democratic idea: formal institutions yet an authoritarian political culture. Colonialism also strengthened the collective identities of Nigeria’s multiple ethnic groupsby fostering political competition among them, primarily among the three largest: the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and the Igbo.<sup>10</sup> Anyadike also observed that colonial arrangements gave advantage to some favoured ethnic groups: a situation which gave colonial administration favourable climate for exploitations and paved way for ethnic formation.<sup>11</sup> Developments since

colonial rule tried to consolidate the foundation of Nigeria since 1914. The 1914 event and the form of post-colonial relationship between the amalgamated groups raise some questions whether Nigeria was truly united by the 1914 amalgamation as it were? Why has the North-South divide continued to dominate the national space and conversations? Our position in the study is that the hobbled amalgamation of 1914 bound peoples that had been free for centuries. Consequently, the artificial binding imposed myriad challenges which formed the threshold of the troubled state of post-colonial Nigeria. This paper thus examines the implications of the hobbled colonial amalgamation in light of Nigeria's challenges with building a united nation state.

### **Amalgamation and Post-colonialism: Shades of Views and Opinions**

Amalgamation has evoked diverse interpretations and contentions among scholars and commentators in national and global discourses. Hence, its meaning, application and trajectory in epochs differ. A look at some views on the term, Amalgamation would suffice, especially as it concerns our interrogation in this *expose*. By the dictionary definition, it is seen as the action taken "to put two or more things together so that they form one". It is the process of combining or uniting multiple entities into one form; it is a merger, consolidation, in a political or administrative sense; the combination of two or more political entities, such as municipalities (in other words cities, towns etc.) countries and districts, etc, into a single entity. This term is used when the process occurs within a sovereign entity.<sup>12</sup> Amalgamation occur due to a number of reasons such as "unbalanced growth or outward expansion of one neighbourhood may necessitate an administrative decision to merge. In some cases, common perception of continuity may be a factor in prompting such a process".<sup>13</sup> Such merger of districts or towns in recent times were seen in Belgium in 1977, Brazil in 1975, Canada in 1990, that saw the forced amalgamation of several municipal entities in the provinces of Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec into new larger municipalities. There were merger in

Denmark in 1970, Finland in 2006, Germany in 1960s and 1970s, and in the United States of America in 2011 and 2013.<sup>14</sup>

The amalgamation of the entities that birthed Nigeria has received divergent perspectives from scholars and commentators. T.N. Tamuno for instance, writes that “the amalgamation was for British economic mercantilism and interest”.<sup>15</sup> Ajayi and Alagoa express the view that the fusion was equally necessitated by the historically protracted interactions extant among the groups prior to colonialism and Lugard’s merger.<sup>16</sup> In fact, popular opinions suggest that the amalgamation was borne out of the need for administrative convenience and exploitative control of the North and South. However, Ogbaji writes that it was the strength of existing integrative factors which made it possible for Lord Frederick Lugard (Governor-General, 1914-1919), to contemplate a proposal in 1913 for the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, entities which could have developed into separate countries<sup>17</sup>. Tamuno stated that as early as June 1913, officials of the colonial office noted that Lugard’s amalgamation scheme, then under consideration, did not provide answers to the question whether Nigeria should evolve as a unitary or federal state. It was hoped that the answers would emerge when the amalgamation came into effect. The amalgamation of 1914 did not stem from a federal idea. Lugard did not conceive the idea of a federal state for Nigeria, even though there were strong integrative forces of inter-group relations. The trend of opinion before 1914 favoured the division of the territory into a number of units that could develop into component units of a future federation<sup>18</sup>. In the words of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa on the Amalgamation of Nigeria quoted in J. S. Coleman averred thus; ...“since 1914 the British government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigeria people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite ... Nigerian unity is a British intention for the country”<sup>19</sup>. One important fact about the Amalgamation was that it granted the Northern and Southern Provinces a common central political head, negating the traditional

systems political structure existent in both Amalgamated areas. The effects on the Amalgamated units have remained disturbingly continuous in post-colonial Nigeria.

Prior to the Amalgamation, Uchenna Anyanwu noted that there was no evidence of friction between the Igbo and the Yoruba<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, R. Smock and Bentsi-Enchill wrote that “the Yoruba (and) Ibo [sic]...did not exist as self-conscious entities prior to the colonial period.”<sup>21</sup> Okwudiba Nnoli is of the view that tribalism and or ethnicity in Nigeria remains “a creation of the colonial and post-colonial order”<sup>22</sup>. By implication, there was little or no friction in the relationship between the Igbo and their neighbours until colonial Amalgamation. After the Amalgamation, the seed of ethnicity was sown deeply in the socio-political and economic relations between the Amalgamated peoples. Political parties were subsequently formed along ethnic lines, ossifying the division between the groups. Not surprisingly, political activities between, the Igbo, Yoruba and later, the Hausa-Fulani assumed a seemingly disturbing trend. This was seen in the political activities of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the leadership of National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG). Events of the post Amalgamation period showed the level of discord between various peoples of Nigeria. Chinua Achebe reacting to the soured Igbo-Yoruba relations on the eve of Nigeria Independence observed;

The event in retrospect was the death of a dream – Nigeria in which a citizen could live and work in a place of his choice anywhere, and pursue any legitimate goal open to his fellow; a Nigeria in which an Easterner might aspire to be premier in the West and a Northerner became Mayor of Enugu. That dream – Nigeria suffered a death-blow from Awolowo’s “success” in the Western House of Assembly in 1951.<sup>23</sup>

With Amalgamation of the diverse entities that became Nigeria, ethnicity assumed infectious dimensions and became ubiquitous in the post-colonial polity. In Nigeria today, ethnicity

and religion have become important causes of social disharmony; they continue to dominate social and political debates in Nigeria.<sup>24</sup> Ethnicity has made sustainable development and politics in Nigeria, virtually a herculean task. It has also made all efforts at effective integration, good and objective leadership and peaceful co-existence almost elusive.<sup>27</sup>

Debates on what became of former colonies after the dissolution of empire have come to be seen from the prisms of the post-colonial theory. As early as 1961 Frantz Fanon provided the work that initiated what gave impetus to the theory. Dawn Duncan regards Fanon as the father of post-colonial studies.<sup>28</sup> Theoretically, post-colonialism is concerned with matters of race, ethnicity, gender, with the challenges of formulating a post-colonial national identity. It tries to describe how a colonized people's knowledge was used against them in the service of the colonizer's interest and how knowledge about the world is generated under specific relations between the powerful and the powerless.<sup>31</sup> Post colonial theory encourages the creative resistance of the colonized to the colonizer. The theory provides a framework that destabilizes dominant discourses on the developed world, and challenges "inherent assumptions" and critiques the material discursive legacies of colonialism.<sup>32</sup> This discourse aligns itself with the above theoretical perspective of post colonialism. Arising from these conceptual and theoretical issues, the discourse focuses on how colonial rule laid the foundation that bred the intractable ethnic, religious and other challenges post-colonial Nigeria is face with. Our central argument is that these challenges are traced to the hobbled amalgamation of 1914, and the subsequent constitutional developments that introduced regionalism, empowered and pitched one ethnic region against the other. The dubious introduction of such political structures for the benefit of the British colonial rulers, were to form the sound bites of debilitating stance of ethnic sentimentalism and religious bigotry in post-colonial Nigerian polity.

### **Colonial Amalgamation and its Divisive Tendencies**

The fusion of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, under British colonial rule laid the foundation of ethnic based politics in Nigeria. During the years after the amalgamation, colonial rulers deepened the extraction of Nigeria's natural resources and the Nigerian labour, according to the economic and political requisites of Britain, the governing power. Colonial rulers left its imprint on all aspects of Nigeria's existence, bequeathing political and economic systems that have left enduring dent on development and government. Kesselman asserts that the British played off ethnic and social visions to keep (the amalgamated entity) Nigeria from developing organized political resistance to colonial rule, and where resistance did develop, the colonizers were not afraid to employ repressive tactics, even as late as the 1940s colonial rulers also strengthened the collective identities of Nigeria's multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingua groups by fostering political competition among them, primarily among the three largest: The Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo<sup>33</sup>.

The leaders and people of the amalgamated groups became increasingly ethnic conscious. In this regard, Kesselman, Krieger and W.A Joseph stated that 'Nigerian leaders quickly turned to ethnicity as the preferred vehicle to pursue competition and mobilize public support for the three largest ethnic groups. The Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, together comprise approximately two-thirds of Nigeria's population and they have long dominated the political process. By pitting ethnic groups against each other for the purpose of divide and rule and by structuring the administrative units of Nigeria based on ethnic groups, the British ensured that ethnicity would be the primary element in political identification and mobilization<sup>34</sup>. The existing ethnically based associations in pre-1914 amalgamation were said not to have been politically conscious as they became after the amalgamation and subsequently, in post-colonial Nigeria. Kesselman supports this view thus,

Initially, ethnically based associations were concerned with non-political issues: promoting



mutual aid for housing and education, as well as sponsoring cultural events. With the encouragement of ambitious leaders, however, these groups took on a more political character. Recognizing the multi-ethnic character of their colony, the British divided Nigeria into a federation of three regions with elected government in 1954.<sup>35</sup>

It would be recalled that many of the divisions and ethnic politics in Nigeria were enthroned by the Arthur Richards Constitution of 1947 which created three regional houses of assembly in the entire nation. Divided into three federated regions, the administrative division of Nigeria, later became the basis for ethno-regional conflict. Each of the regions soon fell under the domination of one of the major ethnic groups, including their religious inclinations and their respective political parties. The Northern region, largely Muslim came under the control of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), dominated by Hausa/Fulani elites. In the Southern half of the country, the Western region with greater Christian population than Muslim was controlled by the Action Group (AG), which was controlled by Yoruba elites. The Igbo, the numerically dominant Christian group in the eastern region, were closely associated with NCNC, which became the ruling party. Thus, ethnic and regional distinctions of modern Nigeria were reinforced in divisive ways during the transition to independence<sup>36</sup>.

The hobbled amalgamation of 1914 and the political structure exemplified in the formation of political parties remains inherent in the challenges of post-colonial Nigeria. In the Nigeria polity, education, economy, military, police, appointments and all institutions of government parastatals became ethnically based and politicized. According to Mordi most amalgamated people "see themselves first as members of their villages or towns competing for survival and economic development with another around them"<sup>37</sup>. According to Chinweizu, the Richard's Constitution was a

ruse for liquidating pan-Nigerian consciousness by inciting rivalries based on a tri-national state structure. The constitution was a subtle framework for diverting pan-Nigerian energies away from anti-colonial agitation to sectional squabbles and rivalries. The divisive trends of the colonial constitutions have remained dominant in post-colonial Nigeria<sup>38</sup>. Ethnicity thus has been negatively manipulated to sustain ethnic hegemony as well as the enthronement of selfish interests of ethnics in heterogeneous Nigeria. Here lies the cause of incessant ethno-religious and political problems in post-colonial Nigeria.

### **Challenges of a Hobbled Amalgamation in Post-Colonial Nigeria**

The amalgamation under colonial rule introduced cultural dualism—a clash of customs, values, and political systems. First, there was heightened clamour for the creation of more regions by minority groups because of the fear of discrimination, marginalization and oppression by the government led by the majority groups. Okechukwu Okeke writes that at the 1957 Constitutional Conference, the Colonial Office decided to appoint a commission to inquire into the matter. Subsequently, the Colonial Secretary, Sir Lennox- Boyd, appointed what was called the Minorities Commission “to enquire into the fear of the minorities and (suggest) ways of allaying them”<sup>39</sup>. The commission did not dismiss the agitation for more regions entirely. It recommended the inclusion in the constitution of provisions by which new regions would be created. The provision included a plebiscite in the area seeking to become a region. If two thirds of the voters in the area support the proposal for a new region, the matter would be taken to the House of Representatives and the houses of assembly of the existing regions. The support of the two-thirds of the regional houses of assembly and a majority of the members of the House of Representatives would permit the latter to pass an act of parliament to create a new region. These recommendations were adopted, and became part of the provisions of Nigeria’s Independence Constitution.<sup>40</sup>It was obvious that the drumbeats of the hobbled

colonial amalgamation and the 1947 Richards Constitution had started to take dangerous tolls on the Nigerian polity even before independence. However, some political parties at the time, expressed the fears that the failure to create more regions before independence, could lead to a civil war in Nigeria in the future. The Action Group (AG) was one such political party which had subtly but effectively opposed the creation of a Mid-Western state. According to Vickers, the party stated in September that: “To proceed to independence without creating new regions for minority is to expose the newly independent Nigeria to the danger of civil war”<sup>41</sup>. He went further to state that it was the failure to create new regions before independence that led to the civil war. Vickers had accused the members of the Commission of committing what he called “Honourable Treason” against Nigeria.

The drumbeats of the colonial amalgamation and the Richard’s Constitution became evidenced in post-colonial Nigeria. Kesselman enthused that the British granted Nigeria independence in 1960 to an elected parliamentary government. Nigerians adopted the British Westminster model at the federal and regional levels, with the prime minister chosen by the majority party or coalition. Northerners came to dominate the federal government by virtue of their presumed greater population. This NPC policy of “northernisation” brought them into direct conflict with their southern counterparts, particularly the Yoruba-based AG and later the Igbo-dominated NCNC<sup>42</sup>. Kesselman further stated that, when an AG internal conflict led to a political crisis in the Western Regional Assembly in 1962. The NPC-led national government seized the opportunity to sub-divide the Western (largely Yoruba) Region into two, hence diluting the political power of the Yoruba. Violence escalated among the Yoruba factions in the West as the NPC-dominated government engaged in extensive political corruption. A fraudulent census, falsified ballots in the general elections, widespread violence and intimidation of supporters and candidates alike, ensured the NPC a tarnished victory in 1965.<sup>43</sup>

According to Billy Dudley, rivalries intensified as the NPC sat atop an absolute majority in the federal parliament with no need

for its former coalition partner, the NCNC.<sup>44</sup> Nnamdi Azikiwe, the NCNC leader who was also president in the First republic (then a largely symbolic position) and Tafawa Balewa, the NPC Prime Minister, treaded the dangerous path of ethno-political divide by separately approaching the military to ensure that if it came to conflict they could count on its loyalty. Thus, in the struggle for personal survival both men, perhaps inadvertently, made the armed forces aware that they had a political role to play. Tension in the country on the eve of the January 1966 coup was obviously between the North and East and within the West. This interregional tension marked out the federal election of December 1964; two political coalitions faced each other in the election. One of them was the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), a coalition in the NPC and Akintola's party, the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP), the other was the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), a coalition in the NPC and Akintola's party, the Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNDP). The other was the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), a coalition of the NCNC and AG. UPGA was convinced that the NNA, the Prime Minister's coalition, had manipulated electoral rules so gravely that it was impossible to hold a free and fair election<sup>45</sup>.

On the eve of the election (December, 30<sup>th</sup>), it decided to boycott it. The boycott was effective only in the East. The results produced in the other regions (even in the North alone gave the NNA a clear majority in the House of Representatives. The President, Nnamdi Azikiwe, refused to call on Abubakar Tafawa-Balewa to form a government. Nigeria was on the brink of chaos in the first three days of January 1965. The plunge was averted on January 5<sup>th</sup>, when it decided to conduct elections in the East, and the Prime Minister undertook to form an all-party government. The political situation that ensued after the elections of October into the Western House of Assembly resulted in confrontation between NNDP and UPGA. The election was said to be massively rigged by the ruling party. Consequently, the violence between supporters of both parties led to the killing of many people, and destruction of properties. The failure by the federal government to declare a state

of emergency in the region led to the continued violence in the new year and was terminated on January 15, 1966 by Nigeria's first coup d'état. The mutual suspicion that followed the first coup d'état led to a counter coup on 29 July, 1966 by Northern soldiers who perceived the first coup and the activities of Aguiyi Ironsi (an Igbo) as an Igbo orchestrated coup. Ironsi was killed in the second coup which led to the emergence of Col. Yakubu Gowon, the most senior army officer then, and middle Belt Christian to power as a consensus head of state among the non-Igbo coup plotters.<sup>46</sup>

Many Northern officials were killed in the initial coup, as a consequence a tremendous backlash against the Igbo fled several parts of the country. By 1967, the predominantly Igbo population of Eastern Nigeria attempted to secede and form its own independent country, named Biafra. Gowon built a military-led government of national unity in what remained of Nigeria (the North and West) and, after a bloody three year war of attrition and starvation tactics, ensured Biafra surrendered in January, (1970). The conflict exacted a heavy toll on Nigeria's populace, including, at least, more than a million deaths<sup>47</sup>. Kesselman explains that, the Nigeria-Biafra war was indeed, a child of ethnic politics mainly between the Northerners and the Easterners the Hausa/Fulani and the Igbo.

### **Impact of the Amalgamation on Post-War Nigeria**

It would be recalled that Yakubu Gowon, who presided over Nigeria till the end of the war, was overthrown by Murtala Muhammad in 1975. Following the assassination of Murtala Muhammad's Second-in-Command and successor to power, Obasanjo peacefully ceded power to an elected civilian government in 1979, to what became known as the Second Republic.<sup>48</sup> The Second and Third Republics, (1979-1999) were not spared by the continued impact of the colonial Amalgamation. The era was again dominated by a section of Nigeria: the Hausa/Fulani from the north. The President, Shehu Shagari, 1979-1983, and his ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN drawn largely from the First Republic's northern dominated NPC), did little to reduce the ethnic mistrust between the various parts of the federation or to stem the tide of rampant corruption. He paid the price by being overthrown a few

months into his second term in office as president, by another northerner, Major General Muhammad Buhari. Buhari's regime in turn, was ousted by General Ibrahim Babangida in 1985. In 1993, Babangida unfortunately annulled the June 12 presidential election. Popularly adjusted fair and evidently won by a Yoruba businessman, Chief Moshood Abiola. The annulment provoked public outcry and resentment from a Nigerian population obviously tired of continuous postponement of transition and lingering military rule. Babangida was however, compelled to hand over to a weak civilian care-taker government headed by General Sani Abacha. Abacha adopted repressive system of administration to prolong military dominance. The Abacha regime continuously conscripted civil liberties and political rights as well as fomented corruption on a massive scale. It took the natural force of death to remove Abacha from Nigeria's leadership in 1998<sup>50</sup>. Abacha's death ushered in General Abdusalami Abubakar, who promptly organized elections and handed power to an elected civilian government. The presidential election was won by Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military ruler from Yoruba land, western Nigeria in 1999, to usher in the Fourth Republic. Obasanjo became President under the umbrella of the People's Democratic Party, (PDP) on the emergence of Obasanjo as the President of Nigeria in 1999, Kesselman expresses the view that.

Obasanjo's election which marked a shift in political power from Hausa- Fulani Muslim-dominated north to Yoruba Christian-dominated west was resented by the northerners who felt they had lost their political birth-right. This "power shift" resurrected latent ethnic/religious cleavages in the politics of Nigeria<sup>51</sup>.

The Fourth Republic like the previous republics is witnessing avalanche of ethno-political challenges which are drumbeats of the 1914 and 1947 colonial policies and the divisive tendencies associated with them. The 1999 power shift heightened religious and ethno-political cleavages. Mbalisi writes that the Sharia seemingly became the obvious ambition of the northern political elites to give national elevation to Islam over Christianity

as Lugard did under his indirect rule policy. It is almost impossible to mention destructive religious crisis without the Sharia which epitomizes the connection between religion and ethnic politics in Nigeria<sup>52</sup>. Bala Usman links the increasing divisive nature of Nigerian politics since the Fourth Republic in 1999 to Sharia when he posited “Sharia marked the beginning of the introduction of religion into contemporary Nigerian politics”<sup>53</sup>. Some Islamic scholars have expressed views that show that colonialism influenced the role of Islam which has come to hound post-colonial Nigeria.

Prominent among these scholars include, Maaji Baba Shani who in a seminar in Zaria stated thus, “When we (Muslims) were helpless because of foreign domination, we tolerated the supremacy of un-Islamic laws, but we are now master of our destiny”<sup>54</sup>. In another conference held at Bayero University Kano, Maaji argued that “the law of the country was a legacy of colonialism and biased in favour of Christians. The present legal system is tyrannical and inimical motivated politically between Muslim and Christians in the north and reprisal attacks by Christians in the southeast against Muslim northerners who live and do their business in the east. There were the Kaduna riots of 1987, 1993 and 2000 between southern part of Kaduna dominated by Christians and the northern part inhabited mostly by Muslims. There were also the Mohammed Maitatsine led riot in Kano in 1985: the 1990 and 1991 Kano riots, the 2006 riot in Maiduguri which caused reprisal attacks by the Igbo on Hausa indigenes in Onitsha Anambra state: the Jos crisis of September 2001 and 2008: the January 17, 2010 crises between Jos Plateau State and Nasarawa Gwom, caused by Jos Muslim youths who attacked worshippers on Sunday during worship”<sup>55</sup>.

These ethno-religions but politically motivated crisis is detrimental to national development, unity and peaceful co-existence in the Nigerian polity. The battle for religious-political supremacy between the Christian south and Muslim north, have been on the increase, especially following the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as President in 2009 after the death of President Umaru Musa. Yar’audua.<sup>56</sup>Ibenwa and Ngele had noted that there

has been ever increasing violence, especially, in the north due to the unexpected feeling of power loss resulting from the “power shift”. The situation resulted to insurgency in the north-eastern part of Nigeria by the “Boko Haram” terrorist is a perfect example of the nature of religious-political intolerance and the non-acceptance of a southern Christian president by the leaders of north and Muslims.<sup>57</sup> Boko Haram has become Nigeria’s nightmare and has created fear, insecurity and stunted development that seem intractable till date.

On the situation in Nigeria in the Fourth Republic, Kesselman stated that “ethnic-based mobilization including the activities of militia and vigilant groups has increased across the country since the transition to civilian rule. Political leers have sometimes built alliance with such groups and are increasingly using them to harass and even kill political opponents. These practices have reached a dangerous threshold.”<sup>58</sup> Rotimi Suberu noted that the domination of federal government from late 1960 to 1999 by northerners, motivated southerners, particularly, Yoruba leaders, to demand a “power shift” of the presidency to the south in 1999, leading to the elections of Olusegun Obasanjo. Northerners then demanded a shift back to the north in 2007. As a result, Umaru Musa Yar’adua, a northern governor from Katsina was elected and sworn into office. The southerners were to expect a return by 2015, but to a different southern ethnic group than Obasanjo’s. This ethnic rotation principle is not formally found in the constitution but the major and ruling political party seemed to recognize it as a necessity for Nigeria’s many ethnic communities to feel that they have stakes in the federal government. Moreover, the parties practice ethnic rotation at the state and local levels as well, rotating those offices among local ethnic and subgroups in a similar fashion.<sup>59</sup> The tension associated with the continued power shift in the Fourth Republic to the south, led to unprecedented violence in the aftermath of the 2011, 2015 and 2019 general elections.

The 2011 general election was keenly contested between the southerners represented by incumbent President Jonathan of the PDP, and retired General Muhammad Buhari, a northerner under



then Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), and later All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2015, President Jonathan's victory ensured power remained in the south till 2015. The northerners had hoped to wrestle power from the Christian dominated south with a view to completing the supposed second term tenure of the north in 2011. Jonathan's victory generated dangerous and increasingly politically motivated ethnic-based terrorist attacks against Christians and southerners by a northern based Muslim group, the Boko Haram. The violence of the Boko Haram terrorist group has continuously threatened the peace and unity of Nigeria. They have continued to bomb schools, Churches and markets kidnapping and killing innocent of citizens, and demanding of an Islamic caliphate, where the Sharia law would hold sway. In recent times, the activities of Boko Haram are perceived as the greatest threat to the security and unity of Nigeria. It also poses a major source of threat and uneasy concern for Nigerians and the international community. According to Senator David Mark, the president of Nigeria's Fourth Republic Red Chamber, "Boko Haram would break Nigeria if things continue this way."<sup>60</sup> Indeed, political developments in recent times questions the continued existence of Nigeria as a single nation-state in her over centenary of existence, since 1914.

### **The Paradox of a "United Nigeria"**

Since 1960 independence, the different ethnic groups have continued to maintain the 1914 status quo that hobbled the north and south together to form Nigeria. The strength of that "unity" was tested in the Nigeria-Biafra war (1967-70) which came exactly seven years after the British transferred power to indigenous people. Several attempts have been made to promote national unity and integration in post war era. Some of these efforts tend to divide rather than unite Nigeria. One of such programmes aimed at national unity and integration was enshrined in the 1979 constitution, the introduction of the Federal Character principle. According to Onifade, the goal was to accommodate the diverse heterogeneous, religious and geographical groups in decision-making. The policy also aimed to foster unity, peace, equal access

to state resources and promote integration. The policy appears to be creating unhealthy competition and rivalry among Nigerians<sup>61</sup>. Similarly, Agbodike noted that “the federal character principle while stressing the imperative of ethnic-balancing invariably enthrones ethnicity and de-emphasizes the nation”<sup>62</sup>. Onifade thinks that the policy has been criticized for introducing crass mediocrity into the public service, weak at fighting ethnicity, cronyism and corruption has been politicized. Without mincing words, the Federal Character principle is at the threshold of prebendal politics ravaging Nigeria. The issues associated therein highlight the challenges and signpost of the paradox of a united Nigeria<sup>63</sup>.

It is therefore worrisome that most of the contestations in Nigeria’s efforts at unity and integration of the north – south divide appear neglected or at best treated with kid gloves. The fallacy that “we are ‘bound’ in freedom” as contained in Nigeria’s national anthem seems to have a retrogressive effect on Nigeria. It is contradictory to be free and be bound simultaneously. Such action imposes strong limitations on the concerned entities. Freedom presumably has to be voluntary or fought for. Nigeria’s unity with respect to 1914 Amalgamation amplified the persistent struggle for dominance between the regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The grim policy of Federal Character with emphasis on “state of origin” in all federal applications and appointments re-enforces and symbolises integration among Nigerians. The North-South dichotomy replete in Nigeria’s socio-cultural, economic and political structure is a pointer to the fact that the effects of 1914 Amalgamation is extant in present Nigeria. In recent times, the concept of “One Nigeria” as it reflects in our individual dealings with people of different ethnic-groups is a hoax. Most people in Nigeria, especially, the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani possess stronger allegiance for their ethnic region than to the entity Nigeria. There is seemingly, unresolved historical problematic which fundamentally challenges all effort towards achieving unity, integration and nation building in Nigeria. The state of affairs in Nigeria makes the chase for a united Nigeria evasive since the years of 1914 till date.

## **Conclusion**

The 1914 colonial amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates and the 1947 Richard Constitution laid in Nigeria's over centenary of existence, the foundation of chaos with respect to peaceful co-existence in post-colonial Nigeria. Post-colonial politics in Nigeria has been characterized by turmoil and periodic crises since the British relinquished colonial power. With over Sixty years of independence, Nigeria is still grappling with a fragile democracy occasioned by miss-governance while national unity appears paradoxical. Despite what many perceive as positive trends, Nigeria continues to wrestle with over dependence of its economy on oil, ineffable infrastructure and institutions, heightened socio-political tensions, irresponsible elite, and an expanding mass culture of despondency and ethnically based politics of rage and hate. There is obvious absence of a people oriented Nigerian constitution, rather what exists is a "constitution" constructed by the military junta.

The project of building a coherent nation out of the competing ethnic nationalities hobbled together in 1914 remains unfinished. The task of nation building in Nigeria could be likened to the attempts to build a bridge across a river to unite the two opposite sides. Such would demand positive efforts from both ends until appreciable point of convergence is reached. Ironically, the political parties of the Fourth Republic, especially, All Progressive Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) generally, do not represent any particular ethnic interest-indeed, they do not represent anyone's interest except those of the leaders and their client ethnic associations and militias that have risen to articulate ethnic-based grievances. Ethnic consciousness cannot and should not be eliminated from society, but ethnicity cannot be the main basis for political competition. Insights from the Nigerian experience may explain why some federations persist, while identifying factors that can undermine them. Nigeria's complex social map, and its varied attempts to create a nation out of its highly diverse population, enhances our understanding of the politics of cultural pluralism and the difficulties of accommodating

sectional interest under conditions of political and economic insecurity. Federal Character in Nigeria has become a form of ethnic and regional favoritism and a tool for dispensing patronage. If current ethnic mobilization could be contained within ethnic association arguing over the agenda of the parties, then it can be managed. If however, any of the ethnic associations captures one of the political parties or joins with the militias to foment separatism, instability will result to national disorder and threat to peace and unity. The heightened call for self-determination by the southeast for an independent Biafra Nation and Yoruba for independent Oduduwa Republic would not be easily papered over in the Nigeria question.

Nigeria's challenges since 1914 and most, especially, in the post-colonial times reflect the frustrated hopes of its people for a better life, stable government, ethnic balancing and democratic political order, while suggesting the potential contributions that this country could make to the African continent and the wider international arena. The quest for responsive, responsible and capable democratic government leads in two directions firstly, "the path to greatness" through a people oriented Nigerian constitution. Another direction presents the specter of military entrepreneurs, or ethnic and religious extremists plunging Nigeria into more serious inter-ethnic devastations, decline and possibly, the collapse and disintegration of the product of hobbled colonial amalgamation of 1914-Nigeria, skewed for the interest of the British colonial rulers. Unity is not by imposition but by choice, dialogue and agreement between the different ethnic nationalities and regions. The increase in insurgency and associated banditry in recent times, accompanied with the herdsman crisis around the country threatens further, the very fragile unity extant in Nigeria. These conflagrations portend a sickly nature of the Amalgamated units that birthed Nigeria. If all is well with the present political assemblage by Lugard, one would wonder the *raison d'être* for the contests in several quarters by several amateurs and interested parties challenging the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. The Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani that dominate the tripartite political structure of Nigeria over time

have continued in several forums to question the rationale behind the continued existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity. If attempts at unity, integration and national development would yield any positive results in righting the wrongs of colonial Amalgamation of 1914, political and economic arrangements must come to terms with the pervading feeling of insecurity, prebendal politics of exclusionism, and ethnic chauvinism in Nigeria.

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