

# The Doldrums of Nigeria's Amalgamation: A Historical Re-Appraisal

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## Abstract

With a long historical background of interactions, the various ethno-linguistic groups occupying different regions and established on distinct cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations and political creeds were merged by the British authority in what became known as the 1914 Amalgamation. It was supposedly to be a historical landmark for Nigeria giant stride for greatness. However, those dreams and aspirations have never been realized. Thus, since the amalgamation, efforts have been geared towards a truly national integration where the chasm of distinct ethnic, cultural, religious and political ideologies would be assimilated into a united Nigeria. In colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, the British administrators and the Nigerian political leaders had respectively designed policies and programmes to ensure united country. Nevertheless, the lacunas among the regions and ethnic compositions have continued to widen founded on crisis of colonial creation, nationalists' vituperations and politicians' imbroglia. Hence, the doldrums in various facets of development in centenary Nigeria has remained endless. Consequently, Nigeria's developmental stride has been stalled. The paper examines the doldrums of unity that have bedeviled hundred years of Nigeria. The methodology adopts primary and secondary sources as well as internet materials presented in text interpretation and thematic chronology.

**Keywords:** Doldrums, Nigeria, Amalgamation, Colonialism, Nationalism

## 1. Introduction

The more than fifty geo-political entities known today as "African countries" were arbitrary creations of European imperial powers in the course of the so-called "scramble for Africa." In these creations, territorial boundaries were demarcated with no regard to the cultural differences of the various nationalities that occupy these territories.<sup>1</sup> In some cases, coherent cultural groups were split by different border lines; in other cases, distinct, or even rival groups, were brought together to form a single colonial entity. No doubt, the absence of an "organic" cultural or "national" identity which is a common denominator of most modern political entities in the Western world is lacking in Africa. There is a broad consensus among scholars on the artificiality of Africa's current political boundaries.<sup>2</sup> These scholars all emphasize the effects of the process of boundary creation during the era of colonialism on the career of post-colonial African states. For instance, V. Y. Mudimbe strongly posits that African states are products of Eurocentric image of Africa.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the renowned Kenyan political scientist, Ali Mazrui, related political instability in post-colonial Africa to the imperial imposition of artificial political boundaries, and hence, the creation of "fake" nation-states.<sup>4</sup>

The Nigerian state emerged in 1914 after thousand years of convergence of different ethnic groups in a geographical region subsequently coined 'Nigeria' by Flora Shaw (later Lady Lord Lugard)<sup>5</sup>. The various ethnic compositions had at one time or another migrated and settled in different regions necessitated by natural factors intrinsic in human ecology such as shelter, food as well as man-made misadventure among which is war and population explosion. Therefore, migration within and outside had constituted an integral lifestyle of the peoples that would later form Nigeria<sup>6</sup>. Nzimiro's view on the peoples of Nigeria is succinctly stated thus:

*for several centuries there were internal migration 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 per cent blood of its*

<sup>1</sup> On the European scramble for Africa, see Raymond Belts, *The Scramble for Africa: Causes and Dimensions of Empire* (Lexington: Heath, 1972); Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (New York: Random House, 1991)

<sup>2</sup> Examples include Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the curse of the Nation State* (New York: Times Books, 1992); J. R. V. Prescott, *The Evolution of Nigeria's International and Regional Boundaries: 1861-1971* (Vancouver: Tantalus Research Limited, 1971), J. C. Anene, *The International Boundaries of Nigeria 1885-1960: The Framework of the Emergent African Nation* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1970)

<sup>3</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), Xv. This work is a sequel to V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)

<sup>4</sup> Ali Mazrui, *The African Condition: A Political Diagnosis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1962), 21

<sup>6</sup> Toyin Falola & Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 16 - 38

*stock<sup>1</sup> and by extension claim over a region.*

To the northern zone is the predominance of the Hausa/Fulani and Kanuri extractions. The South is dominated by two competing ethnic groups: the proud and culturally rich Yoruba people whose cradle of civilization had been attributed to Ile-Ife in south-west and the energetic, industrious and vibrant Igbo in the south-east.<sup>2</sup> Hemmed in between them were approximately over two-hundred and fifty disparate ethnicities with over three-hundred and fifty languages. Among these are the Efik, Ibibio, Jukun, Nupe, Tiv, Idoma, Edo Ijaw Itshekiri, Igbira, Igala, Illaje, et cetera. Thus, the region was a multiplicity of groups with divergent political, economic, cultural, religious as well as philosophical world views. It is these distinct groups that the colonial administrators merged in 1914. It is imperative to state that each ethnic community was politically independent of the other and therefore, indispensable prerogative for their autonomy. The colonization and amalgamation of the groups had consistently threatened the unity of Nigeria. The process of amalgamation had already been initiated in 1906 when the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria were fused into the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the fusion of 1914 was a process already in motion several years back.

It has been presented in many literatures that the amalgamation was for British economic mercantilism and interest<sup>4</sup>. This paper does not avert to this but argues that the fusion was equally necessitated by the historically protracted interactions extant among the groups prior to colonialism *cum* Lugard's merger.<sup>5</sup> It is the position of this paper that the contraption of doldrums developed by colonial policies, negligence of pioneering nationalists and sustained by post-colonial Nigerian political leaders are responsible for the continued challenges of Nigerian's amalgamation. Consequently, the reality of a true Nigerian nation has been disillusionment-- a figment of imaginations, chimera of fantasies, dreams, aspirations and visions. The empirical realization is obvious and in tandem with the remark of Obaro Ikime that, "twenty-five years after independence, no sure foundation for a truly united nation has yet been laid - Nigeria continues to grope along without Nigerians".<sup>6</sup> Years after the remark, the validity is not refutable in contemporary Nigeria. Hence, the crisis of state of origin is placed above the Nigerian State bearing the attendant anomalies of quota system, zoning as well as sharing formula, mediocrity above meritocracy which has continued to broaden the lacuna in ethnic diversity in all ramifications - polity, economy, education and other parastatals of government. Consequently, the resources of the nation are arrogated along individual aggrandizement and egocentrism as well as ethnic compositions by the fortunate' ruling ethnicity. And the by-products of such nepotistic individual *cum* regional enrichment are political bigotry, economic maladministration and misappropriation of public fund plus insecurity, corruption, geometric rise in unemployment, abject poverty et cetera. As a result, the sluggishness and stagnation in the nation giant stride to greatness and a truly contradiction in the centenary celebration of Nigeria.

## 2. The Colonial Factor, 1914 - 1960

The exploration of the African interior had brought to fore the rich and untapped resources within the continent to the purview of the European explorers, traders and missionaries. Hence, the European expatriate firms buoyed by their home government began the scramble, partition and eventual conquest of Africa.<sup>7</sup> So that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, virtually all the parts of the continent had become European colonies, Nigeria inclusive,<sup>8</sup> though exempting Ethiopia and Liberia. By 1906, there was effective occupation of Nigeria. The independent states of the previous centuries had become subjected to colonialism<sup>9</sup>. The conquest nonetheless strengthened the bond of long historical interactions that had existed among the various ethnic communities occupying the geographical area known as Nigeria. Thus, commenced a process set to further unite

<sup>1</sup> I. Nzimiro, *Ethnicity and Development, A lecture Series on Ethnicity and Development: The Danger of Ethnic Ideology*, Vol. 1 & 2, A Division of General Studies, 2

<sup>2</sup> Biodun Adeniran, 'The Origin of Nigerian Peoples', in Richard Olaniyan (ed.), *Nigerian History and Culture* (England: Longman Group Ltd., 1985), 10 -19; See also, Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 21 - 34

<sup>3</sup> James O. Ojiako, *Nigeria: Yesterday, Today And ...?* (Onitsha: Africa Educational Publishers (Nig.) Ltd., 1981), 8 - 10

<sup>4</sup> T.N. Tamuno, 'British Colonial Administration in Nigeria in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century', in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History* (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.), Plc., 1980), 393 - 394

<sup>5</sup> J.F.A. Ajayi & E.J. Alagoa, 'Nigeria Before 1800: Aspects of Economic Developments and Inter-Group Relations', in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, 224 - 235

<sup>6</sup> Obaro Ikime, *In Search of Nigerians: Changing Patterns of Inter-Group Relations in an Evolving Nation State* (Ibadan: Impact Publishers Nigeria Ltd., 1985), 21

<sup>7</sup> J.E. Flint, 'Chartered Companies and the Scramble for Africa' in J.C. Anene & Godfrey Brown (eds.), *Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1966), 110 - 130; See also Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule* (London: Hutchinson & Co.(Publishers) Ltd., 1968), 45 - 64

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 129

<sup>9</sup> Fola Soremekun, 'The British Penetration and Conquest' in Richard Olaniyan (ed.), *Nigeria History and Culture ...* 144 - 147; Michael Crowder, *West Africa Under Colonial Rule ...* 165

them as a country. The unification was further strengthened by the 1906 merger of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the climax of the convergence of the various heterogeneous compositions attained its unification in 1914 when the Northern and Southern Protectorates were finally fused into one united Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> One would have expected the steps taken by the British administrators and colonial government to be supported by effective administrations and policies that would ensure lingering governmental structures or institutions leading to oneness, however this was not to be. Rather, the British masters fostered and emphasized the need for separate administration with plausible arguments in distinct languages, education, religion, culture as well as political organisations. Hence, Elaigwu remarked that “despite the amalgamation, the British continued to rule Nigeria as if it were two separate political entities”.<sup>3</sup> The British divisive policies of administration was noted by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, one of the pioneering nationalists thus,

*the British preserved the Muslim North in its pristine Islamic purity by excluding Christians missionaries and limiting Western education, by denying northern leaders representation in the central Nigerian Legislative Council during the period 1923 – 1947.*<sup>4</sup>

The British administrative policies and other subsequent legislations were intended to perpetuate the individuality and separateness of the north<sup>5</sup> and by extension national disintegration. The policies from the onset were contradictions in the British efforts at Nigeria’s amalgamation. The separation in administration was abinitio a conventional ‘divide and rule’ system of the British which only buttressed and stressed the differences in the ethnic groups. To this end, they succeeded and initiated the stagnation in the true unification of the country. The anomalies in the administrative policies of the British were apparent in the contraption and contradictions of constitutional developments in Nigeria as handed down by colonialism. To this end, we reiterated that Nigeria’s struggle for independence was essentially constitutional and fundamental for a truly united nation and balance of power. For colonial Nigeria and ethnic groups therein, the constitution was to a large extent colonial creation designed to create and sustain imbalance as well as recallable differences among the ethno-linguistic groups. As opined by Mordi, the constitutions created were anti-Nigerian values and attitudes which fostered and nurtured disunity and divisiveness as well as strengthened a disproportionate distribution of powers.<sup>6</sup> The imbalance was later to haunt and taunt the nation as noted by James O’Connell that ‘the constitutional settlement at independence in some countries (like Nigeria) sows the seed of later trouble’.<sup>7</sup> At independence subsequently, Nigeria groped over constitutional misunderstandings which had besieged the nation even after over five decades of independence.

The colonial government replaced Lord Lugard with Sir Hugh Clifford having seemed to realize the folly in the former’s administrative inadequacies. But again, it was a decoy designed by British government for Lugard’s escapism against being censured. Clifford instituted the first and elective constitution for the country. For him, constitution is essential in the effective administration of Nigeria and Nigerians participation in their affairs. However, there was nothing Nigerian about it. The legislative body had a limited principle for Lagos and Calabar while the Governor-in-Council legislated for the North by means of proclamation. The doldrums in Clifford’s Constitution towards national integration was that it retarded the North from active participatory governance for twenty-five years while the South gained political experience and sophistication albeit its inert inadequacies. Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello shared this view. According to him,

*the Nigerian Legislative Council was first set up in 1922 and since that time, the South has been gaining the art of democratic government ... thus ... the South had twenty-five years start over the North in application of parliamentary procedure.*<sup>8</sup>

This was to cause unending political delay and misunderstanding between the North and the South. Mordi clearly expressed the situation thus, ‘the dichotomy in political experience and exposure between the North and the South continues to generate ethnic suspicions and to act as a drag on national integration and Nigerian unity’.<sup>9</sup> In the same vein, the Southern political sophistication and Northern traditionalism inevitably

<sup>1</sup> T.N. Tamuno, ‘British Colonial Administration in Nigeria in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century’ in Obaro Ikime (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History ...* 393

<sup>2</sup> Ojiako James O., *Nigeria: Yesterday, Today And ...?* 8 - 9

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Uchenna Anyanwu, ‘Ethnic Loyalties and National Cohesion in Nigeria: The Historical Role of Colonialism’ in Onuoha Jonah & Okpoko Pat Uche (eds.), *Ethnic Nationalism & Democratic Consolidation: Perspectives from Nigeria and the U.S.A.*, (Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd., 2004), 79

<sup>4</sup> Coleman J. S., *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, (Berkeley & Los Angeles: California University Press, 1958), 322

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Mordi Nwafor E., *The British in Nigeria: A Legacy of Disintegrative Constitutionalism, 1914 – 1987*, A Paper Presented At the 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria Held At the Bayero University, Kano, 27<sup>th</sup> March – 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1980, 2

<sup>7</sup> James O’Connell, ‘The Inevitability of Instability’, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1967, 181

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Mordi Nwafor E., *The British in Nigeria: ...* 28

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

emerged as a major centrifugal force in Nigeria's political geography.<sup>1</sup> This was the British method of "Machiavellian divide and rule intended to stifle the constitutional development as expressed by Ezeru".<sup>2</sup> As already noted, the efforts of the British administrators and colonial government were to keep the peoples divided and weakened in order to facilitate their exploitation. Thus, the idea of a Nigerian nation was inconceivable and the government was determined to oppose its development.<sup>3</sup> This was a consistent policy of colonial government with dynamic implementation at all stages of constitutional developments. So that by the time the Richard's Constitution was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1939, the Southern Nigeria was split into two while the North was left preserved in its completeness. The implication of this was to ensure inequitable representation and imbalance of power at the centre as seen in Macpherson's Constitutional devolution of power to the regions in the decade preceding independence.

While the Clifford's Constitution initiated the dichotomy in political participation and experience distinct to each regions, the Richard's Constitution legalized the process through apparent demarcation of the regions into three along ethnic lines thereby emphasized the differences in ethnicity. As a result, early nationalists began to set up tribal organisations or unions which invariably metamorphosed into ethnic political platforms.<sup>4</sup> Osuala had noted that the formation of political parties assumed the ideology of each of the three geo-political regions in the North, South-East and South-West. To the North was the Northern People's Congress with the motto "One North, One People" which gave an insight accurate description of its objectives. The Western region dominant party was the Yoruba led Action Group and the Eastern region was prevailed by the National Council of Nigerian Citizens.<sup>5</sup> The implementation of Richard's Constitution came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1947 with an established Legislative Council for the whole of Nigeria, Regional Councils for each of Nigeria's three administrative regions with no legislative powers and a House of Chiefs for the Northern Nigeria. Criticisms had been levelled against the Richard's Constitution with Ezeru Kalu describing it as "the first and worst form towards national integration in West Africa";<sup>6</sup> while Kenneth Onwuka Dike remarked that the Richard's Constitution was a "dividing line in Nigerian constitutional development".<sup>7</sup> According to him, it aborted the keynote in Nigeria politics at the time when unification was sought.<sup>8</sup> Chinweizu's dictum on the Richard's Constitution is that it 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 their (pan-Nigerianists) energies away from anti-colonial agitation to sectional squabbles and rivalries.*<sup>9</sup>

Consequently, the nation was enveloped by unending ethnic tensions, mutual mistrust and rivalries into the decade prior to independence and thereafter.

Following the shortcomings and disapproval against the provisions of Richard's Constitution on regionalism, the proviso of the Macpherson's Constitution created more troubles for Nigeria towards national integration and unity. Realizing that the Macpherson's Constitution would devolve power to the regions, the early nationalists in their selfishness resorted to regional power representation and aggrandizement. Mordi succinctly expressed this thus,

*the moment they realized that the Macpherson's Constitution was to establish the power structure of the Nigeria of the future, Nigerian nationalists began to jockey for regional power, revenue allocation and representation.<sup>10</sup> They intensified the rivalries among them and failed to see the British inherent Machiavellian principle of divide and rule at play. Thus, their struggle became directed at their group.<sup>11</sup>*

Instead of their usual condemnation of 'British autocracy and rapacious colonial exploitation' they renewed their threats of secession or outright domination or began to alert their kith and kin that some 'outsider' was bent on dominating them.<sup>12</sup> Whereas the Macpherson Constitution legalized ethnic regionalism, the introduction of Lyttleton's Constitution concretized regionalism created by Richard's Constitution. Under the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Ezeru Kalu, *Constitutional Development in Nigeria*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 31 - 32

<sup>3</sup> Coleman, J.S., *Nigeria*, 1958, 194

<sup>4</sup> Coleman, J.S., *Nigeria*: ... 210 - 215; 319 - 331

<sup>5</sup> Osuala, U.S. & Audu, M.S. et al, 'Contextualizing the International Dimensions of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967 - 1970', *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, Vol.3, No.8, August 2013, 113

<sup>6</sup> Ezeru Kalu, *Constitutional Development* ... 68

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Onwuka Dike, *Hundred Years of British Rule in Nigeria*, Lagos, 1957, 43

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us* (U.S.A.: Nok Publishers {Nig.} Ltd., 1978), 131

<sup>10</sup> Mordi N. E., *The British in Nigeria*: ... 15

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

1954 constitution, the absence of symbol of unity for the whole country became crystal clear through the transformation of the regions into de facto independent entities with separate governors, separate premiers, separate cabinets, legislatures, judiciaries, public service commissioners, marketing boards and development plans.<sup>1</sup> The situation assumed its worst form when all governmental bureaucracies became regionalized in such a way that a prospective civil servant could work or seek employment only in his region of origin – the basis of state of origin in contemporary Nigeria. Thus, the foundation for discrimination in education, employment prospects, opportunities for personal advancement and general development of the country was laid. Consequently, by the time independence was achieved in 1960, the ethnic animosities on political platforms had degenerated into a abyss of political suspicions leading to vitriolic attack on one another. The mutual mistrust became undoubtedly apparent and further polarized the regions. To this end, the colonial government had succeeded in sustaining the balkanization of the amalgamated Nigeria through constitutional contradictions designed to stamp ethnic orientation into Nigerian nationalists' psyche and unequal balance of power.

### 3. The Nationalists' Narcissism and Ethnic-Chauvinism, 1947 – 1979

The jigsaw nature of the British constitutional developments which had left the nationalists and the nation at large into egocentricity along ethnic politics has been discussed. While we condemned the confusion created by colonial administrators and government, it would be complete escapist alibi to absolve the inadequacies of early nationalists and later politicians' role in the process. At this juncture, we take a cursory view at the activities of pioneering nationalists in the doldrums of divisiveness to the detriment of national integration. It would have been anticipated that the nationalists who had studied overseas<sup>2</sup> and had been subjected to British and other *whites'* discrimination, segregation, underdevelopment and exploitation in their entire disguise would have united against a common foe and for a common goal. However, they could not decipher the decoy in British plots to keep them at loggerheads. Rather, they were enmeshed in personal narcissism and ethnic nepotism supposedly believed to be in the interest of ethnic lines. Consequently, the various regions had continued to suffer to the stagnation of the nation.

The crisis of a united Nigeria assumed different dimensions with the introduction of the Richard's Constitution with its emphasis on regionalism. Prior to this, the Lagos Youth Movement founded in 1934 which was renamed Nigeria Youth Movement in 1937 had begun a struggle for complete autonomy within the British Empire<sup>3</sup> and unity of the country. For instance, H.O. Davies once expressed "we can never split – no, never. We are not a party, we are a national government whose mission is the regeneration of our fatherland".<sup>4</sup> In no too distant time, the crack in NYM began to wear tribal dimensions which eventually led to its collapse.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, ethnic sentiments and organisations began to appear with vehement vituperation from their leaders emphasizing differences in compositions. Hence, the then Premier of the Western region wrote that,

*Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English', 'Welsh', or 'French'. The word 'Nigeria' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.*<sup>6</sup>

The statement above was made in an attempt to advance ethnic sentiment and cheap popularity against NCNC which had hitherto wielded political influence in the country especially in South-western Nigeria. There is no justification for the comments. One needs to remind the proponent that there was never *English, Welsh, or French* as at the time of the Roman Empire or Renaissance Period. They assumed their respective distinctive identities and entities over time just like *the United States, Russians, German, Italians, et cetera*. Within the same period and manner, the would-be Prime Minister of Nigeria at independence and leader of the NPC stated that "Nigeria existed as one country only on paper. It is still far from being united. Nigerian unity is only British intension for the country".<sup>7</sup> The opinion contradicted Tafawa Balewa's subsequent actions. One would have anticipated that he would lead the northern extractions out of the nation at independence, nonetheless, he assumed the position of Prime Minister owing to the predominance of the northern representatives at the centre. More so, Tafawa Balewa should be reminded that many of the northern settlers were never complete Hausa, Fulani, or Kanuri. Therefore, the geographical size and tribes claimed to the northern region was for political domination and not for altruistic purposes. Hence, the Tiv demanded for separate states and region in the north

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

<sup>2</sup> J.S. Coleman, *Nigeria*, ... 220

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 225

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 224

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 227 - 229

<sup>6</sup> Max Siollun, *Oil, Politics, & Violence: Nigeria's Military Coup Culture, 1966 – 1976* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2009), 12

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

from the oppressive rule of the Sarduna of Sokoto in the mid-'60s.<sup>1</sup> Besides, the Prime Minister's position contravened the view of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the then Premier of the northern region. Ahmadu Bello expressed his satisfaction with the northern participatory role in the Richard's Constitution. He remarked thus, "for the first time, and this was important to us, the North was represented at Lagos and the Regions met on common ground".<sup>2</sup> The opinions and vituperations of these leaders (Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Tafawa Balewa) influenced the formation of political parties which sought cheap popularity among kith and kin in the years ahead. The emergence of Action Group in 1947 and the Northern Peoples' Congress were designed along ethnic sentiments.<sup>3</sup> Besides, it satisfied the British intensions of balkanization. Therefore, the Richard's Constitution and other colonial policies were a political schizophrenia and psychological sledge hammer of some sort on the psyche of the early nationalists. Alas, they fell for it.

The formation of political parties on ethnic chauvinism and the desire to arrogate power by nationalists at the centre was to lead the nation into doom in the quinquennial years of independence. The preceding decade of independence has sensitized the rank and file politicians along regional and ethnic lines. And the polity, economy, education, military, police and other governmental parastatals became apparently politicized and ethno-linguistic. In Mordi's remark, "they see themselves first as members of their villages or towns competing for survival and economic development with another around them"<sup>4</sup> As a result, tension reached an unprecedented crescendo during the heated Federal Election of 1965. Many of the politicians were little more than ethnic champions uninterested in a national outlook. The campaign was conducted not on platform of policy or ideology but on the basis of personal invective and vitriolic ethnic jingoism.<sup>5</sup> It was on the basis of this gloomy state of polity that prompted the military take over. According to Ademoyega,

*there was no doubt that 1965 was a year of political gloom throughout Nigeria. Generally, people had been disillusioned and disaffected with the Balewa Government and the rulership of Balewa/Akintola/Sarduna clique of NNA. ... It became obvious that the national leadership was nearing its collapse and that the ship of the nation was heading for the rocks.*<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, the coup d'état of 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 ended the first republic in all its perpetual pandemonium. However, the coup was misconstrued<sup>7</sup> and accordingly created series of politicized military imbroglio which eventually plunged the nation into thirty months civil war. It has been debated among scholars whether there were justifications for the coup or not. That is a subject for another historical debate with emphasis on the role of the military in centenary Nigeria. Nonetheless, the years of the *Khaki Boys* never convincingly justify the reasons for their intervention in governance. The submission is founded on the stunted growth in national integration as an indictment on their de facto administration.

The war ended on the 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1970 with the military administration of Gowon at the straddle of post-civil war Nigeria. The administration began with the paradoxical cliché, *no victor, no vanquished* and the 3Rs (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction)<sup>8</sup> programmes without the fourth R (Reintegration). Onwuka Njoku remarked that the declarations were "mere populist sloganeering and pious pronouncements ... not matched by positive action."<sup>9</sup>Therefore, the policies were intrinsically and abinitio ill-conceived and ended up as a turning point that never turned. For instance, Obi-Ani argued that,

*most of the Nigerian armed forces personnel who fought on the side of defunct Biafra were dismissed and a decree promulgated making it a punishable offence to employ them in any corporation in which the federal government has any interest.*<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the backwardness and stunted in technological growth in contemporary Nigeria is an indictment on the failure of the Gowon and his successive military administrations. According to Obi-Ani,

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<sup>1</sup>Adewale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers {Nigeria Publishers} Ltd., 1981), 20

<sup>2</sup> Mordi Nwafor. E., *The British in Nigeria: ...* , 28

<sup>3</sup> James Ojiakor, *Nigeria: ...* , 15 - 16

<sup>4</sup> Mordi Nwafor E., *The British in Nigeria: ...* 21

<sup>5</sup> Max Siollun, , *Oil, Politics and Violence: ...* 18

<sup>6</sup> Ademoyega Adewale, *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers {Nigeria Publishers} Limited, 1981), 21; See also F. Toyin & M. Matthew, *A History of Nigeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 172

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 60 - 61

<sup>8</sup> See *The Violations of Human and Civil Rights of Ndigbo in the Federation of Nigeria (1966 – 1999): A Call for Reparation and Appropriate Restitution*, A Petition to the Human Rights Violation Investigating Committee by Oha-Na-Eze-Ndi-Igbo (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 2002), 35

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Obi-Ani Paul, *Post-Civil War Political and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970 – 1983* (Nsukka: Great AP Express Publishers Ltd, 2009), viii

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, vi

*the Nigerian government did not take advantage of the Biafran technological innovation at the end of the civil war. ... The Biafran Directorate of Fuel designed, fabricated and built a refinery entirely out of locally available material during the war. It was from this refinery that the Biafran army got all the fuel that enabled it to sustain the civil war for as long as it did.<sup>1</sup>*

The consequence of the politicized-ethnic military inaction to consolidate the innovations and invention in the Eastern region of the country confronts us till this day. Nigeria has unquantifiable oil-wells all around her territorial waters, yet the nation consistently and incessantly suffer from seemingly ending fuel scarcity. After over half of a century since the discovery of oil in the country, the Nigeria cannot boast of a functional refinery. The locations of built refineries were far from where crude oil is explored. An ill-conceived and misplaced national project for obvious reasons already discussed. Besides, it was a poisoned indoctrination of the British residual and lingering advice for the nation. This was intended to maintain a hold on the nation in their orthodox *Machiavellian* principle. This is indubitably the effect of dearth of visionary as well as ideological policies of governance. By the end of 1979 and military rule, Nigeria had jettisoned the British Parliamentary system of government for the Presidential system modelled after the United States' system of government. It was an indictment on the disintegrative colonial policies and constitutionalism concretized on the short-sightedness, indiscreetness and imprudence of the pioneering nationalists' narcissism and ethnic-chauvinism.

#### **4. The Latter Politicians' Ineptitude and Bigotry, 1999 - 2014**

Nigeria returned to democratic rule in May 1999 after sixteen years of military interregnum. The expectations for national development were high given the associated progress attributed to democracy. However, the trend in polity and quest for power had never ceased to be likened to the independence years ever since. The political elites still tow the path of ethnic politics with no party ideology and national outlook. Consequently, the rank and file of politics has been infused with such sentiments, thereby regenerating a disintegrative polity. Many placed personal narcissism and aggrandizement above national integration and developments. This is evident in many unguided utterances, actions and inactions by political leaders which have led the nation into series of ethno-religious violence, wanton destruction of lives and properties as well as intensification of ethnocentrism. As such, the political terrain in the nation is comparable to the 1960s era and the perpetuation of the doldrums in national integration.

In addition, many see the return to democratic dispensation and polity as a road to stardom and financial security. Hence, the activities of the contemporary political class appear to be a *cult* where power and wealth of the nation are cyclically circulated among party caucus. In Nigeria, the breed of politicians who had been involved in governance since 1970s and '80s still clinched to power. Some others have only transfigured from military administrators to civilian rulers with orthodox idea of governance. Perhaps, no wonder the country is still held bound to *politics of the old*. It is not indubitable that the governance of the nation is akin to the conservative Romanov Monarch System where power and national appointment is reserved for their progeny and shared among cronies. The resultant effect is mediocrity is placed above meritocracy.

Attempts have severally been made to ensure national integration however, they have all been contradiction at conceptions. Among such national programme was the introduction of the Federal Character Principle enshrined in the 1979 Constitution and sustained by contemporary political class. 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.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the policy has only intensified the chasm in ethno-linguistic differences among Nigerians. This is in agreement with Agbodike's assertion that "the Federal Character Principle while stressing the imperative of ethnic-balancing invariably enthrones ethnicity and de-emphasizes the nation."<sup>3</sup> Hence, the emphasis on "State of Origin" rather than Nigerian nationality in every application form meant for every governmental parastatals. Furthermore, the policy has been criticized for introducing crass mediocrity into the public service, weak at fighting ethnicity, cronyism and corruption has been politicized.<sup>4</sup>

The doldrums in centenary Nigeria has equally been perpetuated by lack of accountability from the ruling class. The litany of corrupt cases in the nation has taken different forms and guises. It is prevalent across the various institutions of governance. The "Hallowed Chamber"<sup>5</sup>, the Nigerian National Petroleum

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*, 120; See also, P.N.C. Okigbo, 'The Economics of the Civil War: The Biafran Experience' in Tamuno, T.N., & Ukpabi, S.C., (eds.), *The First 25 Years Vol. VI: The Civil War Years*, (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1989), 210

<sup>2</sup>C.A. Onifade, & D. Imhonopi, 'Towards National Integration in Nigeria: Jumping the Hurdles', *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.3, No.9, 2013, 78

<sup>3</sup>C.C. Agbodike, 'Federal Character Principle and National Integration,' in Kunle et al (eds.), *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 2000), 177 - 179

<sup>4</sup>Onifade, C.A., & Imhonopi D., 'Towards National ...', 78

<sup>5</sup>Osuala, U.S., & Audu, M.S., 'The Hallowed Chamber and the Skulduggery of Sleaze in the Fourth Republic, 1999 - 2007',

Cooperation<sup>1</sup>, the Judiciary, the Executive, the Police and other sub-governmental structures<sup>2</sup> are cases in point where the doldrums in the progress of Nigeria is being stalled. The ruling class has built and maintained State structures and other State paraphernalia designed for accumulating surplus without producing the surplus. The various anti-graft agencies (the Independence Corrupt Practice Commission and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission), set up to fight corruption have been tagged *toothless bulldog*<sup>3</sup> as they are intrinsically created as a political witch-hunt.<sup>4</sup> The consequences are apparent in all realm of the nation: lack of strong governmental institutions, lack of job opportunities and increasing youth involvement in political violence as well as graduate unemployment, infrastructural decay, alarming insecurity, frequent ethno-religious violence and killings.

## 5. Caveats and Conclusion

The discourse has attempted to historicize the doldrums in the hundred years of amalgamation in Nigeria. Certainly, the British merged the various ethno-linguistic groups within the geographical terrain to create a country – Nigeria. At the same time, the colonial government plausibly designed policies and enforced actions to ensure the divisiveness of the country. This is evident in the disintegrative constitutionalism occasionally prepared for the nation. The paper reiterates that the colonial government and administrators' policies were fragmentary in accordance with orthodox British *Machiavellian* balkanization. Nevertheless, this is not to exonerate the early nationalists and latter politicians' ineptitude in the process. At independence, the aftermaths of the divisiveness of colonialism were apparent across the country. Rather than rebuild their *homes* and ensure national integration by eradicating all forms ethnic polity, the pioneering nationalists intensified ethnic politics which has equally been sustained by latter politicians. Hence, the various ethnic groups have continued with an unending clamour for national conference, rotational presidency, sharing formula among other contentious issues dividing the people and the nation. In Nigeria, the divisiveness is evident in *State of Origin* such as Lagos, Imo, Kano, Bayelsa among others. This has only widened the gap in national integration and retarded efforts at national growth and developments. As Nigeria clocked hundred and on another phase of centenary journey, it is imperative that a regenerative breed of selfless, visionary, purposeful and ideological leaders motivated by altruistic intentions should be at the helm of affairs of the country. In addition, the extant and subsequent political parties should design party ideologies that would promote national outlook, eschew ethnic politics and fight against corrupt practices. It is only through these means that a meaningful amalgamated Nigeria could be sustained.

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<sup>1</sup>Osuala, U.S., & Audu, M.S., 'The Sublimeness of Sleaze in the NNPC in the Fourth Republic, 1999 – 2007: A Historical Conspectus', *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol.11, Issue 2, May – June, 2013, 23 - 30

<sup>2</sup>Samson, A.A., & John, O.A., 'Corruption and Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Historical Discourse', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol.14, No.7, 2012, 81 - 98

<sup>3</sup>Olokun Ayorinde & Tony Orilade, 'I'm Not OBJ's Attack Dog', *The News*, February 19, 2007, 22 – 25: Also see Chiawo Nwankwo & John Ameh, Ribadu: FG Insincere About Anti-Corruption War – Repts, *The Punch*, Saturday, 16 August, 2008 retrieved from www.punchng.com

<sup>4</sup>Toyin Faola & Matthew M., *A History of Nigeria ...*, 272 - 274



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