

THE 1914 AMALGAMATION AND THE DIVISION IN NIGERIA: A LOOK AT CONTEMPORARY MANIFESTATIONS

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Abstract

The paper examined the amalgamation of 1914 and its effect on the political leadership of Nigeria. It argues that the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria has not yielded its expected result as the two parts see themselves as different from each other especially in the area of political administration thereby giving room for mediocracy instead of competence as each part struggles to produce a representative from their area. The amalgamation of North and South seem to have further divided Nigeria especially since 1999 as each group view other as different people. It has continued persistently thereby frustrating the national integration efforts.

Keywords: Amalgamation, Nigeria.

Introduction

In African continent, Colonialism left a lot of legacies. Depending on one's view, these legacies could be either positive or negative respectively. Nigeria has her own fair share of these Colonial Legacies which range from a dependent socio economic structure, a culture of corruption, a deep sense of ethnic chauvinism and lack of oneness among the component parts of reflection especially in level of division in Nigeria as a legacy of colonialism in Nigeria. This division was archived by the amalgamation of 1914 that gave the impression of bringing together people of different cultures and traditions. From 1914, especially since independence in 1960, the idea of seeing these different ethnic groups as different people has continued to frustrate national integration ideas. In contemporary Nigeria particularly since 1999, the division in Nigeria has assumed a life of its own power has been shared as it were between the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria. The South had its share from 1999-2007 and appeared determined to enjoy its own eight years uninterruptedly.

This is obvious when president Musa Yar'Adua was no more, it was difficult to by the Northerners to let his Vice, Goodluck Jonathan assume the office of the presidency as the law permits. This work is divided into four sections, the introduction, the emergence of

a new Nigeria, the 1914 Amalgamation and the crisis of power sharing, finally the conclusion.

The emergence of a new Nigeria

History of a new Nigeria is traced to the British attack on Lagos in 1951. This culminated in the 1861 conquest of Lagos. From then, other part of what is seen as today Nigeria began to emerge gradually under British Colonial influence. Nigeria came into being in 1914 when the Northern and Southern protectorate were amalgamated by Sir Fredrick Lugard. Crowder, 1973. What is known as Nigeria today first had contact with Europeans in the fifteenth century through commercial explorers.

It first started with slave trade which was very lucrative at then. As time went on, slave trade became less lucrative which gave birth to legitimate trade. At this point, the desire to annex spheres of influence by European powers became the driving force. Of course, the abolition of the slave trade was not without the efforts of the early Christian missionaries Soremekun 1985. With the abolition of slave trade, legitimate trade such as palm produce, Ivory and other materials that provided raw materials for European industries. Set in from fifteenth to Nineteenth century, the trading activities centered within Lagos, Calabar and Bonny area.

Gradually, the need to expand trade beyond the metropolis and possibly undermined the middlemen led to the British involvement in local politics. For instance, European involvement in Lagos politics follows some internal equabbles among the ruling class was due to the desire to secure the territory for the purpose of trade with the Yoruba hinterland. This interference led to the annexation of Lagos in 1961 thereby making Lagos a British colony. To ensure River Nigeria become gate way into the interior, protectorates was proclaimed followed by the oil rivers protectorate. The protectorates were initially administered by the Royal Nigeria company. Following the withdrawal of Royal Nigeria company charter, the entire territory of Nigeria became under colonial administration; with the territory being divided into Lagos Colony, protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the protectorate of Northern Nigeria.

By 1906, Lagos Colony was merged with the Southern protectorate. In 1914, the Colony Northern and Southern protectorate were merged together and govern under the leadership of Sir Frederick Lugard .

The 1914 Amalgamation

The 1914 Amalgamation is an important aspect of Nigeria History. Though, it was not the only amalgamation as there were other amalgamations between 1900 and 1914. In 1900 there was the amalgamation of the Niger coast protectorate with other protectorates imposed on the Lagos hinterland by the British to form the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, different from Lagos Colony. By 1906, Colony of Lagos was merged with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria.

The 1914 amalgamation which seems to be more pronounced among others, was necessary as the last legislative and administrative step the British took to establish a single Nigerian colonial entity. The step has made that the Nigerian Nation has not really known cohesion (Egwemi 2009). This is traceable to its colonial history as we have already indicated. After the amalgamation of 1914, there seem to be no conscious effort to forge unity. According to Egwemi 2009, there were attempts to keep the country disintegrated. The attempt by British to keep Nigeria apart received a boost when one of Nigeria's pre independence leaders, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was quoted as saying "Nigeria is not a nation". It is a mere

geographical expression". On the other hand, some philosophers are of the view that Awolowo is quoted out of context. As Kukah Matthew believed that Awolowo used the expression to draw attention to the urgency of the work at hand, which means that he wants Nigerians to work hard in turning her geographical expression into a great nation.

Since 1960, successive governments have put in place measures to tackle the issue of diversity and the attendant animosity Ekeh, 1987. Since the discussion of the measures cannot be treated here, suffice it to say that in as much as the measures may have had the effect of watering down the effect of the divisive tendencies they are far from solving the problems. The divisive tendencies seem to have assumed a life of their own and this becomes very manifest when there is something especially the political office and position of the country.

The crisis of power sharing in Nigeria

The divisive outcome of the amalgamation became transparent before 1960. The early nationalist leaders treated each other with a lot of suspicion. The suspicion was more in the area of electoral contest. According to Elaigwe 1980, the two regions of Nigeria, the North and the South were wary and afraid of a kind of tyranny from the other. The South feared the population of the North while the North on their own feared the Southern skills.

As a result of the above scenario one major area of contention in Nigeria is the issue of power sharing. Power sharing in Nigeria since independence, has been an issue that has called for concern even the status of the nation. The section that has been in control of power want to continue uninterrupted, while those that felt marginalized have articulated and asserted their claims to power.

The Southern part of amalgamated Nigeria, had become restive and want to clinch to power. The opportunity was to come in 1993 when Moshood Abiola contested and seemed to be coasting home to victory when the then military head of state in the person of General Ibrahim Babangida annulled the elections midway into the collection of results based on what he called flagrant abuse of the electoral laws of the country. The reason did not go down well with the Southerners who see the decision as a deliberate

attempt to deprive them of their fair share of power.

Conclusion

In Nigeria, the issue of North/South power struggle is one of the colonial legacies that have impacted negatively on Nigerian federation. The colonial attempt of making Nigerians perceive themselves along the line of North and south have endured with very dire consequences.

The country may overcome the divide if emphasis is placed on competency, merit and integrity instead of ethno- regional origin, putting the interest of the country above personal or regional interest. Perpetrators of ethno religious disturbances should be treated in accordance with the law establishing a country like Nigeria which will serve as deterrent to the younger generation.

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