

Amalgamation and Small Arms Proliferation in Nigeria, 1914-2016

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Abstract

Using the survey research design and integration theory as the theoretical framework the study set to examine critically amalgamation as a seed of disunity and small arms proliferation in Nigeria. The vulnerability of crisis caused and entrenched by Lugard's amalgamation polarized the country along ethnic line with divergent and conflicting rivalries that not only destroyed cohesion but encouraged indiscriminate use of small arms. The study recommends a re-configuration of the constituent units and the restructuring of the extractive political and economic institutions to avert future pitfalls and at the same time charting better security courses.

Keywords: amalgamation, crises, disunity, small arms, Nigeria

Introduction

The year 1914 was critical in the construction process of a Nigerian identity as the British helmed by Lord Fredrick Lugard arbitrarily amalgamated the Northern and Southern protectorates for their imperialist interest. This process of amalgamation had a lot of misgivings among scholars based on their perception of the concept. Some scholars saw it as an inevitable doom inflicted on Nigeria and Nigerians resulting in divided-self, ethnic violence, and small arms abuses but Sandy Ojang¹ argues that “amalgamation was an unavoidably good exercise which when properly harnessed would generate immeasurable benefits for the northern and southern protectorates”.

The amalgamation of 1914 remained the most painful injury British government inflicted on Nigeria as it laid a solid foundation for ethnicity and tribalism². In line with above, Tamuno succinctly averred that the amalgamation of Lugard lacked the essential ingredients of stability in nations whether developing and developed.³ The fact remains that since 1914 despite the claim of the makers of amalgamation, the political history of Nigeria according to Olaniyan Richard reveals “a continuing

¹Sandy O. Onor (2018:18), The 1914 Amalgamation of Nigeria: Some Matters Arising. *International Journal of Inflation and Good Governance Quagmire in Africa*, Vol. 10 Issue 4&5,

² Obafemi Awolowo (1947:51), *Path to Nigerian Freedom*. (London: John West Publication Ltd)

³ Tekena Tamuno (1991:400), *Peace and Violence in Nigeria*. (Ibadan: The Panel on Nigeria since Independence History Project)

story of the struggle between the forces of hegemony inspired by the historical imbalance, caused by the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates on the one hand, and the persistent contest to redress the imbalance and promote integration...⁴ Therefore, the failure of the various tribal groups to negotiate the amalgamation, is the root cause of many tribal wrangling and agitations, ethnic hues and cries of marginalization, greed, controversial and inconclusive censuses, vote-rigging, stagnated economic growth and nepotism in Nigeria. The amalgamation only created a nation ridden with conflicts that encouraged the world's greatest theatre of absurdities resulting in human rights violations and arms abuses.

Lugard amalgamation pursued policies of uneven development among ethnic groups and regions which entrenched ethnic bickering, ranking, stratification, and discrimination that virtually guaranteed Hausa/Fulani aristocracy and political domination⁵. Even the march towards national integration initiated by Nnamdi Azikiwe rather generated inequalities, lack of trust, and injustice which led to the emergence of inter-ethnic clashes and separatist tendencies.⁶ This set the stage for a documented future of endless bloodletting which took place first in Jos in 1945 and was fostered by ethnic violence. By 1953, violence had become political tools used by the elite to achieve their inordinate ambitions. This was evident in Kano in 1957 when the northern leaders that opposed Anthony Enahoro's call for self-determination, sponsored deadly riots that resulted in the death of hundreds of people. Even the independence won from the British created a situation of competition for power which the emergent ruling class elite preferred to use ethno-religious factors as springboard for disunity. This method seemed to have become routine affairs especially in the 1966 pogrom that consumed the lives of many innocent people and led to the Nigeria-Biafra war of 1967 – 1970.

Literature highlighted the firm grip of colonial rule and its attendant consequences in the geographical entity but how Lugard amalgamation spurred small arms abuse, divided-self and human carnage in Nigeria has not been central to existing academic discourse. Nigerian, today, is not only a disabled giant of Africa but also a synonym of anarchy, small arms proliferation, and bloodbath, an edifice erected by Britain since 1914.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research strategy as a means of exploring the existing divided-self and small arms proliferation arising from the evil edifice erected by Britain since 1914. The study made use of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources refer to interviews and some archival materials while secondary sources include research published articles in peer-review journals, working papers, government reports, newspapers, and magazines as well as student dissertations. The study was conducted using a systematic scoping review approach to synthesize research evidence.

⁴ Richard Olaniyan (ed) (2013: xv), *The Amalgamation and Its Enemies*. (Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd)

⁵ Egbosa Osaghe (2002:52), The Federal Solution and National Question in Momoh, A. A.(ed), *The National Question in Nigerian Comparative Perspective*. (England: Ashgate Publishers)

⁶ Cletus Obasi (2010:27), *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Nigeria: The Way Forward*. (Owerri: Claretian Communication)

Theoretical Framework

Nigeria's crisis of destiny was a colonial construct arising from the forceful unification of two strange bed-fellows in 1914. The contemporary Nigerian society took off from a false start as the artificial amalgamation of ethno-religious peoples into a single polity created a sense of frustration among some groups. This development encouraged divided-self, lack of trust, ethno-religious disorder, conflicts, and small arms abuse and misuse. In examining the amalgamation as a seed of discord and small arms proliferation in Nigeria, the study adopts Obasi Igwe's theory of integration which upholds mutual trust, mutual interest, we-feelings, common goals, and continuous optimization of their potentials within the state, or any entities within larger political integrity. The theory posits that "*the process and consequence of purposeful cooperation or outright unity between political units or entities arise out of the notions of objective interdependence or common goals and mutual interests ...within the states or groups of larger political integrity and intended to continuously optimize the potentials of the actors*".⁷

The theory partly holds a different view of the existing situation in Nigeria from 1914 to date resulting in the mad orgy of vices and consequent pillage of citizens. Lugard amalgamation did not amount to integration even though the motive behind it, Ifidion notes was to avert jealousy or competition between the north and south and the object of integration⁸. British colonialists and the aristocratic classes seemed to have become strong allies and applied all screws to maintain their '*status quo ante*'. This implies that the purpose of integration as regards the real meaning of amalgamation was defeated by the British leading to rancor and antagonism.

Rather than natural integration that had already taken root before the arrival of the colonialist through trade relations, inter-tribal marriage, and socio-political and military pacts, Lugard amalgamation divided us with a sharp knife that brought in all manner of ineptitudes. Such amalgamation was superficial and opposed the real meaning of the concept. Amalgamation, according to E.B.Haas appears to be "a process of building a collective space in a conscious, negotiated and irreversible manner by partners who had chosen to shape a common destiny in a political cum institutional framework pre-established through negotiation and based on a strategic vision of common future"⁹.

The process of Nigerian amalgamation was more of coerce, lacked objective necessity for integration, lacked empirical factor and awareness of the populace that warranted its desirability, and also shrouded in secrecy. The purpose of amalgamation was never aimed to produce a smooth ethnological blend or natural integration out of the different nationalities and the process exhausted the natural history fashioned for the state. According to Afigbo, amalgamation properly conceived and fully implemented is bound to be a continuing exercise and as well takes the time that cannot easily be accurately estimated from the beginning.¹⁰

With mistrust and hatred planted by the colonialists in the politics of Nigeria, different ethnic groups saw the struggle to control the state as a zero-sum game in which all the spoils belong to the victor. Therefore, to participate in the political economy of Nigeria, many ethnic groups and regions that

⁷ Obasi Igwe (2005:205), *Politics and Global Dictionary*. (Abia: Eagle Publishers)

⁸ Ehimika Ifidion(2013:23), A Review of Studies of Dysamalgamation in Nigeria, In Olaniyan(ed), *Amalgamation and Its Enemies*.DT515.8.042

⁹ E.B.Haas(1966:94), *Integration International: The European and the Universal Process in International Communities: Anthology*. (New York: Doubleday Publishers)

¹⁰ Adiele Afigbo (2013:48), The Amalgamation: Myths, Howlers and Heresies, Olaniyan(ed), *The Amalgamation and Its Enemies*. (Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press)

were subjugated, exploited, and humiliated by the colonialists and subsequent regimes after their exit raised small arms against the presumed oppressors as the only vehicle for the realization of their rights to self-determination. The out-going British colonial government deliberately willed and structured Nigeria to be perpetually disunited by instituting geopolitical inequality which favored the north against the south. This colonial relationship threw up a generation of the ruling class and irredentist groups with a penchant for misrule, socio-economic and political exclusion, and the abuse and misuse of small arms, respectively to address or redress a perceived injustice.

The concept presents different meanings to different persons. Metallurgists, define it as a mixture of two elements to form one unique element. According to Afigbo, *amalgamation is the process of making amalgams or alloys, that is with the blending together of certain metals in such a manner that at the end of the process it is impossible to say, without prior knowledge, what the constituent metals are or to separate the constituent without going through a process of a chemical reaction as much as that by which the amalgams was constituted in the first place.*¹¹

Amalgamation, in the business world, means coming together of two or more business concerns to form one business entity especially in the recapitalization of failing businesses. Businesses that seem to produce similar products or render similar services sometimes merge to enhance their capital base. Others see amalgamation as the resultant effect of two combined entities. The Encyclopedia Britannica cited in the work of Paul Eric viewed amalgamation “as the process of uniting two or more entities to form a new entity which could be in terms of business organizations with similar or different products and services.”¹²

Politically, it could be a combination of two or more nations, cultures, and civilizations to form a single entity or sovereign nation. Karl Deutsch sees amalgamation “as the formal merger of two or more previously independent units into a single larger unit, with some types of common government”.¹³ In line with the context of this discourse, Charles Ikedikwa refers to amalgamation as “the fusing or merging of two entities or bodies into one with the result that both will cease to exist and be replaced by the new body or entity”.¹⁴

There is no denying the fact of Lugard amalgamation which was more of a top-bottom approach but in reality, amalgamation was and remained a humdrum rather than a grandiose process of bringing the diverse ethnic groups together. It is a blunder associating only Lugard as synonymous with amalgamation because amalgamation was a scheme larger than Lugard, older than he and that lived longer than he.¹⁵ It was not or is not a one-shot affair, nor did it start with the British colonial rule. It started before the British colonial rule and has continued since they left.

Based on the above definitions, most states that were globally products of amalgamation such as India, Brazil, and others had thrown to the wind their colonial chains but the reverse is the in Nigeria. The political entity was deliberately laid on a weak, mischievous and vulnerable foundation in connivance with the indigenous ruling classes that hide under the guise of national unity to create

¹¹ Ibid, p.47

¹² Paul Eric (2016:67-68), The Amalgamation of Nigeria: Revisiting 1914 and Centenary Celebration. *Canadian Social Science Journal*, Vol.12 No 12

¹³ Karl W. Deutsch *et al* (1968:5-6), *The Analysis of International Relations*. (New York: Eaglewood Publishers)

¹⁴ Charles Ihedikwa (2014:66), *Amalgamation of Nigeria: Was it a Mistake*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd)

¹⁵ Adiele Afigbo (2013:54), *The Amalgamation: Myths, Howlers and Heresies*, Olaniyan (ed),(Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press)

more harm for their selfish interest than nation-building. Most conflicts in Nigeria have their roots in a way the amalgamation was handled among the newly independent countries.¹⁶ The amalgamation of Nigeria was based on the policy of conquest and exploitation resulting in the scourge of repression, selective justice, terrorism (Boko Haram), and Herdsmen crisis, threats of disintegration, corruption, insecurity, political and economic exclusion, small arms proliferation, and misuse¹⁷. Under normal circumstances, amalgamation should have been the political hub that would bring the various ethnic groups together and provided the basis for establishing closer socio-religious and linguistic ties vital for true unity rather than ethnic-divide, unhealthy competition, and hatred.

Concept of Small Arms

There is no consensus on the definition of small arms. The nearest to the meaning was that of the United Nations Panel of Expert on small arms and light weapons that were based on applicability and usage. The United Nations definition rather differentiated the concepts with specific reference to the number of the person(s) involved in the operation. The Experts refers to small arms as arms designed for personal use while that of light weapons are designed for use by several persons.¹⁸ Examples of small arms include revolvers, self-loading pistols, rifles, machine guns, etc. Light weapons include portable grenade launchers – mobile or mounted; portable anti-aircraft cannons; portable anti-tank cannons; non-recoil guns; portable anti-tank missile launchers or rocket launchers; portable anti-aircraft missile launchers, and mortars with a caliber of less than 100mm.¹⁹

Furthermore, regional organizations like ECOWAS, EU, AU, NATO, and other smilitary institutions, instead of giving a single definition of small arms keyed into the United Nations definition that has little or no difference except in height which is less than 50mm. Even the United Nations definition-baseline ignored home-made guns produced locally and externally under license based on indigenous design. All these weapons especially small arms were/are a major destructive instrument used by non-state and state actors in most conflict-prone zones in Nigeria. In line with this view, Alaku sees small arms as handy, cheap, and easy-to-use weapons of lethal barreled quality from which a bullet is discharged.²⁰

Arms manufacturing has been on the increase since the 1980s as 300 companies in 52 countries have established facilities for arms production.²¹ Even 22 less developed countries have also joined the group of small arms and light weapons manufacturers.²² This seems to rhyme with the statistical data of arms production and distribution trends, articulated recently by Arenhshot Tom that reveals ‘an estimated 1734 companies in 198 countries world-wide involved in arms production.’²³ Over

¹⁶ Peter Wallenstein (2012:171), *Understanding Conflict Resolution*. (London: Sage Publications Ltd)

¹⁷ Fani Femi-Kayode(2017:47), The Travails of Audu Maikori and Praying for Our Leaders. *Sun Newspaper*, 21st February

¹⁸ Sesay Amodu and Anthonia Simbine (2006:XX), *Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Collection in the Niger Delta*. (Ibadan: College Press)

¹⁹ Conference of the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2006): Their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, Abuja ECOWAS Commission

²⁰ Emmanuel Alaku (2011:3), *Small Arms Proliferation and Economic Insecurity in Nigeria, 1985-2005*. An Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

²¹ Malloch Brown and Dhanapala J.(2000:2), Let’s Go Out into the World. *International Herald Tribune*, 26th January

²² Rachael Stohl (2004:2), Legacy of Illicit Small Arms Proliferation: Its Devastation in West Africa. Briefing on Small Arms in West Africa to the US Congress on Human Rights Caucus, 20th May

²³ Hyginus Okibe(2016:16), Global Trends in Arms Proliferation in Third World Countries and Impending

875million small arms are in circulation worldwide with many of them illegally in the hands of non-state actors and civilians, and about a 100million small arms are in circulation in Africa causing huge problems for the continent and its people.²⁴ The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa doubted the primary responsibility of United Nations Security Council members (USA, Britain, France, China, and Russia) to both First World and Third World because they account for 88% of the world's conventional weapons exports.²⁵

The alarm raised by Anslem Yabouri, UN Director on Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament shows that out of the 500million small arms in sub-Sahara Africa, 350million are in circulation in Nigeria.²⁶ There is a rough estimation of one to three million small arms in circulation in Nigeria mostly in civilian possession that is obtained illegally.²⁷ This development queried the essence of the regulatory and prohibition laws, including the law enforcement agencies trained with the taxpayers' money to maintain order and security in the society.

Amalgamation and Divided-self

The forceful unification of freely independent nations and ethnic groups with a different history, political system, customs and traditions, religions, and other practices in Nigeria by Britain for socio-economic and political plunder has continued to place the country on the keg of gun powder. According to Crowder Ajayi, this became a heavy albatross as it is structured against the political geometry.²⁸ The British, first of all, planned Nigeria to suit her economic interest at the country's detriment. This famous and obnoxious policy had great ripple effects not only at dividing geographical entity (Nigeria) but made one section of the country perpetually dominant in politics. It was for this reason and to enable 'the north to continue to exert its control over Nigeria, the region was made 5/6 (fifth-sixth) of the whole country.'²⁹

The aftermath of this amalgamation and colonial rule resulted in the search of identity as the beneficiaries of the configuration and power transfer capitalized on the opportunity to consolidate, dominate, exclude, subjugate and oppress the disadvantaged both politically and economically. This was how the seed of discord was inadvertently laid, for the diversity which should have been the source of strength and unity, become sore throats, and a constant source of political uprising and small arms abuse and misuse. Nigeria's political elite, instead of fostering unity continued to stoke the fire of ethno-religious nationalism and imposition of harsh religious legal code on so many willing and pretentiously unwilling people.

From the trends of development, it does not seem likely that the independent leaders believed in Nigeria nor had any love for the nation because of the precedent set by them. Their regimes not only

Apocalypse of Human Race. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Devrlopment*,5/9

²⁴ E. Ndawana, M.Hove, S. Chuliku(2018:49), Tanzania: Small Arms Proliferation in East Africa National Security. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, issue 23, April, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324911574>

²⁵ Alexander Kings(1985:86), *Managing Global Issues: The Arms Race and Development – Waste and wants*.(Finland: University of Helsinki)

²⁶ Anslem Yabouri (2017), United Nations Raises Alarm Over 350 million Illicit weapons in Nigeria. <http://leadership.ng-un-raises> alarm

²⁷ John Moses and Julius Ngomba(2017:1641), Small Arms Proliferation in the Early 21st Century: The Nigeria Case. *International Journal of Sustainability and Development*. (ISDS article ID. IJDS17101703) <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/322686060>

²⁸ Crowther Ajayi(2013:10), Nigeria and Security Challenges. *Tell Magazine*, 11th February

²⁹ Emefielu Ezeani(2013:154), *In Biafra, Africa Died*. (London: Veritas Lumen Publishers)

lacked the reason for national integration but cash in on ready established extractive political and economic institutions to divide and rule Nigeria. From 1966 to date, Nigeria has been passing through difficult times ranging from war, conflicts, corruption, political violence resulting in the death of millions of lives and this sowed the seed of permanent division with small arms having a free reign.

The politics of independence was therefore driven by the philosophy of exploitation through repression and selective justice that encouraged the recipients to seize control of the government and its resources for the benefit of their ethnic nationality.³⁰ This implies that seizing control of the government was largely seen as a conquest of other ethnic nationalities and deserved to be cowed with small arms abuse and misuse. The ruling class had ever since made the amalgamation principle an article of faith and enforced its husband's rights as god-given, permanent, and unamenable. They even publicly declared their readiness, Tamuno notes to commit genocide to enforce their presumed rights to plunder and squander the resources of the country by proposing to kill 20million, 14% of the fellow Nigerians who live in the oil-producing Niger Delta.³¹

The insistence on ruling Nigeria in perpetuity and on exploiting the country together resulted in the two coup plots of 1966, the pogrom of 1966, 1967-1970 civil wars and also led to the formation of various ethnic non-state actors like Niger-Delta militants, Boko Haram terrorists, Fulani herdsmen, Indigenous People of Biafra and O'odua Peoples' Congress. This obnoxious policy pursued by the aristocratic class to plunder, conquer and consolidate their grips over the Nigerian economy created a culture of aggression and repression in the mentality of indigenous nationalities in Nigeria hence the genesis of prevalent conflicts and small arms stockpiles among the ethnic groups against perceived enemies.

Certain hate speeches made by northern politicians especially Ahmadu Bello not only had its roots to the amalgamation of 1914 but generated lots of irreconcilable contradictions and mutual suspicious in the political space. The minorities could not completely reconcile themselves to this unjust political and cultural tragedy that denied them their freedom and identity. Because of their agitations for inclusion, they became targets of excruciating experiences such as genocide, extra-judicial killings, and other mad orgies of violence. Many Nigerian lives were not only wasted through extra-judicial means but also the explosive devices of the radical Islamic terrorists, machetes, and AK-47 of Fulani militias and herdsmen thereby spreading deaths, diseases, impoverishment, pains, sufferings, hatred, persecution, destruction, and wickedness³². Therefore, the nation is a harbinger of irreconcilable contradictions as several and regime-changes did not attempt to put in place a system that would have catered adequately for the interest of various discontented groups.

Furthermore, the consolidation of the traditional institution according to the colonial administrative system with the hope that the institutions should protect and mediate between the people was a mere sham as the recipients only enriched themselves at the expense of many. These beneficiaries and the colonialist set the indigenous people against their traditional rulers. Chidozie Agu observes that Europeans gave freed slaves and caste leadership positions and where there were none, the colonial power went ahead to appoint one for the affected societies in utter disregard of the wishes and aspirations, as well as the customs and traditions of the people.³³ This was evident in Igboland where

³⁰ Luke Onyekakeyah(2017:17), Lovers and Haters of Nigeria. *Guardian Newspaper*, 13th June

³¹ Tekena Tamuno(2011:81), *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta 1849-2009*.(Ibadan: Stirling-Horden Publishers)

³² Fani F. Kayode(2017:47), The Travails of Audu Maikori and Praying for Our Leaders, Sun Newspaper, 21st Feb.

³³ Chidozie Agu (2010:177), Leadership, Religion and Development: Insight from Archaeology. In Egodi, U. et al (eds), *Perspective on Leadership in Africa*. (Nsukka: Afro-Orbis Publishers)

warrant chiefs, clerks, and messengers appointed, were resented by the Igbo people not because they were alien impositions violating the Igbo democratic structure but also because those who accepted the appointments were men without status and allegiance and therefore could not protect and defend the integrity of the communities. The pervasive difficulties in Nigeria were encouraged by these oppressors who were also primary beneficiaries of the ruins of the nation's giant strides. Those oppressors bequeathed with power, not only became power-drunk and always above the law but assumed the position of being "born to rule" as they trifled with comfort and indeed, the lives of ordinary citizens

Disunity and Small Arms Proliferation: The Nexus

Nigeria's profound case of identity conflict began after the amalgamation of 1914. The British initiated and formulated the segregation policy which the ruling class currently applied and even make use of, to date. For instance, the Sabon Gari (new towns) segregated indigenes from settlers, Muslims from Christians, and Government Reserved Area (GRA) for the Europeans. Historically, the Sabon Gari system was meant to serve as reserves for non-Muslims. It was feared that they would contaminate the purity of Islamic culture if contacts were allowed between the two groups. The strangers were expected to know their limits, appreciate their inferior status, and never seek to rise beyond the confines which the ruling class drew for them.³⁴ There had always been violent conflicts when strangers went beyond their limits in Northern Nigeria and not religion *per se*.

Till now, there are areas in the North where non-Muslims were not allowed to live and do business. It has become part of the consciousness of the people and a mark of identity, while generating, at the same time, social tension and a lot of struggles. The "settlers" wanted to be recognized and respected against the discrimination, prejudice, lordship, oppression, injustice, and dehumanization of the Northern ruling class. But the indigenes wanted to exercise their lordship and superiority over land and cultural matters as well. The conflicts among the Tiv/Jukun Taraba (2001), Jukun/Hausa-Fulani (2012-2014), Wukari/Donga(2001), Jukun/Gassol in Taraba (2001), Jukun/Tiv (2002), Bauchi (1991) indigenes/settlers crisis in Jos(2012), Shendam crisis in Plateau State, Kano (1991), Zango/Kataf (1999), Chamba/Kuteb (1991) and most communities in the Northern zone found themselves in the phenomenon of permanent strangers. In this ugly situation engendered by the British, Nigeria, Chinweizu aptly observes, is simply a territory, with a state apparatus for internal plunder... which together provide habitat for multi-ethnic nayou... whose boundary/leadership dispute often leads to mayhem....³⁵

Therefore, it is plausibly believed that the identity conflicts and religious dimensions in Nigeria's current socio-political turbulence, unquestionably, were/are the oppressors construct. It was not only inspired by the inevitable horror of losing their treacherous grips on power but the psychotic fear of being completely dragged to the dust by the growing number of Nigerian citizens who are increasingly conscious of their inalienable rights to positive society, good governance, and constitutional rights to govern themselves.

Above all, the political history of Nigeria is riddled with assassination, military coup d'état, and lack of confidence in the impartiality and transparency of the electoral system. The return to civil rule has opened up space for interrogating political and social phenomena established and entrenched by

³⁴ Cletus Obasi (2010:22), *Ethnic Conflict and Reconciliation in Nigeria: The Way Forward*. (Owerri: Claretian Communication)

³⁵ Chinweizu,(2005), *The Reconstruction of Nigeria: Four Delusions on Our Strategic Horizon*, 24th June <http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/policy-politics/article1>

Lugard in 1914. The perceived imbalances and unanswered question with the Nigerian political system contributed fundamentally to the atmosphere of hostility and conflict. However, in the absence of a systematic attempt to resolve most of the fundamental contradictions or differences and problems facing the country's political structure, the newly enlarged political space is fast becoming filled with ethnic or other primordial identities. The net effect of these strong feelings arising from these ethnic groups entrenched an atmosphere of hostility and antagonism, with each group alleging political and economic marginalization at the hands of others. The crises, currently experienced in Nigeria, are examples of conflicts that resulted in the struggle for political participation and inclusion.

The frequencies of conflicts in Nigeria are stimulated by the rising trends of separatists, irredentist movements, and ethno-religious organizations with clearly defined political agenda. These associations were formed largely to promote and protect the interest of ethnic or religious groups. Such associations include the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw National Council, Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDVPF), the O'odua People Congress(OPC), Arewa Consultative Forum(ACF), The Middle Belt Forum, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), etc. These associations make claims that have lots of implications for the sovereign state. These claims and demands include those for the equitable distribution of economic resources, political power-sharing, and the reconfiguration of Nigeria. In most cases, these demands were pursued and promoted by a well-armed militia in a manner that inevitably leads to violent conflicts.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The divide and rule policy of the colonialists created a false and enemy image among the various nationalities in the country. This undermined African humanness, a communal ethos, and created a distorted political scene with obnoxious policies and entangled Nigeria in a chain of democratic confusion. At the end of colonial rule, not only did colonialism create an imbalanced nation of unwilling parties with ill-focused elite, but it also created a dependent economy that reserved Europe as the major determinant of policies. The post-colonial state (Nigeria) was therefore incapable of handling the imbalances inherited. The consequence was the resort to the use of physical threat and small arms by some people to assert their rights and freedom

What has consistently escaped most Nigerians in the entire travesty is the fact that mediocrity planted by the British government destroyed the very fabrics of the country. As was to be expected, such a situation was a recipe for ushering in all sorts of banality, ineptitude, corruption, debauchery, insecurity, and small arms proliferation. Nations that enshrine mediocrity as their modus operandi created the fertile ground for the rise of tyrants and other base elements of the society, thereby leading to the dismantling of the system of excellence because they do not immediately benefit one specific ethnic, racial, political or specific interest group.³⁶ It is for these reasons that Nigeria ought to realize that her economic and political emancipation and advancement would never be genuinely initiated and engineered by the neo-colonialist and their cohorts but through the re-configuration of the constituent units and the restructuring of extractive political and economic institutions to avert future pitfalls and at the same time, charting a better security courses.

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³⁶Chinue Achebe (2012:55), *There Was a Country*. (London: Penguin Books)

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