

COLONIAL LEGACIES AND CONTEMPORARY REALITIES: TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA SINCE 1914

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Abstract

Over a decade after Nigeria's centenary, questions linger about whether the 1914 amalgamation was a blessing or curse. Nigerians have lived with the consequences, marked by protests and agitations that began during colonial rule and continue to this day. This paper examines the socio-political state of the nation since 1914, with cultural diversity and binding factors such as group threat theories posing significant challenges. The paper adopts a historical and analytical approach with a combination of primary and secondary sources of data collection. Findings reveal firstly that despite the difficulties and threats, Nigerian leaders have made significant efforts over the years to sustain the 'nation' inherited from the British in 1960. A case in point was Yakubu Gowon's 9-Point Programmes and no winner no vanquished stance at the verge of final secession in the civil war years which consequently won him the well-deserved acronym of, G-o O-n W-ith O-ne- N-igeria. It further reveals however, that Nigeria's quest for functional integration remains elusive due to persistent challenges and contemporary realities. The country's diversity, security concerns, and developmental issues threaten its unity, making disintegration a looming possibility. The paper concludes that Nigeria's amalgamation is an irreversible historical reality, rendering futile any debate on its legitimacy. It is hoped that the study would contribute to the growing literature on Inter-Group Relations and Diplomatic Studies. Moving on, it is strongly recommended that beyond the blame game, focus should rather shift to leveraging the country's cultural diversity as a strength, rather than a weakness.

Introduction

An examination of the successes and obstacles of integration in Nigeria since 1914 necessitates a historical analysis. Woodbridge asserts in *The Purpose of History* that "we can never understand anything at all until we have discovered its origin in something which preceded it" (Allen 382). Nigeria's pre-colonial period encompassed a variety of societies, including centralised empires such as the Borno

Empire, Benin Kingdom, Oyo Empire, and Hausa empires, as well as acephalous communities like the Igbo, Isoko, and Ibibio. Notwithstanding their disparities, these communities engaged in trade, business, and cultural exchange. The Scramble for Africa in the 1880s, orchestrated by European powers, interrupted this trend, resulting in Nigeria's emergence as an Anglophone nation. The British significantly influenced Nigeria's

history, especially in uniting diverse populations with varying languages and traditions. The initial significant advancement towards unity occurred with the 1906 merger of the Lagos Colony and the Southern Nigeria Protectorate. The pivotal amalgamation of 1914 unified the Colony of Lagos, the Southern Nigeria Protectorate, and the Northern Nigeria Protectorate into a single entity. The term "Nigeria" was created by Flora Shaw, a British journalist and partner of Lord Lugard, during her tour to the area. The British sought to establish a more efficient and centralised administration, mostly motivated by economic considerations. Charles Ogbu believes that "Britain had a singular objective in executing the amalgamation: their administrative and economic convenience." "Nothing further" (Ogbu). Olaniyan further confirms that "Lugard, the architect of amalgamation, did not envision a federal structure in 1914." His thoughts and objectives were primarily focused on establishing a more lucrative union between an impoverished North and a more affluent South" (Olaniyan 7). The authors contend that the amalgamation was enforced onto the Nigerian populace without regard for their cultural, linguistic, or economic disparities, asserting that the British colonial authorities were chiefly driven by self-interest. This analysis elucidates the intricacies and possible disadvantages of the amalgamation, and encourages more discourse on the legacy of colonialism in Nigeria. The 1914 unification of Nigeria encountered opposition and mutual distrust among several communities. The administration of Britain and the demands of Nigerian elites resulted in constitutional modifications, notably the Clifford Constitution (1922), Richard Constitution (1946), Macpherson Constitution (1951), and the London Constitutional Conference of 1957/1958. The 1959 election culminated in the Northern People's Congress (NPC) securing 148 seats, the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) obtaining 88 seats, the

Action Group (AG) acquiring 75 seats, and the Niger Delta Congress (NDC) garnering 1 seat (Epelle 252). Subsequent to the 1959 election, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the leader of the party possessing the majority of seats, established a coalition government with the NCNC. This significant collaboration resulted in Nigeria's independence on October 1, 1960, when Princess Alexander, acting on behalf of the Queen, relinquished authority to Nigerian leaders, signifying a new chapter in the nation's history. Referencing A. Adeleye's work "Amalgamation of 1914: Was it a Mistake?" The discourse regarding Nigeria's amalgamation has elicited both hope and pessimism since independence in 1960, shaped by prevailing research and current circumstances (Adeleye 16). On one side, numerous problems confronting the successive post-independence civilian and military governments have rendered integration elusive. The indiscriminate devastation of lives and property, along with fears of disintegration, persists among the ethnic groups due to the marriage of convenience. This encapsulates the perspective that "Every issue Nigeria has encountered and will encounter can be attributed to the malevolent occurrence of 1914 when the British amalgamated the Southern and Northern protectorates into the nation currently recognised as Nigeria" (Ogbu). Charles G. Thomas and Toyin Falola's analysis of Secession and Separatist Conflicts in Post-Colonial Africa underscores the Nigerian Civil War's origins in the 1914 British amalgamation, which established an inequitable union. Following independence in 1960, tensions intensified, especially among easterners in southern Nigeria who perceived themselves as marginalised and politically dominated by the north. The conflict persisted from August 9, 1967, until January 15, 1970 (Thomas and Falola). Consequently, the neglect of the interests and distinct characteristics of Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups has called into doubt the legitimacy of the nation's integration.

Critics contend that Nigeria is a contrived entity established by the British, with one prominent commentator declaring, "Nigeria was created by the British, not God, and must be partitioned now" (Ebiem). Conversely, pre-dating The geographical cohesion of Nigeria under British administration promoted economic and cultural interchange. In the South, lagoons and creeks have historically served as conduits for commercial and cultural exchange between the populations of Lagos and Calabar, but in the North, vast grasslands and the Islamic faith fostered commercial and cultural interactions and cohesion. Commerce thrived between the forest and savannah regions. The 1914 amalgamation was founded on these pre-existing entities, influenced by geographical, commercial, and cultural connections. Akinwumi asserts the following:

It is a historical fact that the British created Nigeria. But with the nature of interaction between the various groups, Nigeria, though not necessarily in the present form, would still have emerged. ...The three forces (the Sokoto jihadists, the Ibadan state in the South-west and the Aro Chukwu priests whose influence was beyond Igboland) were operating in the nineteenth century. If the British had not intervened, one of the forces would have succeeded in subduing the others, thereby paving the way for the creation of Nigeria. Nigerians are therefore not strangers to one another and have been relating whether peacefully or otherwise before the colonial creation of the country (32).

The 1914 merger of Nigeria's Northern and Southern protectorates is a contentious topic, with discussions focused on its legitimacy and efficacy in fostering a cohesive nation despite the country's varied cultural, religious, and linguistic heritages. This has led to persistent

threats to national unity and stability. A significant study deficiency is to the absence of comprehensive analysis and expert perspectives on the historical context, impacts, and implications of the merger, especially concerning its influence on Nigeria's contemporary socio-political and economic issues. Closing this gap is crucial for recognising effective solutions to the issues stemming from this historic event. This study enhances current understanding by analysing the two arguments in the context of modern circumstances. Despite Nigeria's 111-year endurance since amalgamation and 65 years of independence, propelled by unifying elements, confronting the adverse impacts and problems remains unattainable. The document emphasises the necessity of reconciling institutional support for national development with the mitigation of disruptive tendencies, prioritising national interest over group allegiances. Efficient diversity management is essential for fostering national unity and stability.

Triumphs and Prospects of National Integration in Nigeria

Subsequent administrations have undertaken deliberate initiatives to foster national integration, unity, and advancement in Nigeria. National integration is an essential process that cultivates a unified identity among citizens, reconciling regional, socio-cultural, and economic disparities. Principal initiatives comprise: The Nigerian Constitution is the fundamental force that fosters national integration. It establishes specific safeguards that ensure the fundamental rights of all citizen groups. Chapters three and four of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria focus on Citizenship and encompass the stipulations for Fundamental Human Rights of citizens and persons. It underscores specific ideals and principles, including democracy, secularism, social equality, the right to freedom of movement, the right to freedom from

discrimination, the right to acquire and possess immovable property throughout Nigeria, and the right to freedom of conscience and religion, among others (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria chs3-4).

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria has attracted criticism and demands for revision due to concerns over its legitimacy, stemming from its origins in military dictatorship, as well as challenges related to execution, ambiguity, and contradicting clauses that obstruct effective governance and national integration. In reaction to critiques of the existing Constitution and initiatives to enhance national cohesion, Yakubu indicates that Nigeria's National Assembly held zonal public hearings from July 4 to July 20, 2025, throughout six geopolitical zones. The review sought to tackle urgent governance challenges and enhance inclusive representation by concentrating on critical areas such as state formation, judicial reforms, security, local government autonomy, budgetary reforms, and female representation (Yakubu). ii. Formation of States and Military Consideration –

In his inaugural address at the 1958 London Conference, Chief Awolowo recognised the issue of minority groups as a 'legacy of British governance, which Britain bears a moral responsibility to address prior to Nigeria attaining independence (Epelle 252). The establishment of new states was proposed as a solution to alleviate the concerns of minority ethnic groups. Included among these were the Midwest State from the West, the COR (Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers) States from the East, and the Middle Belt State from the North, which will effectively divide the North into two regions. The series of post-independence crises, including intense rioting in the Tiv Division of Northern Nigeria, extensive unrest in Okrika in Eastern Nigeria, internal discord within the Action Group, the turmoil following the 1964 Federal election, and two military coups in 1966, highlighted that Nigeria is a nation of

heterogeneous and disparate groups that cannot simply coalesce into a unified nation through the mere amalgamation of protectorates, attainment of independence, and the raising of a flag. Lt. Col. Gowon's division of the four regions (north, east, west, and mid-west) into twelve states on May 29, 1967, his 'no victor, no vanquished' policy, and his 3Rs, which addressed the repercussions of the coup d'état and civil war, were significant. In a same manner, Gen. Muritala Mohammed expanded the number of states from 12 to 19 on February 3, 1976; Gen. Ibrahim Babangida boosted it from 19 to 21 states on September 23, 1987, and from 21 to 30 states on August 27, 1991; and Gen. Sani Abacha raised the total from 30 to 36 states on October 1, 1996. The saga of state building in Nigeria, characterised by military rule and territorial disputes, reveals profound issues within federalism. Nigeria need a neo-federalism strategy to decentralise authority, foster equitable resource allocation, and provide sustained security and visionary leadership. The firm conviction in resolving Nigeria's present socio-cultural and political issues through the establishment of new states by the current civilian administration led by President Tinubu is a matter of worry, as articulated:

The high demand for the creation of new states in the country, as disclosed by the National Assembly recently (2025), clearly points to a lack of inclusion and perceived marginalisation of Nigerians about governance and development. While it remains doubtful if state creation is the solution to such perceptions, agitations for new states are unlikely to wane until governance is brought to the doorstep of every Nigerian through the implementation of true federalism. It is hardly surprising that agitation for state creation resonated, yet again, as the dominant issue at the public hearings recently organised

across the country. It turned out that separate public hearings by the Senate as well as the House of Representatives, as part of the statutory process of constitutional amendments, witnessed unprecedented requests for state creation across the six geopolitical zones. As usual, agitators for the creation of new states attribute their demands to perceived marginalisation and the need to entrench equity and a greater sense of belonging in the affairs of the country (Yakubu).

The Nigerian military has profoundly influenced the nation's history since 1966. Significant milestones encompass the defence of sovereignty, the execution of reforms such as the 1976 Local Government Reform and Land Use Decree, and the advancement of economic policy. The military handled the capital's relocation to Abuja and successfully transitioned to democracy in 1999, initiating Nigeria's 26 years of continuous democratic governance. National festivals serve as a significant unifying factor, transcending language, religion, and culture. National Days such as Children's Day (May 27), Democracy Day (now June 12, previously May 29), and Independence Day (October 1), together with the proclamation of public holidays for Christian and Muslim festivals, serve to reinforce a shared national identity. The annual presidential Independence Day Speech serves as both a reflection of the day's historical importance and a reaffirmation of the federal government's dedication to national concerns, urging enhanced efforts towards patriotism, transparency, accountability, and the responsibilities expected of both leaders and citizens (Buhari, "Nigeria Will Emerge from Present Challenges Stronger").

iv. Trade and Commerce - Nigeria's regional variety has cultivated economic

interdependence, rendering it crucial for growth and development. No region possesses complete self-sufficiency, depending on others for resources and consumption. Commercial centres such as Lagos, Kano, and Onitsha stimulate economic activity. Research indicates that economic linkages are crucial to intergroup relations, integration, and diplomacy. Economic forces surpass familial, ethnicity, language, and cultural boundaries. The necessity and abundance foster unavoidable interdependence among ethnic groups, encouraging peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and harmony. Economic interdependence has promoted peaceful cohabitation, mutual respect, and amicable ties among Nigeria's numerous ethnic groups, as seen by the symbiotic relationship between the Ikale and Ilaje, two Yoruba sub-ethnic groups with complementing farming and fishing economies. The pivotal significance of kola nut in Nigeria and its economic interrelations has resulted in the adage, "Kola nut is extensively cultivated in Western Nigeria, significantly consumed in the North, and esteemed among the Igbo of the Southeast" (Ikenna 2). Tourism and

Academic Research - Nigeria's museums and cultural institutions are essential for national development, functioning as venues for cultural preservation, cohesion, and economic advancement. By highlighting historical places such as the Kiriji War Camps, Olumo Rocks, Badagry Slave places, and Ikogosi Springs, these institutions foster cross-cultural understanding, national pride, and tourism. They additionally facilitate academic research, field excursions, and international conferences, hence augmenting national integration and global standing. Shared history, national symbols, and policies serve to reinforce the notion that Nigerians possess a singular identity. Consequently, the necessity of demonstrating authentic respect and sincerity towards these symbols and schemes must be emphasised. Examples encompass: the

National Anthems/Pledge, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme, National Orientation, the National Assembly, the Supreme Court, the Federal Character Commission, uniform currencies (₦&K), the Nigerian Passport, Federal Highways, Federal Institutions and Unity Schools, the centralisation of the Capital Territory (Abuja), the Quota System, a common economy, standardised times, a unified federal civil service, and General Orders. They serve as potent unifying agents during both celebratory and challenging times. vii. Mass Media - Mass media, whether print or broadcast, bears the obligation to represent the cultural and philosophical elements of societies to both domestic and international audiences in a favourable manner for advantageous results. Their programs (i.e., NTA and FM stations), which are educational, entertaining, social, and instructive, unite the entire country as a nation.

Consequently, the mass media serve as the cognitive centre of democracy, since they seek to influence change, attitudes, principles, decision-making, and behaviour. viii. Lingua Franca - If nationhood implies a cohesive society through a shared language and political ambitions, then a 'national language' is presumed to be a means of achieving national unity. The national language refers to the language considered to promote social and cultural unification at the national level. Language has consistently served as a crucial instrument in nation-building, distinguishing humans from other species and uniting individuals across geographical divides. It is the most proximate phenomenon to humanity and is essential for self-actualization. Few tools are as potent for information generation, knowledge transmission, and social integration (Lawal 32). Consequently, the English language, Nigeria's lingua franca, functions as a connective medium across the states of Nigeria. In addition to Standard English, Nigerian Pidgin English, commonly referred to as 'Broken English,' plays a significant role that

transcends its perception as a mere non-literate code or a degradation of the English language. The current sociolinguistic landscape in Nigeria reveals that Nigerian Pidgin English is utilised by university graduates, professors, lawyers, and journalists.

It is utilised not only in casual contexts but also in offices and other formal environments (Akande 37 and Olatunji). Consequently, it has been perceived as a vehicle for identity and togetherness among the Nigerian populace. viii. Sports and Music - Sports serve as a social conduit that unites individuals of varying ages and religious affiliations, whether as participants or observers. As a common language, sports promotes harmony, wellness, and longevity among various communities in Nigeria and worldwide. Nigerians unite beyond regional, ethnic, and religious boundaries in their support for national teams, exemplifying collective national pride and purpose. The 2018 World Cup illustrated this unity when Ahmed Musa, the Super Eagles' Number 7, scored two goals against Iceland on June 22, inciting widespread jubilation and momentarily transcending cultural, political, and religious divides. The Women's World Cup exhilarated Nigerians as Asisat Oshoala scored against Australia on Thursday, July 27, 2023, becoming the first African player to score in three distinct editions of the tournament ("Oshoala Sets Women's World Cup Record").

The Super Eagles' 4-0 triumph against Benin Republic, propelled by Victor Osimhen's hat-trick on October 14, 2025, exemplifies football's unifying power in Nigeria. Although the team did not achieve direct World Cup qualifying, their success exemplifies the capacity of sports to transcend political and religious divides. Songs by Nigerian artists foster togetherness, hope, and peace in the face of difference. Examples include: Sunny Okosun (Which Way Nigeria), Funmi Adams (Nigeria My Beloved Country), Onyeka Onwenu (One Love), Sunny Ade (Nigeria Yi Ti

Gbogbo Wa Ni), T.Y. Bello (Great Nation), Timi Dakolo (Great Nation), Sound Sultan (Motherland), Evi Edna (One Kilometre), Veno Marioghae (Nigeria Go Survive), Orlando Owoh, Wasiu Ayinde-KWAM 1, and Ayinde Barrister, among others. Immortalisation of Heroes and Heroines - Nigeria commemorates its heroes and heroines by designating institutions, streets, and monuments in their name, thereby preserving history and recognising their contributions. Examples encompass: Universities (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife; Nnamdi Azikwe University, Akwa); Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri; Stadiums (Muritala Mohammed Stadium, Lagos; MKO Abiola Stadium, Abeokuta); Herbert Macaulay Ways in Abuja and Lagos; Special days (June 12 Democracy Day, commemorating the restoration of democracy in May 1999 and subsequently honouring Chief M.K.O. Abiola, the purported victor of the June 12 presidential election, whose mandate was annulled). 19 These tributes bolster national unity, integration, and resilience, motivating future generations to strive for a harmonious nation. Overall, the various administrations successfully maintained a cohesive nation despite numerous challenges, demonstrating the collective efforts of preceding administrations, alongside the principles of functionalism (cooperation and interdependence among groups), social identity (a shared national identity that transcends ethnic and regional affiliations), and integration.

Challenges to National Integration

Worldwide, peace is essential for growth. Although colonial legacies may have influenced Nigeria's difficulties, it is essential to recognise that sustainable government, democracy, and national integration necessitate proactive measures beyond attributing fault to historical legacies. Nonetheless, as Akinwumi

elucidates, “upon deeper reflection, there exist certain internal contradictions that have exacerbated the issue” (Akinwumi 32). Twenty Nigerian society is characterised by significant physical, political, and socio-cultural divisions, which impede national integration. i. Ethnicity - Nigeria's formation through the fusion of diverse ethnic groups and kingdoms resulted in a complicated nation. The colonial emphasis on economic profit and administrative convenience neglected national integration, hence promoting stronger ethnic allegiances over national identity. For example, after Chief Anthony Enahoro's 1954 resolution advocating for Nigeria's political independence by 1956, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, in a very nationalist manner, allegedly urged: "Let us set aside our differences." He was purportedly apprehended by the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, who stated, “We cannot overlook our differences.” We can solely comprehend our disparities. You identify as a Christian and hail from the South. I am a Muslim and a Northerner. Nnamdi Azikiwe: Let Us Overlook Disparities. The difficulties to Nigeria's unity have resulted in the emergence of ethnic-based parties and militant organisations, eroding national cohesiveness.

Historical instances encompass parties such as the Action Group (AG) in the West, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) in the East, and the Northern People's Congress in the North; concurrently, contemporary factions like the Arewa People's Congress (APC), Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys, and Egbesu Boys in the Niger Delta persist in threatening internal security, with continuous demands for regional secession. The Punch's headline on Thursday, March 7, 2024, 'Yoruba Nation Agitation Not Security Threat, Igboho Replies Military,' underscores the ongoing agitation in the South-West region, while the Renewed Biafra Secessionist Agitation in South-East Nigeria, primarily led by IPOB members, continues unabated. A countrywide rally,

#FreeNnamdiKanuNow, occurred in Abuja and the South-East on October 20, 2025, led by human rights activist Omoyele Sowore, advocating for the unconditional release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the incarcerated leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (#FreeNnandiKanu). ii. Religious Bigotry/Crises - Nigeria's religious landscape is defined by an expanding divide between Islam and Christianity, characterised by persistent crises and emerging conflicts.

Historical events like as the Damboa civil disturbance in Borno State on March 28, 2000, the Kaduna religious riot on April 13, 2001, the Kano riot on September 7, 2000, and the Jos crises on September 16, 2001, and in November 2008, are indelibly imprinted in national memory. Theological disparities, intolerance, and fanaticism incite violence, especially in northern states such as Borno, Bauchi, and Yobe, as well as in southern regions like Osun and Kwara. Religion profoundly impacts politics, since individuals anticipate equitable representation. This has resulted in calls for religious quotas, frequently emphasising allegiance above competence and fostering sycophancy. The Muslim-Muslim ticket of Ahmed Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, selected by the All Progressives Congress (APC), raised apprehensions among Christian organisations of possible marginalisation. The internet headline “Ondo: MURIC Demands Muslim as Governor Aiyedatiwa’s Deputy” dated January 21, 2024, exemplifies this trend.

The politicisation of religion has emerged as a double-edged sword, promoting coexistence while eroding meritocracy. Nigeria's security issues are intensified by the manipulation of ethno-religious differences for political advantage, resulting in an increasing divide between Islam and Christianity. iii. Insufficient Implementation of Constitutional Core Values - The Nigerian Constitution delineates essential values to be upheld, namely: the security and welfare of the populace as the government's

primary objective (section 14 (2b)); the maximisation of welfare, freedom, and happiness for every citizen grounded in social justice and equality of status and opportunity (section 16 (4b)); freedom, equality, and justice (section 17); and the fundamental human rights of citizens (Chapter 4, sections 33-43) (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria). Public policies have not succeeded in realising the fundamental ideals enshrined in the constitution due to the prevailing governance conditions in the country.

The essence of governance enables policy creators and executors to alter regulations and influence the processes of policy formulation and implementation. The pursuit of constitutional review and restructuring persists to this day ("Nigeria Is a Failing State"). iv. Ineffective Leadership - The advancement or stagnation of any nation predominantly relies on the leadership or those in positions of authority. The fortunes of certain nations have transformed due to the vision and dedication of their resolute leaders, such as George Washington's aspiration for a unified nation, Winston Churchill's resolve to protect Britain's territorial integrity, Nelson Mandela in South Africa, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Nasser of Egypt. Good administration remains elusive in Nigeria due to a lack of genuine commitment to democracy. The detrimental impact of poor leadership by previous presidents is evident in Maitama Sule's speech titled, “Nigeria is in Dire Need of a Leader, Not a Ruler” (Sule). Lack of foresight in leadership, corruption, and electoral manipulation have eroded Nigeria's democracy, fostering a cycle of incompetence and violence, and leaving the nation in search of a rescuer.

v. Military Coups and 'Militicians' (Military Politicians)– Military governance is universally denounced, as it diverges from contemporary democratic standards. The military's principal function is to safeguard the nation's territory and constitution, rather than to usurp authority.

Different types of coups, including self-serving, revolutionary, and palace coups, are regarded as harmful to democracy and the interests of the populace (Musa 40-41). The military governance in Nigeria from January 15, 1966 has complicated nation-building efforts. Their 'holier than thou' demeanour precipitated a series of coup d'états: a counter-revolution on July 29, 1966; another on July 29, 1975; an aborted fourth military coup on February 13, 1976; a coup on December 31, 1983; one on August 27, 1985; and a failed coup in December 1985. This contravenes the Nigerian Army Act of 1960 and Sections 30-71, which prohibit conduct such as treachery, aiding the enemy, cowardice, communication with the enemy, becoming a prisoner of war through disobedience or wilful neglect of duty, looting, mutiny, failure to suppress mutiny, insubordination, and obstruction. The Nigerian Army undermined democracy through coups d'état, while corrupt generals concealed funds in numerous international banks.

In his unequivocal denunciation of military governance, Obafemi Awolowo asserts in 1983 that 'the most inept civilian administration surpasses the most competent military dictatorship.' Africa's encounters with military rule have been characterised by turmoil and ineffectiveness, as demonstrated by recent coups (since 2020) in nations such as Mali, Sudan, Guinea, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which have underscored the belief that military leadership is an untenable avenue for national cohesion. The democratisation of Nigeria has been undermined by the enduring influence of the military, as retired officers have entered politics and occupied significant roles, exemplified by the presidencies of Generals Olusegun Obasanjo (May 29, 1999 - May 29, 2007) and Mohammadu Buhari (May 29, 2014 - May 29, 2023). vi. Linguistic and Cultural Differences - Nigeria's post-colonial leaders had a formidable challenge: unifying over 250 ethnic groupings into a cohesive nation. The inherited federal framework, founded on three

predominant linguistic groupings, sustained the anxieties of ethnic minorities. Superiority complexes, cultural contempt, and pejorative language exacerbated tensions, resulting in confrontations.

Harmonising the elite and the masses, fostering cultural comprehension, and balancing the lingua franca with the advancement of mother tongues are essential for national unity. In addition to estranging the majority of the uneducated populace, the lingua franca significantly inadequately addresses the Nigerian's pursuit of African identity. vii. Insecurity and Sectarian Crises - Nigeria's security challenges are indicative of the nation's post-colonial heritage, characterised by a powerful and absolute state. Onimode Bade asserts that "the post-colonial state superstructure is exceedingly powerful and over-developed, as colonial governance primarily relied on coercion, necessitating a sufficiently robust coercive apparatus to subjugate all indigenous social classes" (122). Nigeria's security issues encompass militant factions such as Boko Haram and ISWAP in the northeast, Biafra separatists (IPOB, MASSOB) promoting secession in the southeast, organised crime (kidnappings, banditry) in the northwest, and farmer-herder disputes in the Middle Belt, necessitating a comprehensive strategy to tackle underlying factors such as poverty, inequality, and inadequate governance.

Akombo asserts that violence is the most prevalent phenomenon in Nigeria. In addition to disrupting socio-economic domains, the phenomena adversely impacts the political process. Some of these crises arise from longstanding rivalries, while others stem from sudden or spontaneous factors (23). VIII. Reorganization/Advocacy for Separation and Consolidation Agenda The partition of Africa during the 1884/1885 Berlin West African Conference divided individuals of the same descent and amalgamated disparate ethnic groups into nation-states, such as the Ewe-

speaking population (currently in Togo and Ghana), the Yoruba speakers (now in Nigeria and Benin), and the Somali, who inhabit Somaliland, northeastern Kenya, eastern Ethiopia, and French Somaliland (Bascom 469). In 1904, Sapara Williams, the inaugural lawyer of Nigeria, advocated for the modification of the boundary between Southern and Northern Nigeria to consolidate the Yoruba-speaking population under a single government. Nevertheless, Sir Frederick Lugard dismissed this notion, citing administrative efficiency. This colonial-era boundary dispute persists unsolved, illustrating the inadequate integration of Nigeria. The Igbomina people, grounded in their common history, culture, and identity, aspire to unify their lands in Osun and Kwara states into a singular, autonomous Igbomina State (Olaoye). Nigeria's heterogeneous factions, compelled by historical events, have encountered persistent conflicts and territorial disputes, exemplified by the hostilities between: the Itumbauzo clans (Abia and Akwa Ibom); Ife and Modakeke (Osun); Hausa-Fulani and Kataf (Kaduna); Jukun, Chemba, Kuteb, and Yivs (Taraba); Ijaw and Itsekiri (Niger Delta); Erinle and Offa (Kwara); among others. The coerced unions have resulted in disorientation, subordination, and unrepresentative administration, exacerbating boundary disputes and ethnic tensions.

Suggestions

Nigeria must adopt a diversified strategy to progress beyond 1914: mitigating "do-or-die" politics, delineating religion from governance, and embracing cultural variety, while fostering tolerance and unity. Moreover, inclusivity is essential for Nigeria's advancement. The downfall of the first and second republics can be indirectly attributed to the sense of marginalisation and isolation experienced by mainstream Yoruba politicians (Eyinla 328). Embracing variety in governance enhances national growth, mitigates tensions, and

promotes inclusivity, guaranteeing that every area participates in Nigeria's advancement. A really healthy democracy in Nigeria necessitates a government that promotes open public conversation, embraces differing views from civil society, and cultivates a culture of tolerance, acknowledging that critical voices are vital to democratic vitality rather than threats to national integrity.

English is advocated as Nigeria's official language, with limited functions in federal operations, international commerce, higher education, and broadcasting, owing to its importance in enabling access to Western science, technology, and global viewpoints, while also fostering local languages and cultures. A thorough security transformation is essential for Nigeria, necessitating innovative strategies to combat emerging threats, integrating economic empowerment and social reintegration with focused military action, supported by a professional military that protects national integrity and upholds civil authority. Advancing national integration in Nigeria necessitates the utilisation of African principles such as camaraderie, accountable leadership, and respect for religious pluralism, in conjunction with strategies including inclusive governance, economic empowerment, cultural exchange, and the acknowledgement of exemplary service through national honours and titles.

Conclusion

The 1914 merger is contended as a fundamental cause of Nigeria's socio-political challenges, inciting a blame game among writers. Prior to 1914, commerce, matrimonial alliances, and cultural connections united Nigerian factions. The British then compelled the amalgamation of various groups, prioritising their own interests. Nigeria's unity is a fragile equilibrium of diversity, with individuals from various tribes, faiths, and languages coexisting despite historical rifts.

The legacy of British colonial integration persists in exacerbating intergroup tensions in Nigeria. Critiques of this coerced union are legitimate, as the dynamics of African integration markedly differ from those in Europe, Western Asia, and North America, requiring a context-specific comprehension. In contrast to African nations, the majority of European countries were not subjected to prolonged colonisation. Nigeria's post-independence difficulties were influenced by its colonial history and amalgamation, reflecting the obstacles faced by African nations due to inherited colonial frameworks that obstructed integration. The trajectory of nation-building in Nigeria has been intricate and arduous; nonetheless, sustained efforts have preserved national unity since the 1914 amalgamation and the 1960 independence. This research underscores the necessity to move beyond assigning blame and to instead harness Nigeria's cultural variety as a national asset, promoting a balanced strategy that fosters national development while addressing and alleviating the conditions that incite divisions and conflicts. Although group allegiances rooted on religious, regional, ethnic, and linguistic identities may be unavoidable, they should be subordinated to the national interest. Effective diversity management is essential for fostering national unity and stability in Nigeria, as demonstrated by the harmonious development of India and China despite their greater populations.

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