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NORTH/SOUTH DICHOTOMY AND THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION: 1914-1960

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ABSTRACT

Colonialism has left several imprints on the African continent including Nigeria. One of the most lethal imprints of colonialism in Nigeria is ethnic chauvinism particularly the North/South dichotomy. This dichotomy was institutionalised with the amalgamation of 1914. From then, the attitude of mutual suspicion and utterances among leaders consistently frustrated nation building efforts to 1960 when the country became independent. On assumption of the colonial establishment in the Northern part of Nigeria, the indirect rule system which anchored on the Moslem Emirate system was adopted by the colonial authorities. They attempted to replicate the system in the Southern part of the country. Despite the "amalgamation", only some essential governmental services were amalgamated. The British authorities refused to break the larger North into smaller units, but rather divided the South which was smaller in size. Thus, the sizes of the two broad sections were very unequal. The British colonial authorities also sanctioned disharmonious educational policies by restricting the introduction of Western education in the core Moslem parts of the North. The disparity in educational advancement between the North and South made the Northern leaders to regard themselves as "late starters" who needed to develop a "Northern personality" to contain the Southern hegemony. Adopting a historical narrative methodology, the paper discovers that the dichotomy invariably impinged the evolution of a true nation state. It concludes that if a North/South dichotomy had been abolished, Nigeria's post-colonial experience would have been more rewarding.

1. INTRODUCTION

The colonisation of the territory that has now become Nigeria by Britain was achieved through a process which began in 1849 with the establishment of consular administration headed by John Beecroft. In 1851, Lagos was bombarded and annexed in 1861 as

a British colony. In 1885, the British declared the Oil Rivers Protectorate which was later re-named the Niger Coast Protectorate over a section of the country. The Royal Charter enjoyed by the Royal Niger Company was revoked in 1899 to give way for direct administration

of the Southern part of Nigeria. In 1906, the Colony and Protectorate of Lagos was merged with the Niger Coast protectorate with Lagos as the capital (Akpan, 2018: 327).

In 1900, the Northern Protectorate was proclaimed and Fredrick Lugard was saddled with the task of establishing the administration of the new protectorate. On assumption of duty, he met a well established structure that he had to convert for his own purposes. In other words, the Jihad of Uthman Dan Fodio had created and sustained a centralised governmental structure in the Northern Protectorate. All that Lugard needed was to impose his authority on the Emirs and coerce with military force those Emirs that resisted his authority; he subsequently transformed these officials into agents of the British (Hatch, 1971: 153). In the absence of a similar structure in the Southern Protectorate which naturally operated a decentralised political system, the British had to engineer their administrative system from the scratch. In 1914, Lugard effected the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates to form the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria (Undiyaundeye, 2012: 16). Obviously, the amalgamation was premised primarily on economic considerations than politics. Through this arrangement, a wealthier Southern Nigeria relieved the colonial government of financial stress in the administration of the less

economically viable Northern Nigeria (Ejituwu, 2010: 29).

The problems of nation building that has come to be the bane of the Nigerian nation state began with the amalgamation of territories with significant disparities with regard to language, religion and cultural practices. On the basis of its "artificial" background, the issue of integration of the "North" and "South" into a united whole became a major challenge between 1914, the year of the amalgamation, and 1960, when the country became independent. The North considered itself disadvantaged, consistently exhibited sectional and divisive tendencies and displayed agenda of domination of the polity. These utterances and actions of the Northern leaders contributed significantly to undermining nation building efforts during the colonial era. It also laid the foundation for the apparent "North/South" dichotomy which plagues Nigeria and triggers the strong advocacy for the restructuring of the Nigerian polity.

2. THE CONCEPT OF NATION BUILDING

According to Afigbo (cited in Ikime, 2006: 144), nation building is the search for collective identity which is co-extensive with the territorial boundaries of the nation state, a collective identity that can become the basis of consensus, solidarity and the shared acceptance of a patterned normative order. Positing further, he argues that nation building

consists of five elements namely: (a) the territory; (b) the people; (c) the institutions and systems (i.e. family, economy, religion, law, socio-political systems etc.); (d) the technology of the society and (e) the ideas, ideologies and other theoretical constructs which give meaning and legitimacy to the other elements of nation building.

Elaigwu (2015: 57-58) considers nation-building as a process by which members of a state create a political community out of an existing political framework. It harps the ability of the leaders to create unity out of a heterogeneous political setting. Nation-building involves, on the horizontal plane, the widening of the horizons of identity of the individual or group to include other individuals and/or groups in the state - as equal members of the political community entitled to a share of the bitter or sweet system. On the vertical dimension, nation-building entails the identification with the central authority of the state as the symbol of the political community.

He also notes that the process of nation on the horizontal dimension involves the acceptance of other members of the civic body as equal fellow members of a "corporate" nation - a recognition of the rights of other members to a share of common history, resources, values and other aspects of the state - buttressed by a sense of belonging to one political community. Nation building is the widespread of acceptance of the process of

state-building; it is the creation of a political community that gives a fuller meaning to the life of the state (Elaigwu, 2015: 58).

Adepoju and Ogunkoya (2016: 75) opine that nation building is the process of winning for the political system, the loyalty and commitment of its subjects. In this sense, nation building is synonymous with national integration. National integration refers to the process of bringing together, culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and the establishment of a national identity. In other words, this position is applicable mostly to Nigeria, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state, where most individuals pursue their own interest at the detriment of the other groups. They also add that it involves the process whereby people transfer their commitment and loyalty from smaller "tribes", villages or petty principality to the larger central system. For the purpose of this study, nation building can be defined as a process of bringing of diverse groups together to develop their common land, devoid of ethnic affinity.

The North

The old Northern Nigeria, as well as certain areas in present-day Niger Republic, was the scene of a violent decisive revolution at the beginning of the 19th century. The movement known variously as the Sokoto, the Fulani and the Uthman Fodio Jihad, marked a

crucial turning point that is unprecedented in the history of the area (Adeleye, 1977:3). The victory of Fodio in Hausa land resulted in the entrenchment of the Fulani hegemony over the area. This is because the Hausa territories which were conquered by the Fulani were incorporated into the newly established Sokoto Caliphate. The other communities of Northern Nigeria outside the Caliphate, and other Northern Yoruba communities which could not be conquered by the Fulani settlers in Ilorin, remained, for the rest of the 19th century, enemies of the Sokoto Caliphate. For military and religious reasons, the Sultan of Sokoto recognised Borno's right to exist as an independent Muslim state, and reached agreements on territorial limits with her leaders. Through the Ilorin Emirate, the Caliphate sought hegemony in Yoruba land, but, from the 1830s to 1893 (when Pax Britannica was imposed on Yoruba land), was frustrated by the emergent Yoruba power of Ibadan (Okereke, 1992: 14-15).

It was over the ruins of numerous polities of this vast area of about 250,000 square miles, Fodio established a new political organisation - the Sokoto Caliphate - based primarily on Islamic law and values". The other enemies of the Caliphate were frequently attacked by the Fulani, who, with the subsidence of the tension generated by their conquest in Hausa land, were often supported by the Hausa, as well as by the Nupe (Adeleye: 1977: 3). The Fulani wanted to conquer and rule

some of their enemies; the others they only wanted to raid for slaves and booty. Some of their enemies such as the Argungu (in the newly created Kebbi State) and most of the groups of the area that were to become known as the "Middle Belt", warred with the caliphate throughout the 19th century, and were able to maintain their independence (Okereke, 1992: 15).

Okereke (1992: 15) also states that by the 19th century, the Sokoto Caliphate extended over a greater part of Northern Nigeria. The Caliphate was an ethnically heterogeneous community dominated by the Hausa-Fulani and ruled by Fulani Emirs, whose suzerainty, the Sultan of Sokoto, was also of Fulani stock. Apart from dominating the smaller groups within the Caliphate, the Hausa-Fulani also threatened the independence, of and often raided and captured slaves from other Northern groups outside the Caliphate. There was therefore a Hausa-Fulani hegemony in Northern Nigeria in the pre-colonial period, precisely in the 19th century.

The Entrenchment of British Rule in Northern Nigeria

On the 1st of January 1900, the British administration was formally inaugurated at Lokoja by Lord Fredrick Lugard. Between 1900 and 1903, series of military expeditions were conducted in the North under the command of Lord Lugard. In the exercise of power after the conquest, the British helped to perpetuate Hausa-Fulani

hegemony in Northern Nigeria. Partly because the British colonial administration did not have enough money and personnel to rule so vast an area as Northern Nigeria directly, and partly because they (the British) saw that the Fulani-led emirate governments was efficient, they adopted the popular indirect rule system of colonial administration, whereby the Fulani ruling families were retained in their posts. Thus, while sovereignty passed into the hands of the British, the Fulani, as agents of the British, continued to rule in the areas they conquered in the 19th century (Adeleye: 1977: 314; Okereke, 1991: 16).

As noted earlier, the Caliphate was established on the foundation of Islam. Consequently, Islam spread fast in the area as many converts were made and they began to identify themselves with the religion. But the situation was not the same in certain areas, especially the areas where Christian missionaries were allowed to proselytise and establish schools, thus producing some elite. Some of these areas included: Yagba and Igala in Kogi State; Kafanchan in Kaduna State and Biu in Borno State. Beginning from the early 1930s, the educated elite Christians among these groups led their people in protest against Fulani domination and against the establishment of Islamic institutions such as Alkali courts in their domains. They succeeded in some places such as Yagba; but failed in others such as

Kafanchan and Biu (Okereke, 1992: 17).

Most of the people in the Middle belt region practised traditional religion. Within the area, many also accepted Christianity. These groups produced their own natural rulers through whom the British administered the Middle belt region during the colonial era. As part of the decolonisation process, the British in the early 1950s, began to phase out power for the purpose of controlling the regional government of Nigeria - to Nigerian politicians. Since the Hausa-Fulani constituted a majority of their region's population (about 65 percent), the political elite of the Muslim north easily assumed control of the Northern regional government. In this way, the Hausa-Fulani hegemony extended throughout Northern Nigeria, and effectively from 1954 when a federal constitution which gave residual powers to the regional governments was adopted in Nigeria (Okereke: 1992: 17).

For more than three decades after the 1914 amalgamation, Northerners demonstrated their resentment of the North-South integration as a political union and were supported by some British administrative officers in the North who pursued it to its logical conclusion through the indirect rule system. The Northern Emirs and the British allies demanded an increased measure of autonomy for the Emirates. As a result, some of the Northern and Southern

Departments including Judiciary, Medical, Education, Prisons and Police adopted divergent policies. In fact, the Police Department was not amalgamated until 1933. More serious still, the Northern Emirs, perpetually anxious to maintain their positions as traditional rulers, gradually began to consider the possibility of making the Emirates the final authorities for legislative and executive purposes and of eventually forming the Government of the Northern Nigeria, which would be constitutionally independent of Southern Nigeria (Nigerian Crisis, 1966, Vol.5: 2)

In 1939, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, then colonial Governor of Nigeria, split the Southern Provinces of the country into two: Eastern and Western Nigeria, but he left the Northern Provinces untouched. With about 74 percent of the landmass area of the country and (according to the official count) slightly more than half the country's population, Northern Nigeria was greater than the two Southern groups of provinces combined. This lopsidedness in the constituent structure of the country became important in the 1950s, when the group of provinces became political regions and the struggle among Nigerian politicians over who should succeed the British at the centre began to gather momentum. The Northerners clearly had an undue advantage over the South (Akpan, 2017: 121).

Efforts by Southern elite to reduce the size of the North failed to the North's advantage. Since

the electoral process adopted in the country was based on principles of proportional representation and majority rule, Northern Nigeria had a competitive advantage over the southern regions in federal politics. This enabled the leading political party in the region (which was led by the elite from the far north) to win a plurality in the 1959 federal elections and became the dominant partner of the coalition that assumed control of the federal Government on independence. Thus, the hegemony of the Muslim north extended to Southern Nigeria.

In 1944-45, the Governor, Sir Arthur Richards brought the Northerners into the central law-making body of the land. To this end, he undertook a tour of the North as well as other parts of the country, to sample the feelings of the people about the proposed constitutional reform. The Northerners told the Governor that they would like to retain the constitutional autonomy between the North and the South, and should be left alone. However, they ultimately agreed to some measure of constitutional co-operation with Southerners only when they were assured that the principle of separate regional development would be enshrined in the proposed constitution, that the representatives in the regional assemblies would be chosen from the existing local authorities (a House of Chiefs being established in the North alone), that regional assemblies would form electoral colleges for the central

legislature, and that the North would have nearly 50 percent of the nominated or indirectly elected members of the legislature as follows: North 9, West 6 and East 5. These measures were calculated not only to retain the position of the traditional authorities of the North but also to entrench the North itself as the dominant region in the country. The reluctant acceptance of the Richard's Constitution by the Northerners thus presaged that if any attempt was made in future to threaten the position of the Northern traditional authorities or to dislodge the Northerners from their position of dominance over other Nigerians, the North would assume its separatist outlook and agitate for secession from the rest of the country. Precisely, this became the pattern of constitutional developments in Nigeria in the years to come (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966: 4).

The Northern position in relation to the rest of the country at this date was summarised by Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, later Nigeria's Prime Minister in a speech which he made on the Appropriation Bill during the debates in the new Legislative Council in April 1947 thus:

I think 1947 will always stand as a very important year in the history of Nigeria. Since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper. It is still far

from being united. The country is inhabited by peoples of tribes who speak different languages, who have different religions, different customs and traditions and entirely different backgrounds in their ways of life, and who have also attained different stages of development (Nigerian Crisis, Vol 5: 5).

Before the Legislative Council met, the leaders of the then National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) with its headquarters in Lagos had made a country-wide tour during which they pointed out to Nigerians that the separate regional development envisaged in the Richard's Constitution would rather divide than unite the country. It was in reply to this message that Alhaji Balewa made the historic and most revealing pronouncement of policy in the light of which subsequent political constitutional developments in Nigeria later become intelligible. He declared:

We would like the world to know that in the Northern Province we have our own leaders whom we have chosen ourselves, to be our rulers and voices. We do not want our Southern neighbours to interfere in our development. If the Southern people feel that are representatives for what they're agitating for and demanding, they must know that the case of the Northern Provinces is

different...but I should like to make it clear to you that if the British quitted (sic.) Nigeria now at this stage the Northern people would continue their interrupted 'conquest of the sea (Legislative Council Debates, 20th March to 2nd April 1947: 212).

Development of Political Consciousness in Northern Nigeria

In 1943, two young Nigerians resident in Bauchi organised Bauchi General Improvement Union. One of the founders, Mallam Sa'ad Zungur, had been in continuous firsthand contact with nationalist activities in the South and the first Northern student to attend the Yaba Higher College. During the early postwar period, Mallam Zungur became Dr. Azikiwe's strong man in the North, and was finally elevated to the position of General Secretary of the NCNC. The second founder was Mallam Aminu Kano, a Fulani school teacher who later emerged as the leader of the Northern Element People Union (NEPU); the third member of the Bauchi Union, was Mallam Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. In 1945, the Northern Elements' Progressive Association (NEPA) was formed in Kano under the leadership of Mallam H.R. Abdullah, an Igbirra from the Middle Belt. A year later, Abdullah also organized the Kano branch of the Zikist Movement, he later became National President. The NEPA was the Northern extension of Dr. Azikiwe's nationalist

crusade, but it had a short life, owing mainly to the strong opposition of the Kano Native Authority. Like its successor, the NEPU, it suffered from identification with Azikiwe and the NCNC (Coleman, 1958: 358).

When Mallam Aminu Kano returned to Nigeria in 1947, he and a few others from a small European-educated group (Dr. A.E.B. Dikko, Mallam Balewa and Mallam Yahaya Gusau), began to plan a pan-northern cultural organization. As a result of the subsequent discussions, which included some leaders of the Northern Teachers' Association, the Northern Peoples' Congress (Hausa: Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa) was formally inaugurated at a conference in Kano in December. The leaders of the congress, Dikko and Gusau, declared at the conference that the North must and could only be saved by Northerners that the peoples of the North felt "cautious friendship" for the other peoples of Nigeria, and that the organisation was not subversive (Coleman, 1958: 358).

The Northern People's Congress had its headquarters in Kaduna. At first, the organisation directed its attention to cultural matters. But with the incipient participation of traditional Northern leaders in Nigerian politics, the organisation was before long converted into a political party. In so doing, it helped further to crystallise the separatist tendencies of the North. The declared aim of the NPC was "to save the North for the Northerners". Its motto was: One

North, One People - a slogan which was to be vociferously repeated in the North ever after. The NPC insisted on "regional autonomy" and strove exclusively for the industrial and economic development of the Northern Region (Report on Kano Disturbances, 1953: 45). Throughout the period of its existence, the Congress was a living testimony to the fact that the North had never really wanted unity with the South.

The North and the Macpherson Constitution of 1951

Primarily as a result of unremitting agitation by Southerners, arrangements were made for the revision of the Richards Constitution. The constitution had been seriously criticised because, among other things, it had been drafted by Governor Richard himself after consulting just the people he choose from various parts of the country. His successor, Sir John Macpherson, decided that the proposals for another constitution should be discussed throughout the country from the village upwards. This gave the vocal section of the Northern people an opportunity to vent their opinion about the question of political association with the South, opinion which amply demonstrated that the exclusivist policy hitherto articulated by Northern leaders was more a correspondent to *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwobo*, a Northern semi-official Hausa language newspaper, "we are not able to

see any advantage in a united Nigeria, only oppression and injustice". On the 11th of February 1950, the Editor of the paper went further to declare: "we on reflection consider that a mistake was made in 1914, when the North and the South were joined together". Indeed, this statement was more authoritatively proclaimed on the floor of the House of Representatives in Lagos in 1953 (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966: 6).

Not even the practical consideration to the sea would weigh the advocates of secession of the North from the South at that time. On the 18th of February 1950, in a letter signed by "a few ordinary people" of Tudun Wada, they state:

There are people who say that the North has no outlet to the sea, but they are mistaken. Large boats come up to Baro on the Niger during the dry season and can get as far as Yola (on the Benue) during the wet season. The North certainly has an outlet (Report on the 1953 Kano Disturbances: 44).

Another correspondence had indeed suggested the invitation of foreign co-operation for the achievement of the secession of the North. The author wrote on the 11th of February 1950, thus:

If the regions of Nigeria become autonomous, what happens to the North will be our own concern and nobody else's, then, we would

retain the services of the Europeans who would continue to assist us in our development...the Europeans who will remain with us, can they not come to some arrangement with the French to build a railway from Ilorin to Kayama and join up with the French system (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966).

Also on the 10th of October 1951, while the proposed constitution was at the drafting stage, the Editor of *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwobo*, summarised the Northern view of what he sarcastically referred to as a "unified Nigeria" the political ideology then being propagated by the NCNC, as follows:

Everything should become a scramble, Western education being the qualification for power. If we follow this alternative it would be tantamount to admitting that the North is unable to take up the struggle for its future and for the well being of its people and the Region as a whole....Hold fast to what you have gained (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966: 7).

Indeed, the North did hold fast to what it had gained because at the various Regional Conferences summoned to discuss proposals for revising the Richards Constitution, whereas the East and the West stood for equal representation of the regions in the central legislature, the North claimed 50 per cent representation for itself.

The North did same at the subsequent General Conference held at Ibadan in January 1950.

The President of the NPC explained what prevented the North from eventually insisting on outright secession in 1953 thus:

There were...two things of most vital importance in our way. The first was that the greater part of the revenue of Nigeria comes from the customs duties collected on the coast on all goods brought over the wharfs. Obviously, we would have to collect our duty at our borders. This would be more difficult than collecting at the waterside, but it was not impossible. But would an unfriendly South permit the free passage of our goods across their lands and the transit of our vehicles to carry those that were not moved by train?.. the second difficulty was similar to it. Would it be possible to send our goods down the coast for shipment by rail or road, and what guarantee would there be that they would get there at all? We depend on the railways for the greater part of our transport and that is federally owned and operated; we would have to use the Southern roads and they are built and maintained from Southern funds. On the other hand, we could use

the River Niger and there we would be liable to no one, but there was no really good port at its mouth and it might even be necessary, at times, to force a passage of the narrower sections (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966:11).

At last, the Northerners modified their original plan of secession and adopted that of "a looser structure of Nigeria while preserving its general pattern - a structure which would give the regions the greatest possible freedom of movement and actions: a structure which would reduce the powers of the centre to the absolute minimum.

After the debate in the House of Representatives, the members of the NPC embarked on a crucial tour of the North "canvassing their constituencies and influential opinion on the merits of the new policy". They conducted wide and public debate and received a great deal of substantial support. This extraordinary political activity was significant in two ways: it clearly showed that the motion (of which more soon) calling for the inauguration of a Custom Union or confederation in Nigeria, which was moved in the Northern House of Assembly in May 1953, was really the Northern stance on the constitutional crisis of 1953 and had the support of a wide spectrum of the Northern opinion leaders (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966:11).

It should be added that on the eve of the meeting of the Northern

House of Assembly in May 1953, riots broke out between Kano City (the indigenous settlement) and Sabongari (the 'stranger' settlement). This matter again would not be discussed as it has been done elsewhere. However, it should be mentioned that four days of looting and murder, resulting in the death of about 52 persons and 145 wounded - casualties which were of Eastern Nigerian origin.

The North's Eight Point Agenda

When the Northern House of Assembly met on the 22nd of May 1953, a leading member of the NPC, Mallam Yahaya Gusau, moved a motion which was the direct opposite of the one moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group, in the House of Representatives on the 31st of March, 1953, namely: that the North would not fix its date for self-government in 1956. It was in the course of moving this motion that Mallam Gusau made this important statement which is very crucial to this discourse about the political association for different parts of Nigeria. He said thus:

I am aware...that it will be abnormal to try to force three brothers, especially in an African society, to have their first wedding the same day, for certainly they come of age at different and long intervals...it is equally unfair to expect the three brothers to start and finish a hundred yards race at

the same time for the fact that they attain different physical development (Debates of Northern House of Assembly, 23rd May, 1953: 20).

The next day, after Mallam Gusau's motion, Mallam Ibrahim Iman, then Secretary of the NPC, moved a resolution to determine the future political relationship of the North to other parts of Nigeria. The resolution was very significant and received so much publicity at home and abroad at the time that and it is necessary to reproduce it in full:

Whereas the constitution established for Nigeria in 1951 provided for the establishment of a central legislature and executive with full legislative and executive powers over all matters throughout Nigeria and for the establishment of a legislature and executive in each Region with limited executive and legislative powers subject to the control of the central legislature and executive;

And whereas the representatives of the Eastern and Western Regions in the said legislatures desire to progress towards self-government in Nigeria at a pace which is not in accordance with the wishes of the people of the Northern Region;

And whereas, the composition of the central

legislature and executive and their powers over the affairs of the Regions are such that the wishes of the people of the Northern Region in relation to their own affairs and to the future are not capable of being satisfactorily realised;

And whereas the wishes of the people of the Northern Region with regard to the staffing of the public service in the Region are being prejudiced by the attitude of the representatives of the Eastern and Western Regions:

And whereas for the reasons before mentioned, the existing constitutional arrangements have become unworkable and it is in the interest of the good relations of the people of the three Regions that new arrangements should be made;

Be it resolved that this House prays His Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor to set up a machinery for consideration of popular opinion measures to amend the constitutional arrangement for Nigeria ((Debates of the Northern House of Assembly, 1953: 75).

The advocated principles were as follows:

1. Each Region shall have complete legislative and executive autonomy with

respect to all matters except the following:

- (a) Defence;
 - (b) External Affairs
 - (c) Customs;
 - (d) West African Research Institutions
2. There shall be no central legislative body and no central executive or policy-making body for the whole Nigeria.
 3. There shall be a central agency for all Regions, which will be responsible for the matters mentioned in paragraph (1) (a) to (d) and any other matters delegated to it by a Region.
 4. The central agency shall be at a neutral place, preferably Lagos
 5. The composition, powers and responsibility of the central agency shall be defined by the Order-in-Council established in the new constitutional arrangements. The agency shall be a non-political body.
 6. The services of the railway, air services, ports, electricity and coal mining shall be organised on an inter-regional basis and shall be administered by public corporations. Such public corporations shall be independent bodies governed solely by statute under which they are created. The Boards of such corporations shall be composed of experts with a minority representation of the Regional Governments.
 7. All revenues shall be levied and collected by Regional Governments except custom revenue: custom duties shall be collected at the ports of

discharge by the central agency and paid to each Region. The administration of the customs shall be organised as to ensure that goods consigned to each region are separately cleared and charged to duty.

8. Each Region shall have a separate public service. "Be it further resolved that should general support be accorded to these proposals they should forthwith be communicated to the Government of the United Kingdom requesting that Her Majesty be advised to amend the constitutional instruments accordingly" (Debates of the Northern House of Assembly, 1953: 75).

Commenting on this resolution, the President of the NPC, Alhaji Bello, wrote in his autobiography: "this, as you will see, was our compromise on the suggestion of secession from Nigeria. It was a novel idea developed in general party discussions, and it might have worked (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966: 14).

The North did not advocate secession in form it hoped to achieve it in fact. There was really not much of a "compromise" in its eight-point agenda. As the President of the NPC himself envisaged, the Regional Governments would be "quite independent of each other", and the central agency would be "an executive committee appointed by the Governments of the Regions". The colonial correspondent of *The Times of London*, on the 6th of

August 1953, described the Northern position in the opposite:

The Northerners have declared that they want a simple agency at the centre and are apparently thinking on lines of some organisation like the East African High Commission. But even the High Commission is linked to a central assembly, whereas the Northern Nigerians have declared that there shall be no central legislative body (Nigerian Crisis, 1966: 15).

Furthermore, in 1953, Nigeria was still a British colony and so the British were responsible for Defence and External Affairs. Also, the West African research institutions were then inter-colonial establishments on which Nigeria alone or a section of Nigeria could not take a unilateral decision. Thus, the only "compromise" made by the North in 1953 was in respect to Custom; and what compelled the North to do this has been mentioned. As a matter of fact, it was even expected to be a temporary concession, as was implied in the speech of Mallam Iman, the Secretary of the NPC, the mover of the resolution. He said:

In discussing communication, we must not lose sight of the importance of in-land waterways more especially the navigability of the rivers Niger and Benue. The possibility of their being navigable as far as Baro and Lokoja cannot be over-emphasised. The river experts must therefore be consulted to investigate the navigability

of the rivers Niger and Benue (Debates of the Northern House of Assembly, 1953: 76).

It should also be recalled that previously, in the letter to *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwobo*, already cited, "a few ordinary people" of Tudun Wada, Zaria, had made reference to this point. It is revealing that shortly after the inauguration of the new constitution in 1954, the newly appointed Northern Minister of Transport in the Federal Executive Council, Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, promptly commissioned Netherland Engineering Consultants (NEDECO), a Dutch firm of hydrological experts, to investigate the possibilities of improving navigation on the Benue, starting from ports of the Niger Delta. Following the report of NEDECO, the Niger Dam Authority was launched to construct installations which would, among other things, make the River Niger, navigable all the year round as far as Bussa. This explains the fact that, in spite of expert advice on the relative cheapness of the generation of power by the exploitation of the natural gas of Eastern Nigeria, the NPC-controlled Federal Government pressed on with the Niger Dam project (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966:16).

It should also be mentioned that in the eight-point agenda of 1953, the North advocated that coal-mining, an industry based in Eastern Nigeria, should be administered by a public corporation; but not tin-mining, an industry based in Northern Nigeria. In the end, the North got, in actual

fact, the best part of what it had proposed. On the 21st of May 1953, two days after the quelling of the Kano riots, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, made a statement in the British House of Commons in London that:

Recent events had shown that it was not possible for the three regions of Nigeria to work together effectively in a federation so closely knit as that provided by the present constitution. The United Kingdom Government, while greatly regretting this, considered that the constitution would have to be re-drawn to provide for greater regional autonomy and for the removal of powers of intervention by the centre in matters which could, without detriment to other regions, be placed entirely within regional competence (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966:16).

As the *London Times* commented on the 23rd of May 1953, "it can be assumed that the leaders of the Northern Peoples' Congress will be entirely satisfied with what the Colonial Secretary said, as it differs so little from their own recently declared programme". Nevertheless, much was made then and afterwards of the great "concession" made by the North in accepting federation, with greatly increased regional autonomy, in place of central agency (Nigerian Crisis, Vol. 5, 1966:16).

The North viewed the proposed independence of Nigeria in 1960 with trepidation. This was mainly because they believed that Southerners would use their educational skills to dominate the government of an independent Nigeria. It was this fear of Southern domination that made the Northern parliamentarians in the House of Representatives to oppose the historic motion moved by Mr. Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group in March 1953, asking the House to adopt "as a primary political objective the attainment of self-government for Nigeria in 1956". The North's opposition to the motion took the form of a proposal that the specific date of 1956 be replaced with the phrase "as soon as practicable". As Alhaji Bello, leader of the North, said while proposing the Northern delegation's amendment to Enahoro's motion, the granting of independence should wait until the North could participate more meaningfully in the post-independence government of Nigeria, that is, share the spoils of independence equally with the South. The self-government motion was never put to vote: knowing full well that the Northern delegation (who was almost wholly members of the NPC) would use their numerical strength (half of membership of the House) to prevent its adoption, the NCNC and AG members denounced their Northern colleagues and walked out of the chambers. Thus, "as soon as

practicable" prevailed over "1956" (Okereke, 1992: 30).

Okereke (1992) also states that, the Northern reaction to Chief Anthony Enahoro's self-government motion was significant in another sense. It indicated that the Northern elite did not believe that any government led by Southerners would be appreciative of the North's special problems, notably, their relative backwardness, as the British rulers had been, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello said as much in his autobiography:

If the British administration had failed to give us even development that we deserved and for which we craved so much - and they were on the whole a very fair administration - what had we to hope from an African administration, probably in the hands of a hostile party. The answer to our mind was, quite simply, just nothing beyond a little window dressing (Abernethy, 1971: 413).

3. A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF THE POSTURE OF SOME SOUTHERN LEADERS

According to Okeke (1992: 30), the North's mistrust of the South was not without basis because as Alhaji Bello said, while proposing the amendment to the self-government motion, the Southern politicians and the Southern Press were generally contemptuous of the Northern peoples and their leaders. This was especially true of the Action Group and its leader's newspaper, the

Nigerian Tribune. The depth of the ordinary Action Group's contempt for the Northerners was evident in the one-sentence song reportedly sung by the rank and file members of the Action Group during the party's campaigns in Yoruba land in the 1950s: "better to die than pay homage to a *Gambari* (i.e. Northerner).

In view of the Southerner's contempt for the North, the Northern elite could not but think that if Southerners assumed control of the Federal Government in succession to the British, they would not make any serious efforts to understand the North; nor would they make any sacrifice to help her solve her peculiar challenges. But, even if the Southern political elite were prepared to make sacrifices in the interest of the North, they would do so in a paternalistic manner which would deflate the bloated ego of the leaders of the NPC. The NPC leaders could not afford to let this happen. In other words, the Southern political leaders of the 1950s could not inspire their Northern counterparts with the confidence and *vice versa*. Capable men though they (especially Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo), were, they did not have enough of the astuteness, charisma and capability needed to break down, even if temporarily, the barriers of history, religion, language and prejudice between the North especially the Moslem North, and the South. Despite every effort made, the NPC and AG leaders could not persuade the Northerners that a Southern-led

administration would not neglect the interest of the North (Okereke, 1992: 31).

4. CONCLUSION

The people of the political entity known today as Nigeria existed distinctly until the intervention of the British colonialists who brought them together via a process for economic benefit of Britain. In 1914, the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated into a common Nigeria. There were significant disparities with regard to language, religion and cultural practices between the North and South. These underlying disparities coupled with consistent British colonial policies skewed towards the North, contributed extensively in deepening the North/South dichotomy.

The British colonial policy which limited the spread of Western education pioneered by the Christian missionaries to specific areas of the North became disadvantageous to the Northerners. This made it impossible for the North to fill existing positions in government. In the period of the Northern political awakening in the 1940s and 50s, the North stood against the Southerners who occupied positions in the North and began to fill those positions with unqualified Northerners.

The Northern People's Congress extensively helped to crystallise the separatist tendencies of the North. The declared aim of the NPC was "to save the North for the

Northerners". Its motto was: One North, One People - a slogan which was to be vociferously repeated in the North ever after. The NPC insisted on "regional autonomy" and strove exclusively for the industrial and economic development of the Northern Region. Throughout the colonial period, the Northern People's Congress vehemently embarked on clannish and regional policies and did not hide its stance of Northern domination over the South.

Serious crisis between the North and South included the Northern resistance of the proposed independence motion by Chief Enahoro in 1953, the 1953 Kano Crisis and the "Eight-Point" Northern Agenda which was a disguised form of secession. The scenario did not abate until independence in 1960.

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