

## The Amalgamation of Nigeria: Revisiting 1914 and the Centenary Celebrations

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### Abstract

The aftermath of colonialism in Nigeria has affected Nigeria's socio-political development, especially in the false marriage with the sobriquet; *amalgamation* where different entities were fused to live as one. This work seeks to explore the concept of amalgamation, its significance and analytical forethought in order to recommend solutions to some myriads of problems that the entity called Nigeria is engulfed in.

**Key words:** Amalgamation; Centenary celebrations; Revisiting; Significance

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### INTRODUCTION

The balkanization of Africa by Europe, whose colonial adventurism was chaired by the pre-World War I Germany's Otto Von Bismarck's 1884 to 1885 Berlin conference, was the foundation for contemporary states in Africa. Nigeria being one among the contemporary nation states in Africa is said to be an offshoot of the Berlin conference. This does not in any way underscore the fact that there were pre-colonial Nigerian states of the Hausa-Fulani, Oyo, Kanem Bornu, the Igbo loosed states, and the Benin kingdom etc.. In 1861, Lagos was already an annexed British colony and by 1885, drawing from the

Berlin Act, the oil protectorates of contemporary southern Nigeria were under the British powers, and by 1900, the northern protectorate was already subjugated through conquest following the fall of Sultan Attahiru; and the eastern Nigeria, through the influence of the Royal Niger Company was under British control.

After series of efforts at pacification and conquest, three separate territories emerged. These were the colony of Lagos, the Northern Protectorate, and the Southern Protectorate. The fusion of the colony of Lagos to the southern protectorate by Sir Walter Egerton in 1906 laid the foundation for the amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern protectorates in 1914. The then British TIMES Newspaper reporter, Miss Flora Shaw suggested the name Nigeria meaning; "*Niger Area*" to Governor Frederick Lugard whom she subsequently got married to. Ikelegbe (1995) stated that:

The amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 marked a turning point in the evolution of the Nigerian state. In fact, Nigeria as a political entity was created in that year. The end result was not to actually have a new territory per se, but was for economic exploitation.

Therefore, the coals of Enugu, tin of Jos, hides and skins of Hadejia and Maiduguri, Cotton from Gusau, cocoa and oil palm from Ibadan were all carted to Europe, however the merger of the protectorates became more pertinent for administrative convenience; to stop internal rancor among the protectorates, and finally to save administrative cost.

### 1. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The term amalgamation means different things to different people. To the metallurgist, "It is the mixture of two elements to form one unique element." The Business world sees it as "merger" which is the combination of two or more business concerns so as to form one, especially in the recapitalization of failing businesses. Businesses which seem to produce similar products or render similar

services sometimes merge to enhance their capital base. While others see amalgamation as the resultant effect of two combined entities, the Encyclopedia Britannica sees it as:

The uniting of two or more entities to form a new entity which could be in terms of business organizations with similar or different products and services. Politically, it could be a combination of two or more nations, cultures and civilizations to form a single entity or sovereign nation.

It can be drawn from the above assertions that most federal states and confederacies are products of amalgamation. The defunct Senegambia and the Soviet Union were all products of amalgamation. However, within the context of this discourse, the term amalgamation according to Charles Ikedikwa (2014) means; *“The fusing or merging of two entities or bodies into one with the result that both will cease to exist and are replaced by the new body or entity.”* If the foregoing is the definition of amalgamation, can we then say that Nigeria is truly an amalgamated entity? Two years ago, we celebrated our century old existence; the challenge of nation building was more glaring than can bear. Gambari (2008) observed that:

The historical legacies of colonial rule created some challenges for nation-building in Nigeria. Colonial rule divided Nigeria into North and South with different land tenure systems, local government administration, educational systems, and judicial systems. While large British colonies like India and the Sudan had a single administrative system, Nigeria had two, one for the North and one for the South. It was almost as if these were two separate countries, held together only by a shared currency and transportation system. Many members of the Nigerian elite class in the 1950s and 1960s had their education and world outlook molded by the regional institutions. Some had little or no understanding of their neighboring regions. Under these conditions, it was easy for prejudice and fear to thrive. During the period of the decolonization struggle, Nigerian nationalists from different regions fought each other as much as they fought the British colonialists. Nigeria never had a central rallying figure like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Mahatma Gandhi of India, or Nelson Mandela of South Africa, instead, each region threw up its own champions like Awolowo (Western Nigeria), Nnamdi Azikiwe (Eastern Nigeria) and Ahmadu Bello (Northern Nigeria).

From this historical legacy, therefore, regionalism has been a major challenge to nation-building in Nigeria. To their credit, however, the founding fathers of our nation tried to deal with this challenge by adopting federalism and advocating a policy of unity-in-diversity. Unfortunately, the lack of consolidation of Nigerian federalism around commonly shared values and positions means that this challenge of divisive historical legacy continues to undermine our efforts at nation-building. One current manifestation of this historical legacy is the division between “indigenes” and “settlers”. This division has been a source of domestic tension and undermined our efforts at creating a common nationhood.

## 2. DISCOURSE

The 2014 centenary celebration was timely in Nigeria’s political history, as it sought to explore the significance of

the 1914’s *connubial* relation that exists among divergent Nigerian interests, especially as we celebrated a century long existence. If we go by Ikedikwa’s definition of amalgamation, the following mind bulging questions demand answers from Nigerians, viz:

(a) Can we really say Nigeria is amalgamated?

(b) Have our diverse interests considering our heterogeneity and religious disparities disappeared to create a “one Nigeria”? In other words, is there really a “one Nigeria”?

(c) What have been our achievements as an entity in our century long existence?

(d) Should we continue to live together as an entity especially amidst the scourge of Boko Haram, the spate of micro-nationalisms, threats of disintegration, Corruption and politics of resource control?

Bringing the Northern Protectorates and the Southern Protectorates of the British holdings together as a unified entity in 1914 was the most concrete commitment of Great Britain to the principle of colonization; especially with the *indirect rule* system. But 1914 was not the beginning of the checkered relationship between Nigeria and her colonizer or of the internal wrangling that beclouds our polity, as well as the dying sovereignty. However, in order to truly understand the significance or meaning of 1914, it will be necessary to discuss its significance.

## 3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1914 AMALGAMATION

The significance of Nigeria’s amalgamation is centered on the unifying factor that ended colonialism and brought about the ethnic wrangling amongst the diverse interests. Nigeria displays her disunity in tribes, religions and natural endowments hinging on politics of resource control. The fact is that we are yet to see ourselves as one. Before the end of colonialism, Chief Obafemi Awolowo a founding father of the Yoruba extraction said that; *“The entity called Nigeria was a mere geographical expression; there is no country called Nigeria, because he happened to be first an Egba man, then a Yoruba man, before being a Nigerian.”* The implication is that his loyalty and patriotism were shaped along that thinking, and this scene replayed itself during the 2014 National Conference, where some delegates observed that *“The country exists along ethnic and religious divides; and the same replayed itself out in the 2015 general elections that ushered in Muhammadu Buhari as the President of Nigeria.*

Obviously, there was nothing to celebrate after the century long existence as the amalgamation was a mistake; this is because from 1914 till date, Nigeria cannot show any tangible achievements in terms of development. If we are battling to place Nigeria amongst the league of developing nations, our assumptions might

be wrong. We are yet to assume nationhood, as we do not love each other and do not see ourselves as one. Ethnic sentiments have eaten deep into the fabrics of our national identities, with divisions along religious creeds. Thus, without a behavioral rebirth as well as seeing each other in the light of same people or autochthonous constitution to move the country forward, Nigeria will always sound as a misnomer. And also because the amalgamation in 1914 was by treaty, obviously, in international law, any treaty that is not dated expires after 100 years and invariably marks the end of the country as it ceases to be legal entity. However, let us take the reports from the just concluded Confab and its recommendations should not be shelved as one of our historical archives, but it should be taken seriously to avoid imminent danger that can lead to break-up.

According to Alaba (2014), "Nigeria is likened to a failed state whose unity is narrowed to numerical strength with little or no achievement on development." The concept of unity in diversity in itself is a misnomer because there is no unity in Nigeria. The results of this ill-fated marriage are factors that have bred ethnic chauvinism in our earlier democratic government, with cleavages to regionalism, which I will say that the pre 1966 Nigerians also held sway and loyalty to their various regions, before the entire entity; and of course in the Army that brought about a coup in 1966, and subsequently a civil war. These events have subsequently translated to hatred in the daily lives of contemporary Nigerians. Also, many other issues have evolved as we stepped into a new dispensation of democratic governance. Nzongola (1999) has observed that; "*All African political crises are explained in terms of tribalism defined as attachment to one's tribe or ethnic group which constitutes a more relevant unit of identification than the country as a whole*"

From 1999 to 2014, Nigeria is placed as a *test tube baby* that cannot coordinate its environment. The birth of micro-nationalisms in the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Survival of a Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) Odua People's Congress (OPC), and the Arewa Consultative Forum (AFC), are all signs that we are not in any way related to each other.

Therefore the aim of the amalgamation was achieved in the colonial era, but after that, disunity in various connotations surfaced. If not, why should we always crave for a president from our faith, from our region and of course from our ethnic group if we are really united or amalgamated as seen? I stand to be corrected if these are all a century old nation can stand for. But we can continue living together if we demystify our ethno-religious inclinations.

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## CONCLUSION

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Even though the cat and mouse relationships that exist between the North and South, Christians and Muslims, as well as Hausa-Fulanis and Igbos etc. are all products of amalgamation, it can be said that our century long existence can be used meaningfully to chart a new course for building a new nation in this new century, and not look back to amalgamation as a *Britain's colonial adventurism* but a divine connection.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The way things are currently going on in Nigeria, a peaceful breakup is not possible and nothing should be done by anybody to plunge our country, the giant of Africa into another civil war, because no nation can survive two civil wars. We have also seen how the aftermath of the 2015's general election has shaped the country future, bringing more uprisings than ever. Therefore, it is recommended that we should have a total behavioral rebirth, draw a people oriented constitution, government should embark on a people oriented policies and programs, an enabling environment be created for employment and job creation mechanisms, deemphasize our ethno-religious inclinations to create an *equal playing field* for our politicians, and above all, our security should be a topmost priority especially one that can deal with the scourge of insurgencies as Boko Haram, and militancy in some parts of the country. While we should learn from history so as not to repeat its mistakes, we must never see ourselves simply as victims of our history; it is our responsibility to overcome the challenges caused by our history; we should adopt a new revenue mobilization and allocation formula, and made it drawn within the context of fiscal federalism as obtained in matured democracies like the United States.

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