

International Journal of Arts and Humanities
(IJAH)

Bahir Dar- Ethiopia

Vol. 5(1), S/No 16, January, 2016:57-71

ISSN: 2225-8590 (Print) ISSN 2227-5452 (Online)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ijah.v5i1.5>

**Nigeria at 100, 1914-2014: Alternative Projections for the Next
100 Years**

Ugbeda, Ejura C.M

Department of Political Science
Kogi State University, Anyigba
&

Egwemi, Victor

Department of Political Science,
IBB University, Lapai
Niger State, Nigeria

E-mail: vegwemi@gmail.com

Tel: +2348062908766; +2348084220830

Abstract

This paper is an examination of the first 100 years of Nigeria between 1914 and 2014. It traces the history of the country from the 1851 attack on Lagos and examines the series of events leading up to the 1914 amalgamation. It argues that the first 100 years have been a mixed bag of good and bad. At the risk of passing judgment on which of the two has surpassed the other, the paper avers that the very fact of the country's continued existence tells a lot whatever the sentiments may be. In the last 100 years Nigeria has been confronted with many challenges; a lack of unity, a largely dependent socio-economic structure, a culture of corruption and impunity, terrorism and insurgency and poverty among other negative features. The paper comes up with

alternative projections for the next 100 years namely, developing and nurturing a culture of oneness, diversifying the economy and dealing decisively with the problems of corruption, poverty and insurgency. The paper advocates among other things that government must muster the necessary political will to make the difficult decisions that will take the country from *potential* to *actual* greatness. The people on their part must make the necessary sacrifices to bring this about

Key words: Amalgamation, Colonialism, Alternative Projections, 1914-2014, Nigeria

Introduction

The Amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1914 by the British colonial administration was a major watershed in the history of the country. With the 1914 Proclamation Nigeria became one country. One hundred years on, Nigeria is still one country in spite of the pessimism of the country's early leaders and all the challenges to nationhood the amalgamation threw up. Having said so, it needs to be stated for the avoidance of doubt that the British were in charge of the country's affairs until she gained independence on 1st October, 1960.

How has Nigeria fared as a country since 1914? What were the challenges and the opportunities of the last 100 years? These are some of the questions that will be answered in this paper. However, before attempting to answer these questions, it is imperative to examine the history of Nigeria before 1914 and onwards through independence to the present. The paper is divided into six parts. After the introduction it discusses the dawn of British colonizing activities in Nigeria from 1851 and the activities and processes leading to that date. Section three expatiates the amalgamation of 1914 and the many events and issues associated with that date in the history of the country. The fourth section discusses the good and the bad of Nigeria's first one hundred years while section five makes alternative projections for the next one hundred years. The last section is the concluding remarks.

The Birth of Nigeria

The birth of modern Nigeria is usually traced to the British attack on Lagos in 1851. From that date a series of events and actions taken by the British colonial administration eventually led to the amalgamation of 1914 (Crowder, 1973; Egwemi, 2012). Since 1914 when Nigeria became one country a number of internal geo-political re-configurations have taken place in the country. From the initial two protectorates to three regions at independence the country is now made up of thirty six states and a federal capital territory.

It needs to be recalled that contact between what is today Nigeria and Europeans began in the fifteenth century through the various commercial explorers (Dike and Ikpokronyi 2010). In the beginning it was the slave trade that underpinned

the relationship. However, as the slave trade became abhorrent and the need to engage in legitimate trade became imperative, the desire to annex spheres of influence by European powers became the driving force. The abolition of the slave trade was greatly aided by the activities of missionaries like John and Charles Wesley (Soremekun, 1985).

European traders began to turn their attention to trading in palm produce, pepper, ivory and other articles which provided raw materials for European industries and which were in great demand. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century, British trading activities were confined to Lagos and the ports of Calabar, Brass and Bonny.

However, the need to expand trade to the hinterland and to undermine the coastal middlemen led to some involvement in local politics. For instance British interference in Lagos politics following some internal squabbles among the ruling house was necessitated by the desire to secure the territory in the interest of trade in the Yoruba hinterland. This interference resulted in the annexation of Lagos in 1861, making it a British colony. In order to render the River Niger safe as a gateway into the interior, protectorates were proclaimed in the Niger Delta regions. In 1885, the Niger protectorate was proclaimed followed by the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1887. These protectorates were initially administered by the Royal Niger Company and its spheres of influence reached the north as far as Idah.

Following the withdrawal of the Royal Niger Company charter, the whole of Nigeria came under direct British colonial administration. The territory was then divided into:

- i. The Lagos colony (1861-1906)
- ii. The Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (1900-1914)
- iii. The Protectorate of Northern Nigeria (1900-1914)

In 1906, the Lagos colony was merged with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In 1914, the protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria were merged by Sir Fredrick Lugard to become one entity known as the colony and protectorate of Nigeria. Sir Fredrick Lugard became its first governor-general and ruled until 1919. He was succeeded by Sir Hugh Clifford (1919-1925); Sir Graeme Thomson (1925-1931); Sir Donald Cameron (1931-1935); Sir Bernard Bourdillon (1935-1943); Sir Arthur Richards (1943-1948); Sir John Macpherson (1948-1954); and Sir James Robertson (1954-1960) respectively (Dike and Ikpakronyi, 2010).

The Amalgamation of 1914

The Amalgamation of 1914 is no doubt an important aspect of modern Nigerian history. However, it was not the only amalgamation that took place as it

relates to modern Nigerian as can be deduced from our discussion in the last section. In fact according to Y.B. Usman there were three distinct amalgamations of British colonial entities located in the Nigerian area between 1900 and 1914 (Usman, 1994).

In 1900 there was the amalgamation of the Niger Coast Protectorate with the series of protectorates imposed on the immediate Lagos hinterland by Britain in the 1880s and 1890s to form the protectorate of Southern Nigeria, as distinct from the colony of Lagos.

This was followed in 1906 with the second of this series of amalgamations, when the colony of Lagos was merged with the protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form a single colonial entity known as the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigerian, which legally made Lagosian, Nigerians, six years after all the others except those from Northern Cameroon who joined after the 1961 plebiscite, had become Nigerians.

The amalgamation of 1914, which has been given so much prominence as to obscure all the others, was no doubt important as the last legislative and administrative step the British took to establish a single Nigerian colonial entity. Yusufu Bala Usman has made the following argument about the amalgamation:

The prominence given to what happened in 1914 as the amalgamation arose out of the politics of the British colonial machinery. The 1914 amalgamation was given its prominence in order to psychologically and politically obstruct the emergence of a pan-Nigerian movement for independence by deepening and emphasizing that the basic division of Nigeria is between the “North” and the “South”. The recognition that, in fact, this “South” was produced as a colonial entity by series of amalgamations and is by no means uniform and distinct from the “North”, would undermine this conscious exercise of obstructing the growth of a broad Nigerian anti-colonial movement (Usman, 1994:38).

Elsewhere the point has been made that the Nigerian nation state has never really known cohesion (Egwemi, 2009). This problem is traceable to its colonial history as we have already indicated. After the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates in 1914, there seem to be no conscious effort to forge unity. In fact, if the truth be told, there were subtle attempts to keep the country apart (Omoleke, 2010, Egwemi, 2009, Usman, 1994).

This British attempt to keep Nigerians apart seemed to have received a boost when one of Nigeria’s pre independence leaders, Obafemi Awolowo was quoted as saying, “Nigeria is not a nation. It is mere geographical expression”(in Usman, 1994:38). Even today such a position is daily re-echoed by scholars like Wole Soyinka

(Soyinka, 2009). On the other hand, some other equally great thinkers are of the opinion that Awolowo is quoted largely out of context. For example, Matthew Kukah believes that Awolowo only used the expression “to draw attention to the urgency of the work at hand, meaning that he wanted us (Nigerians) to work hard... to turn this mere geographical expression into a great nation” (Kukah, 2009:18).

Be that as it may, the attitude of considering Nigerian as a mere geographical expression led to a lot of agitations from different parts of the country. These threats have been well treated in Tekena Tamuno’s seminar work: “Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914”. In spite of these tendencies towards the breakup of the country, Tamuno argues that the series of secession threats and movements examined in his study suggests that historically the “pull” towards a united Nigeria has been of greater momentum than the “push” towards secession (Tamuno, 1970:584). In spite of Tamuno’s optimism events in recent Nigerian history seem to uphold Eghosa Osaghae’s position “that the future of the Nigeria federation cannot be taken for granted” (Osaghae 1995:94).

Over the years in Nigeria since 1960, successive governments have put in place measures to tackle the crises of diversity and the attendant animosity (Ekeh and Osaghae, 1987; Ojo, 2009; Orji, 2008a; 2008b). While we will not go into a discussion of these measures here, suffice to say that in as much as these measures may have indeed had the effect of watering down the divisive tendencies they are far from solving these problems. In fact these divisive tendencies seem to have assumed a life of their own and this becomes very manifest when there is something to share especially the highest political office of the land (see Egwemi, 2012).

As Nigeria moved towards her centenary in 2014, there were fears about a possible breakup of the country. This was based on a prediction made by former United States ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell (Oluwarotimi, 2015). As a corollary Nigeria approached the centenary with a looming economic crisis. The drop in the price of crude oil (Nigeria’s main source of revenue) meant that the country and its government really did not have much to cheer about!

It is against this background of continuing threats to Nigeria’s existence and the economic quagmire she finds herself in that this paper examines the first one hundred years of her existence and makes projections for the next one hundred years.

One Hundred Years of Nigeria, 1914-2014: The Good and the Bad

The first century of Nigeria’s existence has been a mixed bag of the good and the bad! At the risk of passing judgment on which of the two has surpassed the other, this paper dares to aver that the very fact of the country’s continued existence tells a lot whatever the sentiments may be.

In the last 100 years Nigeria has been confronted with many challenges which range from a lack of unity, a largely dependent socio-economic structure, a culture of corruption and impunity, terrorism and insurgency and poverty among other negative features (see Egwemi, 2012; 2013; 2015). Over the years since independence a lot of effort has been made to overcome the challenges but not much success has been achieved.

On the other hand Nigeria has recorded a lot of successes such as the very fact of her continued existence in spite of the many threats to it. The country has also built a brand new capital city, Abuja reputed to be the fastest growing city in Africa (*Tell* May 2014; *Tell* September 2014). She has won many laurels in academics notably the Nobel Prize for Literature won by Professor Wole Soyinka in 1986. Many other Nigerians have recorded other feats like the design of General Motors electric car by Jelani Aliyu. She has won many sports laurel also. A Nigerian, Aliko Dangote has been Africa's richest man for the past three years and with a rebased GDP of \$510 billion as at 2013, Nigeria has become Africa's largest economy (see *Forward* Special Publication on the 2015 Elections: 28). Nigeria is also the 6th largest exporter of crude oil in the world. Nigeria indeed has a lot going for her. What is required in the next hundred years is effort to keep up and improve on the good sides and do away with the problems as we will highlight shortly.

The Next 100 years, 2014-2114: Alternative Projections

After 100 years of existence and the challenges enumerated, it is imperative to begin to try to chart a course for the next 100 years. There have been several interventions in this direction (see Anifowose and Babawale, 2007; Oyovbaire and Olagunju, nd). In this contribution, three key areas have been identified in terms of alternatives that Nigeria can explore to reposition the country for the next one hundred years. These alternative projections are as follows;

- Developing and nurturing the culture of oneness
- Diversifying the economy
- Dealing decisively with the problems of corruption, poverty and insurgency

These issues are expatiated upon below.

• Developing and Nurturing a Culture of Oneness

One will only be stating the obvious by arguing that Nigeria is not a united country. Events in the country's recent history have amply demonstrated this. While this situation has been on for 100 years it is the opinion of this paper that it can be changed for the better in the larger interest of the country. Elsewhere the argument has been made that there has been a tendency to paper over the differences between

Nigeria's ethnic groups (Egwemi, 2012; 2014). This tendency has been counterproductive and would continue to be so until the differences are taken for what they truly are.

Legend has it that the late Rt. Hon. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe once told the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, let us forget our differences to which Bello replied, "...no let us understand our differences. I am a Muslim and northerner. You are a Christian and an Easterner. By understanding our differences, we can build unity in our country" (Paden, 1983:3).

The imperative of such an understanding between the groups in Nigeria cannot be over-emphasized since the fault lines are very sharp. It is only after the differences are isolated that attempts at bridge building will yield positive results. Among the many groups the need to build and maintain unity in diversity cannot be overemphasized.

In attempting to break down barriers it needs to be emphasized that there are no quick fixes. The road to a *united front* will be rough - given the many years of mistrust between these groups - but it must be followed to a logical end. As the Chinese say a journey of 1000 miles begins with a one step. Will the different ethnic groups be able to muster the courage and selflessness to do this? That is a question for conjecture.

Be that as it may the road to oneness is not so difficult if the parameters are clearly defined. In this direction Olukoshi and Agbu have made the following convincing argument about the conditions for oneness in Nigeria;

...a radically restructured federation where there is unity in diversity, where each unit is coordinate and independent to a reasonable extent, where power with accompanying responsibilities is devolved on coordinate units to ensure their growth and development, where injustice of whatever kind is not condoned, where equality of all is guaranteed, where domination of one nationality or a group of nationalities by another is not allowed and where no unit is alienated under whatever guise but each has a sense of belonging, and where transparency, honesty, accountability and selflessness characterize leadership (in Olaniyi, 2003:201-202).

This advocacy does not seem impossible to achieve and Nigerians both leaders and the led need to give it serious consideration.

- **Diversifying the Economy**

Since the discovery of oil in Nigeria, the economy became a mono-cultural one. In the late pre-independence and early independence period, the regions were known for their agricultural prowess: Groundnuts in the North, oil palm in the East and cocoa in the West. With the discovery of oil agricultural production has been in decline.

The danger of this is that the country has been unable to feed itself but more crucially the country is subject to the vagaries of the international oil market. This, to say the least, is a precarious situation for a country to be in. The full import of this became clear when oil prices crashed in the international market. In fact it has been reported that oil prices have slumped to a six-year low (Akanbi, 2015). The impact has been very telling with government unable to meet a number of its obligations (Nwoji, 2015; Baje, 2015; Ukoko, 2015; Wakili et al, 2015; Editorial *Leadership* May 15, 2015: 3). Ironically the fall in oil prices coincided with the country's centenary.

From the foregoing the need to diversify the economy cannot be overemphasized. What direction should this diversification take? An exploration of this is undertaken hereunder.

Before the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the country, agriculture had been the main- stay of the economy. The country produced and exported oil palm, cocoa and groundnuts. With the discovery of oil the agricultural sector went into decline and the Nigerian economy has been a mono-cultural one since then. Elsewhere advocacy has been made for revitalizing the agricultural sector of the nation (Egwemi and Avidime, 2008). This advocacy is still germane today. In recent times and in the face of dwindling revenue from oil, this advocacy has been re-echoed by many Nigerians and the government does not seem to be averse to pursuing it.

The immediate past Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development had put in place a programme to revolutionise agriculture in the country (Agha, 2014; Okwor, 2015; Ogunbiyi, 2015). This is the way to go. Suggestions have been made by the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) to the effect that government should allocate 20% of annual budget to agriculture (Natsa, 2014d). Considering the place of agriculture in ensuring food security, job creation and also as a revenue earning means the government needs to give priority to the agricultural sector (Olorufemi, 2015; Aliyu, 2015).

Apart from the agricultural sector, there is the need to also develop the country's vast solid mineral resources. The government should seriously consider investing in the mining sector given the country's solid mineral resources. The solid minerals sector is said to have earned the economy N31.499 billion in 2012 (Natsa, 2015b). If one considers the fact that the sector is underexplored then its potential contribution to the Nigerian economy comes into clear relief. The need for government to increase investments in the mining sector cannot be over- emphasized (Natsa, 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; Obi, 2015).

Furthermore, there is the need to explore the tourism potentials of the country. In this direction some tourism professionals have drawn attention to the potentials of the sector and the need for government to be more committed to developing the sector.

Specifically Ini Akpabio has drawn attention to how the tourism sector in South Africa is contributing more to the economy than the sale of gold which used to be the highest revenue earner for the country (Akpabio, 2014). Nigeria has limitless tourist attractions and according to Akpabio “unless we have our government...fund the tourism sector and the marketing arm of the sector to give out correct information, we are not going to have people coming to Nigeria as tourists” (Akpabio, 2014:26). Considering the huge promise that the sector holds, the need to develop it cannot be overemphasized. Because Nigeria’s tourist destinations are not developed, her citizens go abroad for their tourism needs and the country is said to lose N700 billion annually to this (Okeke, 2015b). In the face of falling oil prices and the potentials of tourism in Nigeria, the advocacy for prioritizing tourism has been made and it is worth pursuing in the larger economic interest of Nigeria (Amzat, 2015). Chika Okeke has examined some of the challenges confronting the tourism sector in the country and has also proffered solutions which need to be taken into consideration as the government moves towards revamping the tourism sector (Okeke, 2015a). The Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) has in recent times made efforts aimed at showcasing the country’s tourism potential. It has opened tourism information desks at the Abuja and Lagos airports and has plans to do so at other points of entry and exit in the country (Busari, 2015). Such efforts need to be sustained in order to fully tap into the tourism potentials of the country. However, to fully reap the benefits from the sector, the Nigerian government needs to tackle the challenge of insecurity in the country. This is discussed in detail in the next section.

When all these suggestions are given due consideration the economic fortunes of the country will be enhanced. From a comparative perspective it can be argued that if a country like Singapore without any known resource can move from a Third World to a First World country in less than half a century then this is also possible for Nigeria if her vast resources are adequately managed. This is a great opportunity that the country needs to maximize.

The fall in oil price may be taken as a blessing in disguise as it will make Nigeria look towards non-oil exports which are indeed abundant in the country (Editorial *Daily Trust* December 17, 2014: 55; Chidiebere, 2014). The position has been canvassed that non-oil exports are Nigeria’s next line of defence and her trump card as oil prices plummet (Ogwu, 2014; *Zenith Economic Quarterly*, October 2014). Nigeria needs to begin to look beyond oil to other sources in addition to the ones that this paper has isolated and discussed (Manuaka, 2015; Ugochukwu, 2015a; 2015b; Ezonon, 2014).

Dealing decisively with Corruption, Poverty, Terrorism and Insurgency

The problems of poverty, corruption, terrorism and insurgency are not peculiar to Nigeria. These problems occur across the world albeit with varying intensity.

Furthermore, different countries have different approaches to handling them. The case of Nigeria as it relates to these problems is that there seems to be a lack of political will to decisively deal with them (Egwemi, 2012; 2013a; 2013b; 2013c). Governments in the country over the years and irrespective of regime type have continually handled these challenges with levity.

Elsewhere an agenda has been proposed for taming the monster of corruption in the country (Egwemi, 2012). The agenda includes among other things;

- Mustering the necessary political will
- Adopting good governance as an article of faith
- De-politicizing the war on corruption
- A special court to try corruption cases
- Matching action and consistency with the rhetoric of anti-corruption (see Egwemi, 2012).

This advocacy is still as germane as when it was made and the government would do well to adopt the agenda in the developmental interest of the country.

In the same vein the advocacy for the need for political will in the fight against poverty has been made (Egwemi, 2015). The advocacy involves the following practical steps;

- Adopting good governance principle as article of faith
- Punishing public officials who mismanage, divert or embezzle poverty alleviation funds
- Involving the poor in poverty alleviation programmes
- The willingness to learn from countries with successful poverty eradication programmes.

As it is with the advocacy on corruption the government will also do well to adopt these measures.

On the issue of terrorism and insurgency the advocacy has been made elsewhere that the government should negotiate with the terrorists/insurgents. As the argument went in that intervention;

Dialogue is not a sign of weakness on the part of government. On the contrary it is a sign of responsibility! The government needs to engage Boko Haram in order to understand their grievances. A military solution is definitely out of the question. So far it does not seem to have achieved much. More importantly, the problem with a military solution is brought into clear relief with Mohammed Zagga's

rhetorical question: “Is there a military solution in dealing with a man who is ready to die for his cause?” (Egwemi, 2013c: 100).

With the terrorists and insurgents running amok it has been reported that Nigerians do not feel safe in their neighborhoods (Jimoh, 2015). The government needs to muster the necessary political will to engage the Boko Haram sect in the interest of the security and general wellbeing of the country (Moneke, 2015).

Concluding Remarks

The North/South divide (along with other divisive tendencies) in the country still remains potent. Most Nigerians see themselves more as belonging to their ethnic groups than to the larger Nigerian group. Added to this is the regional political mindset of most Nigerians. The 2014 National Conference seemed to have resurrected these primordial tendencies in the country. More often than not the delegates were sharply divided along ethno-regional lines on all the key issues at the conference (Aliyu, 2014; Daka and Tsokar, 2014a; 2014b; Ibrahim, 2014; Editorial *Daily Sun* July 21, 2014:19; Editorial *The Guardian* July 23, 2014:14). Moving on in the next 100 years Nigerians need to shun divisive tendencies and develop a spirit of internal solidarity. In an increasingly competitive world the need for a country such as Nigeria to present a common front cannot be overemphasized.

Nigeria has had a chequered history since 1914. The country has been through the good, the bad and the ugly. While the pessimists see no hope for the country, the optimists see great hope. Of course some are indifferent about the country’s prospects. This paper sees hope for the country. The country has a lot of potentials which can make her a great nation. In this direction all hands must be on deck. The government must muster the necessary political will to make the difficult decisions that will take the country from *potential* to *actual* greatness. The people on their part must make the necessary sacrifices to bring this about.

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Acknowledgements

This paper is a revised version of a presentation made at the conference on "Nigeria Since the 1914 Amalgamation" held between 4th and 7th May, 2014. We thank the organizers of the conference, the Departments of Political Science and History and International Studies, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, Nigeria for providing us the platform.