



UNDERSTANDING
GOVERNMENT AND
POLITICS IN
NIGERIA

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CHAPTER FOUR

POST COLONIAL NIGERIA: POWER AND POLITICS IN THE FIRST REPUBLIC, 1960 -1966

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Introduction

Nigeria as it is today came into existence in 1914, when Lord Frederick Lugard amalgamated the north and south protectorates into a single entity. In fact, the name was suggested by Flora Shaw that “the several British protectorates on the Niger be known collectively as Nigeria” (Crowder, 1980:11). This singular act of amalgamation brought together a people from different ethnic and religious background, which to a greater extent has continued to affect the political landscape of the country. As a matter of fact, most people from the different protectorates did not support the idea and have continued to voice out their disapproval and frustration in various forms such as religious and ethnic violent disturbances in different parts of the country. As far back as 1947, the founder and leader of Egbe Omo Oduduwa and Action Group, Chief Obafemi Awolowo expressed his view about Nigeria as a corporate entity thus:

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no “Nigerians” in the sense as there are “English”, “Welsh”, or “French.” The word “Nigerian” is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the

boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not (cited in Coleman, 1986:320)

In the same vein, while contributing to a debate on the floor of the Nigerian Legislative Council in March, 1948, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who later became Nigeria's first Prime Minister stated the Northern position thus:

Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one...particularly some of the press people...this is wrong. I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside this Chamber...The southern tribes who are now pouring into the north in ever increasing numbers, and are more or less domiciled here do not mix with the northern people...and we in the north look upon them as invaders (cited in Coleman, 1986:361).

The view expressed by the great nationalists goes to support the fact that the amalgamation of 1914 was a British creation that did not receive the popular support of the people. However, between 1914 and 1960, the country was under the British colonial rule. And at independence in 1960, the country adopted the federal parliamentary democracy with the British Monarch as the Head of State as represented by the Governor-General in the person of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (McCormick, 2004). No doubt colonial rule influenced Nigeria in the area of constitutional development, structure of the country, political party system and party formation, elections and governance. To fully appreciate the post-colonial Nigeria therefore, this section examines the country at independence, background information on granting of independence in 1960, the provisions of the 1960 and 1963 constitutions, the parliamentary regime – features, elections, composition and constitutional powers, power politics, Nigerian economy and the collapse of the First Republic on 15th January, 1966.

Background Information on Granting of Independence in 1960

The issue of Nigeria's independence became heightened towards the end of the 1950s and was the dominant issue at the 1957 Constitutional Conference held in London and the 1958 Conference held in Lagos. Most of the political figures in Nigeria politics and delegates from the regional governments attended the Conferences. The issue of regional government was deliberated upon at the 1957 conference and it was resolved that the Western and the Eastern Regions should be granted the status of self-government on 8th August, 1957 while the Northern Region was to attain that status of self-government in 1959. Very importantly however, the Nigerian political leaders unanimously for the first time agreed that Nigeria's independence should be October, 1960 (Ikelegbe, 2004).

The conference set up Sir Henry Willinck Commission to look into the fears of the minority ethnic groups dominated by the majority ethnic groups in the regions. Although, the British government was initially opposed to the idea, they later came out with a declaration that "even if additional states were to be created, not more than one state would be created in each region" (cited in

Elaigwu, 2005:37). The commission, which arrived in Nigeria on November 23, 1957, began public sittings in each region till 12 April, 1958 when it submitted its reports. The terms of reference of the Sir Henry Willinck's Commission to address the fears of minorities in Nigeria were:

1. to ascertain the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and *to propose means of allaying those fears whether well or ill founded*;
2. to advise what safeguards should be included for this purpose in the constitution of Nigeria;
3. if, but only if, no other solution seems to the commission to meet the case, then as a last resort, to make detailed recommendations for the creation of one or more new states, and in that case:
 - a. to specify the precise area to be included in such state or states;
 - b. to recommend the governmental and administrative structure most appropriate for it;
 - c. to assess whether any state recommended would be viable from an economic and administrative point of view and what the effect of its creation would be on the region or regions from which it would be created and on the federation (cited in Elaigwu, 2005:37).

In order to consider the reports of the Willinck Commission to clear some grey areas in the 1957 Conference, the 1958 Conference was held in Lagos. It was resolved in the conference that the north should attain internal self-government on March 15, 1959 and that Nigeria should be granted independence in October 1960 within the British Commonwealth (King, 1988; Ikelegbe, 1988). The reports of the Sir Willinck Commission showed that the fears of the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria were real. The findings of the commission revealed that:

Each regional minority expressed the fear that independence would make it difficult for *autocratic regional governments* to be changed because of their dependence on the votes of majority ethnic groups. In the West, minorities feared Action Group (AG) dependence on a Yoruba majority; in the North, minorities expressed anxiety about Hausa-Fulani domination through the Northern People's Congress (NPC); while minority groups in the East feared Ibo domination through the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) (cited in Elaigwu, 2005:38).

Furthermore, fears that bothered on discrimination in economic field, religion, public posts, provision of public services, changes in the legal system in the regions, maintenance of public order, individual rights in the regions, intimidation, victimization, role of traditional rulers, the relationship between Native Authorities and the regional governments were expressed by the minority ethnic groups. Even though the commission saw the real need for state creation to assuage the fears of domination of minority ethnic groups by the majority ethnic groups in Nigeria; yet there was no single state created from the then three regional structure of the Nigerian federation before independence in 1960.

This was because all the then regional governments denied many of the fears expressed by the minority ethnic groups as baseless (Elaigwu, 2005).

The minority ethnic groups that appeared before the commission included: the people of Mid-west, made-up of present day – Edo and Delta States from the then Western Region; the people of Ogoja, Calabar and Rivers of the present day – Cross-River, Rivers and Bayelsa States respectively from the then Eastern Region; and the people of the Middle-Belt of present day – Bunue, Kogi, Kwara and Plateau States; also included are people from southern Zaria, southern Bauchi, Niger and Adamawa in the present day – Kaduna, Bauchi, Niger and Adamawa States respectively (Elaigwu, 2005).

No doubt, the creation of more states from the then three regions would have gone a long way to properly redefine the Nigerian federation in terms of structure and ethnic balancing for development and which would have prevented the adoption and application of the federal character principle currently seen by different scholars as obstacle to merit for development in manpower procurement and promotion in the Nigerian public service (Gboyega, 1989; Onyeoziri, 2002; Nzeshi, 2012).

In preparation for independence, a general election into the House of Representatives was held on the 12th December, 1959. The results of the election showed that NPC secured 134 seats while NCNC had a total of 89 seats. AG, however, gained 73 seats (Ikelegbe, 1988; Osaghae, 2002; Gberevbie, 2009). Since no party emerged with a clear majority of 156 seats out of the 312 members in the House of Representatives, a coalition government comprising NPC and NCNC was formed with Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (NPC Deputy Leader) appointed as Prime Minister, and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC Leader) appointed President of the newly created Upper Chamber of the Federal Parliament - the Senate, and subsequently became the Governor-General of the Nigerian federation at independence (Akinsanya, 2005). The table below shows the 1959 Federal Election Results of the different political parties that took part prior to independence in 1960:

Table 1: The 1959 Federal Election Results

Regions	Action Group UMBC	NCNC NEPU	NPC	Others Independents
Northern Region	25	8	134	7
Eastern Region	14	56	-	1
Western Region	33	21	-	8
Federal Territory	1	2	-	-
Total no. of seats (312)	73	89	134	16

Source: Ikelegbe (1988:316)

Table 1 shows that NPC won majority of seats in the 1959 election but could not form the government alone because to form a government, a political party must win at least half of the total seats contested for in the election; and in this case, a party needed 156 seats in the house of 312 members to form the government all alone (Ikelegbe, 1988; Adigwe, 1985).

Early in January 1960, a motion for the independence of Nigeria was moved in the House of Representatives by the Fani Kayode. Consequent upon this, the Nigeria Independent Act 1960 was passed by the British Parliament on 26th January, 1960. The authorities of the Nigerian government at independence therefore, derived in part from the British Parliament since the legislative powers of the independent State of Nigeria were defined in an act of the British Parliament (Elias, 1967).

Nigeria at Independence

Nigeria became an independent nation on October 1, 1960 by an act of the British Parliament. The 1960 Independence Constitution of Nigeria conferred full independence on the entire federation and remained in force until 1st October, 1963 when the country became a republic. It had a federal constitution with a parliamentary democratic system modeled after the British Westminster system that emphasized majority rule. Nigeria, unlike most other African states adopted the multiparty system at independence; although it was regionally based (Metz, 1991).

The independence constitution of the federation and its regions were established by Section 2 of the Nigeria (Constitution) Order-in-Council, 1960, made by the British government in the following order: the Constitution of the Federation Republic of Nigeria, the Constitution of the Northern Region, the Constitution of Western Region and the Constitution of Eastern Region. In case of conflict between the regional constitutions and the Federal constitution however, Section 1 of the Constitution of the Federation of Nigeria 1960 provided that the Federal Constitution shall prevail to the extent of the inconsistency and the other law shall be void (Nnamdi, 1995; McCormick, 2004).

The Provisions of the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions

The 1960 independence and 1963 Republican Constitutions essentially had the same features with minor differences (Osaghae, 2002). Some of the main features of these constitutions will now be discussed.

First, the two constitutions maintained the characteristic features of a Westminster model type of parliamentary government both at the central and regional levels. A dual executive existed with the head of state as a titular head while the head of government exercised executive powers. Section 79 of the Constitutions stipulated that the Head of State was a constitutional monarch; the Queen of Great Britain represented by a Governor-General. Section 81(4) of the Constitutions empowered the Governor-General to appoint as Prime Minister any member of the House of Representatives who appeared to him to command the support of the majority of the members of the House. Also, the other Federal Ministers were appointed by the Governor-General but on the advice of the Prime Minister (Adigwe, 1985). At the regional level, the head of state was the Governor and head of government was the Premier. By the 1963 Republican Constitution, however, the Head of State became a constitutional President in the person of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (Ikelegbe, 1988; Osaghae, 2002). The

appointment of the President under the 1963 Republican constitution was clearly stated:

Under Section 37 of the 1963 Federal Constitution, a person elected as the President was required to take and subscribe to the oath of allegiance and such an oath for the due performance of those functions as may be prescribed by Parliament before he could start to perform the functions of the President. These oaths were to be administered by the Chief Justice of the Federal Republic or by any person for the time being appointed to exercise the functions of the Chief Justice (Adigwe, 1985:235).

Furthermore, Section 37 of the 1963 Republican Constitution stipulated that the President was to hold office for a five-year period beginning on the day of his election or on the next day following the date on which the office next became vacant where the elected person or another person held office as President on the day of his election. And once the President assumed office, any other public office held by him was to become vacant and during the tenure of his office, he was disqualified from holding any other public office. Also, the office of the President was to become vacant either upon the expiration of five years after his appointment, or if the incumbent died or resigned his office or was removed from office (Adigwe, 1985).

In addition, Section 37 of the 1963 Constitution mandated the President of the Senate to perform the functions of the President of the federation during any of the following periods:

- a. any period when the office of the President was vacant;
- b. any period when the President was absent from Nigeria; the President could not be absent from Nigeria except with the concurrence of the Council of Ministers;
- c. any period when the President was in the opinion of the Prime Minister, unable to perform the functions of his office by reason of illness; and
- d. any period when the President was prohibited by Section 38(8) of the Constitution from exercising the functions of his office.

But if during any other period the President of the Senate was, in the opinion of the Prime Minister, unable to perform the functions of the office of the President so conferred on him, those functions were to be performed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Further, if during any period the Speaker was, in the opinion of the Prime Minister, unable to perform the functions so conferred upon him; those functions were to be performed by a person appointed by the Federal Council of Ministers by an order published in the gazette of the federation (Adigwe, 1985).

Second, Section 81 of the Constitutions stipulated that the Federal Executive Council was to be headed by the Prime Minister who should advise the Governor-General in matters of appointment or dismissal of Cabinet Ministers. The Federal Executive was responsible for the exercise of such powers like the prerogative of mercy, signing of international treaties, and even termination of

the life of the parliament. Members of the Federal Executive Council were also members of the national parliament. No Minister of Cabinet rank could criticize the government in public due to the principle of collective responsibility. Once a vote of no confidence is passed by the parliament on the Prime Minister, the government stands dissolved. Similarly, the Regional Executive Council consisted of the Premier and some other Ministers appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Premier. The ministers were collectively responsible to the regional Legislature. These same provisions also applied under the 1963 Republican Constitution (Adigwe, 1985; Ikelegbe, 1988; Osaghae, 2002).

Third, the federal parliament was bicameral and consisted of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate - the upper house was made up of 44 members chosen by the regional legislatures while the House of Representatives - the lower house, was made up of 312 elected members. The Senate was composed on the basis of equal representation from the regions. As observed by Osaghae (2002), the Senate had a balancing function to counterbalance the gross inequalities in representation of the House of Representatives. Each regional legislature consisted of a House of Assembly, the lower house and a House of Chiefs, which was the upper house. While members of the House of Assembly were elected directly by the electorate, the House of Chiefs was made up of traditional rulers (Ikelegbe, 1988; Osaghae, 2002).

Fourth, the 1960 and 1963 constitutions were federal constitutions which divided powers between the Central and the autonomous Regional Governments. Each of the governments had its own constitution, public service, judiciary and marketing boards. Thus, there existed the Constitution of the Federation, the Constitution of the Northern Region, the Constitution of Western Region and the Constitution of Eastern Region. Section 105 of the Constitution empowered the Parliament to make provision for Police forces forming part of the armed forces of the federation or for the protection of harbours, waterways, railways and airfields (Adigwe, 1985). The Federal Government had power over matters on the exclusive legislative lists, while it jointly exercised power with the regional governments over matters contained in the concurrent legislative lists. Residual powers were reserved for the regional governments, which in essence made the regional governments very powerful. Section 64(4) of the Constitution stipulated that in the case of conflict between the regional constitutions and the Federal constitution, however, the Federal constitution prevailed to the extent of the inconsistency and the other law would be void. In general, the regional constitutions followed the federal model, both structurally and functionally. The most striking departure was, however, in the Northern Region where special provisions brought the regional constitution into consonance with Islamic law and custom. The similarities between the federal and regional constitutions were deceptive in the sense that differences in religious and cultural practices pervaded the conduct of public affairs at the regional levels of the Nigerian federation (Adigwe, 1985; Otoghile, 1995; Ikelegbe, 2004).

Fifth, the establishment of a Judicial Service Commission was provided for. The commission was to be responsible for the appointment, discipline and promotion of judges so as to guarantee the independence of the judiciary from political interference. The salaries and allowances of the judicial officers were charged on the Consolidated Fund. The Federal Supreme Court was vested with the power of judicial review to declare the action of either the Federal or Regional Governments illegal, null and void if such violated the constitution. Under the 1960 Constitution, the Privy Council in Great Britain was the highest court for Nigeria. The Supreme Court in Nigeria was still not the final Court of Appeal and as such, cases that required appeal went to the Privy Council in London for final decision. However, with the emergence of the 1963 Republican constitution, the Supreme Court became the highest court in Nigeria (Otoghile, 1995; McCormick, 2004).

Sixth, the procedures for the amendment of the constitutions were made cumbersome in order to protect the federal union as stipulated in Sections 4 and 5 of the Federal Constitution (Adigwe, 1985). By this provision, motion for amendment of the constitution was to receive a two-third majority votes in the federal parliament in concurrence with two-thirds of the regions. The difficult process of amending the constitution was perhaps, hinged on the federal framework of the constitution. The two-thirds support of the national parliament and that of the regions required for any amendment in the constitution meant that no part of the country whether in terms of ethnic, religion, individual or interest groups would be able to alter any part of the constitution for parochial or selfish motive (Ikelegbe, 1988; Otoghile, 1995).

Seventh, provisions were made for the definition of the citizenship of Nigeria as stipulated in Section 7 (Adigwe, 1985). By these provisions, Nigerian citizenship was defined by birth and naturalization. Following this, the fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens were explicitly entrenched as a measure to allay the fears of the minority groups and also to guarantee the liberties of the Nigerian citizens. In the administration of justice, particularly in times of dispute among the component units of the federation and in order to ensure fair play and equity, the Supreme Court acting as the highest court of the land had power to settle disputes. Thus the Supreme Court became the final court where appeals could be heard and justice executed for series of criminal and civil matters. Provisions were made for the appointment of the Chief Justice of the Federation and other judges with their tenure of office entrenched in the constitution (Adigwe, 1985; Ikelegbe, 2004).

Eighth, Section 65 of the Federal Constitution gave the Prime Minister emergency powers. By this provision, the Prime Minister could declare a state of emergency, with the approval of the Federal Parliament, on any part of the country for the purpose of maintaining peace, order and good government. The emergency powers could be exercised when the federation was at war, or where there was a total breakdown of law and order in any part of the country (Otoghile, 1995; Ikelegbe, 2004). In February 1961, a plebiscite was conducted

to determine the disposition of the Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroons, which were administered by Britain as United Nations Trust Territories. By an overwhelming majority, voters in the Southern Cameroons opted to join formerly French-administered Cameroon over integration with Nigeria as a separate federated region. In the Northern Cameroon, however, the largely Muslim electorates chose to merge with Nigeria's Northern Region (Adigwe, 1985).

The 1963 Republican Constitution replaced the 1960 Independence Constitution owing to the desire to erase the last traces of colonialism in Nigeria. Consequential upon this therefore, the Federal Parliament enacted the Constitution of the Federation Act 1963, which repealed and replaced the Nigeria Independence Act 1960 and the Order-in-council and delegated the same authority to the legislatures of each of region to enact its own constitution law to repeal and replace the independence act and the order-in-council (Eteng, 1997). The result of this was that while the 1960 Constitution was contained in a single document under the same legislative authority – the British Parliament, the 1963 Constitution was contained in different documents enacted under different legislative authorities (the federal constitution being enacted by the federal parliament and the various regional constitutions were enacted by their respective regional legislatures except the Constitution of Mid-Western Region of Nigeria that was enacted by the Federal Parliament in 1964) (Eteng, 1997; Ikelegbe, 2004).

It was unfortunate that the 1963 Constitution did not last long as various turbulent crises and political maneuvering that characterized the period led to the incursion of the military into politics in Nigeria, which eventually brought about the failure and the collapse of the First Republic on 15th January, 1966.

The Parliamentary Regime – Features, Elections, Composition and Constitutional Powers

In the First Republic, the system of government was the parliamentary type modeled after the British Westminster. By this system, there existed a dual executive - the Head of State whose position was ceremonial without executive powers, and the Prime Minister who possessed the real executive powers and responsible for the day-to-day administration of the government. At Independence, the Head of State was the Queen of Great Britain represented by the Governor-General, who also acted as the Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. The Prime Minister was *primus inter pares* (first among equals). At the regional level, the head of state was the Governor, while the head of government was the Premier (Asia, 2001; Gberville, 2012).

As earlier mentioned, the general election into the House of Representatives that was held in 1959 preparatory to independence did not give a clear victory to any political party in terms of winning majority seats in parliament to form the government. So, a coalition government comprising NPC and NCNC was therefore formed. A fundamental principle of the parliamentary system is that

region, fifty-five other Chiefs, and five special representative members (Adigwe, 1985).

The Executive of each region consisted of the Premier and some other Ministers appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Premier. The Executive was collectively responsible for the Regional Legislature. The executive authority of the region extended to the execution and maintenance of the Constitution of the region in question and to all matters over which the legislative power of the region extended. In order to safeguard the unity of the country, Section 79 of the Federal Constitution stipulated that the executive authority of the region should not be exercised in such a way that it would impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive authority of the federation or endanger the continuance of the Federal Government in the country (Adigwe, 1985).

Power Politics in the First Republic

The politics and power play in Nigeria's First Republic can be better understood by putting the political events of the period in various perspectives as stated below:

a. Formation of Regional and Ethnically Based Political Parties

The period between 1960 when Nigeria became independent and 1966 when the military took over the government is often referred to as the First Republic. During this period, Nigeria operated a parliamentary democracy as earlier stated modeled along British system, although regionally based, multiparty system. While Nigeria as a country operated a multiparty structure at this point in time, all the regions operated mainly ethnically based one-party system that could not control power beyond their various regions (Osaghae, 2002). The Northern Region, for instance, was dominated by the NPC; the NCNC controlled the Eastern Region; and the AG controlled the Western Region. This development encouraged regionalism and had detrimental consequences of political instability on the Nigerian State (Asia, 2001; Gberville, 2009).

b. NPC/NCNC Political Marriage of Convenience

At the federal level, the government that emerged was a coalition of the NPC and NCNC despite their conflicting differences. According to Akinsanya (2005:22), "in many respects, an NPC/NCNC federal coalition government was an anomaly. It involved the cooperation of two political parties whose public image could not be more distinct or diametrically opposed." This was particularly so because "while the NPC was traditionalist, aristocratic, gradualist and regionalist, the NCNC was nationalist, radical, egalitarian and populist." Furthermore, "while the NPC was pro-Western and anti-Israeli in orientation, the NCNC was Pan-Africanist and it espoused neutrality and nonalignment in the 'East-West' struggle (Cold War)" (Akinsanya, 2005:22). Asia (2001:15) pointed that "the uneasy coalition notwithstanding, the NPC/NCNC coalition firmly established itself as the ruling coalition party."

The differences in the parties notwithstanding, the coalition between NPC/NCNC was made possible due to the fact that some NPC and NCNC leaders had been closely associated in earlier governments at the centre between 1951 and 1959. Also, the goodwill that accrued to the coalition, largely, because of the qualities of Dr Azikiwe and Sir Tafawa Balewa, which endeared them to their colleagues in the administration made the coalition to become a possibility (Akinsanya, 2005). Asia (2001) argued that as a party in opposition, the AG had a difficult time experiencing constant harassment such as intimidation of its members by the ruling party and its supporters.

Furthermore, the attitudes of these parties toward accommodating minority aspirations varied widely. While the NCNC espoused self-determination for ethnic minorities but only in accordance with its advocacy of a unitary state, the Action Group, although supported such movements, including the restoration of the northern Yoruba area (Ilorin, Igbomina and Kabba) to the Western Region, but as part of a multi-state, federal Nigeria. The NPC, on the other hand, persistently opposed the balkanization of the Northern Region and was able to win over some disaffected minorities in the Middle Belt (Metz, 1991). Several proposals were introduced for the creation of more states as a means of restructuring the regions along ethnic lines to satisfy the clamour of the minorities, especially those from the Northern Region. Only the Mid-Western Region achieved formal approval in 1963 because it served to further the hegemonic interests of the NPC/NCNC coalition government to the detriment of the AG despite its opposition to its creation from the Western Region (Osaghae, 2002).

c. Political Intolerance

The early political life of the Nigerian federation began to exhibit a culture of political intolerance both at the regional and at the federal level. For instance, there were trumped-up charges against Chief Obafemi Awolowo and some of his supporters including Chief Anthony Enahoro of smuggling arms into the country with the intent to topple the government of the day and for giving military training to 200 activists in Ghana. They were put on trial for treasonable felony, convicted and jailed for 10 years (Asia, 2001). In addition, Chief Awolowo was accused of criminal misuse of public funds that ran into several million pounds from public development corporations to the AG through a private investment corporation when he was the Premier of the Western Region in the 1950s (Asia, 2001).

In the same vein, Dr Chike Obi of the Dynamic Party (DP) and Joseph Taka of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) who were opposed to the ruling coalition government were also put on trial and convicted of sedition and treason respectively. Following these trials and convictions, the opposition party members from the West, Mid-west and the Middle Belt regarded these actions as political vendetta and expressed doubt about the credibility of political and judicial systems of the country (Asia, 2001).

d. AG, the Western Region Crises and Collapse of the First Republic

It is on record that between 1962 and 1966, the Western Nigeria remained the cockpit of Nigerian politics. The leadership of AG could not agree on common issues regarding the administration of the Western Region and as well, the national government. Chief Awolowo favoured the adoption of social democracy as party policy, following the lead of Kwame Nkrumah's regime in Ghana and wanted to enlarge the sphere of influence of the party to make it interregional by drawing support across the country. Chief Samuel Akintola, the regional Premier on the other hand, supported an all-party federal coalition and wanted AG to align itself closely to the ruling party instead of being an opposition party to the government so that the party leaders could have access to power and as well benefit from the national spoils usually reserved for ruling parties (Osaghae, 2002). Furthermore, while Chief Awolowo as the AG leader felt he should be consulted on policy changes and major appointments in the region, and indeed exercised general supervision over all the activities of the AG. Chief Akintola, however, did not like these limitations. All the mechanisms employed by the elders of the party to reconcile the two personalities did not yield any fruitful results, which eventually contributed to the crises in the Western Region and subsequent collapse of the Nigerian First Republic (Akinsanya 2005; Ojo, 2012).

e. Minority Problems and Creation of New States

Although, the British colonial government recognized the need for federalism for Nigeria, it did not properly work out the power struggle between the contenders for federal power since one region was in a position to lord it over the other two regions combined in terms of size and population. At independence, the preponderant size of the Northern Region made it possible for the north to dominate the federation. Having more than half of the country's population, the region through the NPC controlled majority of the seats in the House of Representatives. With this structure, the Northern Region could hold the Nigerian federation to ransom in the sense that any bill that was opposed by the NPC in parliament faced the possibility of rejection.

Furthermore, the arbitrary ethnic grouping engendered much bitterness due to actual domination of the minority by the majority ethnic groups in the various regions. This led to the demands for creation of more states and/or regional boundary adjustments (Metz, 2001; Osaghae, 2002).

Several minority political movements such as the Mid-West-State Movement, Middle-Belt Zone League and the Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers Movement were thus formed to press for separate states (Elaigwu, 2005). Contrarily, the three major political parties seemed not to sincerely support the carving out of the minority ethnic groups in their various regions. NPC with a policy of "one North, one people, one destiny" wanted the Northern Region to be left intact so as to maintain its hegemony over the other two regions of the East and West combined together. The NCNC in the Eastern Region on the other hand, supported the creation of additional states as long as states were to be created in other regions and based on four principles of: self-determination (majority support for separate state); relative ethnic homogeneity; geographical contiguity

of such new state; and viability – that each state, as nearly as possible, should be self-sustained economic and administrative unit (Elaigwu, 2005).

On its part, the AG in the Western Region supported the creation of minority states but with an adjustment that brought to question the viability of the proposed Mid-West State. For instance, the AG suggested that the Ibo-speaking peoples of Asaba and Agbor should be added to the Eastern Region; the Ijaw west of the Niger should join their kinsmen in the East and the two minorities with Yoruba dialect (Akoko-Edo of Afemmai and the Itsekiri of Warri) should remain in the Western Region, the Ilorin and Kabba Yoruba of the North should be merged with Yoruba West, Ishan and Afemmai divisions should be excluded from the proposed Mid-West State because of their opposition to the Mid-Western State idea. If these suggestions were to be accepted, the implication was that the creation of Mid-West State would not have taken place due to the problem of viability in terms of population and economic strength (Metz, 2001: Elaigwu, 2005).

Section 3 of the Federal Constitution mandated the creation of states in the Nigerian Federation (Adigwe, 1985). Consequent upon the minorities' agitation, a bill for the creation of three more states (Middle Belt, Calaba-Ogoja-Rivers and Mid-West) was introduced in the Federal Parliament. Only the Mid-Western Region received the support of both the Northern and Eastern Regional legislatures. The Western legislature, although objected to it when Chief Awolowo was in charge of AG, but the creation of the region was formally approved in 1963, when he was already serving a ten year jail term and because, the NPC/NCNC coalition government considered its creation to be favourable to their hegemonic interests. Thus, the creation of the Mid-Western Region out of the former Western Region in 1963 finally completed the devastating blow on the Action Group as a dominant party in the Western Region (Adigwe, 1985; Osaghae, 2002).

f. The 1962 Census Crises

The issues of size and distribution of population remained volatile in the politics of Nigeria's First Republic. This was because population distribution served as a barometer to measure the political strength of the regions and as major factor for allocating revenue, for distributing social amenities, resources, scholarships and quotas in recruitment into the armed forces among the regions. Furthermore, seats in the House of Representatives were allocated to the regions on the basis of population. For instance, the 312 seats in the House of Representatives were allocated to the regions according to the size of their population based on the 1952-3 census figure. The Northern Region had 174 seats, the Eastern Region had 73 while the Western Region had 62 and Lagos, 3 seats (Oyediran, 1979). Thus, the Parliamentary democratic system in Nigeria simply assured the domination of the Federal Government by the region with the most population. Since party politics ran along ethnic/regional lines, the North with more than half of the country's population was bound to win all the elections conducted on the basis of one man one vote. The 1962 census presented the best opportunity for the NCNC and the Southern political leaders to redress the lopsided Nigeria's federal structure and the defective Northern

domination. The competing regional governments, therefore, approached the exercise from this perspective (Oyediran, 1979; King, 1988).

The results of the census showed a high count for both the East and the West. The North on the other hand felt undercounted and perhaps cheated in the game and therefore protested. As a result, “the census figures were never published and the whole census had to be cancelled on account of harsh criticism” (Adigwe, 1985:260). The Prime Minister ordered a fresh count in 1963. The 1963 census figures released on 25th February 1964 put the country’s population at 55,653,821 made-up of: Northern Region 29,777,986; Eastern Region 12,388,646; Western Region 10,278,500, Mid-Western Region 2,533,337; and Lagos 675,352 (Adigwe, 1985; Osaghae, 2002).

The results apparently dashed the hopes of most southern politicians that a new census would end the age-long North’s numerical predominance, and indirectly, the Northern political control of the Nigerian Federation (Dudley, 1982). The NCNC’s Eastern Regional government rejected the results of the census while the Western Regional government accepted it due to Chief Akintola’s political romance with the NPC. The cacophony wreaked havoc on alliance between the NPC and the NCNC. The NCNC leaders accused the Northern Region’s government of fraud and contested the result in the law court. Tafawa Balewa, the country’s Prime Minister and Ahmadu Bello, the Northern Regional Premier and leader of the party respectively denied the claim. However, the Prime Minister declared the census results valid and final. This crisis paved the way for new political alignment and realignment to the detriment of AG and NCNC (Asia, 2001; Ikelegbe, 2004).

g. Political Parties Realignments and Alliances

The federal parliamentary election of December 1964 was to be the first general elections in Nigeria after independence. The ominous events leading up to the elections revealed an impending volatile political scene. With the elections drawing close, the AG was literally fading from the national political map as a result of Awolowo’s imprisonment, and by early 1964 there was no strong opposition at the federal level, which fundamentally altered political alignments. The Akintola’s led Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), while dominating the political activities of the Western Region, sought to maintain an alliance with the ruling party at the federal level. The NCNC saw NNDP as a tool of the NPC. It also felt that the Eastern Region was underrepresented in the government as a result of the previous census results. The NPC became nervous of the moves by NCNC for possible alliances with other political parties. It also became apprehensive of the increasing Igbos’ presence in the Northern civil service. As a result of this distrust between the NCNC and the NPC about each other’s policies and intentions, the two parties parted ways and looked for new alliances (Asia, 2001; Ikelegbe, 2004).

This volatile political situation led to realignment of parties and produced two alliances in preparation for the 1964 elections. First was the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) which comprised of the NPC, Akintola’s NNDP and the minority parties in both the East and West, namely, the Niger Delta Congress (NDC), the Mid-West Democratic Front (MDF) and the Dynamic

Party (DP). The second alliance was the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). This was made-up of the NCNC, what was left of AG and the Northern Progressive Front (NPF) - a party that came from the merger of Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). As rightly observed by Osaghae (2002), in spite of the national and cross-regional appearance of these two camps, the character of these alliances showed a North versus South group. At the centre of the NNA was the NPC whose aim was to consolidate the Northern hegemony and the control the Federal Government. To extend its influence to the South and as well frustrate the NCNC, but NPC would need to form alliance with the parties in opposition in the South. The UPGA, on the other hand, comprised majorly of NCNC, a southern party whose major aim was to halt Northern hegemony which would only be realized by teaming up with NPC opposition parties in the North (Osaghae, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2004)..

h. The 1964 Federal Election

The 1964 federal parliamentary election was contested by the two major political parties that formed alliances with smaller parties - NNA and UPGA. These two broad coalitions polarized the country's politics into a zero-sum competition between two opposing alliances. The electoral process witnessed great violence, harassment, kidnappings, intimidation and killing of political opponents by the ruling regional parties, allegations and counter allegations by one alliance on the other of plots to rig the election (Metz, 1991). The elections had to be suspended for several weeks and when the elections finally held, each of the regional parties openly harassed, intimidated its opponents in the campaigns. The army had to be engaged to supervise the elections when it became clear that the neutrality of the Federal Electoral Commission could not be guaranteed. There were accusations and counter-accusations of political harassment in the North during the electioneering campaigns (Dudley, 1982).

The electoral procedure was so flagrantly abused that at the close of nominations some 88 out of a total of 178 NNA candidates in the North had their candidature unopposed. The UPGA therefore resolved to boycott the election to protest the unlawful arrest, persecution, kidnapping and in some cases, killing of its members. Its members in the Federal Electoral Commission resigned. Nevertheless, the elections still held under a very tense and violent atmosphere. The results of the election showed the NNA sweeping the polls with most of the party's candidates declared unopposed. Under the conditions that were not free and fair to opponents of the regional parties, the NCNC was returned to power in the East and Mid-West, while the NPC had firm control of the North. NPC was also in a position to form the government at the federal level on its own, so Tafawa Balewa then called on the President - Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe to be reappointed as the Prime Minister of the new government. Dr. Nnamdi then refused, thereby creating a constitutional stalemate that set the country on the brink of collapse. After negotiations, the President - Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, invited Tafawa Balewa to reconstitute a new government to the detriment of UPGA members (Dudley, 1982; Metz, 1991; Ikelegbe, 2004).

i. The 1965 Western Election Crisis

The UPGA, after the devastating defeat it suffered in the 1964 federal parliamentary election, looked forward to the Western Region legislative election of 1965 as a hope of victory over the NNA. The region therefore became the “theater of war” between UPGA and NNA. The irregularities and manipulations that marred the 1964 election were only repeated in the election. Thuggery, violence, victimization of political opponents and widespread electoral fraud was alleged, and NNA won the elections. Following the announcement of the results, riots, arson and killings erupted as heartlands of the AG discovered that the election had only returned NNDP in the alliance of NNA to power. Not even the deployment of the army could placate the breakdown of law and order as burning, looting and killing went on unabated in the Western Region, the home-base of AG/UPGA. When it was so clear that the government could not curtail the political upheavals, the army struck on the 15th January, 1966. The Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, Premier of the Northern and Western Regions – Sir Ahmadu Bello and Chief Akintola respectively were killed and that marked the collapse of the First Republic (King, 1988; Osaghae, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2004).

Nigerian Economy in the First Republic

The Nigerian government in the First Republic had as its main economic objective, the growth and development of the country. The economic policy of the government was geared towards this purpose. Since the economy of the country was dominated by foreign multinationals and trading companies, government efforts were geared towards import substitution and industrialization. The economy of the country, nevertheless, continued to witness foreign, particularly British dominance (Osaghae, 2002; McCormick, 2004).

Despite foreign control of the economy through extractive role, the state played substantial role in the economic growth and development of the country. The regional governments were for the economic development of their regions. The agricultural potentials of these regions such as the production of cash crops were explored, and through the Produce Marketing Boards established under colonial government, the surplus from agrarian production were exported for huge profits channeled for developmental purpose. The period was characterized by the emergence of leaders who were known and respected by their people like Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the West, Sir Ahmadu Bello of the North and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the East who tenaciously and prudently managed the available internally generated revenue to develop their regions (Ikelegbe, 1988; Asia, 2001).

The regional leaders also went into industrial development from the proceeds of their internally generated revenue by setting up regional development agencies. The North had Nigerian Development Corporations that floated Banks of the North and Northern Flour Mills, while the West had Oodua Investment Corporation. Money generated by each region was used for education,

provision of health facilities, water and other infrastructures, although a significant portion of the earnings disappeared to private pockets. In 1962, the allegation of corruption against Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group necessitated the setting up of a commission of inquiry by the Federal Government with Justice Coker as the Chairman to ascertain the true position of things as it affected corruption in the government of the Western Region. The Commission found that:

Action Group received NGN 4.4 million in cash for National Investment and Properties Corporation in addition to payment of its NGN 1.3 million overdraft with the National bank and that the party benefited from NIPC investment in corporations that published pro-Action Group newspapers. On Awolowo, the commission reported: 'His scheme was to build around him with money, an empire financially formidable both in Nigeria and abroad, an empire in which dominance would be maintained by him, by the power of the money which he had given out' (Oyediran, 1979:15).

In the same vein, it was discovered that the main source of funds for the NCNC was loans from the African Continental Bank (ACB), "a bank whose principal shareholder was Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (and Zik Enterprises Ltd, a company largely owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe) but whose assets were later taken over by the Eastern Regional Government when the ACB was almost on the point of liquidation" (Dudley, 82:46). Despite the foregoing, political power in the First Republic thus, created economic opportunity, and played a role in developing patterns of social stratification making politicians sole beneficiaries of the economic wealth of their regions (Jackson, 1972).

Although, the bulk of Regional governments revenue came from cash crops such as cocoa for the Western Region, rubber and palm oil for the Eastern Region, and groundnut for the Northern Region; but substantial amount of revenue also accrued to the regions from the federation account. The revenue sharing formula of the Federal Government between 1958 and 1966, when the military took over political power was based on Raisman Commission of 1958 and Binns Commission of 1964 (Offiong, 1993). The Raisman Commission of 1958 revenue sharing formula was as follows: North 40 percent, West 31 percent, East 24 percent and Southern Cameroon 5 percent, while the Binns Commission of 1964 revenue sharing formula was as follows: North 42 percent, East 30 percent, West 20 percent and Mid-West 8 percent. This was in addition to the already existed principle of derivation, needs and national interests (Ejimofofor, 1987; Offiong, 1995:346).

Undoubtedly at the time, the Western Region was the nation's most affluent and well-developed region. The revenue generated from cocoa allowed the Western Region and its political elites to continue the substantial development in the areas of roads, education, health, and general infrastructure. The emergence of military leadership however, truncated federalism and led to

the imposition of unitary system of government. Agriculture that used to be the main revenue source of the regions was consistently neglected while it had full control over exploration and exploitation of crude oil for its revenue (Asia, 2001; Osaghae, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2004).

The Collapse of the First Republic

At independence, Nigeria was indeed regarded as a beacon of hope for a liberal democratic nation-state. This democratic hope, however, could not guarantee the survival of the republic. Several explanations have been made with regards to the collapse of the First Republic. First, the deficient fundamental socio-political and economic institutional foundation bequeathed by the British colonial government. This wobbly foundation included among others, a lopsided federal structure, ethnic consciousness and rivalries, regionally based political parties and a subverted indigenous ethos of government and culture (Akinboye and Anifowose, 1999). Following this argument, the fractionalizations, confrontations between political actors that led to the collapse of the republic are viewed as inevitable factors of the Westminster-style parliamentary democracy bequeathed to Nigeria but which the inexperienced leadership could not handle. This led to large social cleavages and made it difficult to create a unified government. The colonialists had the opportunity between 1914 and 1960 to change all that for good, but failed to utilize it to build a strong structure that would have guaranteed enduring nationhood and democratic governance for the country (Akinboye and Anifowose, 1999; Osaghae, 2002).

Second was the lack of common political culture amongst Nigerians that could have facilitated the enhancement and sustainability of democratic governance in the country. The new elites, who took over power from the colonialists, lacked political tolerance and, failed to play the political game according to established rules, instead saw the independence as opportunity to further their selfish and parochial interests through the politics of ethnic identity as laid down by the colonial imperialist (Akinsanya, 2005).

Third was the uneven rate of development among the various groups and regions. The disparities in economic and educational development between the south and the north magnified Nigeria's ethnic and religious tensions and resulted to struggle for state power by the various regions that insinuated group, ethnic, and regional conflicts in Nigeria even up till now (Metz, 1991). Furthermore, regionalization of politics and in particular, of party formation made the stability of the republic dependent on a fragile balance whereby each party controlled its regional base. This stability and the fragile balance on which the federation rested were altered when the Federal Government invoked its emergency powers in 1962 and removed the AG from power in the Western Region. These underpinning factors were the mutually reinforcing cause of all the political crises, regional conflicts and instability of the First Republic and which eventually contributed to its collapse on 15th January, 1966 through a military coup (Osaghae, 2002; Ikelegbe, 2004; Akinsanya, 2005).

Conclusion

This paper examined power and politics in post-colonial Nigeria's First Republic. It observed that since independence in 1960, Nigeria as a country has been at many crossroads. At every point throughout its 53 years of existence it was always either coming out of one crisis or going into another. These crises have been political, economic, social, ethnic or religious and have been the cause of the country's underdevelopment, which have frequently threatened its corporate existence as a united entity. This situation may not be unconnected with the fact that the very act of amalgamation on 1914 brought together a people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, which to a greater extent has continued to affect the political landscape of the country. As a matter of fact, most people from the different ethnic groups in the country did not support the idea and have continued to voice out their disapproval and frustration in various forms that manifest in religious and ethnic violent disturbances in different parts of the country.

From the foregoing, it is clear that for the country to experience advancement there is the need for the Federal Government to re-adjust and/or modify some of the earlier policies and programmes put in place with a view to de-emphasizing ethnic and religious colouration as basis for participation and recognition. These policies and programmes include: Federal Quota System and Federal Character Principle, which emphasize equal representation of people from the different segments of the Nigerian society as basis for manpower procurement and rewards in the public sector without proper regard to merit. There are also issues of unequal allocation of resources and infrastructures—for instance, the challenge of the lack of the presence of the Federal Government in some states in the area of the establishment of tertiary institutions - particularly universities and other important industrial concern that would help to facilitate peaceful co-existence of Nigerians from different parts of the country. Thus, the paper observed as more likely to allay the fears of perceived marginalization of people from the different ethnic groups in the country and bring about a sense unity and trust required for enhanced national development.

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