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## **SUSTAINED SOCIO-POLITICAL COLONIAL LEGACIES: THE BANE OF NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Although colonialism positively impacted on colonised nations, it left behind more adverse impacts on them. Quite regrettably, the negative legacies of colonialism have been sustained by various indigenous Nigerian governments since independence. Drawing from secondary data, this paper reveals that the colonialists laid the foundation for the North-South divide in Nigeria, while Nigerian indigenous leaders have sustained and worsened colonial wrongs. It concisely examines the negative socio-political legacies (misdeeds) of the colonialists, which basically include the forced amalgamation of the North and the South by Lord Lugard, wrong boundary demarcation, obnoxious colonial policies, and the erosion of indigenous Nigerian cultures and systems. The indigenous leaders have continuously degenerated the colonial wrongs with failed leadership, rural underdevelopment, corruption, incitement, ethno-religious politics and discrimination, regionalism, Hausa-Fulani political hegemony, resource allocation and control contestation, citizenship question [indigene vs. non-indigene palaver], ethnic hate and religious fundamentalism, among others. In conclusion, the study blames both colonial and indigenous Nigerian leaders for the sustained division between the North and the South. It calls for a change through operational legislations. It is grounded by the diffusion innovation theory, which explains why and how Nigerian leaders have learnt from colonial leaders, adopted and sustained their negative leadership legacies.*

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**Keywords:** *Sustained, Socio-political, Legacies, Bane, North-South divide*

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## Introduction

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has been torn apart by war, violence, and ethnic and religious conflicts. The instability and crisis in the polity can only be understood by tracing as well as examining the origin of the problems. Most of the conflicts, which rage today, have colonial origin. That is, they are rooted in various events that occurred in the colonial era. In the first place, the vast part of Africa, known today as Nigeria, as a country, never existed by this name before the advent of colonialism. The area was habited by diverse tribes and communities, some of whose territories overlap the borders of present day Nigeria. The varied groups, with different languages, cultures and polities were all brought together under British rule.

It is quite regrettable that the indigenous political leaders have not only sustained the negative legacies of the colonialists but also compounded them. Therefore, considering the prevailing underlying factors, which constitute the remote causes of war, violence, ethnic and religious conflicts, power tussle, resource allocation and control palaver among the Nigerian peoples, this paper asserts that the aforementioned and such other major issues rocking Nigeria are the results of colonial misdeeds in Nigeria. In addition, the study blames indigenous Nigerian governments of both military and civilian administrations for not being able to correct colonial wrongs, reposition Nigeria, evolve new indigenous leadership models and practices, and champion sustainable development agenda. The indigenous post-colonial African leaders and other elites have been blamed by several scholars, as this study does, for failing to do the needful. In the words of Prah, ‘The post-colonial African elites have failed or seem to lack the ability, if not zeal, to provide the sort of leadership needed to improve the quality of life of the teeming masses of African humanity.’<sup>1</sup> Prah further observes,

*The African post-colonial elites have consistently failed to provide the sort of leadership which is needed to improve the quality of life of the teeming masses of African humanity. Contestation for resources and recourse to ethnic mobilization instead of clear ideological positioning reduces politics to egotistical grandstanding and philosophically barren personality rivalries. This has been the stock-in-trade of our*

*political elite; power at all cost in the absence of political hygiene. In our different countries, to different degrees, Pentecostalist Christian fundamentalism and Muslim fundamentalism, both, have captured the religious fancies and experience of increasing proportions of our populations. Undeclared conditions of military and bureaucratic elements have in different shapes and forms been used with sometimes the connivance of the political elite in order to dominate the state and blissfully loot.<sup>2</sup>*

On his part, Mazrui<sup>3</sup> attributes the poor developmental progress and mediocrity on the African continent to the relegation of African values and the inability of the elites to harness the potentials of Western education and African values for optimal performance. In his words, ‘African elites failed to match their Western education with their African values in both their intellectual development and continent’s progress.’<sup>4</sup> For Mazrui, the African university is a vehicle of Western influence on African culture. And, the lack of progress in Africa is linked to the influence of Western values. In the same vein, Gyekye is cited by Lassiter to have observed that:

*Cultural values and practices of traditional Africa can be considered positive features of the culture and can be accommodated in the scheme of African modernity, even if they must undergo some refinement and pruning to become fully harmonious with the spirit of modernity and to function...satisfactorily within that culture.<sup>5</sup>*

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is grounded by the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, propounded by M. Roger in 1962. It explains how and why a practice, an idea, a system, behaviour, a product or thereabout spreads and diffuses among a given people. It is observed that Roger particularly used this theory to explore how ideas are spread among people through the media.<sup>6</sup> In the context of this paper, media and all other agents of socialisation are involved in the spreading and diffusion of Western education, religion, ideas, worldviews, policies, thoughts, polity, economy, values and culture, among others. The spreading and the diffusion

have been at a high rate since independence. The theory seeks to explain how, why and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures.

Since independence, Nigerian leaders have been adopting and sustaining the colonial political, educational, social and economic legacies that favour them more or alone, to the exclusion of the masses. By exhibiting, continuously practising and taking advantage of the negative colonial legacies in the spheres of politics, education, social, economy and development, the Nigerian indigenous leaders show how the legacies get diffused in Nigerian society over the years. The theorists of diffusion of innovations uphold that for a new idea or innovation to diffuse, there must be: (a) awareness stage, (b) interest stage, (c) evaluation, (d) trial and adoption stage. And, different types of innovation require different kind of adoption units.

There are obviously many Western systems, practices, leadership models, etc. that are new to Nigerian peoples. Both the masses and the leaders have learnt and diffused many various Western systems, cultures, practices, etc. since the colonial era and up to date. Colonial legacies, both good and bad, are ample examples. It implies that Nigerians had/have simply adopted everything Western and keep adopting everything Western till date, following their curiosity to learn, adopt and experiment Western ways of life and doing things. Since independence, Nigerian leaders have been on the lead in the adoption of Western ways and systems. As Roger has noted, new ideas, processes, practices, behaviours, products, etc. do not occur simultaneously in a social system, and some people are more apt to adapt the innovation than others.<sup>7</sup> This tell us why some colonised nations are doing well today, while others are not doing well. That is, such nations rightly harnessed the new knowledge, practices, ideas, etc. with their indigenous old ones that they had been familiar with as well as begot earlier before running into the innovations. Also, while some Nigerians adopt the positive colonial legacies and leave out the negative ones, the others wrongly adopt the otherwise and/or are not receptive to the innovations at their disposal/discretion.

According to Robert<sup>8</sup>, Roger has grouped adopters of innovations into five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. The change agent centres on the conditions that increase the likelihood that a new idea would be adopted or not. The agent helps the audience to decide on the best idea to adapt by influencing their option about a particular situation.

There are both early colonial and indigenous innovators. The Nigerian nationalists are the indigenous innovators. The people of Southern Nigeria were early adopters of most of the Western innovative ways and systems that the colonialists had brought to Nigeria. The early majority reflects the three major ethnic groups and the early majority in the colonial legislative, executive and judicial government in Nigeria. The Northerners were initially the laggards, as in Western education backwardness and the truancy exhibited by the Northern representatives in the colonial legislative and executive councils.

### **Socio-Political Colonial Legacies, the Bane of North-South Divide in Nigeria**

Obviously, colonialism had impacted more negatively than positively on the colonies. The impacts still manifest till date across the then colonies regardless of the independence of these colonies since the 1950's, including Nigeria. First of all, the colonialists simply merged the diverse ethnic nationals that have since become Nigerian peoples. These colonial merged peoples have been finding it uneasy to remain so, because of the obvious inherent differences between them and their earlier ways of life and doing things, including their differences in politics, economies, socials, cultures, etc. The ethnic or tribal lines, affiliations and relations of the peoples were disregarded by the colonialists.

Next, the drawing of arbitrary internal and international borders was common in colonial Nigeria. Boundary demarcation was done arbitrarily and without any consideration of the factors that ought to be considered. Another critical issue is the super imposition of an alien Westminster style system of government on the peoples, who had previously governed themselves uniquely, peacefully and in different indigenous ways of life. Various constitutions were made over the years, and political parties were formed along ethnic and regional lines.<sup>9</sup>

Nigeria as well as other then colonised nations still suffers the negative impacts of colonialism basically because the post-independence African elites in particular have continuously failed to do the needful to change and reposition Africa in contemporary time. It is apt to reflect on what Walter Rodney has observed on the impact of colonialism on Africa thus:

*In the final analysis, perhaps the most important principle of colonial education was that of capitalist individualism. ...In Africa, both the formal school system and the informal*

*value system of colonialism destroyed social solidarity and promoted the worst form of alienated individualism without social responsibility.<sup>10</sup>*

While blaming the colonialists for their misdeeds in and against Africa, Rodney considers the Africans who align with, exhibit and sustain their practices and misdeeds as accomplices of the colonialists. Such Africans, especially dubious African leaders and other elites, simply continue from where the colonialists stopped. In fact, they worsen the colonial misdeeds or negative legacies besides their own misdeeds. For Rodney, Europe and USA are majorly responsible for the exploitation and underdevelopment of Africa, as they retarded African economy and resources through their imperialist systems.<sup>11</sup> He adds that in manipulating African systems, development and resources, USA were the earlier accomplices/agents, while the Eurocentric Africans were/are the later accomplices. His words read: ‘Not only are there African accomplices inside the imperialist system, but every African has a responsibility to understand the system and work for its overthrow.’<sup>12</sup>

As Rodney posits, every African, especially every African leader/elite, has the ultimate responsibility of developing and repositioning Africa, which should be passed on to and sustained by posterities. Regrettably, Nigerian leaders have rather engaged in and exhibited the sustenance of colonial misdeeds. Nigerian politicians and other elites in particular as well as those of many other African nations continuously fall short of the deserving ideals. Robert<sup>13</sup> extensively blames both African elites and the colonialists cum neo-colonialists for the leadership misdeeds that continuously thwart the development and well-being of Africa. Robert rightly observes,

*Africa’s ideal development that would have been attained by now remains a mirage because of the sustained and continuous misdeeds of African leaders and elites and the neo-colonialists, complemented by the populace who have imbibed their bad leaders’ and neo-colonialists’ legacies and dogmas.<sup>14</sup>*

As Robert<sup>15</sup> further notes, the misdeeds of colonial and indigenous Nigerian governments include failed leadership, bad governance, corruption, obnoxious

policies, nepotism, elitism, impoverishment of the masses, disenfranchisement and low representation of women from politics and other meaningful ventures, westernisation and culture and linguistic imperialism, the erosion of Nigerian indigenous systems, poor diplomacy and inadequate international co-operation, international debt, and neo-colonialism. Some others are inciting and causing ethnic and religious crises, sour intergroup relations, tribalism, favouritism, illiteracy and ignorance, poor technology cum technical-know-how, lack and denial of access to basic human needs and social amenities, and negative effects of globalisation, etc.<sup>15</sup> The implication of the above observations is that Nigerian leaders have sustained and worsened the negative legacies the colonialists left behind upon independence. They have simply taken advantage of the colonial legacies that continuously work against the development, peace, unity, governance leadership, followership and entire well-being of Nigeria, as a plural nation.

The plural nature of Nigeria is often emphasised and used by political elites as a political tool. They incite the peoples against each other and one another on ethnic and religious lines. Based on these, the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria is considered the genesis of the ethnic, religious, economic, political, and resource control issues rocking Nigeria since independence.<sup>16</sup> For this paper, the amalgamation is disproportionate, as a result of which issues of marginalisation continuously linger and ignite bitter conflicts, war, violence, boundary disputes, and ethno-religious and communal clashes. For colonial administrative convenience and the harmonisation of Southern and Northern economies for better economic benefits, Lord Lugard merged Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914. The Northern Protectorate was/is more populated and vaster than the Southern Protectorate (Eastern and Western Regions). The Western Region had the highest level of Western education (i.e. the highest number of educated persons) of all the parts. Other parts of the Southern Protectorate had better formal/Western education than the North had. South-South and several parts of the East Region, comprising the Niger Delta, are richly blessed with crude oil. The Igbo of the Eastern Nigeria in particular are the most business oriented. In other words, each of the regions and protectorates has had several comparative advantages over the others.

The Richard's Constitution of 1945 turned the three administrative areas, created by Governor Bourdillon in 1939, to political entities. The constitution

partitioned Nigeria into three regions: North, West and East. It institutionalised the regional structure that was based on the three unwholesome and disproportional regions.<sup>17</sup> Other constitutions that followed only maintained the status quo and further entrenched it. This placed the numerically superior North at an advantage over the two educationally and relatively developed regions, as this later became the basis for the allocation of seats in the legislature and for revenue sharing between them, even after independence. That structuring still poses severe challenges to Nigeria. No significant restructuring has been done by post-independence Nigerian leaders. The structural imbalance in Nigeria is a sustained legacy of the colonialism.

Another colonial legacy posing challenge to contemporary Nigeria is the lopsided social, educational, economic and political development colonial legacy. Politically, after the annexation of Lagos in 1861, legislative and executive councils were put in place on 13 March, 1862. By 1882, when Lagos was separated from other British West African territories, the councils still remained.<sup>18</sup> Two local representatives were nominated into the legislative council. This was the first exposure to Western-style government in Nigeria. Of the 13 un-official council members, 9 were Nigerians nominated by the governor to represent the coast and the interior. Of these 9 members, 7 of them were from the South, while 2 were from the North. Yet, the Northern representatives were hardly in attendance. It could be reasoned that the jurisdictional confinement of the council to Lagos and Calabar<sup>19</sup> was why the Northern representatives were rarely in attendance.

Another political gap between the North and the South was that a governor single handedly legislated for the North, unlike in the South. It was until the rise of the 1945 Constitution that the North started enjoying a form of legislature. For this paper, the foregoing presents several colonial legacies that have been sustained in contemporary Nigeria. It implies that the unequal representation in the councils roused the feeling of marginalisation in the Northerners. Consequently, when they got hold of power, they became bent to the status quo, whereby the Southerners rather have become marginalised. It was the feeling of marginalisation and the quest for equal representation in the national polity that ignited the Civil War. The regular absenteeism of the Northern representatives still obtains today among them. Still exhibiting this loose leadership attitude is a case of sustained colonial legacies in that the colonialists did not address it,



likewise their indigenous successors. Also, it implies that the colonial authorities paid more attention to the development of the South than the North. Meanwhile, they ought to have paid attention to both protectorates equally. The indigenous post-colonial leaders have been exhibiting such misdeeds.

In terms of elective principle and franchise, Lagos and Calabar got theirs in 1922. It was the 1945 constitution that introduced elective principle in the North for the first time. Yet, franchise was limited to all the regions differently. For example, while Electoral College was used in all regions, the Nigerian voter was separated from their legislator by two steps in the East, three steps in the West and five in the North. And, as from 1955, Eastern and Western regions enjoyed direct election, though the West was levied with a year tax. In the North, indirect elections continued except in eighteen urban areas, while franchise remained restricted to adult male tax payers alone. Indirect election in the North continued until 26 September, 1960, when franchise was extended to all adult males, but women continued to be disenfranchised.<sup>20</sup> The first political party in the South was formed in the 1920's, while that of the North was formed in the 1950's.

The Macpherson Constitution of 1945 is to blame for the political cum structural imbalance between the North and the South. It granted the Northern Region 50% of the seats in the central legislature (House of Representative). Also, during the 1950 Ibadan General Conference, Northern representatives threatened to pull out of Nigeria if they were not guaranteed half of the seats in the House of Representatives. The British granted their request. As Ikime has observed that the immediate implication is what manifests in the tendency and consideration of Nigerian federal power as the birthright of a particular ethnic/religious group in Nigeria.<sup>21</sup>

Another problem that further created a gulf between the various regions in the politics of the nation was the crises that broke up the relatively national party, Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) in the 1940's. Fears and suspicions among the Nigerian ethnic groups, which were administered separately until the late 1940's, became intense.<sup>22</sup> The federal structure of Nigeria remains a colonial legacy, as virtually nothing significant about it has been changed from that of the colonial government. Basically, the colonial government engaged in divide and rule practice. This system has been sustained by Nigeria's independence and post-independence governments. Also, today, Nigeria's census figures are

often contested because every region assumes itself the most populated or more populated than another, all in a bid to have more seats in the National Assembly and to get more revenue allocation.<sup>23</sup> The population census situation has been so since the 1962 census.<sup>24</sup>

Educationally, the South had Western education long before the North. The introduction of this form of education in Nigeria could be traced to the 1840's, when European Christian missions made their first successful and enduring incursions into the territories bordering the Atlantic Ocean in the South. This led to the establishment of CMS Grammar School, Lagos in 1859.<sup>25</sup> Lagos Education Ordinance of 1882, Southern Nigeria Education Code of 1903 and the 1916 and 1926 Education Ordinances<sup>26</sup> are clear indications that the Western education along with the concerned education policies and statutory backings had been in the South for over half a century, before reaching the North. It should be noted that when it reached the North, it was largely resisted by many on the ground of Islam and their inherent cultures and worldviews. The colonialists had established schools in the North based on Muslim, Christian and Pagan zones.<sup>27</sup> Under Lugard's indirect administration, Western education was controlled and offered in trickle in the North, as he perceived it as a threat to the indirect rule system. That single act largely accounts for the educational backwardness of the North.

In North, Western education was devalued and held out as a dangerous thing and only the British officers could dispense it to the children of the aristocrats in a guarded manner.<sup>28</sup> The first Emirs Schools and Province Schools were designed to produce sycophants, who accepted subordinate roles vis-à-vis the British rulers and the traditional aristocrats.<sup>29</sup> Lugard did not really encourage the Emirs and other Muslim leaders to key into Western education. He failed to convince the natives through their traditional rulers to largely key into Western education. But he encouraged Christian missionaries to operate and penetrate the Pagan areas with Western education and Christianity. In 1907, he established the School for Sons of Chiefs in Zaria district. It is thus clear that Lugard laid the foundation for class division that still obtains in North, as it was then in the provincial schools of Kano, Katsina, Zaria and Bauchi.<sup>30</sup> The separation of female and male children at schools is a common practice in Northern schools till date. The foregoing tells us why the North had to strive for

rapid mass education at independence. That task was championed by Ahmadu Bello.

Following the quest to pursue and attain educational, economic and social development proportionate to that of the South, the Northern leaders, who succeeded the colonialists, resorted to the Northernisation policy. They fought and sustained the overthrow of the erstwhile Southern domination in all major sectors of the country, such as commerce, railway, postal services, para/military, and political offices, among others.<sup>31</sup> The reverse has become the case since independence, which is one of the reasons for the emergence of the Igbo's Biafra [aka MASSOB], the Yoruba's Afenifere and the various Niger Delta ethnic movements, among others. The Northernisation policy has adversely affected all spheres to a large extent, including agriculture, education and employment practices.<sup>32</sup> Between 1954 and 1958, a total of 2,148 Southerners were dismissed from Northern Civil Service. If a qualified Northerner was available, he was recruited before a non-Northerner. As a result of pressures from various trade groups, the procedure for awarding contracts by the provincial tender boards was re-assessed and Southerners were edged out.<sup>33</sup> This policy further entrenched regionalism, ethnicity and mutual suspicious and ethno-religious hate between the North and the South.

Issues of minority versus majority dichotomy are the results of colonial erroneous deeds, which have remained endemic and common as the colonial legacies adopted by the independence and post-independence indigenous leaders in Nigeria. Throughout colonial administration and during the handover of power to Nigerian indigenous elites at independence, the colonial government did little or nothing to address issues of minorities (the minority-majority uprising). Accordingly, in order to deal with the North, the Yoruba dominated party, Action Group (AG), started pressing for the creation of more regions, so as to gain the confidence of the minorities. This partly led to the establishment of the Willink Commission to resolve the problem of minorities. The end result was that the North also started supporting minorities in the South. This greatly led to more antagonism between the three political entities and within them. This made it impossible to satisfy the in increasing demands for local autonomy by minority groups with in Nigeria. In the Eastern region, group like Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers (COR) state movement demanded a separate state.

In the Western region, the Mid-West state movements rose. Whereas, in the Northern region, the Middle-Belt state was called for by the minorities.<sup>34</sup>

The issue of fiscal equality still remains unresolved. The revenue sharing formula of the country's population is not quite different from that of the colonialists. To that end, the issue of derivation formula is at the front burner of national discourse in Nigeria.<sup>35</sup> The basic target of national politics has been the amassment of national resources and wealth, as each prospective politician has the remote motive of looting from the national treasury.

### **Conclusion**

The problems arising from the sustained negative colonial legacies include unequal revenue sharing parameters, corruption, nepotism [political hegemony with Hausa-Fulani dominating], tribalism, religious sentiments, boundary disputes, citizen versus non-indigene palaver, abject poverty, widespread illiteracy and ignorance, western mimicry cum neo-colonialism, and elitist incitement of the masses and mobilisation of thugs, militias and other youths for civil unrest, terrorism, violence and conflicts, among others. These leave Nigeria grappling with security and development issues over the years.

On the whole, colonial leadership practices and models had set the foundation for most of what have characterised Nigerian polity, economy, education and socio-cultural spheres since independence. The successive Nigerian indigenous governments have consistently failed to do the needful that would strike a balance between the North and the South, and the needful that would bring forth even development, equality and fairness, national integration, smooth intergroup relations, etc. between them. Therefore, it is quite clear that the North-South divide, which characterises Nigeria and poses severe threats to its oneness [unity], security, peace and progress, is basically the manifestation of the negative colonial legacies that successive Nigerian indigenous governments have sustained and continuously practised.

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