

Nigerian Political System: An Analysis

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Introduction

Nigeria and Nigerians have been caught in the frenzy of centenary celebration. This celebration may be easily confused with the political independence anniversary – the centenary celebration has to do with the birth of a political entity following the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates on January 1, 1914 under the watchful eyes of colonial Britain. Two personalities were important in this study – Lord Frederick Lugard the then Governor General, who can be described as the surgeon who performed the merger, and Flora Shaw (later wife of Lugard), former correspondent of the *London Times*, who became the taxonomist that suggested the name- Nigeria. It is the centenary anniversary celebration, therefore, of the birth of a country variously described as an ‘ethnic mosaic’, ‘geographical expression’, ‘artificial creation’, among others. As a reminder, Nigeria antedated this birthday as the various nationalities therein existed independently but not in isolation of one another in the pre-colonial era. The making of this 1914 baby started therefore with the Berlin West African Conference from November 1884 to February 1885. The process of acquisition, creation/administration started from trade, to the bombardment and annexation of Lagos in 1851 and 1861 respectively, the Berlin Conference which set the acquisition guidelines, the creation of the Northern Protectorate in 1900, the merger of the colony of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate in 1906, and in 1914 the amalgamation to a single (but inherently disparate groups) administrative unit- Nigeria. Nigeria thus fell to Britain more as a result of the “diplomacy of imperialism than a matter of choice for any of the peoples that were to be enclosed within this grid that came to be organized and administered as one territorial unit called Nigeria” (Eleagu: 1988:9). A process completed by Britain in 1914, imposed on and accepted by Nigerians.

This unilateral colonial creation, “the artificial boundaries of the states which emerged upon the European imperial expansion have salient implications for political development in these states” (Elaigwu, 1993:1). Enunciating further, Isawa Elaigwu maintains that:

These artificial boundaries created culturally diverse states as they brought together strange ethno-cultural groups into one political territory. The problems of integration arising from these have been amply demonstrated by communal instability and secessionist bid in the Sudan Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Ethiopia Zanzibar, Uganda, Nigeria, the Chad and Angola (1).

Ever since this merger, the polity has been characterized by ethno-religious politics which has being the bane to national unity. In the Nigerian case study, the reconfiguration, formation of political parties, distribution of human and material resources and even crises (coups, civil war, and religious impasse) are hinged on ethno-religious politics. Thus providing Nigeria with a chequered history - with political transitions from civilian to military, military to military, military to civilian and civilian to civilian; through a democratic, authoritarian, a combination of both or an innovation of a process too unique to be described only in action by its proponents – the political elites. While the world celebrates the centenary anniversary (1914-2014) of Africa’s most populous country, this country’s political history is being examined with particular interest on the political system since the first republic.

Meaning and Characteristics of Nigerian Political System

Since colonial incursion and the attainment of political independence, Nigeria like other erstwhile colonial possessions have inculcated the Westminster-styled political system at independence “influenced tremulously by an elite class that projects the political culture which could make or mar democracy as a result of the political parties” (Aristotle, 2007).

This means that the political parties become platforms on which the politicians actualize the authoritative allocation of values, often time the idiosyncrasies of these political elites form values which are inconsistent with the parent political-style copied, thus making the attainment of good governance impossible. Suffice to state that copied western-style political system, have inherent challenges which are managed with a compelling sense of patriotism- a very rare feature in Nigeria and most other Third World countries. In an attempt at distinguishing a state from the political system, Rummel R. J writes:

A political system consists of the formal and informal structures which manifest the states sovereignty over a territory and people. It is the civil aspects of statehood. But a state through its life time may have many different political systems as have China, Russia and France.

By the above, it could be totalitarian/autocratic, libertarian/democratic, constituting a balance among interests, capabilities, wills and status quo in continuous contestation. It can be more simplistically defined as the members of a social organization who are in power within a geographical setting as determined by time, interest (elites/less often except through revolution) and some other prevalent climate of opinion. It involves the following kinds – autocracy, theocracy, republic, diarchy, democracy amongst others (Free English Language Dictionary) among others. Political systems provide the platform on which political parties are formed-thus a precursor to political parties which later makes a political system desirable to guarantee good governance for the masses or socialize and mobilize the masses to yearning for change. Thus the functional definition of political parties which distinguishes them from other social organization/interest groups structure electoral choice and (a) conduct the business of government under a party label or banner (Jinadu 2011:1).

In the Nigerian context therefore, the desirous political system is democracy, which is in the strictest of sense, utopian. Stressing on the functionality of the political system in the allocation of scarce resources, Maurice A. Coker maintains that, the success of this depends on the “quantity and/or quality of the ‘demands’ and “supports” which are generated in the environment and fed into the political system” (Coker, 1999:48). Lending voices too, Gabriel Almond and Coleman (1960) and Almond and Powell (1966) argue that for a political system to persists, there are several functional pre-requisites which must be performed – divided into ‘inputs’ and ‘outputs’ – inputs – (i) political socialization and recruitment (ii) interest aggregation and (iii) interest articulation (iv) pattern maintenance and adaptation (v) rule making (vi) rule application and (vii) rule adjudication (48). Therefore, the political system works for the environment (human and institutional) and determined by same.

Like the United States, Brazil and India, Nigeria as a federation, a colonial heritage necessitated by her multi-culturality has 36 states, a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) and a 774 Local Government Area structure and adopted the United States presidential system since 1979 which replaced the British parliamentary system of government. It has a three tier of government-legislative, executive and judiciary as provided institutionally working in tandem for the growth and development of the country through the instrumentality of checks and balances and separation of powers. There is a bicameral legislature – the Senate and the Federal House of Representatives (lower house/chamber) both commonly referred to as the National Assembly under the leadership of the Senate President and the Speaker respectively.

While the National Assembly is the legislative arm under the Senate President/and Speaker, the executive is under the President, the judiciary interprets the laws initiated by the executive and made by the legislative arm. This structure is replicated at the state and local government levels. While the governor/chairman (executive), House of assembly/councillor (speaker/leader) (legislature) centralization and the judiciary. With time, the centre becomes over concentrated with power, while the component units were appendages relying on their share of the “national cake”.

A development which became prevalent from the era when the economy became solely dependent on oil, albeit, conscious that oil politics is not the burden of this chapter, the position of Rotimi Suberu on federalism and ethnic conflict in Nigeria is apt: “a stronger federalist system that reduces the power of the central government would counteract ‘cake sharing’ fixation, in which states scramble for a bigger piece of federal monies rather than expanding the overall country’s output” (Hanson 2007).

This has led to series of litigations by the states for powers and revenue allocation conceded to them, ironically, the same concession they tenaciously deny the local government areas. Ideally, there is the feature of unity in diversity due to the inherent heterogeneity. Ethno-religious tolerance is preached. But unfortunately what is obtainable in the Nigerian context is division. It is thus leery that the old national anthem was changed.

An anthem which recognized the heterogeneity of Nigeria and her growth hinged on brotherhood: “...though tongue may differ, in brotherhood we stand...” The frequency and severity of ethno-religious crisis intensified with time since independence (October 1, 1960). This has undermined the basis of federalism. As it is both a principle and method of handling diversity. It presupposes the existence of differences in history, level of economic development, culture, language and socio-political institution (Mangwat, 2008:116). While these could also explain why federating units defy the frontier of their parochial allegiance and join others at the center with a purpose of unity (thus unity in diversity).

Determinants of Political Party Formation and Membership Composition

Political party as defined by Edmund Burke is “a body of men and united for promoting, by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they agree” (1988:34). It will be important to add that political parties apart from the above seek electoral success as well as integrate disparate groups in clearly defined locales. Granted that Nigeria is a colonial creation, the paramount determinant of political party formation was the nationalist opposition to colonial rule. Imperial Britain acquired and administered Nigeria like other colonial possessions for economic gains and to fully actualize this mandate excluded the emerging crop of intelligentsia who questioned their exclusion from the administration of their country.

With the provision of the elective principles in the Clifford 1922 Constitution, Herbert Macaulay formed the first political party in Nigeria – the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923 which contested election. At this stage, election was restricted to the municipalities – Lagos and Calabar with grossly unacceptable elitist pre-require- for franchise which among other things required the electorates to be resident in Lagos and Calabar, have an income of \$100.00. Albeit it, there were other political associations which were either too emasculated for electoral challenges or denied partisan status at the time the NNDP was solely in control of Lagos as it was more or less a Lagos party. With foundered political successes, the emerging nationalists in 1936 formed the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), the first nationalist movement in Nigeria with a mandate to achieve national unity at the expense of sectional or ethnic unity. This was the period Okwudiba Nnoli, describes: “as the communal associations proliferated and urban dwellers increasingly flocked to them, interaction and inter-individual socio-economic competition began to be translated into competition among communal unions” (Nnoli, 1978:140). The NYM became a precursor of a truly national political party with branches in Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Warri, Benin, Aba, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Calabar, Jos, Kaduna, Zaria, and Kano (Fwatshak, 2009:8). Members of this movement were Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ernest Ikoli, K. A. Abayomi, and Samuel Akinsanya among others. Thus politics at this time was nationalist struggle for political independence from colonialism.

The second determinant is ethnicity, when it became obvious that the administrative policy of 1914 which sowed the seed of discord has been sanctified by the 1946 Richard constitution which tore Nigeria into three regions, the tide of ethnic politics blew throughout the country. The admonishment of Eyo Ita in 1945 that “the greatest need of Nigerian today is to become a community to evolve a national selfhood” (Nnoli, 141), (that is the need for Nigeria to outline their parochial sentiment to forge a nation) was not heeded as everything had ethnic colourization. The NNDP and NYM for instance failed because of ethnic politics and personality clashes (which still had ethnic mobilization). The Igbo Federation in Lagos found the nucleus of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) with Azikiwe as head in 1944.

The *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a pan-Yoruba group with Awolowo founded the Action Group (AG) in 1951. The Northern People Congress, NPC was found in 1946 as a “pro-tradition, pro-northern association” (Fwatshak, 9) in response to the Southern politicians exploits. The minorities too were integrated into the politics of the time. The minorities in the middle belt found the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) headed by J.S. Tarka, the Efik/Ibibio group formed the United National Independence Party (UNIP) which was in response to the Igbo dominated politics in the then eastern region which led to the expulsion of Eyo Ita from the NCNC with ignominy. Ever since then, political parties toe ethnic lines eg. the Alliance for Democracy, AD (Yoruba), South West, the All Peoples Party (APP) later All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) Hausa/Fulani North. The purpose for this was to wrestle power and control the gains there from. Political elites’ ego and greed determined the formation of political party as well. At some point, the economic and professional interest between Ikoli, publisher of the *Daily Service* newspaper and Zik’s *West African Pilot* (Nnoli, 142) and the succession intrigue tore the NYM apart as Zik and Samuel Akinsanya, defeated in the election (NYM) deserted the movement.

Although, it was explained along ethnic lines, politicians who feel aggrieved for whatever reason dump one party for another – in a bid to remain politically relevant in the niche carved or intended. This can explain the plethora of political parties and the de-registration of some. Also those who feel threatened by the presence of some politicians resort to vicious political practices of intolerance, victimization of political opponents and the use of violence to settle political quarrel (Uya, 1992:51). Thus the few that opted for progressive programmes were humiliated, frustrated, or eliminated (Ihonvbere, 2011: 5), for fear of these, parties are formed, hence the proliferation.

Political Parties in Historical Perspective

Attempts will be made to examine political parties in historical perspective from the first republic to the fourth with attention on some major political episodes like elections and reasons for the failure of these republics.

The First Republic, 1960-1966

The first republic started from October 1, 1960 to January 15, 1966 with the three major parties representing the then three regions and nationalities – Action Group (AG), National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroun (NCNC), and Northern People Congress (NPC). The first general election in Nigeria on the eve of independence was contested by these three political parties with electoral victories reflected in their regions of origin. In the East, the NCNC won with a large majority and the NPC swept the North. In the West, the AG initially won 44 seats but this increased to 49 as some NCNC members declared for the Action Group (Orugbani 183). Nigerian political system during this era was described by Crawford Young as a “three-person game, with bidding shares ultimately determined by the electoral mechanism. The three actors enter the contest with a given demographic allocation 29 percent for the Hausa-Fulani, 20 percent for the Yoruba, 17 percent for the Ibo - if they succeeded in mobilizing their full cultural community” (Young, 1993:292). The two referred to here were Alhaji Tafawa Balawe (Prime Minister), Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (President), and Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Leader of Opposition) following the NPC-NCNC alliance. As at this time, Nigeria adopted the parliamentary system of government.

The ruling political elites at the time faced inter and intra-party rivalries – the AG, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief S. L. Akintola rivalry resulting to election crisis in the Western Region in 1962 and subsequent imposition of state of emergency in the region on 29th May, 1962 (Harriman, 2006: 4); the treason trial of Chief Awolowo and some AG chieftains; the controversial 1963 census which declared the North more populated with 55%; the absence of a truly national party, and the last struck was the January 15, 1966 coup launched by Major C.K. Nzeogwu which sacked the first republic and opened a new page in the political history of the country – military incursion into politics.

The Second Republic, 1979-1983

After 13 years of military rule, the military under the Murtala/Obasanjo’s regime was faithful to a transition to civilian rule. This transition programme produced the following- a constitution (1979) which provided for among other things an executive president after the American model. This was a departure from the British- styled parliamentary system. The Supreme Military Council (SMC) of Murtala/Obasanjo approved a five-stage programme designed to ensure a smooth transition to civil rule.

These were – state creation, settling down of the created states before election, lifting up of ban on political activities, the final stages – elections into the states and federal houses before handing over (Odinkalu, 2001:65).

The winner of the 1979 general election contested by the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Chief Awolowo; Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), Nnamdi Azikiwe; National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Alhaji Shehu Shagari; Nigeria Advance Party (NAP), Alhaji Aminu Kano; Nigerian National Congress, NNC; Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim. They polled the following Alhaji Shehu Shagari – 5,698, 857, chief Obafemi Awolowo – 4,916, 651, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe 2,822, 523, Alhaji Aminu Kano – 1,732, 113; Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim – 1,686, 489 (Ojiako, 203). The Olusegun Obasanjo regime handed over power to Alhaji Shehu Shagari whose electoral victory was contested by Chief Awolowo and roundly condemned as a farce by other political parties. The election was petitioned by Chief Awolowo on the grounds that Alhaji Shehu Shagari was not duly elected by a majority of lawful votes in contravention of section 34A(i)(c) (ii) of the Electoral Decree 1977 and section 7 of the Electoral (Amendment) Decree 1978 (210).

This republic failed due to the loss of faith in the electoral umpire – Federal Electoral Commission, FEDECO which declared Shagari winner even when his party polled 25% of votes in 12 States but 19.94% of votes in Kano state, which were the 13th state and the turn out of the litigation. Political office holders were corrupt, ruined economy, inter/intra party rivalries and the 1983 electoral fraud which returned Shagari for a second term caused the military to intervene on December 31, 1983. The collapse of the NPN-led government could probably be manifestation of the curses by both Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Awolowo on different occasions. Chief Awolowo warned that “the NPN would self- destruct (sic) by its own greed” (Babarinsa,2003:257).

The Third Republic, 1985-1993

By this time Nigeria has gotten use to the reign of the generals and the martial music that announced the end and beginning of another. The General Buhari’s junta was sacked in a palace coup by General Ibrahim Babangida, the self-styled military president in Nigeria political history. The Babangida’s administration thinned the number of political parties from five in the second republic to two in the third republic – the Social Democratic Party, SDP, and the National Republican Convention, NRC. These emerged out of the many political associations formed to terminate IBB’s regime in 1992. A minority group of the 1986 political Bureau, had proposed 1992 as terminal date while the majority, 1990. Decree No. 19 of 1987 established the National Electoral Commission, NEC. The twin political parties had government imposed pseudo – ideological orientation – the NRC – “a little to the right and the SDP – “a little to the left” (Alkali; 1999:1-2). Thus earned the parties the satirical description of “government” or “official parastatals” (2) as they were government funded. Declaring his administrations resolve to rid the political system of the ghost of the negative influences of the previous era, represented by the “old brigade (politicians), General Babangida declared that his administration:

will not handover political power to any person or persons no matter how distinguished or wealthy but rather to a virile civilian political organization which is openly committed to the purpose of power in the national, nations interest. Those who think otherwise and who are now parading themselves as presidential candidates for 1992 would be disappointed in the end (2).

By the above, the hitherto existing 17 political associations were the platform on which these “old Brigade” politicians stood. Discrediting the process and action of the November 1992 presidential primaries which saw the emergence of Alhaji Adamu Ciroma (National Republican Convention - NRC) and Shehu Yar’adua (Social Democratic Party - SDP), General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) cancelled the primaries in the following words:

It is no longer news that the events which preceded the armed forces ruling council’s decision constitute a set back to the transition programme and pose a serious dilemma to me, not only as a person but also as a general and officer of the Nigerian Army, the president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Nigeria...No less in dilemma are our country men and women who looked forward to that date, January 2, 1993, when our country was suppose to commence the full stage of the transition programme and from other democratic nations around the world (4).

The above action, IBB claimed was predicated upon the following:

all presidential aspirants were extremely distrustful of one another... the committee of aspirants only knew those they do not want, but have no idea of who they want, except their individual selves... the aspirants imbibed the worst culture of the Nigeria political class that feels and sees any election as the last election which must be contested, fought and won at all costs. The explanation for the foregoing pathologies can be sought in the heavy financial investment committed to politics... the presidency should not be for sale (4).

There were modicum of doubts here and there, with the quantum of reasons given by IBB, Nigerians hoped for a credible process to usher in purposeful and people centered leadership. This they showed on June 12, 1993 with the election of Chief M. K. O Abiola (SDP) devoid of ethno-religious sentiment (like the flawed process in the past). The prolonged stay of the military and their atrocities was one mobilizing factor for Nigerians participation in the general election. The popularity and general acceptability of these candidates were tested through the unconventional “option A4” – election to be conducted hierarchically from the Ward level. The “old Brigade will not let it be (the Third World’s mentality which negates the spirit of good sportsmanship) as series of mitigations were filled to stop the polls and announcing of results by the chairman NEC Prof Humphrey Nwosu.

Reneging on his words, General IBB announced the annulment of the polls repealing Decrees 13 and 52 of 1993, on the basis of which the election had been conducted. Government claimed the action was expedient “in order to save the judiciary from further ridicule and erosion of confidence and that a delay of seven days by NEC, in order to comply with the court injunction of June 10, 1993, before conducting the election could have saved the nation all the subsequent crises and upheaval” (7).

The above claim and action (shifting blame on NEC), undermined the collective sensibilities of Nigerians and a grand style by the northern oligarchs represented by IBB to retain power in perpetuity. They would rather prefer a northern Muslim to a southern Muslim to be president. Following the turmoil associated with the annulment and sacking of Nwosu, Prof. Okon E. Uya was appointed to mop up the mess. The June 12 presidential election led to the collapse of IBB’s junta. He literally stepped aside for an interim national government, ING headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan whose reign was for 82 days and was replaced by General Sani Abacha in November 1993. Babangida’s regime witnessed social decadent, economic decline, the fall of the middle class, and the most prolonged political crisis since the civil war (Falola, 2001:23), marked by both political and economic failures.

Generals Sani Abacha and Abdulsalam Abubakar Juntas

Nigeria entered the worse years in its modern history under three successive regimes of Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha, each worse than his predecessor, their styles were different, Buhari was stern but organized; Babangida was urbane but ruthless; and Abacha was crude and callous. By the time the three regimes were ended, the military had been discredited, its officers had lost credibility professionalism was destroyed and entire military force was deeply resented by the public. Nigerians had lost hope in their future (23). This was the grim description of the three Generals poised to perpetuate the northern mandate and their institution. Under the Abacha junta (from November 17-June 8, 1998) Nigeria became a pariah state recording the most authoritarian rulership ever in her political history. His transition was as insincere as the five leprous fingered political parties – Congress of National Consensus, CNC; Grassroots Democratic Movement, GDM; National Conscience Party of Nigeria, NCPN; Movement for Democratic Justice, MDJ, and United Nigeria Congress Party, UNCP. In 1996, less rancorous but teleguided elections to local governments, states and national legislatures were conducted by National Electoral Commission of Nigeria, NECON, but successful candidates were yet to be inaugurated (Fwatshak, 18).

Having literally shot down the historic presidential election result of 12 June, 1993, and the political structures of his predecessor’s transition programme, Abacha would be ferocious in the battle of political credibility and legitimacy (Amuno, 2001-1). The president-elect in the June 12, 1993 was incarcerated and mandate denied, following his self-declaration as president on June 11, 1994 (a year after victory at the polls). The political deviled caused the National Democratic Coalition, NADECO, a pro-democracy group like others to push for the re-democratization of Nigeria – first with the return mandate to MKO Abiola. During this period there was insecurity of lives and property of perceived/imagined political opponents. Unfortunately for Abacha, his self-succession planned transition programme from the first quarter of 1996 to the third quarter of 1998 was short-lived due to his sudden death on June 8, 1998.

The sudden death of Abacha led to the emergence of General Abdulsalam who planned and implemented a short transition programme with the establishment of the Independent Electoral Commission, INEC, and the registration of these political parties, People Democratic Party, PDP; All Peoples Party, APP; Alliance for Democracy, AD. Political detainees were released. These political parties had traces of ideology and composition with their forebears in the first republic, for example, the AD was Yoruba, an off-shoot of Awolowo's AG. The presidential election was between two candidates – Chief Olusegun Obansajo (PDP) and Chief Olu Falae (APP – AD). Starting with the South West geopolitical zone could be explained to be a compensatory/reconciliatory mechanism for the annulled June 12, 1993 polls. The PDP candidate won and was sworn-in on May 29, 1999 as the second elected president after Alhaji Shehu Shagari. May 29, henceforth became Democracy Day in Nigeria.

The Fourth Republic

Nigeria's fourth republic has witnessed four general elections (1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011) and is yet to show profound evidence of a growing democracy (Dkihru, 2011:1) the lamentation is appropriate owing to inherent challenges (mostly avoidable). The Abubakar's regime mid-wifed this republic in admirable manner but the electoral umpires lacked the credibility to conduct free and fair elections.

With judicial intervention the registration process for political parties was liberalized, hence after the 1999 election, 30 political parties were registered and the entrance of many retired military officers (mostly wealthy ex-Generals) probably a ploy to stave off coups in the country. On the performance of the umpire (INEC), the 2003 and 2007 were appalling. For instance, electoral tickets were given to people who never contested primaries and total votes polled more than accredited voters in a polling unit. The courts were thus stuff-filled with election petitions, many states had re-run or the wrong candidate's stolen mandate retrieved and conferred on the rightful candidate. This was the case in Edo State (in 2008 and 2012), Ekiti and Osun had the same experience. There was often rift between the executive and legislative arms of government.

Threats of impeachment of the President, impeachment of senate presidents (from the south east), corruption, the botch third- term bid of Obasanjo, the politics that surrounded the illness, treatment, death and replacement of President Yar'adua in 2010, the emergence of a president from the minority extraction; the issue of zoning, the registration and deregistration of political parties and the recent mega merger – All Progressive Congress, APC to challenge the electoral dominance of the PDP. It should be stated that most of these parties are neither national nor parties in the strict sense. It is because of this that Prof. Itse Sagay, a renowned constitutional lawyer maintains that; our fourth republic democracy is complete failure in the sense that the very first household of what constitute democracy has failed. That is free, fair and credible election (Adingupu, 2012). This republic which has put an end to 16 years of consecutive military rule is remarkable for one thing – civilian – to civilian transition which informs the hope of Nigerians in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In this chapter, attempt has been made to capture the Nigeria Political System in historical perspective. It is clear from the analysis that Nigeria centenary history, which spans from colonial era through the period of independence has witnessed some challenging situations – ethnicity, corruption, violence military intervention, civil war and electoral malfeasance. Despite these challenges, the people are still managing their union with the hope of building a strong and united nation, with a stable democracy that would stand the test of time and compete with other developed democracies in the world. The centenary celebration should be a time for reflection on missed steps and opportunities so that Nigeria will truly become the giant of Africa.

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