

# **THE MISREPRESENTATION OF NIGERIA BY NIGERIANS AND OTHERS**

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by

Alkasum Abba,

CEDDERT,

Hanwa,

Zaria.

## **Introduction**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is perhaps the only country in the world, which is not torn by a civil war, yet the basis of its corporate existence is being subjected to strident and persistent attacks, by an articulate section of its own politicians, journalists, opinion leaders and foreigners . This attack is built on the ethnic and religious conflicts, which have erupted in some parts of the country, especially from 1987 and have become threat to Nigeria's political stability. The tragedy, however, is that this campaign against Nigeria by its citizens and foreigners is based on a complete misrepresentation of the history, geography and politics of the country. In other words, the attacks on Nigeria have been based on false accounts about the country.

The objective of this paper is to expose three of the fundamental misrepresentations of Nigeria and show how they do not represent a true reflection of the history, geography and politics of the country. These are, firstly the claim that the 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria is an arbitrary creation of the British. The second claim is that the arbitrariness of the creation of Nigeria has produced a fundamental dichotomy between the two amalgamated political units, the North and the South of Nigeria. Consequently this amalgamation created permanent competition

and conflicts between supposedly monolithic and distinctive ethnic groups of the two units. The third claim is that there is an inherent antagonism between the Muslims and the Christians of Nigeria.

This outlook of Nigerian history has created concepts, which are seen as fixed and immutable like the North and the South ; the Muslims and the Christians and the Igbo, the Yoruba, the Hausa etc . These categories, by the very way they are conceived, obscure the mosaic plurality of Nigeria and Nigerians and the processes of fusions, diffusions, intermeshing, formations and transformations, which have marked the history of the peoples of the Nigerian area for millennia, before and since the country's formation and right up to today.

## **1. NIGERIA AS A GEOGRAPHICAL EXPRESSION**

### **a). The Myth About the 1914 Amalgamation**

The North-South dichotomy is based on the assumption that, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is an amalgam of two, distinct geographical, cultural, economic , social and political entities, namely the North and the South . These distinct entities have been, according to this conception, brought together by the British, for their own reasons, in the 1914 amalgamation of the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria . According to this conception of Nigerian history, the amalgamated entities have never fused, or, merged into one, but have remained an amalgam of two distinct and often antagonistic entities, in terms of their background, interests and aspirations.

This conception of Nigeria is false, because in 1914 the British did not amalgamate two distinct entities, standing apart from one another and having some cohesion on their own. The Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria was, in 1914, a variegated collection of distinct colonial entities, which except for Lagos , had just been conquered by the British and were, at that time, being brought under effective colonial military occupation. This entity, which is falsely presented as constituting the South , standing distinct and cohesive apart from the North , at the time of the 1914 amalgamation, was itself produced by a series of amalgamations going back to 1893. In that year the Oil Rivers Protectorate was amalgamated with other territories

nearby, which the British had subjugated to form the Niger Coast Protectorate . This Niger Coast Protectorate, which only in 1897, came to include the conquered Kingdom of Benin , for example, was, in 1900, amalgamated with a series of protectorates the British had imposed in the immediate hinterland of the Colony of Lagos to form the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria , administered separately from the Colony of Lagos.

In 1906, the Colony of Lagos was amalgamated with this Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria , which far from being some cohesive colonial entity, was largely a sphere of influence from which the British kept out other European colonial powers. The military expeditions for colonial occupation, here in fact, continued, right up to 1914 and beyond.

The Protectorate of Northern Nigeria , proclaimed in 1900, was also just a sphere of influence claimed by the British. It did not exist as a distinct entity, which could be termed, the North , up to 1914, and beyond, when military expeditions to establish it continued. It was a variegated collection of the subjugated, hitherto largely autonomous, emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate , the subjugated Sheikdom of Borno , the Igala , the Jukun Kingdoms and numerous independent polities, which by the time of the 1914 amalgamation cannot be said to have constituted a distinct entity standing on its own, as the North , distinct from the South .

This is why, the fairy tale that the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was amalgamated with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria because the North was not economically viable,<sup>1[2]</sup> which is so widely disseminated by those who claim to be able to show the historical origins of the North-South dichotomy , is farcical, and only shows ignorance of the actual historical evidence of that process of colonial administrative reorganization. For, in the first place, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was largely a British sphere of influence, which was only at that very time being occupied by the British; therefore, most of the expenditure by the British was on their military expeditions to establish this protectorate.

As that traveller and keen observer of African colonial affairs, E. D. Morel , pointed out in his book **Nigeria its People and its Problems**, published in 1911, out of a total annual expenditure of £305,000 by the colonial administration in the Protectorate of

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<sup>1[2]</sup> The misrepresentation of this aspect of Nigerian political history is being repeated right into the current century. See Karl Maier, **This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis**, The Penguin Press, London, 2000, p. 10.

Northern Nigeria , in the years 1906-1909, the sum of £260,000, that is 85% of the annual expenditure, was military expenditure. This military expenditure was on the Royal West African Frontier Force , whose imperial military responsibilities extended far beyond the protectorate, as its name makes quiet clear.

E. D. Morel also dismissed the widespread fabrication that the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was merged with the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria because the budget of the former was in deficit, as it was poorer and, therefore, had lower revenue and had to be bailed out by the richer southern colony and protectorate. He pointed out that this situation of budget deficit had an obvious cause. The southern colony and protectorate extended to the coast and its administration collected all the custom dues on the sea-borne export and import trade of the two protectorates.

In fact, as various academic studies have shown, the economic and the fiscal policies of the British, before 1914 and after, were driven by the knowledge that the two protectorates formed a largely compact entity, which could not be profitably ruled and exploited in British's strategic interests, if they were not brought together. The imperatives of economic and political geography which led to the amalgamation of 1893, which created the Niger Coast Protectorate ; followed by that in 1900 which created the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria ; followed by that of 1906 which created the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria , was what also led to the amalgamation of 1914, which created the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

#### **b) The Myth of Nigeria 's Arbitrary Creation**

Professors Ade Ajayi and E. J. Alagoa , have drawn attention to the geographical compactness of Nigeria . They said that it was this compactness, which in the light of Britain's economic and strategic interest made these series of amalgamations, ending up with Nigeria in 1914, imperative. Like all countries in the world, Nigeria is indeed a geographical expression, and at that crucial geographical level of human existence, it is not an arbitrary creation, for there were sound geographical factors favouring its formation. The compactness of the Nigerian geographical environment encouraged greater

movement and interaction of peoples within it than with people outside it. This compactness came largely from the complementarity of the Sudan Belt and the Forest Zone with the intervening transitional Middle Belt dominated by the Jos Plateau

And, they said that:

*The essential unity of the Niger and Benue river systems and their tributaries and the enormous delta spreading out into several creeks and lagoons encouraged a network of relationship within the basin. The river networks provided routes of contact between people cutting across the north and south axis and supplementing it. Accordingly, one must recognize east and west movements of peoples and ideas as well as the north and south movement already suggested by the vegetation zones. It is because of this compactness that despite the fortuitous manner in which the political unity of Nigeria came to be achieved, culturally and economically Nigeria was not really an arbitrary creation.*<sup>2[3]</sup>

**c). The Myth about Nigeria's Boundaries**

In fact, it is not only that Nigeria is not an arbitrary creation, but also its international boundaries are largely not arbitrary, as they are often misrepresented to be. Professor J. C. Anene pointed out that the boundaries of Nigeria were, like all political boundaries, all over the world, and throughout history, is artificial, but they were not arbitrary. He explained that all political boundaries are artificial, because they are political demarcations of territory made by political authorities for political purposes and not by natural or, cultural processes, even if some may coincide with some geographical feature, or, patterns of cultural geography.

**2. NORTH-SOUTH DICHOTOMY**

**a). Geographical Unity of Nigeria**

Nigeria is not geologically divided between the North and the South, howsoever, defined. It is divided between the areas of

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<sup>2[3]</sup> See Obaro Ikime, ed. **Groundwork of Nigerian History**, Heinemann, Ibadan, 1980, pp. 224-225.

basement complex rocks and sedimentary rocks , which do not fall into any North -South division. The Lake Chad Basin , the Sokoto -Rima Basin , the Niger -Benue Basin, the Niger Delta , the Benin -Lagos Coastlands and the Cross River Basin , have more in common with one another geologically, being made up of sedimentary rocks, as distinct from the Plains of Hausaland , the Jos Plateau and the Central Nigerian Uplands , the Yoruba Uplands , the Adamawa and Mandara Mountains , which are made up of the basement complex, and volcanic material.

The geological base of the whole economy of Lagos , Edo , Delta, Anambra , Enugu , Imo , Ebonyi , Abia , Rivers , Bayelsa , Cross River and Akwa Ibom states, is much more similar to that of Sokoto , Kebbi , Niger , Borno and Yobe , than any of these are to the geological bases of Oyo , Oshun , Ekiti , Katsina , Kano and Plateau , for example. So where is this North, and where is this South, in terms of Nigerian geology and natural resource endowment arising from soil types, minerals and water supply?

But even the sedimentary, formations , covering just over 70% of the country, are made up of rocks formed at widely different periods, from the Albian-Cenomanian , about 120 million years ago, to the Holocene , only about one million years ago. This gives them different characteristic as far as the mineral resources in them, their soils, and hydrology, are concerned. It is this mosaic plurality of the physical realities of Nigeria , which the North - South dichotomy and that whole outlook derived from it, seeks to deny and to cover-up.

But even more significantly, when we look closely at the geology of Nigeria , together with its hydrology, we realize how closely integrated the river system of the country is with the Niger -Benue and their tributaries and their watersheds providing the cohesive axis. The fact is that the geology of Nigeria has made its soils, its minerals, fauna and flora and the basic conditions of existence of its people interdependent and inseparable. This did not come about as a result of the amalgamation of 1914. It goes back hundreds of thousands, and millions, of years.

#### **b). The Climate and Vegetation Patterns**

We should also look at the climate and vegetation pattern of Nigeria and find out to what extent it support the North -South

dichotomy and the view of Nigeria as being made up of separate and distinct parts, merely stitched together by the British, and barely hanging together.

The climate of Nigeria like that of the rest of West Africa is one in which humidity and rainfall decreases as you move from the Atlantic Ocean , in the south, towards the Sahara Desert , in the north. So, there is definitely a basic north-south dimension in the rainfall, and generally, in its climatic pattern. However, the total annual rainfall of Nigeria clearly reveals, there is no North -South dichotomy made up of a wet Southern Nigeria and a dry Northern Nigeria . In terms of the rainfall pattern , there is not even a North, Middle Belt and South pattern. It is a much more complex pattern with for example, Zaria City in Kaduna State in the same annual rainfall zone of 40-50 inches with the City of Ibadan in Oyo State and with Mubi in Adamawa State . With Kafanchan in Kaduna State in the same zone with Enugu in Enugu State receiving 60-80 inches of rainfall annually.

It is not only that Nigeria does not fall into any simplistic division of North and South , or, North, Middle Belt and South, as far as its rainfall pattern is concerned, but the rain throughout most of the country comes from the movement of two wind systems, the south-west monsoon and north-east trade wind. The rain-bearing capacity of the south-east wind is determined by the weather conditions in the South Atlantic Ocean and on the territory of Nigeria it is blowing over, particularly, how far the dry north-easterly from the Sahara Desert is reaching. The important point out that the humidity and the other weather conditions, at Lagos , Warri and Port Harcourt directly and daily influence the climate of Birnin Kebbi , Kano and Geidam , and vice-versa.

If conditions, due to human, or, to natural factors arise which cause a process of desiccation at Lagos , Warri and Port Harcourt , this will reduce humidity and rainfall in Birnin Kebbi , Kano and Geidam . Similarly if the latter are to experience much drier weather conditions, it will send the harmattan right down to the latter, with all organic and inorganic substance, toxic and non-toxic, it may carry. The degree of interdependence at the level of these wind systems and what they carry with them is considerable and is a

physical reality which those attacking the basis of the corporate existence of the Nigerian nation-state are not able to face up to. They want to believe that you can simply separate Warri from Birnin Kebbi , or, Lagos from Kano by a political fiat, and the Lagosians and the Kebbawa , for example, can each go their own way, because all that linked them before was a political arrangement which can be made and unmade politically, sitting at a conference table.

**c). The Formation of the Niger Delta**

One of the best examples of the high degree of interdependence between various parts of Nigeria is the geological and hydrological process of the formation of the Niger Delta and all its soil, water and mineral resources. Far from the Niger Delta being a separate and distinct part of Nigeria, it is not only the most recently formed part of the country, but it has been formed, and is still being formed, by the soil, vegetation, and other organic matter, which the Rivers Niger and Benue , and their tributaries, carry from all over Nigeria and parts of West and Central Africa , and deposit to create the delta where the Niger enters the Atlantic Ocean .

It has to be realised that the sediments in which petroleum deposits are found, in the Niger Delta are made up of marine deposits and also of soil containing vegetable and other organic materials, including human, and animal, faeces and remains, which were washed away from farmlands, pastures and forests all over Nigeria and outside and carried by the Niger to form its delta and all the minerals in it. This is essentially because the Niger and the Benue drain the waters from 60% of the surface area of Nigeria . They also drain large parts of West Africa and the Cameroon . It is from these areas that the organic and inorganic matter is carried away down the tributaries and main channel of the Niger to form the Niger Delta and all the crude oil, natural gas and other minerals in it. This draining away of material to the delta takes place every rainy season, every year, for millennia, up to today.

They are products of geographical processes, which, in concrete physical terms, have inter-locked the people of Nigeria and neighbouring areas of Africa with one another, at very fundamental levels of their existence. The hydrological realities of the processes of the formation of the Niger Delta reveal how shallow and short-sighted, those riding on the real sufferings, and genuine grievances, of the Nigerian citizens inhabiting the Niger Delta are,

when they use these to attack the basis of the corporate existence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria .

All these definite and specific realities of Nigerian geography are denied and covered-up and the fallacious notion is disseminated that the modern ethnic groups of Nigeria , like the Ogoni , the Ijaw and the Urhobo , have some autochthonous sovereign rights over the land and minerals of the Niger Delta and its coastal hinterland; and the these rights are illegitimately being denied by the Federal Republic of Nigeria .

These sovereign rights, which the British seized and made all of us colonial subjects, were only recovered with the independence struggle, conducted not by ethnic , or, religious group, but by Nigerian nationalist organisations like the Nigerian National Democratic Party , the Nigerian Youth Movement , the Nigerian Trade Union Congress , the Nigerian Union of Students and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons . The winning of the independence was part of a world-wide movement for national liberation, in the context of the victories of which, we ceased to be colonial subjects and became Nigerian citizens. Moreover, the constitutional conferences at which the constitutional arrangements for decolonisation were worked out, were conferences between the British and delegates representing, not any ethnic, or, religious community, but Nigerian political parties, which, even when they were regional, or, local in scope, attended these conferences as part of national alliances. On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1960, the sovereign rights seized by the British were recovered by the government of the Federation of Nigeria on behalf of the people of Nigeria, and not on behalf of any ethnic, or, religious community.

### 3. ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS

An outlook of Nigerian politics, which has emerged since 1946, insists that politics has to be confined to contests between ethnic groups and regions for positions, power and resources. Chief Bode Thomas first muted this idea in 1946 when he was reacting to the successful national mobilisation campaign against the Richards' Constitution organised by the NCNC.<sup>3[4]</sup> Two years later, he and others established the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* (the Society

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<sup>3[4]</sup> Nnamdi Azikiwe, **ZIK: Selected Speeches of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe**, Cambridge, London, 1961, pp.321-322

for the Descendents of Oduduwa) to specifically mobilise Yorubas, irrespective individual political and economic interests to come together and constitute a distinct political group and vie for political power.<sup>4[5]</sup> From this outlook, Nigerian politics is seen as a contest between the so-called Hausa - Fulani , the Igbo and the Yoruba , with the other smaller ethnic groups pursuing their own agenda, on their own, or, attached to one of the major tribes.

**a). The Ethnic Geography of Nigeria**

However, Nigerian ethnic groups are not distributed over its territory as separate units, whose spaces can be marked out on a map, with a few boundary problems here and there. The linguistic and ethnic geography of Nigeria is a multi-dimensional mosaic, with origin, kinship, languages, territoriality, religion, cultures, habitation, occupation and identity, overlapping and over-arching and intermeshing, at so many levels and changing in response to so many factors.

The intermixing, and intermeshing of dialects, and of languages, which has gone on for millennia in this country, has made it obvious that any attempt to use ethnicity as a basis for political representation will not only be economically retrogressive, but also a recipe for a complete political disaster. This is further confirmed by the pattern of settlements and of migration which do not conform to the picture of Nigeria as being constituted by separate blocks of monolithic ethnic groups , each with its own language, identity, separate territory and its own leaders and spokespersons.

**b). Election Results and the myth of ethnic, Religious and Regional Politics**

**(i) The 1951 Elections into the Western Region House of Assembly**

It is very significant that contrary to the misrepresentations of Nigerian political history, the first nation-wide election held in 1951 resulted in the NCNC, defeating the Action Group in the Western Region . The NCNC won 35 seats, while the AG secured 29 seats. What is important about this result is that the AG was created as a Yoruba political party with Western Region as its base. Yet, it was defeated by the NCNC, which was considered an Igbo and Eastern Region party. Indeed, the AG was able to form the Western Region Government only because it negotiated and secured the support of 16 legislators elected on the platform of smaller political parties.

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<sup>4[5]</sup> See Intelligence Report on the establishment of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* in 1948 in CO537/5786, PRO, London

## **(ii) The 1954 Federal Elections**

In the 1954 Federal elections, the voters of the Western Region gave the victory to the NCNC . The NCNC won 23 out of the 42 seats. The AG won 18 seats, despite the advantage of being in office for three years, 1951-1954. The victory of the NCNC over the AG in the Western Region during the 1954 federal, elections into the House of Representatives frightened the AG, the NPC, their British sponsors and patrons. Part of the reason for this fear was that this victory of the NCNC was a blow to the attempt to regionalise and tribilise Nigerian politics.

Judging from the evidence in the form of the actual results of these maiden elections at the regional and federal levels in 1951 and 1954, the notion of Nigerian politics being a perpetual ethnic and regional boxing match, from its very beginning is a misrepresentation and distortion of what actually happened.

## **(iii) The 1956 Western Regional Elections**

In the 1956 election into the Western Regional House of Assembly, the AG won by a narrow percentage margin of 48.3% of the votes cast. This gave the AG, 48 seats in a 70- member legislature. The NCNC obtained 45.3% of the votes and won 32 seats. The balance of 16.4% of the votes cast, were shared by four other parties and independent candidates, all of whom were opposed to the AG, making the anti-AG votes to come to 51.7%, leaving it with a minority of 48.3% of the votes.

Thus, in 1956, the AG formed a minority government, in terms of votes, in the Western Region, after being in office for five years. How do these facts and figures fit in with the picture of Chief Obafemi Awolowo , and the Action Group, leading the Yoruba from the very beginning of electoral politics in Nigeria ? They clearly do not support this misrepresentation of politics in the Western Region, with its accompanying fabrication of a so-called “mainstream Yoruba” political party.

## **(iv) The 1959 Federal Elections**

In the 1959 Federal elections, the NCNC -NEPU alliance secured the highest votes, with 2,592,629, representing 36.1% of the total votes cast in the whole of Nigeria . The NPC came second with 2,027,194, representing 28.2% of the votes cast. The AG came third with 1,980,839 votes, representing 27.6% of the total votes cast. The other parties put together secured 578,893 votes, representing 8.1% of the votes cast. In terms of seats, the NPC came first with 134, followed by the NCNC-NEPU alliance with, 89, the AG with, 73, and the others, 16. Professor Bolaji Akinyemi , questioned the conclusions of some leading political scientists on the electoral behaviour of Nigerians in the 1959 federal elections. Professor Bolaji Akinyemi is now one of the leading intellectuals of the Yoruba racist political organization, the Afenifere .

Ken Post and Richard Sklar, among others, had tried to give pre-eminence to the ethnic factor in the support that Nigerian voters gave to the political parties in Nigerian elections. Ken Post said, categorically, in 1963, that:

*From 1951 onwards... nearly all Ibos supported the NCNC, most Yorubas backed Action Group, all but a small minority of the Hausa and Fulani were associated, if indirectly, with the NPC.*<sup>5[6]</sup>

In his analyses, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi demonstrated that the figures in the 1959 election did not show that Nigerian voters gave pre-eminence to ethnic considerations. For example, the Northern Region, which, according to Ken Post, was the home base of the NPC, on account of ethnic affiliation, did not give NPC an overwhelming majority support in a significant number of the constituencies. Indeed, out of the region's 174 federal constituencies, only one third, or, 57 constituencies, returned NPC with over 75% of the votes cast. In 63 constituencies, between 25% and under 50% of the electorate voted against NPC and in 33 constituencies the successful candidates returned were non-NPC.

The constituencies that did not vote NPC cut across the minority and the core Hausa-Fulani areas like Sokoto, Kano, Katsina and Zaria Provinces. Indeed, the total votes cast for the NPC and the other parties did not indicate an overwhelming support for the NPC in the Northern Region. The NPC secured 1,994,045 votes while the other parties obtained 1,264,475 votes, meaning that in the 1959 federal elections, 39% of the voters in the Northern Region voted against the NPC. And 39% is not a small minority by any standard. It meant that four, out of ten, voters in the Northern Region voted against the NPC in that crucial election to determine which party will head the first government of the independent Federation of Nigeria. Where is the "monolithic North" always standing behind the Sardauna, and the NPC?

In the case of the Western Region and Lagos, the margin of the AG victory over the NCNC was small. The AG obtained 933,680 votes that gave it 33 seats; the NCNC had 758,462 votes and 21 seats. Other parties and independents scored 195,067. The position in the Western Region was that the Action Group scored 49.4% of the votes cast while the NCNC and the other parties scored 50.6% of the votes cast, meaning that even in that major election the Action Group was not the majority party in the Western Region and Lagos.

Bolaji Akinyemi's general conclusion was that:

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<sup>5[6]</sup> Quoted by Bolaji Akinyemi, "Ethnic Politics: A Non-conformist View", in A. O. Sanda, editor, **Ethnic Relations in Nigeria**, Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 1976, p.135.

*“In Post’s study, no reason was adduced for the fact that even in the Yoruba areas, the Action Group could only command majority support in 55% of the constituencies. It seems logical to suggest however that the over-all pattern of voting in the Yoruba area of the Western region did not support the theory that the Yoruba saw the Action Group as a Yoruba party for which their Yorubanness dictated political support.”*<sup>6[7]</sup>

In the Eastern Region, the NCNC , in spite of its control of the local and regional government machinery, won only 64.6% of the votes. That means 35.4% that is more than a third of the voters, voted against it. But the party’s performance in the Western Region, where it scored 40.2% of the votes and in Northern Region where it scored 17.2%, of the votes, and this national spread across the Federation of 36.1% of the votes, shows how Ken Post ’s position is contrary to the actual empirical evidence of the election results.

While ethnicity, region and religion played, and still play, an important role in politics in Nigeria , as in almost all other countries in the world, there is nothing in the actual empirical evidence from Nigerian elections, which justify the way Nigerian politics is misrepresented as being almost entirely a matter of ethnic and regional solidarity and conflicts. This view is a misrepresentation of the political realities of Nigeria and serves as a basis for the campaign against the corporate existence of the country, and the chronic crippling of the social, political and economic development of its people.

(v) The 1961 Regional Elections

The AG was able to secure over 50% of the total votes cast in an election in the Western Region only in 1961. This was the election into the Western Regional House of Assembly . In that election, the AG obtained 53.6% of the votes cast. The NCNC obtained 36.2%. It is, however, quite interesting to note that the situation was in reverse for the other two regions; in both the North and the East, the fortunes of the NPC and NCNC declined in the first post-independence election. In the regional elections held in 1961, NPC’s share of the votes dropped to 69.2% in the Northern Region, even though it secured 160 out of the 170 seats in the House of Assembly.

The AG contested the election into the Northern Region House of Assembly in 1961 and captured 14.6% of the votes which gave it 9 seats. The NCNC -NEPU alliance also obtained 14.2% of the votes and this gave them just one seat. On its part, the NCNC dropped to 58% in 1961 from 63.26% in the 1957 election into the Eastern Region House of Assembly . In that election, the AG obtained 14.4% of the votes and this gave the party 15 seats in the Eastern Region House of Assembly. In this election, independent candidates captured 22.2% of the votes and got 20 seats in the House of Assembly. This

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<sup>6[7]</sup> **Ibid**, p. 142

meant that the opposition was growing in the two regions, exposing as false, the picture, of the ethnicisation of Nigerian voting behaviour.

**(vi) The 1979 Presidential Elections**

Even in the 1979 Presidential elections, the results were not decided by ethnicity even after 13 years of military rule. For, although some candidates like Awolowo, Zik and Aminu Kano got massive votes in their home areas, the votes of the candidate who actually won the presidential election and the one who got the next national spread after him, Alhaji Waziri Ibrahim came from different parts of Nigeria . For, the candidate who won the elections, Alhaji Shehu Shagari , did so with the votes of states, outside his own Hausa - Fulani home area. In fact, he obtained more percentage votes from some of these states than his home state.

His highest percentage of votes from the states was in this order: Benue 76.38%, Niger 74.88%, Rivers 72.66%, Sokoto 66.58%, Cross River 64.40%, Bauchi 62.48% and Kwara 53.62%. These seven states which are, except Sokoto not Hausa , or, Fulani , gave him more than 58.9% of the votes he got in the election. Alhaji Shagari obtained, from these seven states, 3,336,600 out of the total of 5,688,857 votes he won in the whole federation, to clinch the presidency. So a crucial fact about the results for the 1979 presidential elections was that the candidate, who won did so largely, with votes from other ethnic groups , other than his own. Those who got most of their votes from their ethnic groups lost the election!

**(vii) June 12, 1993 Presidential Election**

In the case of the June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1993 presidential elections, while Chief Abiola of the SDP, defeated Alhaji Bashir Tofa , of the NRC, in the predominantly Yoruba areas, he also defeated him in almost all the states with predominantly Hausa , Fulani and Kanuri voters, and Alhaji Bashir Tofa, is said to be a Hausa-Fulani of Kanuri extraction. In fact, out of total registered voters of 7.76 million in Lagos , Ogun, Ondo , Osun and Oyo states in 1993, only 3.0 million voted for Chief Abiola. That means that only 38.9% of the voters in these predominantly Yoruba states voted for him, while 61.1% either did not vote, or, voted for the NRC candidate, Alhaji Bashir Tofa. Chief Abiola did not win that election because Yorubas voted for him; and in any case a clear majority of registered Yoruba voters did not vote for him.

**(viii) The 1999 Presidential Elections**

The case of the 27<sup>th</sup> February 1999, presidential election is even more glaring. In the six predominantly Yoruba states of Lagos , Ogun, Ondo , Eketi, Osun and Oyo , Obasanjo got only 1.09 million votes, This is less than the 1.29 million he got in Kaduna State alone, and barely higher than the 0.96 million he got in Katsina State. He “lost his deposit” by scoring below 25% in five of these six states getting as low as 12% of the votes in Lagos and 16.6% in Ondo!

**c). Lessons From Presidential Election Results**

One of the most important lessons to learn from election results in Nigeria is that the conduct of the electorate has not been blinded, or influenced by ethnic, religious, or regional considerations, despite the massive media campaigns promoting such retrogressive politics. Analyses of the five Presidential election results from 1979-2003 also point out clearly that there has not been regional block voting in the country.

The table below has shown clearly that in the 1979, 1983 and 1993 Presidential elections, more people from the Southern States voted and in the first two elections, first in 1979 with 8.7 millions votes cast from the South against 8.1 million from the North and in 1983 with 13.5 millions votes cast from the South and 11.8 million from the North, the candidate who won the election was Alhaji Shehu Shagari from the North.

It was only in 1993 elections, where more people voted from the South and Chief Abiola, from that part of Nigeria won the elections. For in the case of the 1999, with 15.6 million votes cast from the North and 14.1 million from the South it was Chief Olusegun Obasanjo who won the election. The same story is true of the 2003 Presidential elections where 24.0 million votes from the North against 18.8 million from the South produced Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. This is a very clear evidence that the Nigerian electorate are far more sophisticated, advanced and patriotic than many of the politicians, intellectuals and journalists, who have been operating within the orbit of the doomed ethnic, religious and regional politics.

**DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL VOTERS CAST BETWEEN THE  
NORTH AND THE SOUTH AT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF  
1979, 1983, 1993, 1999 AND 2003**

<b>Election</b>	<b>Registered Voters</b>	<b>Total Votes Cast</b>	<b>Votes Cast From the North</b>	<b>Votes Cast From the South</b>	<b>Difference in favour of the North</b>	<b>Difference in favour of the South</b>	<b>Candidate who won the election</b>
1979	47,433,757	16,862,208	8,127,093	8,735,115	-	608,022	Shagari
1983	65,304,618	25,385,844	11,824,625	13,561,219	-	1,736,594	Shagari
1993	39,125,492	14,336,417	6,879,146	7,457,271	-	578,125	Abiola
1999	58,138,945	29,848,441	15,671,116	14,177,325	1,493,791	-	Obasanjo
2003	60,823,027	42,874,419	24,035,946	18,838,473	5,197,473	-	Obasanjo

**Sources:** Okadigbo Chuba, **The Mission of the NPN**, Nwanko Associates, Enugu, 1981, p.134; **New Nigerian**,

August 12, 1983,p.9; **Sunday Concord**, July 5, 1998 p.9; **The NEWS**, March 15, 1999, p.42 and **Analysis**,

Volume 2, No.5, May 2003,p.7.

#### **4. REASONS FOR THE PERSISTENT MISREPRESENTATION**

Despite the overwhelming evidence that Nigeria is being misrepresented, the misrepresentation has continued, almost unabated. The local print media, has in particular, played an important role in the persistent misrepresentation of Nigeria. This media has been used by its journalists, politicians, intellectuals and others who do not believe in Nigeria to exploit every little crisis to continue the misrepresentation of the country. They have been preaching the break up of Nigeria over a long period of time.<sup>7[8]</sup>

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<sup>7[8]</sup> See for example covers of the following magazines: **Newswatch** of November 1, 1993 captioned: “Break-Up Over June 12”; **TELL** of December 4, 1993, “Now, NIGERIA is FINISHED”; **TELL** of April 18, 1994, “Why Nigeria May Collapse” ; **TheNEWS** of February 21, 1994, “IF NIGERIA BREAKS - - - The Shape of What Will Come” and **TELL** of July 15, 1996, “North Ready For Secession”. A number of the local journalists and other Nigerians involved in this orchestrated misrepresentation of the country seem to be doing it to please foreigners, who keep on asking them about the break up of the country because they do not like a country like Nigeria, in Africa to survive and play an active and independent role in world politics.

At our Centre, CEDDERT, we have personal experiences with Mr. Chris McGreal, a correspondent of **The Guardian Weekly** of London. He visited us and we brought out to his articles on Nigeria and showed him how they constituted a misrepresentation of the country. He agreed with us but went to write in the same manner he wrote before. Indeed, one of his articles on the 1999 Presidential election portrays this same line of ethnic, religious and regional politics in Nigeria. He went to the extent of reporting that “As expected, Nigerians largely voted along ethnic and regional line” even when the two Presidential candidates were Yoruba from the South-West!<sup>8</sup>[9]

Indeed, another correspondent of a foreign newspaper, the **Independent** of London, who also contributed articles to the **Washington Post** and the **Economist**, Karl Maier, went to the extent of writing a book with a title, **This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis**.<sup>9</sup>[10] This book was based on interviews with selected Nigerians, which he conducted in 1998. Karl Maier had lived in Nigeria for two years, 1991-1993, yet this book is full of the typical misrepresentation of the country. For example, he said that:

“Nigerians from all walks of life are openly questioning whether their country should remain as one entity or discard the colonial borders and break apart into several states. Ethnic and religious prejudices have found fertile ground in Nigeria, where there is neither consensus nor a binding ideology.”<sup>10</sup>[11]

In fact, the most recent of the misrepresentations of Nigeria came from the National Intelligence Council of the United States Government. In its March 2005 report, it said categorically that Nigeria could out rightly collapse within 15 years! This conclusion is based on the premise that “Nigeria’s leaders are locked in a bad marriage that all dislike but dare not leave...”<sup>11</sup>[12] This US report clearly indicates that those who are misrepresenting Nigeria are doing so deliberately because they wish the country to collapse and they could be working towards it.

One is saying so because Nigeria is not the only country, which has faced serious crises and conflicts, yet no country has received such a barrage of misrepresentations, designed to break

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<sup>8</sup>[9] Chris McGreal, “Fraud claims mar Nigeria poll result” **The Guardian Weekly**, Vol. 160, No. 10, Week ending March 7, 1999, p.3.

<sup>9</sup>[10] Karl Maier got the title of this book from the remarks by Chinua Achebe, during an interview he conducted with him.

<sup>10</sup>[11] Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*, Penguin, London, 2000, p. xx.

<sup>11</sup>[12] National Intelligence Council, **Mapping Sub-Saharan Africa’s Future**, Conference Report, March 2005.

the country like Nigeria does. There are, for example countries, which have been at war for nearly fifty years, but are still considered to be viable. Columbia is one of the best examples. It has been fighting Left Wing Guerrillas, FARC, for the past fifty years and the Government has even lost control of about 25% of the territory, yet there are no reports that it is facing imminent collapse.

Philippines is another country, which has been fighting Muslim rebels for the past thirty years. Indonesia has been in permanent conflicts since its independence. There has been a permanent war at the Amazon region of Brazil for decades. Bolivia has had 3 Presidents in two years over very serious political crisis. Others countries, which have been facing ethnic, or religious conflicts over long periods of time are: Britain with the Irish Republican Army; France over Corsica, and Spain; Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Ivory Cost etc are in deep crisis.

Therefore, this persistent misrepresentation of Nigeria could only be located within the context of the global significance of country. With a population of about 150 million, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the tenth most populous country in the world, and the most populous African nation on earth. Nigeria's territory of 923.7 thousand square kilometers amounts to less than 3% of the total territory of the African continent but it has within it, up to 25% of the continent's total population. This high level of concentration of Africa's population, in this rectangle of African territory, standing out on all the population density maps of Africa, that has come to be Nigeria, is not a recent phenomenon. Furthermore, for well over five centuries, forced and voluntary waves of immigrants from this rectangle, that has come to be Nigeria, have settled and populated many parts of West, Central and North-eastern Africa, the Caribbean, South, Central and North, America, forming long-established, and substantial, Nigerian diasporas, across three continents. Nigeria's global significance has deep historical roots.

Moreover, the position of Nigeria in Africa has additional global significance. For, in both territory and population, Africa is the second largest continent on earth, after Asia. The African continent covers 30.3 million square kilometers, amounting to 20.3% of the land surface of the earth. Europe covers 6.7% of the earth's surface; North America covers 16.2%; South America covers 11.9%; and Australia covers 5.7%.

Furthermore, Africa has a population, which, in spite of the ravages of poverty and disease, is heading towards one billion, by the beginning of the next decade, giving it tremendous human

resources only next in size to Asia . The African continent is endowed with vast mineral, agricultural, hydroelectric and other natural resources, second to no other continent in the world.

In addition, Nigeria is significant, because of the particular way its own substantial human and natural resources, are combined with its location, the compactness of its territory, the diversity, interdependence, and external connections, of, its ecological zones, and of its geographical, historical and cultural networks. These attributes and combinations, have given it, economic , political and cultural weight, dynamism, and sustainability, which over the years have made it defy all predictions of its marginalisation and disintegration.

The significance of Nigeria as outlined above, indicate that certain interests, both local and foreign do not want to see such a country with this great potentials and promises in the African continent to stand on its feet. They are determined to destroy it. This is why they keep on misrepresenting it, consciously so as to drive to its grave.

One of the implications of the misrepresentations is to convince other countries not to support the legitimate aspiration of Nigeria to secure a seat as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council with a veto power to represent the African continent.

## **5. Conclusion**

The current campaign to convince Nigerians that there is no basis for their country to continue as a Federal Republic, constituted by territorially-based states, made up of territorially based local governments, is built on the systematic misrepresentation of the truth about the nature of Nigeria and Nigerians and what has taken place and is taking place in the country. This misrepresentation is derived from the politics of very narrow and backward-looking vested interests, organised in so many open and secret, parochial, ethnic , regional and religious organisations flourishing nowadays which are informed with a particular twisted outlook on Nigeria, which, however, fits into certain long-standing generalizations, and stereotypes about the country and its people. This has given this campaign a level of effectiveness, in political terms, which poses a threat to democracy, political stability and economic progress in the country.

All Nigerian citizens, committed to democracy and national integration, who do not want their country wrecked and themselves and their families fleeing around as refugees, have to clearly understand this campaign and consciously counter its misrepresentation of the country. They must stand up, every time and everywhere, to oppose this campaign and firmly and counter all attempts to divide and set Nigerians fighting against each

other. They must organize and work hard, looking far ahead, determined to build a great future for this country, not only as part of the process of national integration, but as part of the process of the integration of the Economic Community of West African States and of the great dream and hope of continent-wide Union of African States, early in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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