

NIGERIA CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, 1914-1960

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines Nigeria Constitutional development from 1914-1960. It discusses the geographical location of Nigeria. It assesses the concept 'constitution'. The British conquest and amalgamation of Nigeria also came to focus. It examines the provisions of the Nigerian council of 1914, 1922 Clifford's Constitution, the activities of Sir Graham Thompson and Sir Donald Cameron. The provisions of Richards Constitution of 1947, Sir Macpherson's Constitution of 1951, 1954 Constitution and 1960 Constitution were examined. Finally, it analyses the 1957 and 1958 Constitutional Conferences. The data were sourced from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include oral interview and archival materials. The secondary sources were books, newspapers, journals, articles, theses, dissertation etc. It was found that the country lies roughly between 3⁰ and 15⁰E Longitude and between 4⁰ and 14⁰N Latitude. It was also found that Nigeria was coined by Flora Shaw to describe the vast land around the River Niger and its basin. It was demonstrated that Nigeria operates a written constitution while Britain the colonial master has unwritten constitution. It also found that Sir Clifford Constitution was remarkable for its elective principle while the 1947 Constitution of Sir Richards included the Northern part of the country in the Central legislative council for the first time. It was also discovered that for the first time, Nigerians were made Ministers in the 1951 Constitution while the 1954 Constitution Introduce the federal system of government in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: *Nigeria, Amalgamation, Constitution, Development, Provisions.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria covers an area of 923, 768km. The country lies roughly between 3⁰ and 15⁰E longitude and between 4⁰ and 14⁰N latitude (Ekundare, 1973). It is undoubtedly a country with a great political and economic potential in the Third World. The name "Nigeria" was coined by flora Shaw, who later became the wife of Lord Lugard which she used as the title of an article in the Times, to describe the vast land around the River Niger and its basin. It was then called Niger-area, but after a long usage it was shortened to Nigeria.

Nigerians have a common racial origin which unites them while their differences are attributable to history and local environment (NERC, 1978) According to Ajayi and Alagoa, the history of Nigeria before 1800 can be much more than just a collection of histories of individual peoples political and ethnic units (Ajayi & Alagoa, 1980:22). So it is instructive to state here that the country as it is known today had not existed before 1914, instead, there were a number of states and kingdoms like the Hausa states, Benin Kingdom, the Bornu Empire, Old Oyo Empire and so on. Before 1914, Nigeria was not a single political unit.

For proper understanding of this paper it may be necessary to examine constitution as this will provide an insight into what the paper is about. For a start constitution can be seen as a formal or legal document. According to Oyediran, not only that it is descriptive of the allocation of powers between levels of government and various positions and responsibilities, it is also legalistic in nature (Oyediran, 1998:1).

Finer on his part saw constitution as codes of rule which govern the allocation of functions, powers and duties among the various governmental agencies and their officers and define the relationship between and the public (Finer, 1970). Another scholar, Ben Nwabueze posits that a constitution is an act of the people if it is made by them either directly in a referendum or through a convention or constituent assembly popularly elected (Nwabueze, 1982).

Based on the above position of scholars, constitution can be seen as the basic instruments or tools for the control of political power. It is the fundamental rules, regulation or principles of any organization, state or country.

It could therefore be said that a constitutional government is a government in which the Head of State and all the functionaries of government operate in accordance with the written or unwritten constitution of the

state (NERC, 1978). This is the reason why the constitution of a country is a paramount in its administration. For example in Nigeria, the constitution is written while Britain operates unwritten constitution. The constitution in a democratic setting is binding on all the citizens.

On the strength of this, the constitutional development in Nigeria in historical perspective can now be properly examined. First, it is necessary to discuss the British conquest, amalgamation and occupation of Nigeria. This becomes necessary because Britain was the colonial master that conquered Nigeria and set up a style of administration called the indirect rule. By 1914, the British colonial government amalgamated the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria and protectorate of Northern Nigeria to become the colony and protectorate of Nigeria. Thereby appointed Governors who administered Nigeria between 1914-1960. These governors drafted the different constitutions that formed the basis of discussion and analysis in this paper.

II. THE BRITISH CONQUEST AND AMALGAMATION OF NIGERIA

It is not a subject of debate that the geographical entity called Nigeria today is a British imperial creation. The first attempt by the British to subjugate any part of what later became Nigeria to British imperial control took place on December 24, 1851 when the ships of British West Africa Squadron bombarded Lagos (Ojo, 2000: 31). After three days of eventful and historic resistance Oba Kosoko and his supporters were forced to accept defeat.

John Beecroft the Consul for the Bights of Biafra and Benin which means the entire coast line of the Nigerian area, succeeded in bombarding Lagos deposed Kosoko and installed Oba Akitoye. Oba Dosunmu, succeeded his father, Oba Akitoye, who died on September, 1852.

In 1861, the Acting Consul Mikoskry annexed Lagos. He negotiated with Dosumu, in a treaty for the cessation of Lagos on 30th July, 1861. It was quite unfortunate that Oba Dosumu ceded Lagos to Britain in an agreement to be paid 1,300 pounds a year. So Lagos was ceded to the British Crown and became a crown colony. From Lagos as a base, the British jurisdiction spread and extended into the hinterland as the requirement of order and peaceful trading dictated (Ezra, 1960:13).

The success of the conquest and annexation of Lagos encouraged similar actions on different parts of what later became Nigeria. It is not an exaggeration to say that between 1861-1903 kingdoms, empires, states and territorial units that were centres of resistance to the British imperial control were attacked and defeated. Opobo was defeated in 1887 and Ebrohimi was brought down after much resistance against the British in 1894, under the leadership of Acting Consul-General Ralph Moor. Benin Empire was defeated in 1897 by the British soldiers under the command of Rawson. Calabar was defeated in 1885, Aro in 1902.

According to Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu, and Nwaubani, on February 26, 1895 the British attacked and occupied Brass. They also maintained that Oyo was captured in 1895 and Ijebu fell in 1892 (Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwaubani, 1988: 187). Again, the British defeated Nupe and Kontagora in 1901, Bauchi was occupied on 16 February, 1902 (Ibid, 193). On 3 February, 1903, Kano city was assaulted and Sokoto in 1903 (Ibid., pp. 193-194).

Amalgamation

It was owing to the activities of the Royal Niger Company and its leader, Goldie that Britain was able to claim at the Berlin West African Conference of 1885 that her interests were paramount in the Niger territories (NERC, 1978:7) In 1886, a charter was granted to the Royal Niger Company to administer the protected territories in Northern Nigeria (Ibid., 7).

In 1899, the charter of the company was revoked and protectorate of Northern Nigeria was proclaimed and the company's territory came under the British crown. In 1891, the Oil River Protectorate was declared and in 1893, the territory was renamed, the Niger Coast Protectorate. This was so when this protectorate was extended into the interior. In 1900, the Southern protectorate was proclaimed. The Protectorate of Northern Nigeria replaced the administration of the Royal Niger Company.

The first attempt to build a nation by our British colonial masters started in 1906 when the colony and Protectorate of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria were amalgamated into the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria. In that same year in 1906, Lord Lugard who had been the High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria since 1900, resigned to take up a new appointment in Hongkong and returned to Nigeria in 1912 as Governor of both the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (NERC, 1978).

Before this time between 1861-1866, William McCoskey was the Acting Governor of the new colony of Lagos. In 1862 January, Henry Stanhope Freeman became the first British Governor for Lagos (Ibid., 72-74) Between 1866-1874, the administration of Lagos was transferred to freetown in Sierra-Leone (Ibid., p. 74). It was also asserted that in 1874 the administration of Lagos was merged with that of the Gold coast now Ghana with Accra as its headquarters (Ibid., 74-76). This arrangement was in place until 1886.

The final stage in the amalgamation process was in January 1st, 1914 when the Protectorate and colony of Southern Nigeria was joined to the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria which became known as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. Sir Frederick who was instrumental to the amalgamation now became the Governor-General.

The Nigerian Council

Lord Lugard, who was the Governor-General of Nigeria set-up the Nigerian council in 1914 in order to provide opportunity for the expression of public opinion. It must be noted that the Nigerian council was not a legislative council but an advisory one. At the meetings of the council, the Governor reported matters of interest during the last year and explained any question of policy and legislation (Federal Information Service, Lagos, 1955:5).

According to Ezra, the Nigerian council consisted of 36 members including six Nigerians nominated to represent as far may be the coastal districts and the interior of the country (Ezra, 1960: 22). These six Nigerian consisted of two Emirs from the North, the Alafin of Oyo, one member each from Lagos, Calabar and the Benin-Warri area (Federal Information Service, 1955). Raymond remarks that the council was only advisory and confined solely to the discussion of the Governor-General's annual address and when possible motions earliest submitted by members (Raymond, 1928).

It must be said that this council did not in any way meet the hopes and aspirations of Nigerians especially as it was not a legislative council but mere advisory. Ezra posits that the Nigerian unofficial members at this council was very poor (Ezra, 1960). It was said that the chiefs who formed the majority of the Nigerian nominated unofficial members of the council would best represent the views of the masses of the people, but this they failed to do because they rarely attended the council meeting (Proceeding, first meeting of the council, 1914). So it was not a surprise that the Nigerian council was quickly replaced by the 1922 constitution established by Sir Clifford who took over as the new Governor of Nigeria in 1919.

III. 1922 CLIFFORD'S CONSTITUTION

In 1919 Sir Fredrick Lugard's Governorship or term of office in Nigeria ended Sir Clifford was appointed the new Governor and was the first administrator to devise the first written constitution for the country.

According to Eluwa Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwanbani, the new Council legislated for the whole of Southern Nigeria and the North was still however governed by Governor's proclamation but the council could debate the estimates of the whole country (Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwanbani, 2005: 213).

This constitution of 1922 made provision for a total membership of forty-five. It consisted of 26 official members and 15 nominated members. Four elected members who were Nigerians, were included in this council. Oyeleye posits that for the first time in Nigeria, Lagos and Calabar were granted the right to vote in an election to the legislative council (Oyeleye, 1998). What this meant was that the four elected Nigerians came from Lagos and Calabar. Three seats were allotted to Lagos and one seat allotted to Calabar. Apart from Lagos, it shows the status of Calabar at the time as an intellectual centre. It should be noted also that Calabar was the capital of Oil River Protectorate created by the British in 1891 which was later renamed in 1893 as Niger Coast Protectorate.

This concept of elective principle introduced by Sir Clifford encouraged the formation of political parties particularly in Lagos to contest election into Legislative Council and Lagos town council. The first of such parties was the Nigerian National Democratic Party established in 1923 (NNDP). Ojiako posits that late Herbert Macaulay and his supporters like Dr. Adeniji Jones, Egerton, Shyngle, Thomas Horatic, Karimu Kotun, J. T. White and Baul Erick founded in 1922 the Nigerian National Democratic Party (Ojiako, 1981:10). This party was victorious in the 1923 election to the legislative council as the party won the 3 seats for Lagos. The party was also victorious into the Lagos town council election. Within the same period, a new political movement was founded in 1934 called the Lagos Youth movement which later became the Nigerian Youth Movement which took over the political dominance of NNDP in Lagos as the party defeated Nigerian National Democratic Party in 1938 election to the legislative council.

The 1922 constitution was appreciated for the introducing elective principle which led to the establishment of parties and newspapers. However it was criticized because the Governor has veto power. Again the executive council was predominantly whites. Also Clifford was full of doubts about the capacity and capability of the Nigerian to rule his own country. According to Ojiako, Sir Clifford called such politicians among the late Herbert Macaulay and Eric Moore as coastal agitators who depended even for their existence on British magnanimity (Ojiako, 1981:11).

Before Sir Richards introduced the next major constitution of 1947, there were some Governors who ruled the country between the interval. First was Sir Graham Thompson who became the Governor of Nigeria in 1926 and was there till 1930. There was nothing actually to justify his stay in office. He was replaced by another Governor called Sir Donald Cameron. Although Ojiako argues that he governed the country until 1936 without a

single major political concession (Ibid., p. 11), it could be said that when he came to power the country was witnessing serious financial distress. Oyediran argues differently that, Cameron abolished the office of Lieutenant Governor and instituted those of Chief Commissioner and encouraged northern local leaders to visit the South and the United Kingdom (Oyediran, 1998:7-8). Again it was further said that he abolished the provincial courts which did not welcome lawyers and substituted the High Court and magistrate courts where lawyers could appear (Ibid., p. 8). Cameron also introduced the doctrine of separation of powers. So it may be wrong to say categorically that Sir Donald Cameron did not achieve anything to be recorded in the political history of Nigeria based on the above tangible achievements.

Sir Richards Constitution of 1947

Sir Arthur Richards was appointed by the British Government to replace Sir Bernard Boundillon as the Governor of Nigeria. According to Sir Richards, the constitution aimed:

- (a) To promote the unity of the country;
- (b) To provide adequately within that unity for the diverse elements that make up the country; and
- (c) To secure for the Africans greater participation in the decision of their own affairs (Oyediran, 1998:12).

There was a legislative council for the whole country composed of the Governor as President, Sixteen official members, thirteen of whom were ex-officio and three nominated, eight unofficial members, four of whom were elected and 12 nominated or indirectly elected (Ibid., p. 12). It was said that Sir Arthur Richards explained that the aim was "to create a political system which is itself a present advance and contains the living possibility of further orderly advance.... a system within the diverse elements may progress at varying speeds, amicably and smoothly, towards a more closely integrated economic, social and political unity without sacrificing the principles and ideals in their divergent ways of life" (Despatch, December, 1944). Ojiako noted that out of the 45 members for the whole of Nigeria, 28 of the members were Nigerians of whom four were elected and the remaining twenty-four nominated (Ojiako, 1998: 14-15).

The constitution made provision for Regional House of Assembly in each of the three regions. It was hoped that the central legislative council in Lagos will be the forum at which all Nigerians could meet. It must be noted that for the first time in the history of Nigeria, the Northern part of the country was included in the central legislative council, which provide the golden opportunity for the delegates in the North to sit together with those of the South to deliberate on issues or matters affecting the whole country. A major criticism of the Clifford Constitution was the non-inclusion of the North into the legislative council in Lagos. The North was governed by the proclamation of the Governor.

By the provision of the 1947 constitution, the legislative council in Lagos had power to make law for the whole country subject to the Governor's reserved power. Unfortunately the constitution was strongly criticized by the nationalist in Nigeria as it was seen by many that the Richard's constitution had very little or nothing to give Nigerians in terms of constitutional advancement or progress. The most articulate and organized criticisms came from the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) as contained in a memorandum presented to Governor. The party expressed disappointment over the unilateral way which the Governor drafted his constitution without consulting Nigerians. Their main argument was that the constitution should be withdrawn since Nigerians were not consulted. Hence a national campaign was organized throughout the country to expose the ills of the constitution and to raise money in order to send a powerful delegation to London to protest to the Secretary of States for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones. According to Oyediran, the delegation consisted of Prince Adeleke Adedoyin, Chief Nyong Essien, Buka Dipchama, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and Nnamdi Azikwe who was the head of the delegation, because of the death of Herbert Macaulay in Kano during the national tour (Oyediran, 1998:13-15). Although Creech Jones rejected their request to withdraw the constitution, the speed at which a new Governor was appointed to replace Sir Richard is suggestive that the British Government was mindful of the criticism or agitation against the constitution. The name of the new Governor was Sir John Macpherson.

Again, the nationalists expected that the elective principle should be extended beyond Lagos and Calabar, this was not so as the elected Nigerians into the legislative council still remained four. The Governor still enjoyed veto power. Hence it could not be a surprise that Awolowo said that the constitution retains some of the objectionable features of the old, contains unsavoury characteristics of its own and falls short of expectation (Awolowo, 1947:121-134). On his part, H. O. Davies said that, it contains one or two choice bits but the whole dish leaves a bad taste. No attempt is made to democratize... bureaucratic rule or make it sensitive to public opinion (Davie, West African Review, Vol. 16).

Sir Macpherson Constitution of 1951

Sir Macpherson came to Nigeria in 1948 as the newly appointed Governor. Sir Macpherson was intelligent enough to probe into the complex political climate in the country and was ready to provide solution to the political problems that had been created by Sir Richard's constitution. However to avoid the mistakes of the

past, Sir Macpherson went into wide scale consultation with Nigerians to allow them to participate adequately. So Sir Macpherson set-up the constitution of 1951 with the full participation of the Stakeholders.

The Nigeria (constitution) order-in-council number 1172 of 1951 established a central legislature made up of a single chamber, called the House of Representatives in which the Regional Houses will be represented by one hundred and thirty six members (Constitution order-in-council, 1951). The Regional members selected will be through the Regional legislature into the central legislature (Ibid., No. 1172). Omu asserts that under this new constitution, there was to be an executive council consisting of the Chief Commissioners of each of the 3 regions, the Attorney General, Financial Secretary, Director, medical Services, Director, education and others nominated by Governor (Omu, 2005). This constitution also approved bicameral legislature for the western Region of Ngeria and the Northern Region (The Nigeria (constitution) order-in council, 1951) it is necessary to add that for the first time, Nigerians were made Ministers but without ministries or portfolios which was seen by many as a setback to our manifest destiny.

Unfortunately this constitution did not last long as a new constitution was put in place in 1954. The constitution collapsed because the Northern delegates in the central legislature council refusal to support the motion moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro of Action Group in 1953 that Nigeria should be self-governed by 1956. While the members in the South saw it as eventful and historic, the northern members saw it as an attempt by the South to-set-in motion, political hegemony. Hence Sarduana of Sokoto, Sir Ahmandu Bello added to the motto as soon as it is practicable. It was said that excited crowds outside the House of Representative in Lagos showed their disapproval of the Northern stand by booing and insulting the Northern members at which these members swore never to come to the South for any meeting again (NERC, 1978).

In spite of these shortcomings, the constitution led to the formation of more political parties like Action Group and Northern Peoples Congress. Ezera states that with the prospect of a new constitution in 1951, Awolowo and a small group of Yoruba intellectuals with the full support of the Yoruba Obas quietly planned and organized in the political wing of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Ezera, 1980). It was not until March 1951 that this small group publicly announce” the existence of the Action Group as a political party (Ibid., p. 93). In the same vein, the Northern Peoples Congress was formed in Northern Nigeria to contest and win election in that region following the promulgation of the 1951 constitution.

1954 Constitution

The 1954 constitution was introduced by Sir Littleton Oliver who was not a Governor but Colonial Secretary. In May 20, 1953, he informed the British House of Common that the recent events in Nigeria had shown that it was impossible for the three regions of Nigeria to work effectively in a federation closely knit as the existing one (Olusanya, 1980).

It became clear later that the working of 1951 constitution was impossible because some-events which took place between 1951-1953.

The 1954 constitution introduced the federal system of government into the country. Powers were shared now between the central and regions. The regions and the centre had jurisdiction in law making over areas allocated to it (Ezra, 1960:202).

Thus the list known as the exclusive list were matters on which the central government had legislative power, all matters named under the list known as the concurrent list were matters on which both the central and regional governments could legislate on and matters falling under the residual list were dealt with by the regional government (Ibid., pp 201-203). Ojiako states that the members of the House of Representatives were increased to 184 and the members were to be elected directly from single member constituencies based on population (Ojiako, 1981:20).

Also it should be noted that the new House Representatives consisted of a speaker, three ex-officio members and six members who were subsequently appointed by the Governor-General to represent interests of communities not otherwise adequately represented. For the first time, the appointed ministers who were Nigerians were given ministries. It means that the ministers now have the responsibility for the formulation and execution of policy. Also premiers were appointed for the Northern, Eastern and Western regions.

The 1954 constitution though reflected the authentic spirit of federalism, there were still some critical areas still needed to be addressed. Such vital issue was the position of Prime Minister. Although the council of Ministers was established in 1951 constitution and they were given ministries in the 1954 constitution. The position of Prime Minister was vacant, the Governor-General at the centre and Governors at the regional level were still the sole persons to approve the yearly estimates before money could be spent. In the same vein, the regional premiers had no exclusive powers as the Governors could reject their advice. There was also the contentious issue of self-government for the western and eastern Nigeria, since the Northern part of Nigeria was not ready yet. These issues necessitated further deliberations, hence the 1957 constitutional confederence was convened.

1957 Constitutional Conference

The colonial secretary, Mr. Allan Lennox-Boyd was the chairman of the 1957 constitutional conference which took place in London between May 23 to June 26, 1957. The issue of creation of states seriously came to focus because of the fear of the minorities from the major ethnic groups in Nigeria. In the western region, there was the demand for the creation of Mid-West State. There was also the demand for the creation of Middle Belt and Cross River states (Daily Times, 1956). It was so complex that the conference could not resolve it, hence it was decided that a Commission of Inquiry should be appointed to handle the issue and propose means of allaying those fears (CMD, 1957). Hence a four-man Commission of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Sir Henry Willinck was set-up.

Again under the conference of 1957, the Eastern Region now got the House of Chiefs like the Northern and Western Regions. More importantly was the decision that a second chamber tagged the House of Senate was approved.

In this conference, there was also a provision for the creation of the office of Prime Minister of the federation. It was agreed at the conference that the Eastern and Western regions should become self-governing at an early date immediately after the conference and that the Northern region should be self-governing in 1959. It was on the strength of that the Eastern and Western Regions became self-governing in August, 1957.

1958 Conference

This conference started on the 29th of September and came to an end on the 27th of October, 1958. The main issues for discussion were the recommendations of the minorities commission. This commission was set-up by the 1957 conference to address the fears of the minorities by the majority ethnic groups like the Ibos, Hausa and Yoruba. The issue of self-government of Northern Nigeria also came to focus. Also discussed was the request for independence which Nigerian delegates had made to the United Kingdom Government at the 1957 Conference (Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachuckwu and Nwanbani, 1988). Attended by 106 persons variously classified as delegates, advisers and officials, the conference recorded decisions on fundamental human rights, the police, self-government for Northern Nigeria, the position of Lagos, the Southern Cameroons electoral arrangements, fiscal arrangements, the minorities problem and Nigerian independence (Ibid., p. 53).

On the controversial issue of the fears of the minority groups in the country based on the recommendation of the Minority Commission that no state should be created instead fundamental human rights should be entrenched in the constitution. The conference agreed that a number of rights and freedom like the right to life, the right to religion, the freedom of peaceful assembly, movement, speech, association etc should be entrenched in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. So the conference accepted the inclusion of a long list of fundamental human rights in the constitution to protect Nigerian citizen (majority and minority alike) against arbitrary abuse of power by government (Report by the Resumed Nigeria Constitutional Conference (1958).

Based on the request of the Northern Nigeria delegates, the 1958 confederence decided that the Northern region to become self-governing on March 15, 1959. A memorable and historic moment was reached at the confederence when the colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, who presided over the conference declared the promise by Her Majesty's Government of Independence to Nigeria on October 1, 1960. Eluwa, Ukagwu, Nwachukwu and Nwaubani described that moment as Nigeria's gladdest tidings of all times (Ibid., pp. 15-20).

1960 Constitution

One major feature of the 1958 conference was the fixing of the date for the Nigeria's independence. Ezera posits that during the concluding sessions, the conference tackled the most important issue before it, namely the target date for Nigeria's independence. (Ezera, 1960:255) without much difficulty, it unanimously agreed on October 1, 1960 as Independence Day for Nigeria (Report by the Resumed Nigeria Constitutional Conference, 1958).

Provision was made for the office of Governor-General as Head of State and he represented the Queen of England who was also the Queen of Nigeria (NERC, 1978:81). The constitution also provided for a cabinet, the head of which was the Prime Minister, to be responsible to the legislative council and to advise the Governor-General (NERC, 1978:80-81). Other issues incorporated into the constitution are fundamental Human Rights, the Judicial Service Commission, the Courts, the Public Service Commission and so on.

IV. CONCLUSION

Nigeria is a country with a great political and economic potential in the third world. Nigeria was coined by Flora Shaw to describe the vast land around the River Niger and its basin. It is important to note that the country as it is known today had not existed before 1914, instead there were a number of states, and kingdoms so it was not a single political unit before 1914.

Nigeria operates a written constitution while Britain the colonial Master has unwritten constitution. The first attempt by the British to subjugate any part of what later became Nigeria to British imperial control took

place on December 24, 1851 when the ships of British West Africa Squadron bombarded Lagos. Between 1861-1903, Kingdoms, empires, states and territorial units that were centres of resistance to the British imperial control were attacked and defeated.

By 1914, the British colonial government amalgamated the colony and protectorate of Southern Nigeria and Protectorate of Northern to become the colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

Nigeria witnessed constitutional development between 1914-1960. Lord-Lugard the first colonial Governor-General of Nigeria set-up the Nigerian Council in 1914. Sir Clifford introduced the 1922 constitution remarkable for its elective principle. Sir Arthur Richards was appointed by the British Government to replace Sir Bernard Bourdillon as the Governor of Nigeria. In this constitution, the Northern part of the country was included in the central legislative council which provided the golden opportunity for the delegates in the North to sit together with those of the South to deliberate on issues or matters affecting the whole country. However, the constitution was criticized by the nationalists in Nigeria that it was drafted by Sir Richards without consulting Nigerians.

Sir Macpherson constitution came in 1951. He went into full scale consultation with Nigerians to allow them to participate adequately. In this constitution, provisions were made for the first time for Nigerians to be made ministers without portfolios or ministries. The 1954 constitution introduced the federal system of Government in Nigeria. Nigeria became independent in October 1st, 1960.

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