

Nigeria Faces unstable Future

Since becoming independent in 1960, Nigeria's political history has been marred by several intricacies – tribal clashes, religious wars, oil wars, military coups etc. About 75% of post-independent years were spent under military rule and dictatorship. However, Nigeria's violence has never reached the level of its African counterparts like Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the Central African Republic (CAR).

Nigeria was on the radar of European colonialists for centuries. It was part of the 'Slave Coast' and blessed with mineral resources. The British laid claim over it and conducted slave trade and exported palm oil. Although, it met resistance from the likes of Sokoto rulers and King Koko,¹ their 'Missionary' fleets took over control directly in some parts and indirectly in others. The British came to Nigeria with the ostensible mission of spreading Christianity through the Missionaries. But the truth behind its 'Mission' was colonialism.

The agreement of the world powers at the Berlin Conference (1889-1890) initiated the *Scramble for Africa*. This made Africa the personal property of the colonial nations. King Leopold of Belgium declared his colonies as his personal fiefdom.

Nigeria discovered oil in 1956. This made Nigeria a more important and valuable 'Protectorate' or 'Mandate'. This also came at a time when the global balance of power was shifting and the struggle for control over oil regions was picking up speed all over the world. Africa was still not part of the global political landscape until 1960. British interests, therefore, faced no threat in Nigeria until the rise of the United States of America as the Superpower after World War II. The whole of Europe was devastated by the war, following the depletion of its resources by World War 1 and the Great Depression of 1929. This made holding a firm grip on its colonies harder.

The US emerged very powerful with a military after World War 2. It set out to control the world after discovering and tasting the 'stupendous' amount of oil in the world. It then started supporting independence movements in the 'Third World' – colonized nations. Thus, it struck a deal with Nikita Khrushchev, the Soviet Union Premier in 1961, to share the World between the US and the Soviet Union. This was the reason the US allowed the Communists to make inroads into parts of Africa and Asia.

However, 'Great Britain' was becoming 'Little Britain', the US realized it had to steal from Europe its colonies to consolidate its global position. After giving 'independence' to the Colonies, the Colonialists left control to their agents in order to secure their interests; this was the reason for the coups and counter-coups.

Britain realized it was too weak to face the US directly, so it adopted the policy of *Self-Preservation*, which was implemented in two ways: siding with the US at times and foiling its plans on other occasions; hoping to influence political outcomes for its own benefits in both cases. As Lord Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston – the then Prime Minister of England in the 19th Century – stated in his most famous quote "*We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests*

are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow”.² This is a statement revered by all colonial powers.

Despite its weakness, Britain is good in political manoeuvres. In his book, *The Post American World*, Fareed Zakaria encapsulated British Foreign Policy after WW II: “*The photographs of Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 are somewhat misleading. There was no ‘big three’ at Yalta. There was a ‘big two’ plus one brilliant political entrepreneur who was able to keep himself and his country in the game, so that Britain maintained many elements of great powerdom well into the late 20th century.*”³

After years of fluctuating civil and military rulers, the US finally got a stable hold on Nigeria when Olusegun Obasanjo came to power in 1999. The US made sure its agent was elected after Obasanjo until the 2015 election when the long-standing British agent, Muhammadu Buhari, came out with fortune smiling on him to win the election after contesting for years. The US had no choice because it lacked a credible personality to support – Goodluck Jonathan literally messed up its plans. Manipulating the election’s result to hand over victory to its candidate could have triggered violence, especially in the North – which was Buhari’s stronghold. The US obviously did not want that. Buhari took over for the British. He was, however, surrounded by US agents; the likes of Saraki and Kwankwaso.

The US is making significant efforts to find a credible candidate. But 2019 doesn’t seem like the year for it to regain Nigeria. Potential candidate, Atiku Abubakar, has a tainted reputation among Nigerians – especially in the majority North where Buhari is blindly supported. The former governor of Kano, Kwankwaso, might be a better choice.

Nigeria’s predicament was caused by the greed of Western Colonialism. Nigeria’s political history has always been the story of colonial struggle. Therefore, the election in 2019 is a struggle between Colonial powers – in Nigeria’s case, the United States of America and Britain. Nigeria must break away from the shackles of Colonialism and it must adopt a coherent thought that is productive to humanity for it to truly develop.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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¹ Tekena N. Tamuno, *Oil Wars in the Niger Delta*, Pg52, Stirling-Horden Publishers 2011

² <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1848/mar/01/treaty-of-adrianople-charges-against>

³ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post American World*, pg 179, W.W Norton 2008