



Demonstrate How Sarduana's Philosophy Has Contributed to Aunited and Stronger Nigeria of His Time and What Lessons Can Welearn from It

TO

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Introduction

The unity of Nigeria or of any other society cannot be an end in itself but a means to the end of the utilitarian well-being of the greatest number of its citizens. Nigerian national unity is aspirational and a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation which commenced in earnest in 1914 when little thought was given to the amalgamation beyond the administrative convenience of the British colonialist. Still we can make the best of a very bad situation. Beyond the blackmail of the Nigerian Praetorian Guard no one is posing the unity of Nigeria as a Manichaeian duality between my way or the highway, between remaining together as one indivisible country and outright disintegration. The recourse to blackmailing those calling for the perfection of the union as advocates of dismemberment is a great disservice to this country. Nigerian unity is constantly tested and measured on such scales as equity in the spread and weight of appointments; governance objectivity; social, cultural and political identification; covert and overt political signaling. Contrary to self-serving politicization, the 2014 national constitutional confab was broadly representative of respected and objective opinion across the national divide. In the 75% threshold of passing resolutions, it was subjected to the most severe test of national consensus. If anyone needed to be persuaded of the bogey word- restructuring, you need not go further than the conspicuous bankruptcy of the near totality of the 36 states-which had now to be sustained by so called federal government bailouts to meet the minimum standard of *raison d'etat*- salary payments. As presently constituted, the legitimacy of the Nigerian state will continue to be challenged and compromised by the activities and demands of subversive entities like the Niger Delta

militants. The bad news is that, in implicit acceptance of its own illegitimacy, Nigeria will have to trade with them in a manner that proves its inherent instability, and it is in this haphazard and hazardous motion that this beleaguered country may sooner stumble on the messy fate that awaits it around the corner. But in the beginning, it was not so: the activities of our founding fathers have bequeathed a united and stronger nation called Nigeria.

Sarduana (Sir) Ahmadu Bello: His Politics and Philosophy

Al-Haji Sir Ahmadu Bello (June 12, 1910 - January 15, 1966) was a Nigerian politician, and was the first premier of the Northern Nigeria region from 1954-1966. He is considered to be a founding father of the modern Nigerian nation state, which was formed October 1, 1960 when Bello's NPC forged an alliance with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) to form Nigeria's first indigenous federal government which led to independence from Britain. Despite his popularity and political support, Bello chose to remain in the North instead of accepting the post of national Prime Minister, which would have required living in the South. Bello combined traditional leadership qualities with knowledge of Western governance. Bello's greatest legacy was the modernization and unification of the diverse people of Northern Nigeria. In 1938, he made an unsuccessful bid to become the new Sultan of Sokoto. The successful sultan immediately conferred on him the traditional, now honorary, title of "Sarduna" and elevated him to the Sokoto Native Authority Council. He first became politically active in 1945, when he helped to form a Youth Social Circle, which later (1948) affiliated with the NPC (Northern People's Congress) of which he became President-General in 1954. In 1948, he was offered a scholarship to study local government administration in England. Ahmadu Bello took the scholarship, sensing he needed to develop his knowledge about the process of governance.



After returning from England, he was nominated to represent the province of Sokoto in the regional House of Assembly. As a member of the assembly, he was a notable voice for northern interest and embraced a style of consultation and consensus with the major representatives of the northern emirates: Kano, Bornu, and Sokoto. As the movement for independence from the British Empire gathered momentum, Bello emerged as a strong advocate of federalism as the system of government that in his view was most suitable for Nigeria. Nigeria has some 300 clan groups. He may also have wanted to protect the North from what he perceived as the possibility of Southern domination. He also served on the national constitutional drafting commission as a representative of the North. In the first elections held in Northern Nigeria in 1952, Ahmadu Bello won a seat in the Northern House of Assembly, and became a member of the regional executive council as minister of works. Bello was successively minister of Works, of Local Government, and of Community Development in the Northern Region of Nigeria. In 1953 and in 1957, he led the Northern delegation during independence talks in London. In 1934, Bello was made the District Head of Rabah by Sultan Hassan dan Muazu, succeeding his brother. In 1938, he was promoted to the position of Divisional Head of Gusau (now in present-day Zamfara State) and became a member of the Sultan's council. In 1938, at the age of just 28, he made attempts to become the Sultan of Sokoto but was not successful, losing to Sir Siddiq Abubakar III who reigned for 50 years until his death in 1988. The new Sultan immediately made Sir Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna (Warlord) of Sokoto, an honorary title, and promoted him to the Sokoto Native Authority Council. These titles automatically made him the Chief Political Adviser to the Sultan. Later, he was put in charge of the Sokoto Province to oversee 47 districts and by 1944, he was back at the Sultan's Palace to work as the Chief Secretary of the State Native Administration. In the 1940s, he joined Jamiyya Mutanen Arewa which would later become

the NPC in 1951. In 1948, he got a government scholarship and was off to England to study Local Government Administration which broadened his understanding and knowledge of governance.

After returning from Britain, he was nominated to represent the province of Sokoto in the regional House of Assembly. As a member of the assembly, he was a notable voice for northern interests and embraced a style of consultation and consensus with the major representatives of the northern emirates namely Kano, Bornu and Sokoto. He was selected among with others as a member of a committee that redrafted the Richards Constitution and he also attended a general conference in Ibadan. His work at the assembly and in the constitution drafting committee brought him appreciation in the north and he was asked to take on leadership positions within Jamiyya Mutanen Arewa. In the first elections held in Northern Nigeria in 1952, Sir Ahmadu Bello won a seat in the Northern House of Assembly, and became a member of the regional executive council as minister of works. Bello was successfully minister of Works, of Local Government, and of Community Development in the Northern Region of Nigeria^[citation needed] In 1954, Bello became the first Premier of Northern Nigeria. In the 1959 independence elections, Bello led the NPC to win a plurality of the parliamentary seats. Bello's NPC forged an alliance with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) to form Nigeria's first indigenous federal government which led to independence from Britain. In forming the 1960 independence federal government of the Nigeria, Bello as president of the NPC, chose to remain Premier of Northern Nigeria and devolved the position of Prime Minister of the Federation to the deputy president of the NPC, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.



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Ahmadu Bello was a practicing Muslim. He chose "work and worship" as the slogan for Northern Nigeria. Bello established a reputation for religious toleration. On Christmas Day 1959 he stated, in a broadcast: Here in the Northern Nigeria we have People of Many different races, tribes and religious who are knit together to common history, common interest and common ideas, the things that unite us are stronger than the things that divide us. I always remind people of our firmly rooted policy of religious tolerance. We have no intention of favoring one religion at the expense of another. Subject to the overriding need to preserve law and order, it is our determination that everyone should have absolute liberty to practice his belief according to the dictates of his conscience. The cardinal principle upon which our University is founded is to impart knowledge and learning to men and women of all races without any distinction on the grounds of race, religious, or political beliefs.

Bello's greatest legacy was the modernization and unification of the diverse people of Northern Nigeria. He founded the Ahmadu Bello University (1962) in Zaria, the second largest University in Africa, which is named after him. He was the University's first Chancellor. Nigeria's 200 naira carries his portrait. He wanted both national and Pan-African unity. He did not waste time blaming the ills of his time on colonialism, but instead set out to develop his region and to adapt from the West what suited Nigeria, while retaining those cultural practices and values that were cherished and integral to Nigerian identity. Various institutions were created under Bello, including the Northern Nigeria Development Corporation (NNDC), Bank of the North and Northern Nigeria Investments Ltd (NNIL). NNDC was an holding company with capital sourced from the region's marketing board while NNIL was a partnership between the Commonwealth Development Corporation and NNDC created to assist in the industrial development in Northern Nigeria.

The Northern People's Congress (NPC) and Saruana (Sir) Ahmadu Bello

The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was organized in the late 1940s by a small group of Western-educated northern Muslims who obtained the assent of the emirs to form a political party capable of counterbalancing the activities of the southern-based parties. It represented a substantial element of reformism in the Muslim north. The most powerful figure in the party was Ahmadu Bello, the sardauna (war leader) of Sokoto, a controversial figure who aspired to become the sultan of Sokoto, still the most important political and religious position in the north. Often described by opponents as a "feudal" conservative, Bello had a consuming interest in the protection of northern social and political institutions from southern influence. He also insisted on maintaining the territorial integrity of the Northern Region, including those areas with non-Muslim populations. He was prepared to introduce educational and

economic changes to strengthen the north. Although his own ambitions were limited to the Northern Region, Bello backed the NPC's successful efforts to mobilize the north's large voting strength so as to win control of the national government. The NPC platform emphasized the integrity of the north, its traditions, religion, and social order. Support for broad Nigerian concerns occupied a clear second place. A lack of interest in extending the NPC beyond the Northern Region corresponded to this strictly regional orientation. Its activist membership was drawn from local government and emirate officials who had access to means of communication and to repressive traditional authority that could keep the opposition in line. The small contingent of northerners who had been educated abroad--a group that included Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Aminu Kano--was allied with British-backed efforts to introduce gradual change to the emirates. The support given by the emirs to limited modernization was motivated largely by fear of the unsettling presence of southerners in the north and by the equally unsettling example of improving conditions in the south. Those northern leaders who were committed to modernization were firmly connected to the traditional power structure. Most internal problems within the north--peasant disaffection or rivalry among Muslim factions--were concealed, and open opposition to the domination of the Muslim aristocracy was not tolerated. Critics, including representatives of the middle belt who plainly resented Muslim domination, were relegated to small, peripheral parties or to inconsequential separatist movements.

The NPC continued to represent the interests of the traditional order in the pre-independence deliberations. After the defection of Kano, the only significant disagreement within the NPC related to the awareness of moderates, such as Balewa, that only by overcoming political and economic backwardness could the NPC protect the foundations of traditional northern



authority against the influence of the more advanced south. In all three regions, minority parties represented the special interests of ethnic groups, especially as they were affected by the majority. The size of their legislative delegations, when successful in electing anyone to the regional assemblies, was never large enough to be effective, but they served as a means of public expression for minority concerns. They received attention from major parties before elections, at which time either a dominant party from another region or the opposition party in their region sought their alliance.

The political parties jockeyed for positions of power in anticipation of the independence of Nigeria. Three constitutions were enacted from 1946 to 1954 that were subjects of considerable political controversy in themselves but inevitably moved the country toward greater internal autonomy, with an increasing role for the political parties. The trend was toward the establishment of a parliamentary system of government, with regional assemblies and a federal House of Representatives. In 1946 a new constitution was approved by the British Parliament and promulgated in Nigeria. Although it reserved effective power in the hands of the governor and his appointed executive council, the so-called Richards Constitution (after Governor Arthur Richards, who was responsible for its formulation) provided for an expanded Legislative Council empowered to deliberate on matters affecting the whole country. Separate legislative bodies, the houses of assembly, were established in each of the three regions to consider local questions and to advise the Lieutenant governors. The introduction of the federal principle, with deliberative authority devolved on the regions, signaled recognition of the country's diversity. Although realistic in its assessment of the situation in Nigeria, the Richards Constitution undoubtedly intensified regionalism as an alternative to political unification.

The election of the House of Representatives after the adoption of the 1954 constitution gave the NPC a total of seventy-nine seats, all from the Northern Region. Among the other major parties, the NCNC took fifty-six seats, winning a majority in both the Eastern and the Western regions, while the Action Group captured only twenty-seven seats. The NPC was called on to form a government, but the NCNC received six of the ten ministerial posts. Three of these posts were assigned to representatives from each region, and one was reserved for a delegate from the Northern Cameroons. As a further step toward independence, the governor's Executive Council was merged with the Council of Ministers in 1957 to form the all-Nigerian Federal Executive Council. NPC federal parliamentary leader Balewa was appointed prime minister. Balewa formed a coalition government that included the Action Group as well as the NCNC to prepare the country for the final British withdrawal. His government guided the country for the next three years, operating with almost complete autonomy in internal affairs.

Lesson learnt from Sarduana's Politics and Philosophy

Sarduana was a Nationalist, a pan-Nigeria politician who never compromised the unity of Nigeria. Indeed from his political and philosophical standpoint, three basic lessons can be learned. These are the principles of compromise; the principles of negotiation; and the principles of accommodation. As a nationalist he was aware of our differences - the multi-ethnic complexion of our federal arrangement, the plural mosaic of our religious and cultural diversities. He was not blind to these differences. But he was convinced that Nigeria could



rise beyond these inhibiting factors to forge one united nation. The Sarduna's principles of compromise, negotiation, and accommodation, serve well in his time and would continue to serve us in these times. By the will of the colonial master, Nigeria inherited a federal system. Unlike in the United States and elsewhere where federalism grew naturally out of the political experience of nation states, Nigeria found herself foisted with a skewed federal structure from the onset. Nearly a century of colonial administration has combined with decades of military rule to define as at today, the basis of Nigeria's federalism. Today the issues that dominate national debate include Sovereign National Conference, Resource Control, and balance of interests among the ethnic nationalities that constitute the Nigerian polity. And at the core of the exchange is fiscal federalism, revenue allocation, and sharing the national cake. Federal finance is politics; it is also economics - matters that evoke much passion and emotion among Nigerians. In our national experience, historical antecedents have placed the issue of revenue allocation and resource control on the front burner of national debate and discourse, and it has often seemed that the future of Nigeria's federal experience could depend on the twin factors.

Nwokedi (2004) described Nigerian federalism as having, the unique origin ...which evolved through devolution from virtual unitarism. He identified the problem of resource control as springing primarily from the fact that oil resources come mostly from the small states within the ethnic minorities which lack the political and economic clout to push through their political demands. Nowhere in a federation the world over other than in the Nigerian federation does the system of revenue allocation completely negate or ignore the taxable capacity, tax effort and nature of resources of the component governments.

Concluding Remarks



For a strong and united Nigeria in the context of modern state system, and learning from the basic principles of the Sardhana - Compromise, Negotiation, and accommodation, are all cardinal attribute of federalism. And that the principle of derivation is one of the most potent instruments adopted to achieve autonomy among the federating states. Between 1946 and 1977, the derivation principle had enjoyed the pride of place in the Nigerian revenue allocation format. In the days of military rule, successive military regimes in the country found the oil wealth a sure source of financing for the profligacy that became synonymous with those administrations, and so began to diminish the importance of derivation. As derivation took a bashing, the states where these resources originate from had little or nothing to show for their natural resources. The derivation principle continued to lose ground until the Abovade Technical Committee on Revenue Allocation put the final nail on its coffin in 1977. on the recommendation of that Committee, the Obasanjo Military Administration deleted the principle completely from Nigeria's revenue allocation formula. Thus, in the hey days of the agricultural boom - the days of the groundnut a pyramids in the North, the cocoa boom in the West and the palm oil windfall in the East - derivation was the predominant basis for allocating national revenue. But when oil came on stream, notwithstanding the environmental degradation and devastation that came with it, derivation faded away from the nation's economic calculus. Any wonder then at the level and stridence of the agitation for resource control which has compelled a return in recent times to a consideration of this principle in revenue allocation. The Abubakar Administration in mid-wiving the 1999 Federal Constitution of the Federal Republic, stipulated at least 13% of national revenue to be allocated on the basis of the principle of derivation. Without doubt, the agitation for resource control stems from the criminal and callous neglect of the past, and the impoverishment that has been visited on the area that has generated much of the resources on which modern



Nigeria is built. It does appear that Europe was built out of the colonial exploitation of Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries; modern America was built on the sweat and tears of slaves who were transported across the Atlantic in inhuman and dehumanizing conditions. And modern Nigeria is built on the rape and abuse of the South-East and South-South regions where much of the oil resources that have transformed the nation come from. Only equity, fairness and natural justice in the allocation of the nation's abundant resources, will enable the land and her people be in peace, united and stronger.

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