

# Nigeria History: A Panacea for National Integration and Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Nigeria, a country with an estimated population of about 140 million attained independence in 1960. Since then there has been the challenge of incorporating the diverse peoples into a stable and single national community and sustainable democracy in order to achieve the utmost goal of sustainable development. This paper thus with particular focus on happenings in the country since 1960 bring into a bold relief the need to revisit, reinvigorate and reposition the neglected Nigerian history in our educational system in confronting the country's goal of unity and sustainable democracy because it is held that what had happened in the past and what is happening at present are all within the purview of Nigerian History.

## Introduction

The history of Nigeria today is the story of our determined goal of two major social values- one of which is National integration through ideological, social, economic and Political integration on the basis of social justice and the other sustainable democracy for even distribution of the material means of existence. It has long been recognized, and world wide too, that history or any subject which concerns it self with the study of the past has important contributions to make towards the attainment of these basic goal of human society.

Nigeria, no doubt, represents a unique entity evidenced in its multiethnic character, which has variously been estimated to be between 250 and 370. With an estimated population of about 140 million Nigeria has been battling with National integration and measures to sustain the nascent democracy which came on board in 1999. In the course of our political history, the county has experimented the civilian and the military governance before now, yet the problem of national integration remains. Sustainable democracy has to do with the longitivity of the fundamental tenets of democracy. Thus the author felt that Nigerian history if reinvigorated and made compulsory in our schools can play that supportive role of detribalizing Nigerians because the nation's history will require the citizens to be patriotic and united towards achieving certain goals. We know that we cannot understand a situation in life without some perception of where its fits into a continuing process or whether it has happened before. Moreover, our sense of personal identity demands roots in the past which we sought in the first instance in general and family history. This paper intends to highlight the relevance of Nigerian history in solving our contemporary problem especially that of National Integration and sustainable democracy. Thus the paper is divided into five sections including this introduction. Section two examines the concept of history, national integration and sustainable democracy, section three is divided into indispensability of Nigerian history and the consequences for neglect to National integration and sustainable democracy. The fourth section centers on the challenges for the Nigerian state schools and individuals, section five concludes the work.

## The concept of History, National Integration and Sustainable Democracy

At the popular level with which we are concerned here, the concept of Nigerian history should be seen as practical human activity related to the immediate needs of Nigerians and the nation-state as a group to his and their location in time and place and to his and their expectation of the future. Like the knowledge of sciences, the knowledge of history has immense practical significance. J. TUSH for example argued that our sense of what is practicable in the future is formed by an awareness of what has happened in the past.<sup>1</sup> As a contact point, history is the source of every knowledge known to man. All the fields of study are products of history. The observation of history as the source of other disciplines has been well captured by V.D Roberts, when he posits that:

*History is the memory of human group experience. If it is forgotten or ignored, we cease in that measure to be human without history we came to be, like victims of collective amnesia groping in the dark for our identity. it is the events recorded in history that have generated all the emotions, the values, the ideals that make life meaningful, that have given men something to live for, struggle over and die for. Historical events have created all the basic human groupings- countries, religions, classes and all the loyalties that are attached to these.<sup>2</sup>*

Meanwhile, it has been argued that there is a continues link between the past and present. It is this agreement that constitutes a fulcrum which constitutes a reference point for the activities of man. Describing it, R G

Collingwood in one of his submission stated that:

*...Those societies which retain in changing circumstances a lively sense of their own identity and continuity. . . are to be counted fortunate not because they possess what other lack; but because they have mobilized what none is without and all in fact rely in part on that is HISTORY.<sup>3</sup>*

Thus history conceived as a practical human activity is a good tonic for including a sobering awareness of the responsibilities we bear as individuals and groups for everything we think, say or do. In other words it should teach us that it is men that make the history they live through and after them. It is because men make history that they bear the consequences of history. This is only natural justice. History conceived as practical human activity will inculcate social values such as individual initiative, hard work, honesty commitments, loyalty,<sup>3</sup> unity, good governance for sustainable democracy and so on because it is the events recorded in a history of a nation that have generated all the emotion, that have given citizens something to live for, struggle over or die for. In that way history creates a sense of nationalism, genuine efforts at sustainable developments of a country through university education and its products.<sup>4</sup>

Post colonial Nigeria like all other nations of the world can gain from the knowledge of history. Nations require their citizens to be patriotic and united towards achieving a functional educational system which can better encourage all round development especially in the shaping of communities' priorities and the empowerment of the people which must be built, it cannot be imported. It has to be, domesticated. In other worlds, we have a collective responsibility to mould our own university system that can empower us. Rowse A.L. restated it that:

*One of the greatest advantages of history is that the subject grows with you from a very elementary stage to the cast refinement of ripe maturity and skeptical wisdom. Through history children come to know about their nations past and present. A sense of belongingness and complete loyalty to a larger abstraction called nation then germinates and matures.<sup>5</sup>*

In other words, in history, Nigerians salvation or doom should be shown as likely to come from what Nigerians think, say and do, not from some extra terrestrial force. For instance if Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio made possible the Islamic Revolution which overtook and changed Hausa society from 1804, a determined and properly motivated Nigerian society and state can set us on the path of our desire goal.<sup>6</sup> That results in the transformation of the whole societal system and enhancement of the individuals capacity to realize his inherent potentials and to cope effectively with the challenges of life. Such processes ultimately lead to the achievement of whatever is regarded as a general good for the society at large. This imperative came more forcefully to the fore at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with several countries coming up with various development agenda for the new millennium and adoption of the United Nations, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agenda.<sup>7</sup> The drive for sustainable development also came against the background of the quest for effective university system as a central concern in international effort for sustainable development for global acceptance. In other words, whatever, the aspiration of any polity/entity, such can only be achieved within an atmosphere of peaceful coexistence of citizens or groups and a harmonious relation between the rulers and the ruled. As Claude Ake notes, the task of societal or national development is one that has the people as the central focus and object of development.<sup>8</sup> Thus nothing could be farther from the truth. For one thing this view arises primarily from the mistaken view that history means the record and activity of a state, rather than the record and activity of a people or peoples. We should see our history not as the history of a state, but as history of peoples. With this again, Nigerian history would come to mean not the record and activities of a Nigeria state, but the record and activities of the peoples who from as far back as Stone Age times had elected the Nigerian area as their home.<sup>9</sup> The implications of this are many. One of these is that the experiment in co-existence and mutual support in enjoying democracy is not of recent origin at all. Another is that it has passed through different phases in which eras of intense contact and interaction at times alternated with periods of low ebb in inter-group contact.<sup>10</sup> Also we find that by and large as centuries rolled by the extent to which the people in this region were knitted together increase in depth and territorial range. This long span of history has for us enough lessons pointing in the direction of mutual accommodation, patience and forbearance with one another common identity and destiny and the quest for development, all of which are among the fulcrum of that social value popularity known as national integration.<sup>11</sup>

National integration is something that is desired by all nations since it forms the basis for political stability for concerted development. In order to capture appropriately the notion of national integration, it would be apposite to first give accepted meaning of the term integration and national. For instance Ibrahim Tahir defines it as the emergence of a situation in which every citizen is a perfect substitute for any other citizen for nomination to perform socially determined roles...<sup>12</sup>

James Coleman and G.G. Roseburg as quoted by Sasime, R. see national interaction as;

*The progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities on the horizontal plane in the process of creating a homogeneous territorial political community.*<sup>13</sup>

The definition, no doubt, is emphasizing development in homogenous community as one of the strongest bonds uniting a large social grouping and its member's awareness of a common history. This will show how group identity has endured through shifting circumstances without that awareness citizens would not easily acknowledge the claims of their loyalty in the nation but instead to other social groupings such as religions and ethnic nationalism. In a similar note, national integration is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty toward a central political authority and institution by individuals belonging to different social groups or political units. Z.A. Ernest has postulated that "national integration is a process whereby political actors in distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalty specification and political activities towards a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation state"<sup>14</sup>.

From the above definitions, it is implied that our quest of national integration entails bringing people of different backgrounds to become as one family for the progress and development of the state.

In relation to Nigeria since the attainment of political independence and within the context of this paper, national integration or national unity has eluded the nation for quite some time, mainly due to conglomeration of many ethnic nations. The dominant groups include the Hausa/Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba. Other nationalities exist in the country. These three groups have by virtue of their numerical strength and vantage position in power matrix only assumed a dominant character and as such tend to subsume other groups or nationalities of these different ethnic nationality groups which had although had relations before then but wanted it to end at that so as to protect their sovereignty.<sup>15</sup> On the contrary the colonialists were more guided by perceived economic and social gains in their intra-European struggle for the soul of Africa. Equally, there were no concrete efforts to integrate the various ethnic nations especially between the north and southern regions. Rather different policies and systems of administration were adopted which further undermined the fact according to R. Akinyele that:

*The nature of ethnic groups of Nigeria relates to a people whose unity rests on some racial, linguistic, religious or cultural ties hence they are always on ethnic groups self consciously united around shared history and traditions beliefs and value system, language and culture and other forms of affinity.*<sup>16</sup>

This description is significant for this paper about the ethnic groups of Nigeria because it stresses an important fact which is that ethnic groups or categories see themselves as a different group and this forms the basis of their relation with other groups or the larger society. It thus becomes imperative for the state to wipe up and imbibe all the amalgamation which joined together in a marriage that produced the present nation state should be well received and exploited because for both levels of amalgamation i.e. that of the amalgamation of the society parts in 1906 when the separately acquired Lagos colony and protectorate which covered the area of present day Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Ondo states, were merged with what used to be "southern Nigeria" which was the area of present day Edo states, Rivers, Imo, Anambara and Cross River states etc. And that of 1914 which brought the different Southern and Northern ethnic groups together<sup>17</sup>.

For both levels of amalgamation, the best known of the official considerations related to the concern of the British for administrative convenience and economy. But as has been demonstrated in recent studies, mostly by Nigerian historians, a crucial aspect of the argument was the inevitable awareness even on the part of the British policy makers that the lands and peoples which in pre-European times dominated the Nigerian region were neither isolated nor self-sufficient. This according to O.S. Obikeze; is richly illustrated by the expansion of the frontier of Lagos colony which the British had to undertake after 1861 upon their realization that Lagos without the vast Yoruba interior was a mere town upon a sandy island, insignificant in itself. There had been before the British advent several centuries if not millennia of vital interaction of cultural, commercial and political nature.<sup>18</sup> The observation of the use of Nigerian history as the main force in the question to Nigerian integration has been further explained by Professor A.I. Aiswaju, when he posits that:

...Archaeological finds in respect of the Nok culture, based on the Jos Plateau and extending over an area 300 miles east to west and about 100 miles north to south of the Old Zaria Province, and the stylistic and structural relationship with the celebrated Ife, Benin, and Igbo Ukwu arts have provided historians with the basic data not only about the great antiquity and glory of the past of the individual regions but also of the connection between the diverse local histories.<sup>19</sup>

Similar impressions of close cultural connections are indicated in linguistic studies. Transitions of common origin such as those of Kisra relating Kanuri with the Jukun, the Bariba and sometimes the Yoruba, of Oduduwa and Bayajidda providing charters of unity for the Yoruba and the Hausa peoples respectively simply affirm the fact of these relationships. Since history teaches us that there was ethnic cooperation in various parts of the country, then this should form the foundation for ethnic relations in Nigeria to foster national integration.<sup>20</sup>

Traditions of migrations in remote times from one area of the Nigerian region to another have been similarly strengthened by a more precise knowledge of ancient trade routes which have operated over the centuries to bring about at least a socio-economic integration of the sub region. For intra-regional connection, perhaps the most prominent water ways according to R.A. Olaye, was the Niger which, with its principal tributary, the Benue, has justifiably provided the root for the name of the modern state. Illustration of the role which these major rivers played as unifying forces for Nigerian people prior to the formal inauguration of the Nigerian state may be provided by the cosmopolitan nature of business gathering at such points as Rabat on the Niger and Yola on the Benue. Rabat in Nupe, for example, was the location of an ancient market where the Nupe met with the Yoruba, the Bariba, the Hausa, the Ibo, the Edo; the Ibibio and the Ijaw. Although the primary purpose was trade, other forms of interaction also took place, which generated among the various Nigerian peoples the awareness of one another. In this connection, the major water ways were generally complimented by several trans-regional land routes. Two of these were particularly important. The first was the Kano-Badagry route crossing the Niger at Rabat<sup>21</sup>. This has been succinctly put by M. Crowder, "This was the route which early British explorers- captain Hugh Clapperton (1827) and Richard and John Lander (1830)-took to reach Hausa land via western Yoruba land. The other was the N. Garzaganu (Borno)-Yola route which connected the Kanuri with the Jukun and the Igbo as well as the Efik and Ibibio. Passing through Bauchi, this route connected such centres as Panda, Abinchin, Ibi, Muri and Wukari. It was through this second route, for example, that the natron or salt from Lake Chad region reached the Efik<sup>22</sup>.

The essential relationship between these land and riverine traditional highways is best illustrated by the complementarity of the Niger and the Kano Badagry route and the influence of this on the size and cosmopolitan character of the great market of Kufu, near present-day town of Kontagora, which up to C. 1830 was patronized by nearly all sections of the present-day Nigeria community. Through this medium, for example, the Edo sent upstream their camwood to the Nupe in exchange for northern products while the Yoruba transacted business with the Ijaw and the Ibibio, leaving off their canoes at Rabat to attend the periodic market in Kufu. It was also through the wide connections generated by these long-distance routes that Old Oyo was able to obtain such essential supplies as horses usually from Tropolli through Kanuri middle men<sup>23</sup>.

One major dimension of historical connection between one Nigerian people and another prior to their being brought together within a single state by the British was the interaction generated by the various processes of macro- state formation. This aspect is not always appreciated by inter group historians. The multi-national or cosmopolitan ancient states such as Kanem-Borno, old Oyo, Benin, Nupe, Borgu, Kwararafa (Jukun) and the Sokoto caliphate had always embraced more than one Nigerian people and they provided the local antecedents for the all-embracing imperialism of the British<sup>24</sup>. Thus some historians, especially T.N Tamuno have argued that, the activities of states such as those of Bariba the Nupe and the Jukun or the Kwararafa located in the Middle Belt had the effect particularly in the 18th century of reducing to nonsense the dictionary that later came to be implied in the division between the so-called northern and southern Nigeria<sup>25</sup>.

Of some significance also was the relationship between the various states of the pre-British era. While war was an important aspect, peaceful and essentially harmonious inter-action was also a reckonable dimension. It is on record, for example that in the nineteenth century, the Etsu Nupe sought advice from the Balogun of Abeokuta and the Sultan of Sokoto mediated in the Yoruba civil wars<sup>26</sup>. These relations and relationships not only influenced the British decision for amalgamation in 1914; they and the other forms of historical connections constitute important entities that must be seen to nullify the view that there is in Nigerian history nothing about "national integration"<sup>27</sup>. Of course, it needs to be stressed that in Nigeria, as elsewhere, political strains would occur in spite of known historical connections. Thus even among the Yoruba recognized by many as one family protracted and very destructive war broke out in nineteenth century in spite of the acknowledgment of a common descent from Oduduwa<sup>28</sup>.

Thus, the optimism engendered by the arrival of independence dissolved into an increasing awareness of exploitation among the Nigerian peoples and the growing loyalty to ethnic groups, a shared historical perspective must seem more than ever desirable to the governing elites of Nigeria for the purposes of achieving national integration or unity. Nigerians should reinvigorate and regulate their history to learn that there were situations in the past inter-tribal cooperation which were no doubt tilting towards a one united nation as discussed above<sup>29</sup>. This leads to every important question how will Nigerians know of this unifying past in order to inculcate national consciousness and unity. It is through the promotion of Nigerian history at all levels of our educational system in the country. This would enable every successive generation to be aware of the country and its respective history. Nigerian history should, therefore, feature prominently in the curricula and the state should promote historical research and the publication of research findings. A powerful alliance should, as a result be forged between historical scholarships and officially approved national integration<sup>30</sup>. The point that Nigerian history is the basis of our internal effort is not in doubt. The history of yesterday is indeed the basis of the history today. Indeed, the knowledge of the past would be useless, if it is knowledge for its own sake. This means that the Nigerian history we are concern with here, should be one that would guide us today in order to achieve

societal and national goals and that would be taught in such a fashion that it would help to create harmony among people rather than division and hatred, that it would serve this nation better. W.H. Walsh confirmed this when he remarked that:

*We cannot escape from history, our lives are governed by what happened the past: our decisions by what we believe to have happened. Without knowledge of history, man and society would run adrift, rudderless craft in the uncharted sea of time<sup>31</sup>.*

But warning should be sounded here that propaganda should not find its way into the Nigerian history syllabi. This is where historical criticism becomes important to enable professional historians to critically assess the source material and the purpose of the produced historical material. In other words the produced historical knowledge should be objective devoid of element which whip up primordial sentiments which culminated in to the historical nationalist movement that paved the way for Nigerians independence in 1960, which became wane in no time. Thus at independent, the country was still far from integrating her various ethnic nations in to a stable national community due to the relegation of Nigerian history in our schools<sup>32</sup>. But while ethnic nationalism is rooted in the colonial history of Nigeria, successive civilian military regimes in the post independence period have in no small way contributed to its complexities. This is through overt or converts discriminatory state politics that tend to continue with the same colonial strategy of manipulating ethnicity and ethnic sentiment for cheap political and economic gains, hence party structure and social organizations took an ethnic character thereby, only resulting in the veneration of ethnic entities at the expense of commitment to national integration<sup>33</sup>. Little wonder therefore, that most integrative mechanisms put in place since independence have been of little or no effect while the spate and volatility of ethnic nationalism have continue to rise because of majority of those Nigerian elite class that mount the sits of leadership/rulership do not have sufficient knowledge about Nigerian history. No doubt citizens who do not have sufficient knowledge about the history of their country would not have sufficient knowledge about the direction of the state aspirations and government policies, and by extension, the nation at heart. H. Perkin argues that “without history a society scarcely exists, since it inheres only in the continuing relation ships between its members, which in term are merely the expectation that certain patterns of conduct and mutual service will continue in the future as they did inn the past”<sup>34</sup>. It is indeed, a nation lost with its past that, for instance, that a military coup of January and July 1966; the 30 months civil war (1967-1970) and a host other events can be aptly linked to the consequences of ethnic nationalities in the country because since independence the neglect of Nigerian history in that direction of national integration an important instrument for undermining the unifying causative factors<sup>35</sup>.

However, so far, the some evidence of history as a product of superb prospect towards our integration has been exhibited by the three dominant tribes, the Igbo, Hausa and the Yoruba. The Igbo integration is proceeding at a very rapid pace despite survival of tribal differences. The Igbo have a common material and spiritual culture, the old Igbo language remain. A wanted Igbo nation is taking shape out of many Igbo subdivision into different states and local government<sup>36</sup>.

The same trend is taking place in the western region amongst the Yoruba’s, the Yoruba subdivision have retained the ethnic names, with differences in language, but despite the differences, all subdivisions consider themselves as Yoruba with common mode of dressing, common values hence common Yoruba identity<sup>37</sup>. The Hausa language and culture has become a unifying centre not only for the Hausa ethnic group, but also for many small tribes in the middle belt and beyond where the Hausa language is gaining currency. The Hausa nation is being built of heterogeneous ethnic tribes in the middle region of the country. Most of these tribes have retained their ethnic names; identify and language but speak Hausa. Thus, the urgent call for schools and universities in Nigeria syllabi to feature the great experiments of the past in nation building, inter-tribal cooperation and constructive economic activities in pre-colonial Nigeria<sup>38</sup>. Topic such as these, which were preciously given little space or were altogether ignored should now be part of the historical consciousness of school educated Nigerians.

It should be noted that this re-invigorated Nigerian history learning does not provide Nigerians with the knowledge of Nigeria history alone; what we have in mind is that, it also will provide them with the knowledge of histories of the other parts of the world. So as to learn about how other nations of the world evolved politically, economically, culturally, technologically; and the nature and effects of their interactions with one another in the past because they form the crop of elite who will decide the fate of the continent in future<sup>39</sup>.

It is pertinent to note that, the various efforts by the civilian and military government since 1960 at national integration is applaudable but not enough because it’s not historically motivated. It’s weighted with too much political propaganda therefore playing down the positive role in uniting the various ethnic groups of the country. Nigeria and Nigerian unity has to be consolidated by putting on board those historical factors of unity in the pre British period with these, much of the effort of the federal government especially that of the NYSC<sup>40</sup>. Federal Character Commission in appointment and resources distribution will not make any meaningful impact

if issues on human rights citizenships, poverty, mismanagement of the economy mass unemployment, underdevelopment of productive forces, non-absorbance economy and poor infrastructural facilities and other necessities of life are not addressed historically. In fact it is estimated that about 75 million Nigerians do not have access to portable water, decent accommodation and quality education<sup>41</sup>. These does not only create alienation and in Security but also frustration and divisiveness among citizens. In such a situation, people are susceptible to seeking accommodation within the social insurance system of ethnicity. The challenge is therefore for the state to improve on its economic management techniques and ensure good governance and accountability. Since the lack of these elements creates an unfortunate situation that will retards interest of historical learning about national integration and sustainable democracy<sup>42</sup>.

Democracy as an ideology and philosophy of government sets a high premium on the basic freedom and fundamental human rights of the citizens, the rule of law, right to property free flow of information and the right to choose between alternatives political positions. Mabogunje posited that:

*Democracy as politics is concerned with the institutions and process of governance that they elicit which tend to foster consensus whilst simultaneously promoting and sustaining respect for the ideology of democracy. Sustainable democracy is therefore simple defined as the longitivity of the fundamental tenets of democracy<sup>43</sup>.*

Therefore, for democracy to be sustained in Nigeria, it must provide those tenets or instruments which promote accountability, transparency and rule of law. In addition to the realistic separation of powers between the three arms of government, it must also represent the views of the opposition and the minorities<sup>44</sup>.

Conceptually, democracy is complex and means different things to different people. Scholars have recently identified three critical elements encapsulating the democratic agenda for sustainability: popular participation, equitable representation and accountability because a society is democratic in so far as the public can play a meaningful role in the managing their own affair. Thus according to Dahl, democracy is conceptualized as:

*A system of government that meets three essential conditions: an extensive competition among individuals and groups especially political parties for all elective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force: a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies at least through regular and fair election, that no major social group is excluded; and a level of civic and political liberties freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation<sup>45</sup>.*

In another way, it means a society is democratic if at minimum, it involves both the provision of the means to pursue the representation of diverse interests in government and the institutionalization of mechanism to hold rulers accountable to the public will- including instruments that allow for the peaceful removal of governments from power<sup>46</sup>. This is one of the intrinsic values of democracy which will create a system of government in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.

From the above, we can deduce that as a complex principle/a living organism, democracy requires nurturing with proper mechanisms before it could be sustainable for the promotion of peace, development and stability. Nigerian nation has an objective even though not clearly defined. It is stated in Nigerian constitution:

*To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God... and to provide for a constitution for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality and justice and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people<sup>47</sup>.*

Indeed, one does not need an oracle to point out that Nigeria needs for a sustainable democracy for all- round development which could be achieved when the Nigerian histories we are envisaging here will expose lessons from the remote and near past as to why our previous democratic governments failed woefully. They failed because of the exclusion of the historical problems associated with election, party formation and politics, issues on poverty and corruption.

Indeed sustainable democracy is built on periodic election and the emergent government legitimacy is derived from the conduct of free and fair election. That is an election conducted in an atmosphere devoid of harassment, intimidation and other coercive means in order to bend the will of the voters because it is the litmus

test of democracy. Without elections, there will be no yard stick for gauging or assessing the democratic content of any regime. It is describe as the act of choosing or selecting candidates who will represent the people of the country in the various arms of government. It is also said that an election is a contest between competing political parties or groups for government power. People expect fairness and justice, with due process in the manner of choice regulated by rules and regulations of the state. Besides, election negates obnoxious policies thereby enabling people decide the type of policies that should be adopted by government by choosing political parties with policies of their choice through the manifestoes they presented to them during electioneering campaign. Amuwo, K posits that apart from the above election is:

*An instrument or process which makes rulers accountable; foster democracy, measure public opinion on certain issues in a country; educate the electorate bestows legitimacy; integrates various groups and the encouragement of and promotion of healthy political competitions in a country<sup>48</sup>.*

Additionally, elections are used as barometer for gauging the popularity of political leaders. Election gives people who are qualified for elections equal political opportunity to vote and be voted for. Moreover, election is used to check government excesses. By curtailing the dictatorial and tyrannical propensities of government in power. Indeed, election is an important instrument in the democratic process thus it fairness, equity, justice and acceptability by the electorates has been a real challenge to a sustainable democracy in Nigeria.

Since independence, conduct of free and fair election in Nigeria has been subject of debate as no election has been held without becoming a matter of litigation. Due to wide spread rigging, violence, disputations and unacceptability, for example the collapse of the first and second republics at our attempt at democracy was rooted in the crisis of elections<sup>49</sup>. The first democratic system that lasted from 1960-1966 was fashioned after British West Ministership or parliamentary system. The formation of government by the prime minister is expected from the party with a simple majority in the parliament. Unfortunately the first republic was characterized of gross electoral malpractices both at the federal and regional levels. Four years after independence, the Nigerian politicians could not organize hitch-free elections to choose their leaders and form a stable central government. There occurred unprecedented electoral malpractices during the federal elections held in 1964. The NPC central government was accused by the A.G and the N.C.N.C. of rigging the election in the north. The N.C.N.C and the A.G to check this act in western and eastern region formed an alliance-United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) to enable them win the majority vote at the central legislature. The N.P.C also allied with the N.N.D.P. formed by S.L. Akintola a high priest of election rigging! The result of this was that when the result of the 1965 regional election was announced declaring Chief S.L. Akintola the winner. The UPGA accused the N.P.C of assisting the N.N.D.P. in manipulating the result of the election in their favour. The supporters of the A.G and N.C.N.C felt dissatisfied with the result of the election and consequently, there was breakdown of law and order in the western region leading to looting and arson in what was coded operation *Wetie*.<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, in the second republic [1979-1983] six political parties emerged. They included the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) led by chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The People Redemption Party (PRP) led by Mallam Aminu Kano, Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) led by Waziri Ibrahim, the Nigerian Advance Party (NAP) led by Tunde Braithwaite. After the general elections held in august 1979, the NPN won the highest votes but could not form the national government. The NPN therefore reached a political agreement with the NPP to form a coalition government. Before and after the coalition government of President Shehu Shagari, there were controversies with the elections. There were wide allegations of rigging and counter rigging which eventually created the constitutional controversy of what constitute 2/3 of Nigerian federation of their nineteen states. Furthermore, it was the recurrence of election manipulation said to have given the incumbent government of Shehu Shagari "land slide" victory that was questioned by other political parties and the electorates that led to military intervention again in Nigerian politics to seize power in December 31, 1983<sup>51</sup>.

Formation of political parties and the nature of their politics is another instrument for achieving sustainable democracy in Nigeria, because parties are formed or permitted to operate for the purposes of forming a government on political party basis. Party system is therefore imperative for elections to be conducted with ease in this complex nature of modern day politics and society<sup>52</sup>. After independence the nation had to grapple with the problem of increasing sentiments of regionalism and ethnic nationalism. People seem to continue to generate allegiance to their regions than to the Federal Government. The leaders made little effort to create greater national consciousness and patriotism for good governance. The gap between the centre and the states continued to widen as unscrupulous politicians formed tribal parties with the motive of whipping up tribal sentiments during elections to win votes. Even parties which formerly had a national outlook went tribal and sentimental after elections in order to have a share of the national or Federal cake for its kith and kins. According to Majumobi: 'Though our political parties are duly registered each tried to be national in outlook but end up

being personalized ethicized or sectionalized. And due to these problems sustainable democracy and national integration has been eluding the Nigerian State<sup>53</sup>.

Moreover, that history is the basis of every development effort is not in doubt. The history of yesterday is indeed, the basis of the history of today. Indeed, our knowledge of the past would be useless, if it is knowledge for its own sake. The reinvigoration of Nigerian political, social and would guide us today in order to achieve societal and national goals or else the issue below will make no meaning to national integration and sustainable democracy<sup>54</sup>.

Another major problem challenging the sustenance of democracy is poverty which the Nigerian history syllabi would also expose to future leaders. Nigeria since independence is a major player in the oil industry, being the sixth largest oil-producing nation in the world<sup>55</sup>. But the abundant wealth of the nation has turned to its poverty such that the country is rated one of the poorest in the world where an average person lives on \$1 per day. Poverty as a social problem affects the nation as well as the individuals. There is the vicious circle of poverty in Nigeria. What this means is that, unstable political system and government rigging of elections, and several other social problems is caused by poverty. Nwakanrna lament that:

*This Nigerian has to be flogged out of the highway when the "bigmen" are about in their sired convoys; he subsists on less than one hundred naira a day, he lives in a badly built house, in poorly designed cities, dies from easily treatable diseases, and most recently, although he was told that education is his mean ticket out of poverty, managed to put his children through the hardship of badly built schools and poor education until they earned university degrees currently unusable any where else in the world, and has found to his chagrin that there is no job, even for the educated<sup>56</sup>.*

Ali affirms poverty is real and the present malaise is not new to most adult Nigerians where most people in Africa lives<sup>57</sup>. In fact; it is estimated that about sixty-five million Nigerians do not have access to portable water, accommodation, decent home and quality food. These social problems not only create alienation and insecurity but also frustrations and divisiveness among citizens. In such a situation therefore, National integration and sustainable democracy will make no meaning to the poor. The challenge is therefore for the state to create this awareness of this (poverty) danger by promoting the teaching and learning of Nigerian History in our educational school system. Since the lack of it is creating an unfortunate situation. An aggressive and deliberate effort on the part of the government and individuals and corporate bodies is highly necessary. We need to address the evils of poverty.

Nigeria is a highly stratified society with a yawning gap between the rich and poor. The poor are ignorant of their basic rights and lack the power to hold any government to account for its stewardship. The poor cannot sustain the type of struggle that can impose accountability in government. It is due to poverty that some political gladiators whose records of criminality worse than armed robbers are still jostling for leadership positions<sup>58</sup>. Poverty to many scholars, remain the enemy of our democracy and National unity; A poor man looks inferior, life lacks meaning value and integrity to him. When it engulfs man, he redefines morality. Poverty is indeed an enemy of democracy National Integration and sustainable governance.

Another major aspect which the teaching and learning of Nigerian history would concern itself is on corruption which since independence has negated all attempts at fighting poverty, achieving unity and stable democracy. Akinola sees corruption as a destruction or subversion of honesty and integrity. In Nigeria, corruption is like pandemic prostitution manifesting itself in inflation of contracts, over invoicing of imports, forgery, embezzlement of public funds, fraud, illegal dealing in foreign exchange, smuggling, misuse and abuse of office etc. There by destroying economic development and reforms. The implication is that it hinders the growth of democratic institutions and concentrates power in the hands of a few<sup>59</sup>.

Corruption is destructive to governmental structures, parastatals and agencies, ruining the legitimacy of governments and rendering governance ineffective. It is responsible for the systematic collapse of social and economic infrastructure and the pauperization of the citizenry. Besides, it wastes skills and causes capital flight and brain drain. Ohueri, G.O. opines that: In Nigeria as in most African countries, political instability and inefficient and corrupt administrations has been obstacle to economic development<sup>60</sup>. For example the collapse of the railways, National Electric Power Authority inspite of the change of name to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), the Nigerian Airways, NITEL and several others about to be sold or privatized are virtually dead. They are all being financially raped and crippled and await burial, The billions of naira invested into these enterprise are yet to materialize corruption, therefore is another major aspect which the envisage Nigeria history will highlight and examine so as to imbibe the extent of underdevelopment and what corruption has caused the nation<sup>61</sup>.

The Nigerian elite especially the political elite have been the major hindrance to the survival of democracy. For example Kofi Annan observed that: obstacle to democracy have little to do with culture or



religion but much more to do with the desire of those in power to maintain their position at any cost...<sup>62</sup>. Unquestionable corruption checkmates all vision for a morally strong and economically prosperous society. Indeed, corruption is antitheses of development and progress of Nigeria's democracy. "Bribery and corruption in recent democracy since the nation gain independence have increased in alarming proportion"<sup>63</sup>. The democracies experienced so far in the country has no concrete indication yet of reducing corruption and unruly and unscrupulous activities of some political elite who engaged in kick-backs and inflated contracts. Sometimes, contracts are given to ghost contractors who collected mobilization fees and disappear. Squandermania, nepotism, looting of government property and vault are still rampant amongst the ruling elite<sup>64</sup>. But with the type of actor based Nigerian history over time, it will gradually shape the mind of the people to the change needs in the society. By extension the Nigerian history will be affected in such a way that it carries the burden of perception and sensitivity. Accordingly, the nation need functionaries like historians and those with knowledge of history whose work is to preserve and communicate events that will make comparison and permit the learners to think which way to follow the benefit of mankind. And since the Nigerian political elite would have had knowledge of this developmental instrument and what is expected of any leader, the protected issue of National Integration and Sustainable Democracy would be a settled matter<sup>65</sup>.

### Conclusion

Our analysis so far has revealed that the only panacea for quest for national integration and sustainable democracy is by repositioning the Nigerian history which will tie the past to the present and vice-versa. As an academic discipline, it will retrace the nation quest for integration and sustainable government as a precondition for success in developmental aspiration. Because the sterling qualities of the Nigerian history envisaged here will encourage social justice, equity tolerance and compromise as was the experience in the pre-British period.

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