



History of the 1950 Ibadan Conference and the Entrenchment of Regionalist Politics in Nigeria

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Abstract. The people of Nigeria demanded greater political participation in the administration of their territories in the post-World War II period. The process of regaining independence from the British Colonial government culminated in various constitutional conferences in Nigeria. The January 1950 Ibadan Conference was one of these conferences organised. However, the conference rather than being a tool for integration of the politics and people of Nigeria became an avenue through which regionalist politics became part and parcel of Nigerian political terrain. Its significance was visible in the entrenchment of regions as centres of political power control with all the executive powers under regional premiers. Each region became distinct and separate from other regions, whereby regional political parties became centre of politics, rather than national integration. This was a clear demarcation from the existence of the North, West and East as administrative centres only. This act in the long run, defeated the objective of the nationalist struggle, which propagated the unity of Nigeria as a single political and economic entity, rather than a divisive unit created based on myopic standing and ideas of regionalism. This research will employ the use of primary source in the form of Proceedings of the January 1950 General Conference, autobiographies and account of participants, and secondary sources which will enable us to reconstruct the history of that historical development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, regionalism, politics, integration, nationalist

1. Introduction

The formation of a unified Nigerian state serving the general and common interest of the people of the Nigeria area was the aim of the nationalists' struggle.

There was the formation of nationalists' fronts, using a common ground with the formation of nationalist parties, such as Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923, National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938, and National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in 1944. These political parties started on a nationalist footing and their activities were significant in the independence struggle against the shackles of British colonial domination. In fact, the activities of the nationalists' struggle served as a heavy blow to the colonial government, with the Nigerian labour strike of 1945, which was anchored and supported by the NCNC. Therefore, in order to curtail the power of the nationalists' movement and prevent the emergence of a unified Nigeria, the colonialists transfigured the regions into centres of political power as independent entities by organising the Ibadan Conference of 1950, which became a prelude to the Macpherson Constitution grafted in 1951. Consequently, there was not only the emergence of regionalist politics but it became part and parcel of Nigerian politics. This is so, as political parties such as NCNC formed with a nationalist vision was pushed to the helm of regionalist politics. The significance of regionalist politics is deleterious to the corporate existence of Nigeria as a single polity, thereby affecting its development politically, economically and socially.

1.1 Development towards a Common National Front

The Nigerian area as a whole was conquered by the forces of the British and subdued the area under its control and Nigerians were rarely associated with the central institutions that administered the territories. It was administered as a separate unit with the southern part administered differently from the Northern Province. The division became more pronounced

with the creation of Western and Eastern Provinces from the southern Province by Boudillon in 1939. This was a move that ushered in the division of the Nigerian area into three different administrative units instead of the emergence of a single political unit. Therefore, for the emergence of a single political unit in Nigeria, there was the emergence of nationalist forces that clamoured for a single unit. There was the emergence of a nationalist movement that clamoured for greater political participation by Nigerians in their affairs. Thus, there was the creation of the Nigerian National Democratic Party under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay in 1923. The party was Nigerian in outlook and was able to win an election in the central legislature. Also, Macaulay co-founded the Daily News Newspaper as a medium to propagate and anchor their struggle against colonial exploitation. The NNDP and its activities was a milestone in the political history of Nigeria.

A further step was taken with the nationalists' struggle, and this had with the formation of another political party, the National Youth Movement (NYM) in 1938. Its activities went further than NNDP, as it came to encompass membership from other parts of the Nigerian territory, as it was not a Lagos-based party. Also, its activities were radicalised in order to press home their grievances of self-government. In fact, it was some of the dissent members of the NYM that established a new radical party, the Nigerian Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) whose nature, identity and activities were nationalist in nature. The NCNC was established in August 1944 with the sole aim of working against foreign exploitation and the realisation of self-government in Nigeria. According to Azikwe "The NCNC was founded in order to unify the various elements of our communities, to crystallise the various aspirations of our people and the emancipation of our people from foreign control." The NCNC called upon all patriots to join them in the salvation of Nigeria from the yoke of colonialism. The membership of the political party was indeed national in outlook as people from different segments of the society joined it in different parts of Nigeria, cutting across tribal, religious and social affiliations. Membership was organisational and affiliated branches were defined and recognised by the constitution of the party as the representatives of people in various towns. This means that individuals could only join the party through affiliating with a certain organisation and it was these organisations that joined the party on behalf of the people. By January 1945, the NCNC comprised of 87 member unions constituted of tribal unions, existing political parties, market women unions, and students'

unions whom all joined in order to protest colonial exploitation.

The formation of the NCNC as a force to reckon with in the nationalist movement was not a single, isolated and peculiar event that happened in Nigeria. There were similar happenings in the decolonisation process which were unfolding in West Africa at that time. In fact, there was the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention in 1947, and the following year it organised a riot and protested against inflation and the cutting down of trees that were infected with swollen shoot disease that affected cocoa trees. This move was significant in shaping the hold of colonialism on the Gold Coast. And this event did not go unnoticed in Nigeria as the news percolated in Nigeria and inspired the activities of the nationalist movement.

It was indeed true to its constitution as the NCNC and its activities and programmes were channelled towards the decolonisation of Nigeria. In 1945 there were many grievances against the colonial government including: the enactment of four ordinances considered obnoxious by the nationalists on land and minerals exploitation which were considered exploitative in nature and therefore, were utterly rejected by the NCNC. Also, the Richards Constitution proposal which was published was as well rejected as it did not conform to the aspirations of Nigerians. This shows that the demands were nationalist in nature and not in any way reflecting sectional interest, representing the collective interest of the Nigerian people was detrimental to the corporate existence of colonial administration.

Thus, a few months after, there occurred a movement which shook the colonial government and this was Nigerian Labour Union, which organised a strike in 1945 under its leader Michael Imoudu. About half a million workers participated in the strike, making it the greatest in the history of Nigeria. The workers had their grudges on inflation which had reached up to 150% and they demanded a salary increase of about 100% to be relieved of the hardship, and other grievances of the Nigerian workers They were not given the necessary attention by the colonial government as they were ignored, which triggered the strike. The strike paralysed the activities of the colonial government for over a month as all sectors were closed including the railway sector, a move that was supported by workers in all parts of Nigeria. This move by the Nigerian workers was a watershed in the independence struggle of Nigeria. Also, the activities which unfolded have shown that there was a move towards the development of a pan Nigeria movement

towards the actualisation of independence. The general opinion was that Azikwe and the NCNC were the brains behind the strike as they engineered, nurtured and supported it. Thus, in July 1945, The West African Pilot and the Daily Comet were banned for supporting the strike.

It is interesting to note nationalist's activities were supported by the use of combative journalism. There was the establishment of newspapers that championed the struggle against colonial exploitation. The West African Pilot established in 1937 and the Comet newspapers left an indelible mark in the history of the nationalists' movement in Nigeria. Obafemi Awolowo argued on the significance of the west African Pilot "..... whatever its literary defects, was a fire-eating and aggressive nationalist paper of the highest order" The newspapers played the role of educating the people on the exploitative nature of the colonial administration and the anti-colonial struggles were widely covered. The newspapers gave wider coverage to the 1945 strike which made it receive wide attention from the public which in turn did not go well with the British colonialists. Also, the press was important in articulating and conveying political ideas to the people.

The significance of the move towards the development of a nationalist movement has shown the unifying effect of binding people and groups together, who worked towards the decolonisation process on the one hand and on another hand a wrong signal was sent to the British, that if they allowed the people to come together their days were numbered in Nigeria. After, the British were not in Nigeria on humanitarian grounds. They came for the human and material exploitation of Nigeria. It is, therefore, a clear indication that the general awareness of their rule amongst the people was detrimental to their continued rule. Therefore, it was likely that the British were going to orchestrate more divisive tendencies that would thwart the nationalist struggle and in the long run prolong their rule.

1.2 The emergence of Sectional Divisive Politics

Therefore, for the British to curtail the development of a national front in the struggle against colonial rule they introduced the Richards Constitution in 1946. A constitution that was designed to breach the unity and corporate survival of Nigeria as a nation whereby the unity of the people is prioritised. The creation of regions was given prominence, which was a move towards division among the people. This does not imply that regions were first created in that period;

rather, at that particular period regions were given political power which changed their former position as administrative units only. Also, there was an attempt to link the indirect rule system with the Crown Colony method of administration. And this was not all that the constitution offered in terms of division of the people, there was the imposition of an undemocratic system of election, using the Electoral College. The usage of the Electoral College was an undemocratic system of selection of officials from the regional legislature, which is a bottleneck to a wider representation of the peoples' interest. In fact, it was a move towards the prevention of radical elements from being part of the decision-making in the regions. This was a constitution viewed as an imposition, without consultation with the people.

The administration and power control remained in the hands of the British colonialists, who embedded their rule with all forms of exploitation of human and material resources in the Nigerian area. Moreover, the income or property qualification of £100 for voting representatives in Lagos and Calabar was a huge blow to the rights and aspirations of the people, who wanted to vote and be voted for into office without any form of restriction. This was a move to dwindle the strength of the people towards integration into strong trade unions to fight colonial exploitation. There was the existence of a legislative council which was dominated by the British. In fact, the chiefs remained as stooges, without any form of power vested in them. It was until 1947 that there was a legislative council which had representatives from different parts of Nigeria. This means that before that period in 1947, there was no central representative to serve as a unifying factor for the people of Nigeria. This explains the fact that before the period the Nigerian people did not have a sense of belonging to a single entity that command their dedication and loyalty in terms of serving the interest of a nation. The exploitative and discriminatory nature of the colonial administration made some Nigerians organise themselves in groups to challenge the status quo which culminated in the formation of political parties within the national interest.

However, the imposition of the Richards Constitution was a kind of method and way of challenging the national unity which was beginning to unfold. The imposition of such divisive politics instead of a national integration did not go unchallenged by the nationalists. After all, it was a move to create division and independent development of the regions instead of promulgation of policies that would enhance the unity of the Nigerian people. The unity of Nigeria, which was beginning to manifest was visible in the

support the people of Nigeria granted the NCNC during its tour in 1946.

The NCNC decided to carry out protests and demonstrations against the Richards Constitution in order to inhibit the development of regional politics. Their radical ideas manifested in their writings in the Daily Comet Newspaper which were channelled towards the overthrow of the exploitative regime. These write-ups were visible under the editorship of Anthony Enahoro of the paper. Indeed, the activities against the British colonial policies were radical in nature by radical proponents who later formed the Zikist Movement which was radical in outlook and resistance to exploitation. Therefore, the struggle against the constitution took a new dimension which was pan- Nigerian in outlook.

As a form of a radicalised move towards resistance to the exploitative tendencies and division of the Nigerian people into enclaves, the NCNC decided to embark on a Nigeria-wide tour to galvanise and educate the people against the imposition of division amongst them as contained in the Constitution. Thus, the major way to inculcate knowledge of the happenings was only by educating the people about it. That was why Herbert Marcoulay, Nnamadi Azikwe and Micheal Imoudu were elected to lead the delegation on the tour. They educated chiefs and rulers in different Nigerian communities. In fact, they travelled to different communities in Nigeria and Cameroon. About 153 communities were visited covering all the regions of North, East and West. They were there to educate the people and seek for their mandate in protesting against the Constitution in London.

It should be noted that, all nationalists were against the exploitative nature of the Richards Constitution. It was the method and form of fighting against it that differed. The NYM believed that the Constitution imposition could be fought on the Nigerian soil. While the NCNC believed in sending a delegation to the Colonial Secretary that was why they travelled in order to seek for peoples' mandate in that regards. The people gave their mandate and even went to the extent of contributing money to support the nationalists' course embarked upon. Thus, the people of Nigeria contributed the sum of £ 13,500 to protest against the Constitution in London.

Indeed, the national peregrinate was so effective as it created awareness on the nationalist struggle among a larger chunk of the population located in the interior of Nigeria. On the other hand, it created fear, in the minds of the colonialists of the move towards national integration. This was why they did not

remain unconcerned they had to make a move to sabotage the struggle against national unification. Thus, on the tour Kalu Ezera stated that:

"In fact, the Nigerian government was so worried about the effectiveness of the NCNC tour, the Governor Richards himself undertook to tour several of the places visited by the NCNC leaders to counteract the propaganda effect of the latter."

Thus, in June 1947, Azikwe led an NCNC delegation to protest against the Constitution in London. They were received back by people in thousands as they returned to Nigeria. However, the travelling of the NCNC to London did not yield much result, as they were not given any concession by the Colonial Secretary. This had an adverse effect on the NCNC which led to the dwindling of its light in the eyes of many Nigerians, who saw its failure in reversing the obnoxious policies enshrined in the Constitution. The party remained as a shadow of its former self and much of its existence survived on the pages of the newspaper. This development dealt a heavy blow to the NCNC that it was unable to recover from its standing as a national party. In the same vein, the precarious position found by the national party was further exploited in the new development orchestrated to curtail the development of a national front in the struggle against colonial rule.

It is significant to note that, an attempt towards frustrating the development of nationalist politics was planted by several groups such as the coinage of 'northern' and 'southern' regional enclaves by the people themselves. Some of the politicians in the northern part of the Nigeria such as Abubakar Tafawa Balewa referred to as the other people from southern part as "our neighbours", which was an indicator of an emergence of enclaves. Similar development occurred with the formation of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a Yoruba cultural group to thwart the emergence of a nationalists' front and to frustrate the effort of the NCNC in the emergence as a nationalists' party. Thus, later developments made the seed of regionalism sown by the Richards Constitution to germinate and bear fruits of sectionalism in Nigeria.

2. The 1950 Ibadan Conference and the Emergence of Divisive Politics

The Richards Constitution met with lots of criticism by the Nigerian leaders. The effort of the national party the NCNC cannot go unnoticed. The NCNC delegation to London to protest against the constitution yielded some fruits even though it was made to look otherwise. It is wrong to believe the

delegation did not have any impact on the planning in the colonial office, and even on the administration of Nigeria. Thus, the British learning from their Gold Coast experience decided to halt disastrous consequences and embarked on a review of Richard Constitution which was supposed to be reviewed after nine years, but the situation in Nigeria at that time made it imperative to review the constitution in what culminated in the January 1950 Ibadan Constitutional Conference in preparation of the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, by the new Governor appointed into office in 1947, Sir John Macpherson.

Some of the major criticisms heaped on the Richard Constitution were that, it was an imposition on the people; without consultation. Thus, that was why the legislative council composed a committee composing of all the unofficial members, including the chief Commissioner, the Attorney General, the Honourable Financial Secretary and the Acting Commissioner of Colony. The Select Committee Recommended that consultation should be at the Provincial and regional levels, as well as the centre. Thus, based on the recommendation public hearing was organised at the villages and districts, to Provincial and Divisional Conferences, and later culminated in the Regional Conferences up to the National Conference. According to Hugh Foot:

It was I believe the most ambitious plan for public consultation ever undertaken in any colonial territory. And its purpose was of course not only consultation but also the awakening of political awareness in every corner of the country.

The Constitution revision gave great attention to people in the rural areas while the nationalists and the educated groups based in the cities were sidelined. This was done in order to inhibit and dwindle the influence of the educated groups towards radical nationalism. Also, it was a move toward incorporating and propagating regionalists' ideas in the review of the new constitution. This is so because for example in the Northern Region, Nigerians from other parts of the territory were barred from participating in the exercise. Thereby sowing the seed of sectionalism, and it was becoming clear at that time that the issue of regionalism was beginning to take shape in the history of Nigeria.

Alkasum Abba argued on the exercise of revision of the Richard Constitution that:

So, it was a political process that was undertaken without the participation of politicians and political parties; and, strictly speaking, it was conducted within the context of regions and confined to regional identities. The purpose of that exercise was to allow

regional consciousness to develop, grow and consolidate outside the framework of pan-Nigerian politics and political parties.

Following the consultation and conferences, the recommendations from the three regions and the Colony of Nigeria were in October, 1949. Then these recommendations were reviewed by the Drafting Committee of the constitution, which completed its work in November, 1949. On the 9th-28th January, 1950, there was a General Conference in Ibadan in order to discuss all suggestions and recommendations at the lower level. The General Conference was charged with the sole function of deciding the Nigerian political system and it was in it that recommendations were to be made to the Governor and Secretary of State.

The General Conference composed of twenty-five representatives from the regional conference, twenty-five unofficial members of the representative council and three unofficial non-Nigerians. The meeting was headed by the Attorney general of Nigeria who had no vote.

The views of the participants from the regional Conferences became the bedrock of the discussions at the General Conference. These views were published in October, 1949, prior to the General Conference. Of course, all the three regions favoured the establishment of a federal system of government however with a much more increase in regional powers both in the parliament and the executive level. However, there were divergent and similar opinions on matters as regards to the composition of parliament from the regions to the centre, appointment of ministers from the three regions. All the three regions favoured the establishment of federal and regional parliaments, and the regional parliament should have the power to legislate on residual matters as the centre. In terms of election the Northern and Western Regions favoured the employment of Electoral Colleges while the Eastern Region favoured a direct Election. The fact is the road to regionalism was opened up at that time.

The procedure of the General Conference was a general debate on the proposal from the regions. At the end, recommendations were made which include more and more regional autonomy in Nigeria. At the regions more political legislative and executive powers were devolved to the regions, making the regions semi-independent in the corporate existence of Nigeria. This means that the General Conference became an avenue where by the regions took centre stage in the political development of Nigeria with

powers to make and implement laws for the regions, making the emergence of three separate units with different orientations each for its people in their respective regions instead of resolving to have a united Nigeria where people would look up to for unity, harmony and development of a single entity. A clear diversion from the earlier period where by the region only had administrative powers under the Richards Constitution.

On the nature of the Ibadan Conference Alkasum Abba argued:

That process of the constitutional review culminated in the Ibadan General Conference in January 1950. Delegates at that conference were representatives of their regions. This was to ensure that only people who accepted the balkanization of Nigeria into regional political enclaves took part. Thus Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and the NCNC refused to participate in the conference. Therefore, negotiations at the Ibadan General Conference, agreements and disagreements were based on regions and within the context of identified regional interests, simply put Nigeria's national interest was relegated to the background!

Indeed, the *modus operandi* of the whole exercise was division of the country along regional lines for divide and rule; this is because Lagos was suggested to be merged with the Western Region, to ensure that only three units existed. Though this move was opposed by the other two regions and was supported by the Western region, but at the end of the day a select committee recommended the merging of Lagos with the Western Region. Similarly, Kabba and Ilorin which happened to be Yoruba speaking areas thus it was suggested to be pulled out of the Northern Region were it happened to be administered and be part of the Western region. However, at the end, the status quo was maintained as the areas remained in the Northern Region. Thus, the creation of three regions as centres of authority in their own right was completed.

With the provision made in the Macpherson Constitution under the Ibadan General Conference that the stage was set for the establishment of regional parliaments. Indeed, the Macpherson Constitution happened to be the brain work of the General Conference, and it ended up in transforming the regions into more powerful centres of executive and legislative units of government. It gave more powers to the regions. The regions were transformed from administrative units as provided under the Richards Constitution, to centres of political power in their own right. In each region there was the provision for the office of premier who happened to

be the head of a region vested with executive powers, as well as regional ministers and parliaments who were given absolute powers in the implementation of policies that affected the regions.

Also, in order to accentuate the existence of regionalism, the legislators at the centre were to come from the three regions. This is significant in ensuring that the legislators represented the interest of their regions and the people of the regions, instead of the representing the interest of the generality of the people. And this was backed up in practice as the allocation to each region was and to the central parliament at that time. This was why it was recommended that the Central House of Assembly consisted of a president, six ex-officio members, one hundred and thirty-six (136) members to be elected from the regions to the centre; and it was in the discretion of the governor to appoint members to committees not adequately represented in the House of assembly. What is clear is that it was a move towards the tripartite division of Nigeria based on regional interest.

The breakdown of the representation of the 136 members from the regional parliament to the centre is as follows: sixty-eight (68) of the members were to be elected from the Northern Regional Parliament to the centre, thirty-four (34) representatives were to come from the Western House Parliament and thirty four (34) were to come from the Eastern Region to the centre. Indeed, the representation to the Central legislature was recommended to come from the Regional Parliament during the conference. The Northern Region recommended that the number of representations from the region to the House of Representatives should be based on population, which happened to double that of the West and East. While the other regions favoured equal representation.

However, the representation was made based on the size of population in each region. This was why the number from the Northern region was equal to that of the East and Western Regions put together. A move opposed by the Western and Eastern Regions, but was later accepted as part of the recommendations. And also, allocation of resources was base size of the population. The division of the three regional parliaments and shouldered with the responsibility of producing representations from the region to the centre was nothing short of creating a path towards implanting disharmony, rivalry and competition between the three regions. Consequently, people began to see themselves as distinct and separate with others from other regions. A process which was

designed to accentuate the division of the country along regional lines and creation of regional identities. What is clear is that, regional interest superseded national interest at the Ibadan general Conference

It was at the Ibadan Conference that election was made an indirect system of choosing representatives through the employment of electoral colleges for the whole territory. On the pretext that only a negligible percentage of the population had the experience of voting, and had an understanding of the nature and operation of a British Parliament. Therefore, the electoral college involved different tiers starting at method was carried out at the village and town level who will successively through a formal gathering elect people to represent them at the division or provincial level. This was done in the absence of local party branches at some village. It was set up in order to prevent non-indigenous people from emerging into elected position from the villages. It was made difficult for a non-indigene to be elected at the primaries of the Electoral College. Therefore, the Electoral College made it difficult for foreigners to contest election outside their regions. It was an attempt to make the people at the grass root to choose people amongst them to rule, and prevent the emergence of educated elite in the various political offices.

The sad reality of the matter is that, the General Conference laid the foundation of the Macpherson Constitution and that constitution made no provision for parties to nominate their candidates. Therefore, the only option left was for the parties to become regionally based. The Electoral College has not represented the will of the voter; in fact, the will of the voter to elect people directly to represent them has been truncated. The Electoral College was a system opposed as undemocratic, and yet despite the opposition it was recommended for the whole territory. Therefore, any one contesting into any political position had the opportunity to do so only through the undemocratic form. The only option left for the political parties to participate in the election was to become regionally based. Thus, it was one of the ways through which the Ibadan Conference of 1950 entrenched regionalist politics in Nigeria.

The entrenchment of regionalist politics in the General Conference, which shaped the 1951 Macpherson Constitution in Nigeria, took a clear-cut form, when it became obvious that contesting and winning election has become an affair orchestrated to hold on regional basis, not national interest. Therefore, in order to win election, it was necessary

to form regionally based political parties in the West and North. This was why the Action Group (AG) in April 1951, it was formerly a Yoruba Cultural Group called *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* formed in 1945 for the enlightenment and well being of people of Yoruba descent. It was turned into a political party due to the provisions of the Macpherson Constitution which the Ibadan Conference championed, that only a Yoruba political party could win election in the Western Region. Nnoli argued "AG was born to exploit this new constitutional development; the new party was formed under the prevailing condition in the country the certain avenue to political power was through regional political party." Thus, during that period regions were given authority as centres of political powers. As such the Action Group was established to win election in the Western Region. Udoma argued that the "AG under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Samuel Akintola, Anthony Enahoro for the purpose of General election the party concentrated in the western region. In fact, it was originally a pan Yoruba cultural movement." In the same vein, the Northern Peoples' Congress NPC was formed in October, 1951, formed from a cultural organization that was regionally based called *Jamiyyar Mutanen Arewa*. The NPC was formed as a political party to exploit the provisions of the Macpherson Constitution in the Northern region in competition a rival party the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), in a bid to dominate the politics of the region.

It is a fact that the AG and NPC were formed to win election in their respective regions due to the provisions made in the Macpherson Constitution. Prior to the Ibadan General Conference there was no political party apart from the NCNC which was more like a national organisation than a political party. This was why Udo Udoma argued that "Nothing appears to have been heard of the existence of any political party nor, if any existed by the role played by it during the introduction of Macpherson Constitution in 1950." It is wrong to assume there was no political party before 1951 in Nigeria; after all, there was the existence of NNDP and NCNC. What is clear is that before that period partisan politics was almost unknown in Nigeria until the entry of NCNC into the political arena.

Indeed, it was in the 1951 General election that the regionalist politics became manifest in Nigeria. The political parties NCNC, AG, NPC came to compete extensively amongst themselves to contest election during the Nigeria-wide election into the regions, in 1951. Though there was no manifest restriction on any party to contest election in any part of the territory during the period in question. NCNC was

the only party that had a national outlook and tried to contest election in all the regions. In the Western region, out of 80 seats in the regional parliament the NCNC won 35 seats, and the AG despite being a regional party ended up with only 29. However, AG was not ready to concede defeat that was why it deemed it fit to forge alliance with smaller parties and at the end of the day the alliance resulted in securing 16 seats and it became a major party with 45 seats, as against NCNC 35 seats in the Western Region. This was how AG dominated the politics of the Western Region. Similarly, in the Northern Region the NCNC formed alliance with NEPU in order to win election in the region, and despite the effort put to it, they were few seats and NPC became the dominant party in the Northern Region.

The emergence of AG and NPC as regionally based parties sowed the seed of regionalist and regionalist politics in Nigeria. This development consequently frustrated the development of nationalist politics in Nigeria. This is so because Nnamdi Azikwe was frustrated out of bid of implanting nationalist politics, as he ended up forming opposition in the Western Region and without any hope of NCNC winning in the Northern Region, then the only option he had was to renege and form majority in the Eastern Region. The NCNC was transformed into regionalists' party and Azikwe into a regional politician. Therefore, during that period there was the emergence of regionalist politics where there was struggle between the three regions for the control of power and resources, instead of the emergence of a national front to fight for self independence. The regions came to appear as distinct units, where rivalry became the watch word.

It should also be noted that, the emergence of the NPC, AG and NCNC in the North, West and East respectively as regionally based parties was the outcome of implanting the Electoral College system of election. As a result of the Electoral College indigenes came to contest the election as sons of the soil. Oluwole Odumosu argued:

As a result of the General Conference the election of 1951, the Eastern, northern and western Regions had been controlled by NCNC, NPC and AG respectively, since election to House of representation was based on electoral system. It was for each party to choose the representation of its own region.

The discussion above has depicted the origin and development of regionalist politics, and we are right to argue that the Ibadan General Conference of January 1950 entrenched regionalists' politics in Nigeria. In fact, the representation and discussions at the General Conference reflect division along

regional lines whereby regional interests were promoted, propagated and implanted. It is clear that, the people who went there championed regionalist politics and divide the territory along regional lines and south and north politics became preminent. The conference would have been of an opportunity to forge Nigerian unity and form a nationalist front in the political atmosphere of Nigeria considering the wide representation at the village, town, provinces, and up to the general conference. If all the conferences organized had advocated for national unity there would have been a change in the content of the General Conference and the unity of Nigeria would have been an utmost priority. Politics would not have been on regional basis; rather, any politician could contest for election and be voted for in any part of the country. This would have minimised the disunity, distrust, and division which later came to define politics in Nigeria after 1951.

The people even came to align themselves as part of their regions, that was why the 'northerner' 'southerner' dichotomy became manifest even after political independence in 1960, in Nigeria. Udoma argued "Had this evolutionary process and devolution of powers from the centre to the regions been pursued normally and naturally by further breaking up of the so-called autonomous regions...", the unity of Nigeria was certain and guaranteed.

Also, Odumosu further argued on the General Conference and its role of entrenching regionalist politics that:

For the first time the North, East and West sat together to frame a new constitution for 'one Nigeria'. Many issues were addressed which came to plague the unity of Nigeria. The atmosphere of the conference was characterised by promised sectional interest and mutual distrust, particularly between the north and the south, but every speaker made a speech on the need for Nigerian unity.

Therefore, the discussions, deliberations and recommendations at the January Ibadan General Conference in all ramifications were centred on propagating regionalist politics in Nigeria. The Conference propagated the establishment of regional powers inculcated based on regionalist politics. However, it was a move which did not go unchecked as some minority members opposed the recommendations of the conference by opposing the division of Nigeria into North, East and West but into more states based on ethnic groupings. Advocated universal adult suffrage, whereby all adults could vote, as an indication that all people were equal, without any form of discrimination and segregation.

The first minority report was signed by only two people. Later representatives from the Eastern Region opposed the recommendation of the North that only adults of 25 years with 3 years residence in the North could contest an election in the Northern Region. This was seen as a move to prevent people from other areas from contesting for election in the north. However, the general opinion of member at the conference superseded the opposition of the minority as electoral system of election and political agile regions were entrenched and regionalists' politics manifested.

3. Conclusion

Ibadan General Conference of January, 1950, was an avenue used to decide the developments that later led to division and the emergence of regionalist politics in Nigeria. During the General Conference that prelude the Macpherson Constitution, the regions were transformed from administrative units created under the Richard Constitution of 1946, to more centres of political powers. The irony of it all is that, the General Conference was a medium to revise the Richards Constitution, criticised as deficient in the views and opinions of Nigerians. The Ibadan General Conference instead of utilising the opportunity to decide on a unified Nigeria, turned out that it was a forum used to entrench regionalists politics as it ushered in the emergence of Western, Northern and Eastern Regions with executive and parliamentary powers. In fact, the 1951 Nigeria-wide election into the regions saw virile competition between the regions for the control of power instead of the emergence of a united Nigeria. Thus, the Ibadan General Conference was a medium used to entrench regionalist politics in Nigeria.

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