

CHAPTER 8

THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA

Objectives

After studying this chapter, students should be able to:

- define the concept of nationalism;
- discuss the origin of nationalism;
- discuss the demands of the early nationalist leaders;
- examine the strategies adopted by the early nationalist.

Introduction

The British occupation of Nigeria did not happen without resistance and opposition from Nigerians. The resistance to the British administration in the pre-colonial and colonial era came mainly from the traditional chiefs and more recently Nigeria elites and indigenous businessman. They fought hard against all odds to keep the Europeans away from dominating their lands. They wanted to be free to make their choices and decide their own future.

However, in spite of these resistances, the British still subdued the resistance and established their authority, forcing many traditional rulers to exile and those who compromised became their allies in the colonial administration.

By 1920, the struggle took a different dimension when few educated Nigerians who saw themselves not as Igbo, Yoruba, Efik or Igala but as Nigerians fought with their intellectual powers in order to free Nigerians from all forms of colonial oppression and injustices. These were the nationalists who aggressively fought the colonial authority till they finally got independence in 1960.

8.1 What is Nationalism?

The term Nationalism has been defined by various scholars in different ways but they express one thing “the love for one’s nation” and for desire for its growth and development as a nation.

Nationalism can also be defined as the strong desire by a group of people of the same race, language and culture to form an independent country. It can also be defined as the strong feeling or sense of attachment or love for one’s own country and the strong belief that it is going to be greater and better than any other country.

Nationalism could also be defined as a very strong desire, devotion for one’s own country’s development as a nation. It can also be seen in the light of any practical and conscious efforts made or given to one’s country for its development and survival as a nation. Whichever way, nationalism expresses the “deep love for one’s country’s survival”.

8.2 Origin of Nationalism

The emergence of nationalism in Nigeria predates the Britain colonial rule. It is as a result of unintended event which occurred since Nigeria's contact with the British Ruler. Before the colonial period, nationalist movement were seen in the form of protest and grievances against imperialism and British conquest while, during the colonial period it was not only seen as grievances but as a means which could create an opportunity fro Nigeria's Independence.

Therefore, the earliest form of nationalism is known as traditional nationalism while the protest movements organized by Nigeria's educated elites is known as modern nationalism especially in the 1940's. The traditional nationalism involves movements of resistance to the initial British penetration and occupation, provoked by the undue imposition or systems of foreign socio-political threats and also an outlet for the natives expression of their frustration produced by the cultural change. Modern Nationalism includes all the activities and organizational development aimed at attaining self-government and independence of Nigeria.

However, Nigerian nationalism like else took different form until it matured. The European encroachment, conquest and proclamation of its colony and protectorates witnessed so many revolts and protests in all parts of Nigeria expressing their national sentiments against British domination. The colonial policies of indirect rule, the amalgamation of 1914 were greeted with wild protests and also the colonial government introduction of new economic, political and social reforms aimed at continuous exploitation of Nigeria resources for the benefit of the British colonial government also received protests and wild condemnation.

Importantly, it was after the first world war that nationalism gained more momentum and effected the colonized people or become more sensitive whereas before this period it was restricted to ethnic groups, provinces and Lagos but during and after the second world war a combination of forces both internal and external made the nationalist to more aggressive from 1940's until the attainment of independence in 1960.

8.3 The Early Phase of Nationalism and Resistance Movements

The early resistance and protest movements in Nigeria began with the British conquest, occupation and consolidation. Indigenous Nigeria's traditional chiefs such as King Jaja of Opobo, Nana Olomu of Itsekiri, Oba Ovonramwen of Benin and the Caliph Attahiru Ahmadu of Sokoto were leaders who resisted and refused to surrender their land to the British colonial domination.

In the South East, the people resisted and protested against the institutionalization of the Warrant Chief systems and their powers.

The missionary Christians churches played prominent roles towards the Nationalist movement through the “provision of western education and civilization”. Many Nigerian leaders of note went through their education and it was through this means that they got to know the implications or some of the obnoxious and evil policies of the British colonial rule and right against it. Whereas some Christian missionary churches also provided useful information to their home country for perfection

against some traditional rulers that opposed them. For instance, the deposition of King Kosoko of Lagos in 1852 was partly due to pressure from missionaries at Abeokuta who found his slave trading activities inimical to their interest and to those of European legitimate trade.

Importantly, the missionaries established primary and post primary schools, Teacher Training Colleges through which Nigerian Nationalist leaders emerged, who championed the cause for the independence of Nigeria. And also, by 1920, there were about fourteen churches controlled by Africans in Nigeria. These local churches were used instrument by Africans, Nigerians inclusive to protest the indigenous cultures and to fight against the corroding influence of the foreign missionaries on their traditional institutions. Therefore, Christianity was seen as a binding force for most Nigerian nationalist leaders balance. It provided a means of bringing people of various tribes in Nigeria together for one common purpose.

8.4 The Strategies of the Nationalist Movement and Resistance after the Second World War

The end of the Second World War stimulated further militant aggressive nationalist movement across the various regions now known as Nigeria. The 19th century kind of traditional nationalism failed to achieve desired results expected of them partly because majority of those traditional nationalist agitators were illiterates. However, the return of Nigerian elites from Europe who had acquired the necessary kind of exposure and education mostly, from the Southern Nigeria added more impetus to the rise of militant nationalism with greater liberty and freedom to form and organize political parties and involve in political activities too. For example, H. O. Davies, Dr Nnamdi Azikwe and Dr Koto Abayomi, etc.

The nationalist made effective use of the press as a veritable instrument to fight their cause and spread their message across. For example, the Lagos weekly Record founded by John Payne Jackson, West African Dr Nnamdi Azikwe, the Lagos Daily News found by Dr Herbert Macaulay including the Nigerian pioneer. All these Newspaper in one way or the other helped the nationalist in fighting the colonial authority.

Dr Herbert Macaulay founded the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923. It was through his political party that he and Egerton-Shsyngle repeatedly won elective positions in Lagos legislative council. Also, in 1934, the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was founded by Ernest Ikoto, Samuel Akinsanya and Dr J. C. Vangham. The organization demanded for free education for all Nigerians and adults suffrage, by 1937 great Nigerian leaders like Dr Nnamdi Azikwe and J. O. Davies had joined the organization.

Also, in 1920, another political platform was formed known as the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA). This political organization was formed in Accra, Ghana by notable African Nationalist Agitators like John Casely Hayford and Dr Akinwande Savage. One of the cardinal objectives of the party is to demand for legislative council for each of the British West

African territories, insisting on the principle of elective representation and the stoppage of racial discrimination in the civil service and other areas of human life.

However, after the formation of NCBWA, the group sent a powerful delegation to London to demand for the above objectives with the colonial office. Their demands were not accepted nor appreciated because some governor of the West African region felt relegated and so the Governor of Nigeria described the delegated as “a group of self-appointed, self-selected educated gentlemen who staged themselves as the National Congress of British West Africa”.

With the upcoming Richard's Constitution, the Nigerian Youth Association had the opportunity to express themselves on some crucial concern about the constitution. By this time, the National Youth Movement had become weak due to political situation then, it was within this period that the King's College Branch of the Nigerian Student Union asked the political leaders to form another strong group in order to promote the interest of Nigerian. The Nigerian National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) was formed in 1944, in response to their demands. This political Association (NCNC) was founded by Herbert Macaulay and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, etc fight the Richard Constitution for the reasons that the constitution does not have the consent of Nigerians; it was an imposition since the makers never consulted Nigerians. Secondly, there were elements of indirect rule in the constitution because the Richard's constitution brought back to regional council without legislative powers and thirdly, the Nigerian Nationalist did not see any need why the Northern region should be treated specially, by swap them a respond council and a house of Chiefs.

Therefore, with the coming of a Governor General, McPherson in Nigeria, he brought these crucial issues for public discuss. After the constitutional matters were nationally discussed in 1951, Macpherson constitution replaced the federal structure of Nigeria as a solution for the Unity of Nigeria. In 1954, the Lyttleton constitution equally replaced the Richard Constitution. The constitution provided three regional government for Nigerians with a legislative assembly made up of Hose of Chiefs and a House of Assembly, all having legislative powers. The region is to be headed by a premier. This constitution specified the regional junction and the federal junction with the birth of the Lyttleton constitution, the eastern region and the western region asked for self-government.

8.5 The Road to Independence

Therefore, with the call for self-government, the Nigerian Nationalist leaders were invited to another constitutional conference in London. They considered issues bordering on Revenue allocation, state creation, the status of Lagos and adjustment of boundary. The meeting did not so as agreed because the Nigerian Nationalist had already agree on independence. There was rivalry and great animosity among themselves due to mistrust. However, the fact that, the British Government had decided to grant Nigerian independence, they never disappoint or reneged on their promise. While, the Northern region were not properly prepared for self-government due to lack of qualified personalities from their regions, not so fro the western and eastern region, who really benefitted from the Western education.

Therefore on October 1, 1960, Nigerian got her independence from Britain. Nigeria before a representation of British since 1960 until in 1963, when Nigeria became a Republic with an indigenous president. The new state of affair in Nigeria showed indeed, the importance of western education and the preparation and seriousness of Nigerian nationalist movement to self-government.

Summary

- Nation is a strong devotion by a group of people with common cultural identity to form a country.
- Nationalist moment predates the colonial period which arose due to certain unintended and unplanned development since Nigeria came under British rule, aimed at expressing their grievances against the British imperialism.
- The Nationalist leaders demanded that they be allowed to choose, decide what they want and be allowed to have control of their lands without any interferences from the imperial powers.
- The Nigerian Nationalist movement adopted various strategies to express their views through the effective use of the medium, political parties, trade unions and the churches.

Revision Questions

Objectives

1. Nationalism can be defined as _____.
 - A. the expression of one's feelings
 - B. the measurement of a nation's wealth
 - C. the strong belief for one's of nation
 - D. the process of negotiations
2. The NCNC was formed in _____.
 - A. 1911
 - B. 1811
 - C. 1944
 - D. 1844
3. Who founded the West African pilot?
 - A. Dr Nnamdi Ezikel
 - B. Dr Edele Azikiwe
 - C. Dr Nnamdi Azikwe
 - D. H. O. Davies
4. When was the NCBWA formed?
 - A. 1820
 - B. 1720
 - C. 1520
 - D. 1920

5. _____ founded the NNDP.
- A. Dr Herbert Macaulay
 - B. Dr Herbert Macpherson
 - C. Dr Herbert Macauthony
 - D. Dr Herbert Macoley
6. In which country was the NCBWA formed?
- A. Nigeria
 - B. Ghana
 - C. Ethiopia
 - D. Ghandi
7. In which year was the Macpherson constitution made?
- A. 1920
 - B. 1851
 - C. 1951
 - D. 1952
8. Nigeria became a Republic in _____
- A. 1963
 - B. 1863
 - C. 1763
 - D. 1663
9. When was King Kosoko of Lagos deposed?
- A. 1852
 - B. 1752
 - C. 1352
 - D. 1952
10. Why did Nigerians reject the Richard Constitution?
- A. It was made by a whiteman.
 - B. It lack general praise.
 - C. It did not have the Nigerian consent.
 - D. It did not have signature of the Governor – General.

Essay Questions

1. Define the concept of Nationalism.
2. Discuss how nationalism started during the early period.
3. Explain three methods adopted by the Nigerian Nationalist to drive home their demands for self-government.
4. Identify and explain any two strategies adopted by the Nigerian Nationalist leaders.
5. What were the reasons for the North's rejection of the motion for self-government?