



OPERATION OF COLONIAL INDIRECT RULE POLICY AND POLITICAL-SOCIAL VICES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The colonial policy of indirect rule in Nigeria was a system of administration through which the British governed by utilizing indigenous rulers as intermediaries rule over the colony. The system was developed and popularized by Lord Frederick Lugard in the early 20th century. The system aimed at reducing the cost of colonial governance, maintaining law and order, and ensuring effective control with minimal British personnel. This research is set to assess the colonial indirect rule in Nigeria. The research is qualitative in nature sourcing information from the journal papers, textbooks and internet materials. Data was analyzed thematically and textual analysis is also utilized. The research revolves around the era of the pre-colonial Nigerian society, colonial, indirect rule system and post Nigerian colonial society. From the research findings, it was deduced that, centralized emirate structures already existed in the Northern and Western Nigeria which make indirect rule relatively successful, as it blended easily with the pre-colonial Islamic administrative system. However, in the South, particularly among the decentralized Igbo communities, the policy faced major challenges. The imposition of warrant chiefs and the distortion of traditional governance, exemplified by the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. Indirect rule, therefore, represented both an instrument of colonial convenience and a source of political and social tension. Its legacy remains significant in shaping Nigeria's administrative framework, local governance, and post-colonial state formation. Finally, the research recommends that, policy makers with the public domains should always consider indigenous values, culture and systems when designing development policies to avert the Abia Women's Riot of 1929 on the imposition of tax.

Key words: Colonialism, Indirect rule, Political and Social-vices, Traditional ruler, and Emir

Introduction

Colonial indirect rule in Nigeria refers to the administrative system introduced by the British colonial government under Lord Frederick Lugard during their colonial conquest and consolidation of the territory in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rather than ruling directly through British officials, the colonial government relied on existing traditional rulers and indigenous political institutions to implement its policies and maintain order. It was a system where the British governed through existing traditional rulers and indigenous political institutions, rather than introducing an entirely foreign administrative structure. This approach was adopted primarily to reduce the cost of

governance and to ensure effective control over vast and culturally diverse territories with limited British manpower. (Usman, Umar, & Abubakar, 2016).

The roots of indirect rule can be traced to Lord Frederick Lugard, who first experimented with the system in Northern Nigeria after the conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903. The North already had a well-structured system of emirate administration under Islamic law, which made it relatively easy for the British to adapt existing institutions for colonial purposes. Traditional rulers, such as emirs, were retained as intermediaries but made accountable to British residents and district officers. (Usman, et al, 2016)

The policy of indirect rule was perceived success in the North and West, the system was gradually extended to Southern Nigeria, but, its application in the South was more problematic because the Igbo and some other groups lacked centralized political authority comparable to the emirates. This forced the British to create warrant chiefs, an artificial arrangement that later led to social resistance, such as the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. Therefore, the background of indirect rule in Nigeria reflects both the pragmatic needs of the colonial state and the varying levels of compatibility between British administrative ideals and indigenous political structures. It became the hallmark of British colonial policy and significantly shaped Nigeria's political, social, and administrative development. (Dalhatu, 2016).

Nevertheless, the arising issues is that, policy makers tends to have neglect the customs, values and traditions of their community before implementing certain policies unlike how the colonialists tactically consider and wisely adopt the indirect rule policy in favour of the people's tradition and culture most especially in the North and Western part of the country. Another problem is how the system succeeded in dividing the country into different region having negative impact on both religious and ethnicity. Therefore, the aim of this study is to assess the impact of the indirect rule policy on political system and to examine why indirect rule succeeded in the North and Western oarts of Nigeria and fails in the southern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the operation of the colonial indirect rule in Nigeria. While the specific objectives are:

- i. To assess the impact of indirect rule on Nigerian political system,
- ii. To examine why indirect rule system succeeded in the North and Western region,
- iii. To evaluate why indirect rule system failed in the Southern region of Nigeria.

Methodology

The research is qualitative in nature that sources information from the journal papers, textbooks, magazine, newspapers and internet materials. The research inter-woven around the pre-colonial, colonial and indirect rule in Nigeria.

Conceptual Issues

A Chief: A chief is an acknowledged traditional leader or paramount ruler of his community. The community also sees him as a natural ruler. The status of the chief varies from one community to another based on the importance attached to the traditional rulership in the community from historical antecedence or experience. A chief in Nigeria is a person of integrity with paramount

authority over wide span territory is called an Emir, Oba, Obi etc. This paramount chief has a number of lesser chiefs who are responsible to him. Similarly, the status of the lesser chiefs depends on the level of their respective span of control, or the responsibilities vested on them by the paramount leader. Dalhatu, 2023)

Colonialism: Colonialism is a relationship between an indigenous majority and a minority of foreign invaders where fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of their interests that are often defined in distant metropolis. Colonialism in Africa is the events or phenomenon that took place between 1800-1960s. It is a phenomenon which is part and parcel of another phenomenon called, imperialism. Colonialism is a direct form of imperialism, is a system of political, economic, social, and cultural domination in which a more powerful country (the colonists) take control of another territory and its people, usually by force or coercion. The colonizing power imposes its authority, exploits the resources of the colony, and often seeks to reshape the local society to serve its own interests. Dalhatu, 2023)

Indirect rule: Indirect rule is a colonial administrative system in which a foreign power governs its colony through existing traditional rulers and indigenous institutions rather than establishing a wholly new system of administration. In Nigeria, under British rule, indirect rule meant that the British colonial government used local chiefs, emirs, and traditional councils to implement colonial policies, collect taxes, maintain law and order, and administer justice, while still being supervised by British officials.

Policy: A policy is a set of principles, rules, guidelines, or courses of action adopted by an individuals, group, organization, or government to guide decisions and achieve specific goals. It serves as a framework for consistent decision – making and problem – solving in particular areas of activity. (Dalhatu, 2016)

Political Social-Vices

Political social-vices refer to immoral, unethical, and corrupt practices that occur within the political system and society, often undermining good governance, democracy, justice, and national development. They are negative behaviours and attitudes that distort political processes, weaken institutions, and erode public trust in government.

Emir: An Emir is a traditional ruler and political leader in parts of West Africa, North Africa, and the middle East, particularly in Islamic societies. The terms comes from the Arabic word “Amir”, meaning commander, prince. In Nigeria, the Emir is the head of an emirate, a traditional Islamic state that developed mainly in Northern Nigeria after the 19th century Sokoto Jihad led by Usman Dan Fodio. Emirs held both political and religious authority. They governed territories, enforced Islamic law (sharia), collected taxes, and acted as spiritual leaders of their communities. During British colonial rule, the British retained the emirs under the system of indirect rule, using them as intermediaries to implement colonial policies while maintaining their traditional prestige. (Usman, et al, 2016).

Traditional Rulers:

A traditional ruler is a community leader who holds authority based on customs, traditions, and cultural heritage rather than modern constitutional or electoral processes. Traditional rulers derive their legitimacy from the history, values, and beliefs of their people, and they often serve as custodians of culture, mediators, and symbols of unity.

Theoretical Framework

Indirect Rule Policy: This study is anchored with Indirect Rule Policy theory was propounded and popularized by Lord Frederick Lugard in the early 20th century. This theory was rooted in the idea of ruling a society or state through traditional rulers and existing indigenous institutions rather than introducing entirely new administrative structures. The crux of this theory emphasize that ruling or administering a community should be through existing traditional rulers and indigenous institutions under the supervision of British colonial officials, rather than direct administration by Europeans. This prevails through the utilization of the traditional authorities, supervision under the British officials, integration of customs and laws, cost-effective governance and legitimacy of rule. In essence, the crux of indirect rule theory was to govern Nigerians through their own rulers while ensuring that ultimate power rested with the British colonial government.

Criticisms of Indirect Rule Policy

The main criticisms of the indirect rule policy are:

- i. The policy strengthened autocracy in the North. It preserved and even empowered the emirate system, making emirs more autocratic since they ruled with British backing and were no longer accountable to their people.
- ii. It failed in acephalous societies, among the Igbo and other stateless groups, where there were no centralized rulers, the British created "Warrant Chiefs". These chiefs lacked legitimacy and sparked resistance (e.g., Aba Women's Riot of 1929).
- iii. The policy also reinforced regional, ethnic, and religious differences, since the system worked differently in the North, West, and East, laying a foundation for future disunity in Nigeria.
- iv. It discourage the practice of modern democratic institutions and civic participation since it is rulling through traditional rulers.
- v. The indirect rule policy was essentially a tool for economic exploitation and political control, with the British making the final decisions.
- vi. The policy promoted traditional structures, discouraging modernization, social mobility, and reforms in education, governance and economy.
- vii. Conflicts often arose between traditional rulers and colonial officials over whose orders should be obeyed.

Traditional Institutions and Local Governments during Pre-Colonial and Colonial Era

The administration of local areas or communities before the advent of colonial rule was totally left in the hands of traditional rulers. In fact, the paramount chief controlled his territory which was the sovereign political entity. An Emir in the north for instance, was recognized as the only sovereign authority in his domain. The Emir and his council were solely responsible for executive, legislative and judicial functions. Traditional institutions-initiated policies and oversaw the implementation of same. (Stephen, 2012).

Although legislations were found in the Holy Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah, the Emir with some reputable Islamic scholars (Sheiks) decided things which were not found in the Holy Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah. In the judicial aspect, the traditional council was firmly in control. The Alkali's court was more or less under the emirate council. the Emir also reserved the right of prerogative of mercy (i.e can pardon offenders where necessary). The foregoing situation was almost the same in the

Yoruba land except for the existence of checks and balances which made the chiefs not to be absolute or supreme rulers. But the situation was different in the Igbo land where the traditional institution was not known. Government was done through certain democratic principles even though age was respected. (Adegbite, 1979).

In the era of colonial rule, the power of the chiefs, were restricted and they became subordinated to the British Commissioners, Resident and District Officers under the political system called Indirect Rule (Adegbite, 1979). Although, the chiefs were seen as lords or masters in the eyes of their subjects, Adegbite added that, “in strict law, they had become the mere agents of the colonial authority who could take away or vary any of their powers”. The powers of the traditional institutions in government were drastically reduced. That is, their involvement in government had become indirect. Their power to make and implement rule and that of adjudication were overseen by the colonial administration. (Stephen, 2012).

During the period of Sir Donald Cameron, he enacted the Native Authority Ordinance which introduced three types of native authorities. They were the one made up of the chiefs, the chiefs in conjunction with the council and the council only – chiefs in – council, chiefs and council and council only, respectively. The north worked favourably under the indirect rule system (Native Authority System).

However, at the center, the chiefs lost their relevance in the scheme of affairs. At the regional level, House of chiefs were created in both the North and the West. In the North, the House was quite powerful with authority equal to that of the elected House of Assembly, whereas in the West, the elected House of Assembly was more powerful than the House of Chiefs. (Obiajulu & Obi, 2003).

The Pre-Colonial Hausa/Fulani Political System of Government

The Hausa/Fulani states which were hitherto scattered and with loose administrative system, were brought together under a centralized Fulani administration through the “Holy War” waged by Usman Danfodio in 1804. The traditional political system was based on the emirate system. The whole of the empire was divided into two parts: the Eastern Zone with its headquarters at Sokoto, and the Western Zone with the headquarters at Gwandu. The Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Gwandu were the senior rulers who appointed Emirs for the emirates under their jurisdiction. These Emirs acknowledged the overlordship of the Sultan of Sokoto and the Emir of Gwandu and paid allegiance and annual tribute to them. At the emirate level, an Emir could make some appointments but such appointments would have to be approved by the senior rulers. The traditional political setting was like that of other groups in the Western Sudan where Fulani Jihad and Islamic revolution had impact on the system (NOUN, 2006). Its government therefore was based on the Islamic doctrine. In the words of Robert Levine (1991) cited in Adekunle (2012), the Hausa-Fulani pre-colonial system was a status which strongly favoured qualities of servility, respect for authority, allegiance to the powerful and rejected the qualities of independent achievement, self-reliant action and initiatives. (Usman, et al., 2016).

However, some of the features of Hausa/Fulani Traditional political system are; the system was hierarchically organized and the political authority of the state was highly centralized. The Emir combined both religious, judicial and political functions of the emirate. This signifies that, there was fusion of powers and lack of separation of powers as advocated by Montesquieu. Also, the system had a well organized standing army that defended the emirate against internal and external attack. There

was an effective system of taxation which required every subject to pay tax. Any subject who failed to pay could in extreme cases be sold into slavery. Moreso, the judicial system was based on sharia/Islamic laws to regulate the daily activities of the people. The laws covered a wide range of human interactions and include such aspects as property ownership, divorce, stealing, murder, arson, marriage, adultery etc (Ubaku, 2014).

Meanwhile, the Emir is saddled with the responsibility of making laws on certain issues which were not captured in the Holy Quran and this was done with the help of reputable Islamic scholars for the smooth running of the emirate. However, sharia laws were compulsory for the muslim ummah in the emirates. Again, the powers to make local laws were delegated to the District Heads. In any case, the Emir as the highest authority had the powers to set aside any of such delegated legislations if they conflict with the general interest of his authority system. (Usman, et al., 2016).

The Pre-Colonial Traditional System of the Yorubas

The history of the Yoruba people in the Western part of Nigeria is traced to a common descendant from Oduduwa and common dissension from Ile-Ife (Taiwo, 1982). Oduduwa, the great ancestor of the Yoruba is believed to have migrated from the East and settled at Ile-Ife- Oduduwa had at Ile-Ife seven sons who later became the rulers of seven former Yoruba kingdoms. (Usman, et al., 2016) As time went on, the seat of government moved from Ile-Ife to Oyo, and the rulers of the seven kingdoms regarded the Alaafin of Oyo as their overlord. Oyo Empire was the prominent Yoruba kingdom when the white men arrived Yoruba land. As a result of inter-kingdom wars, the seven kingdoms were similar in organizations, and each of them was ruled by an Oba. All of them still regarded the Ooni of Ife as spiritual head of the Yoruba. All the Obas traced their ancestry through the male or paternal line to Oduduwa. Without this, they would become unacceptable to their people. (Usman, et al., 2016)

In choosing an Oba, the various lineages presented prospective candidates for selection to the king makers who eventually select an Oba. As a rule, the title of an Oba was hereditary (ascription). Thus, care was taken to discourage slaves, non-royal and people of questionable character from ascending to the throne. After the selection and installation of the new Oba, he was secluded from public view. This period was necessary to enhance the learning of the machinery of government. The Oba and the council of chiefs field session in the palace to deliberate on issues concerning the general administration of the kingdoms. Then discussion between the Oba and the Senior Chiefs was by an intermediary who served as a transmitting belt. In politics, this implies democratic centralism (Abubakar, 2010).

The concept was further reflected in the government of the minor towns. There, the Ba'ale was a king's representative and they ruled their towns with their own set of kings. The subordinate towns were compartmentalized into districts, headed by senior chiefs. The senior chiefs at the headquarters provided the link between the Ba'ale and his chiefs, the Oba. The Ba'ale involved other chiefs to settle legal or religious cases. Serious crimes like murders, burglary, etc were tabled before the Oba for settlement. The Ba'ale in his domain informed the Oba of such cases. The final decisions taken were then sent to the Ba'ale for enforcement. This does not imply that excessive power was concentrated in the Oba. He only served as a referee amongst the various contending interests. This means that there existed balance of power amongst the Obas. (Abubakar, 2010).

Balance of power as a concept in the Yoruba traditional political system sought to curb the excessive powers of the Oba over the senior chiefs. The senior chiefs controlled the army which in politics is an instrument of coercion (force). The senior chiefs could force an autocratic Oba to commit suicide by simply opening the symbolic calabash. Also, the Oba could forbid an unpopular senior chief from political participation. The Oba could counter certain advantages on the senior chief to fall in line with the aspiration of the Oba. The senior chiefs could withdraw their presence from the daily deliberation in the palace. When this happens, there is stalemate (confusion). (Usman, et al., 2016)

Pre-Colonial Igbo Traditional Political System

The Igbo people occupy Enugu, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, Anambra states and part of Delta and Rivers states. They are the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria. The origin of the Igbo people suffers from improper documentation. They lived and still live in the Eastern part of Nigeria, and were said to have migrated from the middle East and traced their origin to a single ancestor. However, the traditional political system of Ibo was basically woven around their social and cultural systems. (NOUN 2006). In giving historical accounts of Igbo society, classical social Anthropologists like Meek (1937), Green (1947), Forde and Jones (1950), Uchendu (1965), Isichei (1976) cited in Uchendu (1965) described it as consisting of autonomous villages and village groups ruled by diffused authority without formalized, permanent or hereditary leadership positions. The Igbos can be said to be democratic and egalitarian. They maintained a decentralized and cephalous society. (Uchendu, 1965; Usman, et al, 2016).

The basis of the Ibo traditional political system was the patrilineal family called the Umunna. A group of Umunna stormed the kingdom and a number of kingdoms formed villages. Every family group was headed by an elder who was normally the holder of "Ofo" title. The most characteristics of the Ibo political organization is total absence of kings or rulers. Their political organization is operated basically on family and kingship ties. Each village unit has its own autonomous power in running her internal affairs. In Igbo society except there is a problem affecting the boundaries of the units, no village has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another village. (Ubaku, 2014).

The pre-colonial Igbo society just like any other society in Nigeria had its own political and social interaction and this organization displayed the basic properties or characteristics of a stateless society. The society has the following structure or characteristics. The political system was kingless with no provision for kings, it was decentralized unlike the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba systems that were highly centralized. The power acquisition was based on achieved status rather than ascribed status (inheritance). (Ubaka, 2012).

Colonialism and Colonial Administration in Nigeria

Colonialism began as a result of changes in the mode of production in Europe after the World War II (industrial revolution). The industrial revolution ushered in a new process of production in place of the earlier slave based economy. The quest for the investment of the accumulated capital and the need for raw materials led to the colonization of Africa. Colonialism was introduced into Nigeria and other parts of West African territories as a result of the desire of countries like Great Britain, France and Germany to acquire foreign territories as part of their empires Kohn (2006) described colonialism as the process of European settlement and political control over the rest of the world, including the America, Australia and parts of Africa and Asia. The reasons for the introduction of

colonialism in Nigeria are; economic reason, imposition of foreign culture, compensation for lost territories, search for new markets and investment of surplus capital. (Usman, et al., 2016)

In effects, colonialism was tied up with forced labour. Nigerians were made to work forcefully under a very harsh and unfavourable condition with little or no regards or respect. They were never treated equally with their European counterparts. (Abubakar, 2010).

Colonialism was also tied to the introduction of currencies (colonial money) to the demise of our local monies like cowries, silver, etc. and for any African to get that money, he must work for the whites. The currencies introduced in the African territories were those used by the colonialists back home. It was therefore easy for them to regulate the use and value of the currency as means of maintaining effective control of the African economy (Stephen and Basil, 2012). Consistent with the above was the introduction of cash crops. Farmers were discouraged from producing food crops. Only cash crops production was encouraged for the consumption of European industries. Most Africans that produced food crop were automatically fined. The effects of cash crop consumption to our economy were the total fall in the production of food and over dependence on foreign food. The introduction of the cash crop system of agriculture completely changed the traditional standards of wealth and status (Dwayne, 1996).

Politically, Africans were denied the opportunity for participating in the political life of their own societies. There was no representative assembly and people were denied the right to vote and be voted for. Decisions were mostly imposed on Africans were not given the required education to enable them come to terms with the realities of their own immediate environment. In fact, colonial education was only aimed at producing clerks, messengers and people that can only differentiate between file "A" and "B". It was never meant to prepare the blacks for greater challenges like that of becoming managers and chief executives in their places of work. According to Stephen and Basil (2012), the poor base of most of the present African states, which has been responsible for their underdevelopment stems from their poor foundation of education laid by the colonialists? Infact, colonial education did not aim at stimulating industrialization and technological development of Africa. (Stephen, 2012).

Colonialism had robbed Africans of their mineral resources like cocoa, rubber, groundnuts etc. it also robbed Africa the opportunity for its industrial growth and development, thereby reducing the continent to a mere dependent and open market for the Europeans. (Kohn, M., 2006). Colonialism equally led to the emergence and institutionalization of classes and class struggle in the socio-economic and political life of the people. These classes include comprador bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, proletariat and the peasant. The African petty bourgeoisie serve as the conveyor belt through which the colonial masters exploited and siphoned the economy of Africa. The British used the system of indirect rule while the French adopted the policy of assimilation. Walter Rodney (1971) opined that colonialism introduced a dichotomy between the centre and the periphery. The periphery nations who are the producers of raw materials are exploited by the centre here known as the west. (Rodney, W., 1972).

Another effect of colonialism was the introduction of neo-colonialism. In essence, independence in most African states does not represent total freedom from foreign rule. It only represents a change from Europeans in white skin to Europeans in black skin. Neo-colonialism is the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress cultivated a petty bourgeoisie class in Africa,

Nigeria inclusive that is interested in the capitalist way of life. As a result, it (this class) has by policies and programmes promoted the country's relationship with the world economy as a junior partner for which she participates in sharing the surpluses generated from the country with international capital (Nkrumah, 1965). According to Abubakar, (2010) though, Nigeria is almost fifty years as an independent country, yet no body questioned issues like inequality between the rich and the poor, capital flight from Nigeria to Europe, repatriation of profits, most especially that of the oil to the America and rigging of election and other political crime. (Nkrumah, K. 1965).

Indirect Rule in Nigeria

After the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, various countries in Europe balkanized the continent of Africa into territories and devised ways of administering them. While the French opted for system of assimilation, the British adopted the indirect rule system (NOUN, 2006). Indirect rule according to Obiajulu and Obi (2003) is "One of the non violent measures adopted by Britain in ruling her African colonies. The system was based on the belief that officials were to be advisers to indigenous rulers ruling the communities" Nwankwo (1992) defined indirect rule as a system of British administration in West Africa aimed at administering the local people through their native rulers called Chiefs while the British officials supervised, directed and instructed on how colonial policies were to be implemented. This fashion of rule which centered on working through African/Nigerian natives and utilizing local social structures became the official policy of British imperialism in all her colonies. This system utilized British officials known as Residents and Commissioners who served as the eyes and ears of the Governor General. (Dwayne, J. S. 1996).

How Indirect Rule Operated in Nigeria

The British colonist make use of the existing traditional rulers in the various communities most especially in the northern of Nigeria. The British appointed the chiefs, emirs, obas, obis, and other traditional authorities as intermediaries. These rulers were empowered to collect taxes, maintain law and order, and enforce colonial directives on behalf of the colonial government on their subjects. More so, the traditional rulers were constituted as Native Authorities. They had responsibilities such as administering customary laws, adjudicating disputes in Native courts and mobilizing labour for colonial projects. Customary courts were recognized, though supervised by colonial officers. They dispensed justice according to local traditions, but in line with colonial interests.

Also, local chiefs were tasked with the responsibility of collecting tax, which became a major source of revenue for the colonial government. In the Northern Nigeria, the Jizya (Islamic tax) system was adopted, while in the South, direct taxation met stiff resistance (e.g., Aba women's Riot of 1929). The British District Officers supervised traditional rulers to ensure compliance with colonial policies. Traditional rulers who resisted colonial control were either dethroned or replaced with "Warrant Chiefs" (as in Eastern Nigeria).

Indirect Rule Regional variation in operation

Indirect Rule worked most effectively in the north because of the pre-existing centralized emirate system under the Sokoto Caliphate. The British retained emirs but subordinated them to the colonial administration. Islamic law was allowed but restricted in cases like capital punishment (which required colonial approval).

In the western region, the Yoruba kingdoms had relatively centralized system (Obas, Chiefs, and councils), which made indirect rule somewhat workable. However, it was less smooth than in the North due to the tradition of checks on monarchs powers.

The the Eastern Nigeria, the Igbos society was largely decentralized, based on village assemblies and age-grades rather than strong kingships. Since there were no natural central rulers, the British created "Warrant Chiefs" local men given authority by colonial warrants. This artificial imposition led to resistance and crises, notably the Abia women's riot (1929).

Why indirect rule succeeded in the North

- i. Existence of a well organized system of traditional administration. On coming to Nigeria, the colonial masters discovered that the Emirate administrative system in the North was well organized. The British therefore decided to administer the North with the existing administrative structures on ground.
- ii. Influence of Islamic religion which enjoined its followers to be subservient to their leaders.
- iii. Non interference with the culture and tradition of the Hausa people by the British officials. Lord Lugard was very careful not to dismantle the religious and socio-cultural institutions of the Hausa Emirate system. Thus, the Emirs ruled as if nothing had changed.
- iv. The educational level of Northerners was quite low and thus the people could not see anything wrong in their subjugation by the colonial masters.
- v. The North at that time had no radical and articulate elites to protest against the colonial domination.
- vi. Existence of a well organized civil service: The British on arrival in the North discovered well organized and committed civil servants that assisted in the implementation of public policies and programmes. The British officials only appointed colonial officials who supervised the Emirs.

Why Indirect Rule Partially Succeeded in Yoruba nation

Since the Yoruba nation had a centralized administrative structure, the British thought it would be easy to introduce the indirect rule system. They (British) erroneously believed that all they would have to do was to use the Oba's influence to achieve their exploitative mission. However, the presence of the principles of check and balance rendered the power of the Oba to be limited. Let us now look at the factors that led to the partial failure of the indirect rule system in Yoruba land:

- i. The fact that there were a great number of educated elites made agitation for freedom from British colonialists rife.
 - ii. Lord Lugard failed to lay effective political structures before introducing the indirect rule system.
 - iii. The introduction of the system disrupted the social and cultural institution of the Yoruba people.
 - iv. The system of checks and balance in the Yoruba kingdom made the Oba not to be powerful.
- The limitations of the Oba posed a very great challenge to the British.

Why indirect Rule failed in Igbo Land

When Lord Lugard was contemplating introducing indirect rule in Igbo landsite was very glaring to join him that the system was going to be a failure. But Lord Lugard was hell-bent on introducing the

system and that resulted to the appointment of Warrant Chiefs. Lets now look at the factors that accounted for the failure of the indirect rule in Igbo land and its consequences.

- i. **Absence of Centralized System of Administrative:** The absence of kings who commanded central authority put the colonial masters in a dilemma since they could not find already established structure to use. They therefore resorted to using Warrant Chiefs.
- ii. **The Appointment of Warrant Chiefs Faced a very Stiff Opposition:** This was because the warrant chiefs became excessively assertive and autocratic. The Warrant Chiefs were ruthless and high-handed in the process of executing their duties. The introduction of tax collection and the way it was handled brought the fear of women paying tax and this led to the Aba women riot of 1929. The riot took some months for the colonial government to suppress and became a historic example of ferminist and anti-colonial protest. (Allen, 1971).
- iii. **Failure of the British to Carry the Educated Elites Along:** The delegation of these elites generated a lot of discontent which eventually led to the collapse of the indirect rule system in Igbo land.

Critical Implication of Indirect Rule

The indirect rule was cheap and cost effective administration, this is because few Europeans were needed since there are existing traditional rulers on ground to handle the affairs of their communities. It also preserved elements of indigenous traditions and institutions. It also gave an appearance of local participation in governance.

However, the weaknesses are that, it is characterized with distorted traditional systems. Many rulers became autocratic under colonial backing. They imposed alian systems where non existed (especially in Igbo land), creating legitimacy crises. Prioritized colonial exploitation over true development. They also encouraged division among ethnic groups, since indirect rule worked differently across regions. Then, it stifled democratic evolution by reinforcing authoritarian rule.

More so, the operation of indirect rule in Nigeria was more of a colonial convenience than a genuine respect for indigenous governance. While it succeeded in the North, it was only partially effective in the West and largely failed in the East. Its legacy includes weakend traditional systems, distorted political structure, and a divided Nigerian polity – a division that continues to affect Nigerian politics today.

The Post-Colonial Nigerian Administration

Post-colonial administration in Nigeria has been marked by cycles of democracy and military dictatorship, struggles with corruption and insecurity, and gradual movement toward democratic stability since 1999. While challenges remain, the endurance of the Fourth Republic signals progress toward more stable governance. The Nigerian governance post-2019 has been characterized by continuity in democratic processes, serious security challenges, economic reforms amid hardships, and a more assertive regional role. While democratic consolidation continues, governance effectiveness remains hampered by corruption, weak institutions and socio-economic inequality. The post 2019 transition to Tinubu, Buhari's era ended with mixed legacies of infrastructural development (railways, roads, airports) but heavy economic strain. Tinubu government introduced bold reforms of fuel subsidy removal in May, 2023, introduce exchange rate unification, and

economic restructuring which sparked hardship but aimed at long term stability (Daily News Paper, June 2, 2023).

The period also indicates that, Nigeria maintained its leadership role in ECOWAS, though internal challenges limited influence. The post 2019 governance saw Nigeria grappling with regional instability (Mali, Niger coups), and sanctions diplomacy.

Also, COVID-19 Pandemic, Nigeria managed the crisis with lockdowns, palliatives, and vaccination campaigns, but poor distribution of relief exposed governance weaknesses. The country also saw rising unemployment, inflation, and high of living worsened hardship, fueling public discontent. The economy also faced severe pressure from falling oil revenues, COVID-19 disruptions, and rising inflation, policies pushed agriculture, ICT, and local manufacturing, but heavy reliance on oil persisted.

Discussion of the Findings

This study focused on colonial indirect rule in Nigeria, indirect rule was the system adopted by the British colonialists to rule their colonists especially Nigeria through their existing traditional rulers. However, the research reveals a number of significant outcomes regarding its introduction, operation, and impact on Nigerian society. Firstly, the research indicates that the system of indirect rule was largely influenced by the British administrative convenience. Faced with vast territories, diverse cultures, and limited manpower, the British adopted this system as a cost-effective method of governance. By ruling through existing traditional rulers, the colonial authorities were able to extend their control without directly interfering in every aspect of local administration. Secondly, it was discovered that indirect rule worked more effectively in the Northern Nigeria than other regions. This was because the region (North) already had a well-organized and centralized political system under the Sokoto Caliphate. The emirate structure provided ready-made administrative machinery, which the British could co-opt to maintain law and order, collect taxes, and enforce colonial policies.

However, findings also reveal that indirect rule faced major difficulties in Southern Nigeria, especially among the Igbo who practiced a decentralized, acephalous system of governance. The British attempt to create warrant chiefs as substitutes for non-existent centralized authorities led to widespread resistance and social unrest, notably the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. This shows that indirect rule was not a one-size-fits-all system and its effectiveness depended on pre-existing political structures. Another important finding is that indirect rule led to the entrenchment of traditional rulers as intermediaries between the people and the colonial government. While this preserved some aspects of indigenous authority. It also distorted traditional systems, since rulers now served colonial interests rather than those of their subjects. This created tensions, eroded legitimacy in some areas, and laid the foundation for conflicts between traditional institutions and modern democratic governance.

Finally, the research highlight that indirect rule had long-lasting consequences on Nigeria's political development. It promoted regionalism, deepened ethnic divisions, and contributed to uneven development across the country. The legacy of this policy can still be observed today in the strong influence of traditional rulers, regional disparities, and the challenges of national integration.

Conclusion

From the study, it is evident that colonial indirect rule system in Nigeria was a system introduced by the British primarily to serve their administrative convenience, reduce the cost of governance, and ensure effective control of a vast and diverse territory. The system thrived in Northern Nigeria where centralized emirate structures already existed, but it was less successful in Southern Nigeria, especially among the Igbo community who had no tradition of centralized authority.

Also, indirect rule preserved some aspects of traditional leadership, it also distorted indigenous institutions by making traditional rulers accountable to colonial authorities rather than to their people. This created social tensions, undermined legitimacy in some regions, and led to resistance movements such as the Aba Women's Riot of 1929.

In addition, the long-term impact of indirect rule has been profound. It entrenched regional and ethnic divisions, promoted uneven development, and left behind a legacy of dual authority between traditional institutions and modern governance. Nevertheless, it also introduced structured administration at the grassroots level, which influenced the shaping of Nigeria's local government system.

In conclusion, colonial indirect rule in Nigeria was both a tool of effective colonial domination and a source of deep socio-political challenges whose legacies continue to shape Nigeria's governance and nation-building efforts today.

Recommendations

- i. Policy makers today should always consider indigenous values, culture and systems when designing development policies to avert the Aba Women's Riot of 1929 on the imposition of taxes.
- ii. Government policies should deliberately promote equitable resource distribution, infrastructure development, and educational opportunities across all regions to reduce historical imbalance.
- iii. Since indirect rule distorted indigenous systems, there is a need to properly define the roles of traditional rulers within Nigeria's democratic framework. They should serve mainly as custodians of culture, peace-builders, and advisers, while modern governance structures handle political authority.
- iv. Reforms are needed to ensure that the role of traditional rulers are more transparent, accountable, and aligned with democratic values, rather than being remnants of colonial manipulation.

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