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Politics, election, and governance: The strain in southern and northern Kaduna relations, 1976-2019

Joshua Anthony Marabs Ph.D, Joel Joseph Gajere & Zakka Soja

Abstract

Southern and Northern Kaduna today is in political crisis. This crisis could be traced to the imposition of the indirect rule system in Northern Nigeria by the British colonialists during the colonisation of the area. The British colonialists appointed local traditional rulers such as Emirs and District Heads to govern Northern Nigeria and especially areas which hitherto were not under the emirate rule. This development did not augur well with the people South of Zaria because they felt that even during the pre-colonial times, they never came under Zaria rule. No wonder with the creation of Kaduna State in 1976, the southern part of the state has always felt left out in the political arithmetic particularly on the question of who becomes the Governor of the State. While the northern part (who are largely adherents of Islamic religion) always maximise the privilege of producing the governor, the southern Christians on the hand always felt dominated, subjugated, and marginalised at every bid of governorship election. In most elections to governorship position, the North and South regions of the state often reach consensus with some concessions mutually won by the two blocs. However, the 2015 election marked a major epoch in the annals of political history of the state, that is, the long standing tradition of political bargains was bridged. This work aims at discussing politics, election, and governance from the perspective of the travail of southern and northern Kaduna relations 1976-2019. The work discussed the nature of political relationship between 1976 to 2015, and also examined the mannerism of election between 2015 to 2019. In doing this, the work interrogated issues from theory of colonialism and was able to explain how the relationship of the northern and southern part of Kaduna over the years, which would appear appeared to be more or less a kind of internal colonialism. The work made use of primary and secondary sources and adopted multi-disciplinary approach to explain the manipulation of politics, election, and governance in Kaduna State.

Keywords: Politics, Election, Governance, Colonialism, Domination

Introduction

Before the creation of Kaduna State in 1976, the political culture of the Nigerian system under the military rule shaped itself with varied animosities. These acrimonies erupted as a result of coup and counter coups of the mid-1960s which resulted in the Nigerian civil war in 1967.¹ Consequently, state creation which ought to have been a national exercise turned out to be an instrument of oppression against the non-privileged groups.² The creation of Kaduna State in 1976 with odd political constituents was perceived by the people of Southern Kaduna. This development was further perceived oppressive by the non-Hausa and non-Fulani people in the state. This is because the Sir. Kashim Ibrahim House (the State Government House) was seen as a house where decisions that concerns them are taken, without adequate consultation from them (the southern part polities). The local elites from Southern Nigeria and other parts of Nigeria whom presupposed to have been the 'saviours' of the political lop-sidedness were largely the victims of the political inequalities in their various state's political conundrum, perhaps, due to their regional identity as southern minorities.³ This trend continued to consume the fabrics of unity amongst the diverse polities in the state. Therefore, the root of political discord was sown and the route to political cohesion turned a mirage and the state political road map became polarised, while discontent set the Muslim north against the Christian south politically.

1 Udida A. Undiyaundeye, "Issues and Cause of the Nigerian Civil War", In Armstrong Matiu Adejo, *The Nigerian Civil War: Forty Years After, What Lesson*, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, Nigeria. 2008, pp.16-17.

2 Akinlola A.G., Leadership and Postcolonial Nigerian Predicament: Transparency International Series No. 1, 1999, pp. 6-10. In 1958, Sir Henry Willink, a colonial official, released the report of his special commission to consider the agitations of ethnic minorities in Nigeria about the future of the new country. These ethnic patriots feared that they would be marginalised by the majorities within the regions that the colonialists have forced them. They wanted self-determination in the form of new states. These agitations started as soon as Sir Hugh Clifford crafted Nigeria's federal constitution in 1922 and Sir Macpherson reinforced it with regional government. The effect of regionalism was that minorities found themselves trapped amongst the big three regions and could find no future of political relevance. This could have been a little inconvenience if colonial administration had not magnified ethnic difference and created a political economy of ethnic competition. The Willink Commission rejected the demand for new states for minorities in the new republic. Instead, it recommended the insertion of a bill of rights in the new constitution and special representation and development intervention for the minorities. By the 1960 Constitution, Nigeria became the first country in Commonwealth Africa to adopt a bill of rights in the language of European Convention on Human Rights. This was a counter-majoritarian device to protect the rights of the minorities to procure their acceptance of a federal Nigerian state. This constitutional design was completed with self-determination of local communities and an administration of justice structure that insulated state justice institutions from the determinism of majoritarian politics.

3 Okello Oculi, "The State and Security in Africa", in George Klay Kieh, Jr, and Pita Ogaba Agbese (ed), *The State in Africa Issues and Perspective*, Kraft Books Limited, 2008, p.105.

Definition of the Geographical Space ‘Southern Kaduna’

The geographical or better still, geo-political entity commonly referred to as ‘Southern Kaduna’ was initially known as ‘Southern Zaria’ during the pre-colonial and colonial period signifying the area south of Zazzau or Zaria Province.⁴ The inhabitants of this area form just a small part of the non-Muslim areas. During the pre-colonial period, some of the peoples of ‘Southern Zaria’ came under the influence of the Hausa and Fulani people. Under colonialism, this area was generally subordinated to the Hausa and Fulani rule of Zaria and Jema’a. Jema’a was a Fulani colony in Southern Zaria which was established by the Fulani Jihad of the 1800s. Jema’a was a vassal state of Zaria.⁵ The preference of some to ‘Southern Kaduna’ than ‘Southern Zaria’ is a reaction against Hausa and Fulani rule.⁶

Southern Kaduna is situated within the central high plains of Northern Nigeria. It is located between longitude 5° and 7° East. It today comprises of Jaba, Kachia, Kajuru, Kagarko, Kaura, Kuru, Lere, Sanga and Zagon Kataf local Government Area of Kaduna State.⁷ It covers a land area of about 26,000km² (10000 sq ml).⁸ The inhabitants of Southern Kaduna are predominantly Christian with a little Muslim and Fulani population.⁹

Southern Kaduna is inhabited by multi-farious ethnic and linguistic groups belonging to the broader Niger-Congo linguistic family. Its main sub-division is the Benue-Congo linguistic group. Based on the linguistic and cultural linkages between and among these groups, some five distinct ethnic linguistic clusters have since become evident. These are the katab and Netzit cluster, the Ham or Jaba cluster, the Adara-Kadara cluster, the Aninka or Ninzam cluster and the conglomeration of several groups in the Saminaka or the Ninani cluster.¹⁰

According to the 2006 National Population Census result, Kaduna State population stood at 6,113,503 million, The nine local government areas of Southern Kaduna put together had a population of 2,131,919, while the seven local government areas of Northern Kaduna had a population of 1,750,478.¹¹

4 Smith M.G, *Government in Zazzau, 1800-1950*, London, Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 1-2.

5 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria: A Social Ethical Analysis of the Colonial and Post-Colonial Society and Politics in Nigeria*, Jos, Challenge Press, 1993.

6 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:.....p.3.

7 James Ibrahim, *Studies in the History, Politics and Cultures of Southern Kaduna Peoples Groups*, Jos, Ladsomas Press Ltd, 1997, p. 1.

8 James Ibrahim, *Studies in the History, Politics and Cultures* p.3.

9 Yohanna Simon, *The National Question: Ethnic Minorities and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, Kgoro, Mikrom Prints, 2002, p. 3.

10 James Ibrahim, *Studies in the History, Politics and Cultures*p.3.

11 Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, ‘Report on the Census 2006 Final Result’,

Historical Background of the Problematic

The Kaduna State was/is made up of both the 'Muslim Groups' and 'Non-Muslim Groups'.¹² The term "the Non-Muslim Groups" refers to the multi-ethnic groups in the southern parts of Northern Nigeria. The term "the Non-Muslim Groups" was used during the colonial period to address these ethnic groups who were non-Muslim.¹³ It is further stated that during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, the Non-Muslim Groups (NMG) were also addressed as "pagans" or "*arna*" (in Hausa). Their religions were traditional African religions. Terms such as "paganism", "heathenism", or "animism" etc, were often used to refer to these religions. The colonial administration permitted Christian missions to carry out their activities among the NMG as opposed to among Muslim groups.¹⁴ The consequences of Christianity was that it granted a better social status and position to the NMG. It gave them a new identity with the Christian world community. The particularistic religious and cultural worldviews of the NMG were replaced by Christian universalism. But in a colonial hierarchical social structure, the NMG had no better status and socio-political position. Even with a new identity in Christianity and western education, they were not fully incorporated into the colonial system, but were kept out from active political participation. The adverse consequences of Christianity upon them was that it was used to stigmatise their inferior status and socio-political role in the colonial system.¹⁵ The Colonial Administration by its policies and attitudes, created a serious socio-political conflict between the Muslim and the NMGs. By permitting Christian missions in the non-Muslim areas, this resulted in the creation of a Christian community, wherever its locus might have been. On the other hand, by protecting and promoting Islam in the Muslim areas, the Colonial Administration was also strengthening the position of the Muslim Community (Umma), where ever, its locus might have been. As a result, the colonialists created two "world" communities under its colonial structure.¹⁶

The Hausa and Fulani as an assimilated group after the Fulani Jihad in the early 1800s, was the largest and the most dominant group of all Muslim groups. Islam integrated the various ethnic groups in pre-colonial Northern

Abuja, Federal Government Printer, 2009.

12 Smith, M.G, *Government in Zazzau 1800-1950*, London, Oxford University Press, 1960; Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria: A Social Ethical Analysis of the Colonial and Post-Colonial Society and Politics in Nigeria*, Jos, Challenge Press, 1993, p.3.

13 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:.....p.3.

14 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:.....p.4.

15 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:.....p.4.

16 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:.....p.4.

Nigeria, who before the arrival of Islam were adherents of traditional African religions just like the NMG who remained outside Islamic influence. In the 1800s, the Fulani Jihad integrated the various Hausa states and other ethnic groups that fell to Muslim Jihadists. This was the first time in Hausa land and beyond that a really political system incorporated many different peoples, traditions and states over a vast area. Sokoto Caliphate was an empire in the sense that it was truly multi-ethnic that is, (Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Yoruba, and many other ethnic groups). As an empire, it required something other than language, tribe, traditional religion or something in particular to hold together. Islam was an ideal, because of its claim to universality, just like Christianity, and because of its internally sanctioned multi-ethnic legal system. Muslim law or sharia law was instituted and Islam became an official religion of the empire. The religious and social life of the people were informed, influenced and guided by the principles of Islam. Islam became the fundamental basis for socio-political values and organisation. It influenced and informed conception of identity, authority and legitimacy.¹⁷

The British colonial philosophy of indirect rule was developed from the experience of ruling British India, even though the concept predated the British experience in India, the British used it extensively there. The Northern Nigerian experience showed that, the Islamic political culture dominated the colonial hierarchical structure. The Muslim groups were considered superior to the NMG, especially the Fulani who were considered as a “caste of rulers”. For this reason, the Fulani were placed over the NMG or the other lesser groups or “native” rulers. Within the colonial hierarchical structure, the Muslim groups were generally placed higher than the “pagans” or the “primitive” tribes (NMG). Thus, Muslim groups had advantages in the colonial history of Nigeria.¹⁸ The prominent Muslim groups that enjoyed colonial situation were the Hausa, Fulani, the Kanuri, the Nupe, the Muslim Yoruba of Ilorin and the Muslim Igbirra.¹⁹

On the final analysis, the reference to Muslim groups and the Hausa and Fulani in particular are used here to show the effect of colonial institutionalisation of ethnic hierarchy and differential treatment of ethnic groups and their long-term consequences for post-colonial Nigeria.²⁰ For example, during the post-colonial era, at the level of political competition,

17 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:.....,p.5.

18 Indirect Rule as introduced by the colonialists was a system of government which recognised, elevated, promoted, and empowered traditional rulers within the Sokoto caliphate. This made it possible for the Northern region to be governed by the British colonisers through the Emirs and local chiefs using existing traditional institutions.

19 Turaki Yusufu, *The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria*:..... ,p.5.

20 Umaru, T.B, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Northern Nigeria: A Socio-Political*, pp. 44-49.

some aspects of political tolerance began to collapse as individuals angle for power and advantage and found that there were no-go areas for them within the new political arrangement. In such political matters, it attached an expiration label on non-Hausa and non-Fulani Muslims on the one hand, and on non-Muslims in general on the other.²¹

Understanding The 1976-2003 Epoch

It is important to note that, the bloc vote pattern of southern Kaduna people that gave victory to Alhaji Balarabe Musa, Alhaji Lawal Kaita, and Alhaji Dabo Lere during the 1976, 1983 and 1990/91 elections respectively sowed the seed of symbiotic political relationship between the north and the south.²² This was because since most of the party flag bearers from the contending political parties in the state were largely from the northern part of the state, the votes from southern part therefore unequivocally become the determining factor for winning the governorship position in the state. This therefore offered the southern political elite the opportunity to bargain for their own 'fair share' of the political position. Mostly, they were considered for exotic positions in the largest bureaucratic organs of the state. Education ministry is one of such big parastatals that housed 60 % of the civil service work force of the state while southern Kaduna people formed the greater chunk in the teaching sector.²³ Perhaps this led to the appointment of most of the southern Kaduna native as commissioners of education or head of service.²⁴ Nevertheless, one cannot discount incidence of discontent among the northern and southern elements. In 1987, ethno-religious skirmish reared its ugly head following a clash among students of Advanced Teacher College, Kafanchan.²⁵ This debacle formed the nucleus of an unhealthy political feelings between the two contending divides of the state (Muslims north and Christian south). Perhaps, some of the actors of the conflict eventually found themselves in government and decided to widen the political azimuth

21 Kukah, M.A, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd, 1993, p.xi

22 Tanghan Kyieluom, "Is this Marginalisation or Slavery"? The Olive Branch Magazine, May, 2008, p.8.

23 Muhammed Shuaibu, "Inter-Ethnic Relations and Political Marginalisation in Kaduna State: A Study of Claims of Domination in the State Civil Service", in *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development*, 2021, <https://zjpd.com.ng>

24 Thomas Mataimaki Maiyashi, An Adara from Southern Kaduna was appointed Commissioner of Education by Balarabe Musa,s administration in 1983. Prof. Andrew Nok was appointed Commissioner for Health and Human Services in July 2015 and later reassigned to the Education Ministry in 2016 following a cabinet reshuffle.

25 Suleiman, M. D, "Southern Kaduna: Democracy and the Struggle for Identity and Independence by Non-Muslim Communities in Northern Nigeria, 1999-2011, 34th AFSAAP Conference, Flinders University, 2011, p.9.

between the north and the south as way of expressing grievances. That is a hypothesis which is beyond the scope of this work.

However, the return to democracy in 1999 ushered in a new epoch that presented a different view on matters of nationhood, and regional advocacy. Sectional sentiments took the lead than collective state political interest. During the subsequent elections, especially from 2003 onward, more agitations and public outcry characterised the southern part of Kaduna state particularly on the quest for power shift from Northern Kaduna to Southern Kaduna.²⁶ This agitation threw a backlash of feelings of animosity from both sides of the state.

2003-2015 Era

In 2003, there was an informal politically motivated understanding between the incumbent governor and the southern politicians on Southern Kaduna support in 2003, with a view of power shift to the southern part in 2007. As would be expected, in 2007, the southern Kaduna agitation for the governorship position became intensified. Governor Mohammed Ahmed Makarfi conceived the idea of supporting the Southern Kaduna candidate – Senator Isaiah Balat as a way of fulfilling the 2003 re-election promise. However, the political pendulum swung against the Southern Kaduna PDP candidate (Sen. Isaiah Balat), another northern candidate (Arc. Namadi Sambo) emerged. Since then, the political route to Sir Kashim Ibrahim house became rough for both the southern political aristocrats and the masses. However, for the first time in the political history of Kaduna state, a non-Hausa Muslim from the southern part gained access to power in 2009. This was consequent upon the unfortunate demise of His Excellency Umaru Musa Yar'Adua which created a vacuum and opened the opportunity that brought His Excellency Goodluck Jonathan as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In the same vein Arc. Namadi Sambo (the Executive Governor of Kaduna State) was picked to serve as Vice President of Nigeria. The chain of vacuum was extended to the state level in Kaduna State. This necessitated the emergence of the deputy governor to be the governor of the state as the rule of law stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, Mr. Ibrahim Yakowa was by this provision made the Governor of Kaduna State. In 2012, the fortune of the southern political climate to power was reversed following the unfortunate Helicopter-crash that claimed the life of Yakowa.²⁷

²⁶ Tanghan Kyieluom, Is this Marginalisation or Slavery..., p.8.

²⁷ Buhari Reuben, *Yakowa: A Dream Deferred*, Kaduna, Adekins Graphic, 2019, p. 94.

The 2015 – 2019 Phenomenon

In 2015, the emergence of All Progressives Congress to power spelt a new political scenario in the state and spoke loud in changing the political narratives of 1976, 1983, and 1990/1991 elections which offered an impression that victory goes to any candidate who enjoys bloc votes from the southern part at any governorship election. Indeed, this might not really be bloc votes in support of the ruling party of that time as the tradition was in the past. Contestation of interest set people against party lines even in the conservative southern Kaduna area.

In 2019, the status-quo was altered. Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the governor polarised the electorates along incisive socio-political lines through his instrumentality of his Muslim–Muslim ticket, a situation that did not go down with the Southern Kaduna politicians. The question of winning lies on the credibility of the election which is outside the scope of this research. However, this was not the first of its kind when election into governorship position was held in the state with candidate and running mate of the same ethnic and religious background winning the election. It happened in the case of Balarabe Musa, and during that period, there was no clear division between Muslim and Christian which could have led to the emergence of PRP's Balarabe Musa and Abba Musa Rimi as the elected governor and deputy governor of Kaduna State respectively.²⁸ Perhaps, what became worrisome and aggravated political reaction against the 2019 Muslim – Muslim ticket was the alleged repressive political undertone that characterised the action.²⁹ To Southern Kaduna political elites, that was an act of political marginalisation which could seal off their political relevance in the state due to the mannerism and justification of the ticket.³⁰ The emergence of the governor under the Muslim – Muslim ticket seriously became a subject of political debate in the state, an impression was created that cleared doubts on whether the southern votes can midwife victory or not.³¹

28 Suleiman, M. D, "Southern Kaduna: Democracy and the Struggle for Identity and.....; between 1979-1983, these two individuals served as governor and deputy governor of Kaduna State, however, when Balarabe was impeached in 1981, Abba Musa Rimi took over as the governor between 1981-1983. Eventhough, their candidature appeared to be in todays political parlance of a 'Muslim-Muslim' duo, there were no public outcry like today due to the sincerity of purpose of Balarabe Musa and political track records of not being a religious nor ethnic bigot.

29 Sabo Anche et al, "An Examination of Governance and Security in Kaduna Since 1999", Wukari International Studies Journal, Vol.7, No.1, 2023, pp.411-423.

30 Sabo Anche et al, "An Examination of Governance and Security in Kaduna Since 1999",..... pp.422-423.

31 Prior to the elections, Governor Nasir El-Rufai insisted that with or without the Southern Kaduna people and their votes, he was going to win the elections. The results of the 2019 elections, the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) defeated the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in governorship election in Kaduna State with 1,045,427, representing 55.32% of the total votes cast. The PDP

Conclusion

Election, Politics and Governance: the Southern and Northern Kaduna Struggle has had a long history which is evident since the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. It had its foundation more glaringly during the British colonisation of Nigeria. It would appear that it has been established that the non-Muslim people in Kaduna State would hardly produce a governor no matter how organised or competent they are. The turn of events has however, shown that the centre stage was ripe for the non-Muslim people to taste the number one seat of power in Kaduna State. It however, did not take long that this dream was thwarted with the untimely demise of Sir Patrick Yakowa the first non-Muslim Governor of Kaduna State on 15th December, 2012. This led to a return to the old established status-quo where the non-Muslim people of Southern Kaduna were considered fit only to produce the number two citizen of the state and not the other way round.

It should be observed that while presently the relations politically between Northern and Southern Kaduna has been off-balance, under the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) from 1999-2015, the Southern Kaduna zone had the following as Deputy Governors; Stephen Shekari (1999-2007), Patrick Yakowa (2007-2010), Nuhu Bajoga (2012-2015) and later on an elected Governor in the person of Patrick Yakowa (2010-2012). The zone also had the following as Secretary of State Government (SSG); Charles Bonat, Patrick Yakowa and Waje Yayock. They had 3 commissioners of finance, 3 commissioners of local Government Affairs, 2 commissioners of Works, 5 commissioners of Health, 2 commissioners of Agriculture. Every Local Government area had a commissioner in the State cabinet.³² All these has changed since the coming to power of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2015. The political, economic and social marginalisation of the non-Muslims of Southern Kaduna has become more sharpened and widespread despite their contribution to the electioneering and democratisation process of the present dispensation.³³

scored 814,168, representing 43.08% of the total votes cast. Unsurprisingly, 510,116 of the PDP votes came from Southern Kaduna, the stronghold of the PDP. The remaining 304,052 votes came from the Northern part of the state, predominantly the base of the APC. The APC truncated the usual bloc votes of the PDP in Southern Kaduna by pulling 263,344 in the area.

The APC won the governorship election with a margin 231,259 votes. Source: Amazing Times Nigeria, 'Reflecting on the 2019 election results and the Southern Kaduna factor', July 23, 2022.

³² It is argued that during the Peoples Democratic Party's (PDP) grip of power in Kaduna State, almost all the 23 Local Government Areas of the State had a representative in the State Executive Cabinet. Southern Kaduna had a say in the 16 years of PDPs rule in Kaduna State because of the bloc votes it gave during both the Presidential, Gubernatorial elections. Kunnen Gari, 'The Scramble of Southern Kaduna Votes', www.kunnengari.com, 2014.

³³ On assumption of office in 2015, Gov. Nasir El-Rufai, reduced the number of ministries to 13 claiming that he needed to reduce to cost of governance. He therefore appointed 13 commissioners to head the ministries, 4 were from Southern Kaduna, while the remaining 9 were from Kaduna

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North- Busines Day, 'El-Rufai Unveils his Commissioners', July, 2015, businessdayng.com. A similar scenario was witnessed in terms of appointments and reshufflement of members of the State Executive Council during his second term in office from 2019-2023. Out of 14 senior appointees, only 5 were from Southern Kaduna-Premium Times Nigeria, 'El-Rufai shuffles cabinet', 12, Oct, 2021, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>.

Udida A. Undiyaundeye, “Issues and Cause of the Nigerian Civil War”, In Armstrong Matiu Adejo, *The Nigerian Civil War: Forty Years After, What Lesson*, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, Nigeria. 2000.

Yohanna Simon, *The National Question: Ethnic Minorities and Conflicts in Northern Nigeria*, Kagoro, Miskrom Prints, 2000.