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The Nigerian Political Bureau of 1986: A Historical Review

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a comprehensive historical review of the Nigerian Political Bureau of 1986, a pivotal institution established by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida to facilitate a transition to democratic governance. The Bureau, comprising 17 members, was mandated to examine the country's political landscape, identify the causes of its democratic deficits, and recommend a framework for a more inclusive and participatory political system. The study leveraged the qualitative method of historical research, which involved the use, mainly, of secondary sources of data. Through a critical analysis of primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, newspaper reports, and scholarly literature, this study examines the Bureau's composition, mandate, and recommendations. The paper argues that the Bureau's report, which advocated for a mixed presidential-parliamentary system, a decentralized federal structure, and a robust system of checks and balances, represented a significant departure from Nigeria's post-colonial political trajectory. We argue that the recommendations of the Bureau are congruent with the country's multiethnic and multicultural nature. There is, therefore, the need for the current and subsequent political leadership of the country to revisit the work of the Bureau and consider implementing most, if not all, of its recommendations.

Keywords: Nigerian Political Bureau, 1986, democratic transition, military regime, General Ibrahim Babangida, democratization, authoritarianism.

Introduction

The lingering political crises that engulfed the Nigerian project in the post-independence era were the result of a fragile political entity bequeathed by the erstwhile British colonial administrators. Nigeria was ushered into independence on a tripartite arrangement so as to keep the country perpetually divided and under the British sphere of influence, even after the phony independence. The political leadership of the country was split into three to achieve the British motive of 'divide and rule'. The British governed Northern and Southern Nigeria as separate administrative units. In 1946, the South was bifurcated into East and West by Richard's Constitution of that year, thereby dividing the country into three regions, with Lagos as the overall coordinating centre. And by the Tripartition Act, 'the British deliberately placed a greater percentage of the land and people of Nigeria in the North, putting the percentages of the population at 54.5% (North), 20.0 (West), 23.0 (East), and 2.5 (Southern Cameroon which was then part of Nigeria)'.¹ Thus, arising from the divisive colonial Constitutions and the disproportionate distribution of political gains and roles to the three major ethnic groups, there was no genuine attempt by the British at creating an enduring political entity, national integration, or democratic unity.² The British contrived Clifford's (1922), Richard's (1946), and Macpherson's (1954) Constitutions used for administering an amalgamated Nigeria and 'entrenched regionalism and ethnic sentiments as official

¹ A. Ademoyega. *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*. (Ibadan: Evans Brothers Nigeria Publishers, 1981), 3-5.

² E. O. Erim. 'Constitution Making in Nigeria: An Historical Perspective', In: *Issues in the 1995 Nigerian Draft Constitution*. Okon E. Uya and Victor C. Uchendu (eds.) (Calabar: CATS Publishers, 1999), 8-31.



policy'. By October 1953 when the federal constitution was introduced into Nigeria, the North, by the deliberate act of the British had become larger than the other two (East and West) combined, against the principle of true federalism in which the federating units are, more or less, equal. The consequence of this was the inevitability of conflict and instability.³

Conscious of this anomaly, therefore, independent Nigeria's political leaders, both civil and military, sought ways and means, through policy and legal instruments, to institute a viable, durable, and coherent political system for the country. But this task of nation-building has been made more complex by the multi-ethnic character of the Nigerian state as well as the mutual fears of domination by the various ethnic groups that make up the country—a situation that has been exploited by some ethnic chauvinists to fan, *ad nauseam*, the embers of discord within the polity. Thus, harmonising the centrifugal and divergent ethnic interests into productive national endeavours became a major challenge to the emergent political leadership of post-independence Nigeria.

Evidence abounds that the Nigerian traditional societies were inherently democratic. These pre-colonial societies are imbued with numerous democratic traits and features in the governance of their polities, such as service and accountability, power and authority sharing, rulers remaining in power to the extent that they serve the public good, decisions that are binding on all and sundry and which were arrived at through debates and consensus by the citizens in public fora, promotion of the welfare of the people as the most fundamental objective of governance, recruitment of political office holders judged by the characteristics of honesty, integrity and uprightness and removal of same from office for violations of commonly accepted communal norms, as well as a sense of equality in the understanding that the group takes precedence over the individual despite the social stratification or the hierarchical system in the society. Put differently, democracy, viewed as a system of governance by the people and for the welfare of the populace, was not imported into the Nigerian political landscape *ab initio*; and the notion of African communalism was no more than the democratic ethos *writ large* on the African traditional political landscape.⁴

Thus, the Nigerian political dilemma is a colonial creation of the British government. It is now generally accepted that colonialism was undemocratic and autocratic by denying the colonised participation in the system that governed their lives. The British colony of Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa, was an overseas extension of the metropole, designed to sap the peoples and economies of the colony and run by a small number of British agents who still paid allegiance to the metropole.

Colonialism coalesced different traditional political societies into one political entity and christened it Nigeria without the consent of the people, and by so doing upset and undermined the various democratic ethos, norms, and values, inherent and

³ V. Ndoma-Egba. 'Forced Unity: The Nationality Question', In: *Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy in Nigeria*. Okon E. Uya (ed.) (Calabar: CARTS Publishers, 2000), 74-89.

⁴ O. E. Uya. 'The Democratic Project in Nigeria: The Road Not Taken', In: *Issues in the 1995 Nigerian Draft Constitution*. Okon E. Uya and Victor C. Uchendu (eds.) (Calabar: CATS Publishers, 1999), 32-64.

prevalent, in these disparate traditional societies. The result was a dilemma of reconciling the values of these disparate traditional societies. Moreover, colonialism constructed the political boundaries of present Nigeria, just as the entire African continent during the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, without regard to ethnic affiliations and traditional boundaries, and without consultations with the indigenous peoples, to boot.

The Indirect Rule system through which Britain administered Nigeria lacked popularity and legitimacy among the people. The colonial Warrant Chiefs that served under the system were mainly tools in the hands of the British for the implementation of colonial policies such as recruiting forced labour, maintaining law and order, as well as tax collection. Under this illegitimate foreign system that operated through unfamiliar rules, there emerged a series of political crises directed against the colonial government such as the Aba Women's Riots of 1929⁵, to mention but one. As the uneasiness and crises continued to deepen, the multifarious ethnic groups that were forcibly merged to form the Nigerian colonial state since 1914 could not forge a common sense of national consciousness and identity—a deplorable legacy that has continued to the present. The 1914 Amalgamation was the outcome of the Selbourne Special Committee which in August 1898 recommended that the 'Niger Territories' should be amalgamated by the British government.⁶

The crisis of ambivalence that colonialism imposed on the Nigerians in which admiration for Western ideas, values, and institutions clashed with the indigenous Nigerian social and ethical standards dealt a devastating blow to the emergent Nigerian political state. And this dilemma was to complicate other problems of the post-colonial state such as converting the artificial British creation, Nigeria, into a stable, cohesive polity, turning the economic advantages from the Western profit to Nigeria advantage, as well as developing and asserting a genuine Nigerian culture in the comity of nations.⁷ By and large, it is incontrovertible that the major political legacies of colonialism in Nigeria were:

Weak constitutional and institutional bases for development-oriented politics; unbalanced federation; regionalism which engendered mutual jealousies and fear and created barriers against the free movement of people and goods; governance in which the people were perceived as an exploitable group and leadership unaccountable to the people; regionally based political constituencies; and an educational system which alienated the educated from his cultural milieu.⁸

These deplorable and undemocratic legacies inherited at independence in 1960 continued unabated in the post-independence Nigerian era. In our time, the democratic project in Nigeria has been constrained by several challenges such as social alienation, cynicism, and apathy due to failed expectations: the situation has forced most citizens to become lackadaisical and refuse to exercise their democratic rights and perform their civic duties. Other bottlenecks to Nigeria's efforts in establishing an enduring political system include skewed federalism, ethnic

⁵ A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*. (London: Longman, 1972), 236-239.

⁶ S. O. Onor. *Foundations of Nigeria's Unity*. (Glienicke, Germany: Galda Verlag, 2021), 143.

⁷ Uya. 'The Democratic Project... ', 32-64.

⁸ *Report of the Political Bureau* vol.1(Lagos: Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1987), 49.

chauvinism, irredentism, separatist agitations, and religious fundamentalism, which impact negatively our national integration and nation-building endeavours; uneven economic development and the mindless struggle for resource control, national and institutional corruption, as well as social and class stratification which have resulted to marginalisation and impoverishment of large segments of the Nigerian people. Thus, conscious of this national malaise, successive Nigerian leaders, civil and military strove, with varying degrees of sophistication, to fashion out policies and programmes for an enduring political system that could place the country on the path of untrammelled social harmony and economic growth based on social justice and equity, and devoid of rancour and acrimony. One such programmes was the Political Bureau of 1986, established by the then military President, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, and to which we now turn for appraisal.

The paper is divided into four sections: the introduction gives a general background to the study; this is followed by the section that discusses the inauguration of the political bureau and its terms of reference. The next section deals with the recommendations of the political bureau; and the last portion, the conclusion, makes an unbiased recommendation for the country's forward-match to a sustainable economic and political system.

Inauguration of the Political Bureau

Realising the import of an overhaul and fundamental restructuring of Nigeria's society – politically, socially, economically, and institutionally, President Babangida took the bold step in national reconstruction and rejuvenation. On January 13, 1986, he inaugurated the seventeen-man Political Bureau, a distinguished panel of experts drawn from the academia and the public service, with Dr. S. J. Cooke as Chairman. Other members of the Bureau were: E. O. Ewa, Tunde Adeniran, Mrs. R. Abdullahi, A. D. Yahaya, S. E. Oyovbaire, Ola Balogun, Haroun Adamu, Bala Takaya, Edwin Madunagu, O. E. Uya, Ibrahim Halilu, Paschal Bafyau, Abdullahi Angie, Sani Zahradeen, Hilda Adefarasin, and Oye Oyediran.

The Bureau was charged with the following terms of reference:
(i) Review Nigeria's political history and identify the basic problems that have led to our failures in the past and suggest ways of resolving and coping with these problems;

(ii) Identify a basic philosophy of government that will determine goals and serve as a guide to the activities of governments;

(iii) Collect relevant information and data for the Government as well as identify other political problems that may arise from the debate;

(iv) Gather, collate, and evaluate the contributions of Nigerians to the search for a viable political future and provide guidelines for the attainment of the consensus objective;

(v) Deliberate on other political problems as may be referred to it from time to time.⁹

Thus the Bureau was expected to undertake a comprehensive study and analysis of the Nigerian situation and prescribe efficient modalities for the establishment of a stable, durable, and viable political system for the country.

The Bureau then swung into action and employed numerous strategies to ensure that all strata of Nigerian society, especially the rural dwellers, participated actively in the national discourse. The Bureau's Monitoring and Assistant Monitoring Officers engaged the grassroots populace in discussions and interviews and received massive contributions. During its work, the Bureau received a total of 27,324 submissions in the form of memoranda from individuals and groups, contributions at public hearings and debates, electronic media discussions, as well as newspaper articles. These contributions were based on the 30 topics which the Bureau identified as forming the bedrock of Nigeria's future political culture, and to which Nigerians were invited to reflect upon and make submissions, thus:

- i. A philosophy of government for the future;
- ii. A viable, popular, and genuinely democratic system;
- iii. Human rights (economic, social, legal and political);
- iv. The links between the economy and politics in Nigeria;
- v. Rural and community development;
- vi. The local government system;
- vii. The rural population in Nigerian politics;
- viii. Labour in Nigerian politics;
- ix. Women in Nigerian politics;
- x. Youths and students in Nigerian politics;
- xi. Traditional rulership and administration;
- xii. The Armed Forces in Nigerian politics;
- xiii. State and religion;
- xiv. Forms of representation in government;
- xv. Formation of political parties, their funding and administration;
- xvi. Elections and electoral processes;
- xvii. Federalism, regionalism, statism, nationality, and citizenship;
- xviii. Creation of states;
- xix. Revenue allocation;
- xx. Ethnicity in Nigeria politics;
- xxi. Interests of minority and under-privileged groups;
- xxii. National census;
- xxiii. National languages;
- xxiv. Corruption in public life;
- xxv. Discipline, law and order;
- xxvi. The Judiciary and the administration of justice;
- xxvii. Social and political mobilization for development;
- xxviii. The mass media and other forms of communication in Nigerian politics;
- xxix. Bureaucracy and development;

⁹ *Report of the Political Bureau* vol.1, 3.

xxx. External relations.¹⁰

The Bureau thus designed a robust democratic project whose major objectives were:

- i. To weaken the social forces that constrain democracy;
- ii. To free and enhance democratic forces and possibilities;
- iii. The establishment or re-establishment of necessary critical political, technical, and social institutions and structures to enhance and sustain democratic developments in Nigeria;
- iv. The socialisation and mobilisation of the Nigerian masses, both civilian and military, regarding their duties, obligations, and responsibilities for the establishment and sustenance of democratic tradition in the country;
- v. The restructuring of the federation to ensure maximum participation, involvement, and contribution of all sections of the country in the democratic experiment as well as equal access to the benefits therefrom;
- vi. Reduction in the cost of governance and minimization of waste through the inauguration of a regime of efficiency, integrity, public accountability, and transparency as well as the sanitization of the political environment.¹¹

Recommendations of the Bureau

In 1987, the Bureau concluded its work and submitted its report (published in two volumes) to the Babangida administration. The recommendations of the Bureau designed to achieve the above objectives are well known to the Nigerian public, and include the following:

- i. Setting aside 10% of elected seats for women and labour leaders;
- ii. Adoption of a single five-year term for the presidency;
- iii. Economic structures should be predicated on self-reliance and social justice;
- iv. Rejection of the zoning principle;
- v. A unicameral legislature;
- vi. Adoption of a two-party state;
- vii. Mass mobilisation as a cornerstone of a newfound political orientation;
- viii. Democratisation of socio-economic power through political and economic participation in all structures and organisations of power;
- ix. Creation of an additional six states in the federation;
- x. Leaving the traditional rulers out of the political equation and the rejection of diarchy and triarchy respectively: civilian-military joint administration, and civilian-military-traditional rulership models.

Perhaps, it is pertinent, at this juncture, to dwell on the rationale for some of the above recommendations of the Bureau. For example, on the traditional institutions, the Bureau noted the relevance of traditional rulers as custodians of the people's culture and traditions as well as mobilising agents. However, the Bureau was of the view that the status, duties, and responsibilities of traditional rulers must be re-defined to prevent them from competing for loyalty, attention, patriotism, and supremacy with the Nigerian state. Thus, their functions should be largely advisory and confined to their respective local government areas and states. Said the report, 'As regards traditional rulers, we cannot see in which way their inclusion can

¹⁰ *Report of the Political Bureau*, vol. 1, 5-6.

¹¹ See, T. Olagunju, A. Jinadu and S. Oyovbaire, *Transition to Democracy in Nigeria*. (Ibadan: Safari Books, 1993), 126-134.

provide a unifying force; they compete against the nation for allegiance, represent a force against the principle of popular democracy and are dysfunctional reminders of national differences'.¹²

On the issue of political parties, the Bureau's recommendation for a two-party system was aimed at ensuring that the parties are national in scope, orientation, and coverage, and do not serve as vehicles for articulating and implementing ethnic and parochial interests, projects, and programmes. It was also meant to ensure that anyone who emerged as Nigeria's leader would have the across-the-board support of Nigerians from every nook and cranny of the country. This decision was borne out of historical experience. During the First and Second republics, between 1960-1966 and 1979-1983 respectively, virtually all political parties derived their support from specific ethnic groups, and did not, therefore, serve as integrative national parties. The Bureau was of the view that two political parties would guarantee a stable political atmosphere without accentuating ethnic and religious sentiments that played prominent roles in the collapse of our previous experiments at democratic governance.¹³ Moreover, global evidence has shown that two-party systems are germane even in countries that practice parliamentary and presidential systems of government; such is the case with the Labour Party and the Conservatives in the United Kingdom, and the Republicans and the Democrats in the United States, respectively.

The Bureau also recommended a ban from participation in politics, for a specified period, certain categories of persons who were responsible for Nigeria's political failures in the past. This was aimed at sanitising the political environment and ensuring the emergence of a new breed of politicians who, it was hoped, would be free from the politics of intrigues, corruption, and ethnicism that marred the country's previous experiments.¹⁴

There was also the need for grassroots participation in the political process. The Bureau therefore recommended the creation of structures that will ensure the full participation of all Nigerians, especially those in the rural areas, including rural women, in the governance and development of their country. Thus, the recommended two political parties were to be grassroots-based, and every intending member must be nominated and registered in his political ward, which is the first and basic unit in the political hierarchy, to qualify to contest for any political position in the country. It was believed that every elected political leader in the country should derive authority and legitimacy from the consent of the governed. In the opinion of the Bureau, there was a need to involve the rural population, especially rural women, in the development efforts of the country. In this direction, it recommended that the programmes of the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) be expanded. It was this initiative that gave birth to the Better Life Programme for Rural Women.¹⁵

It is striking to note that in addition to the above, the Bureau recommended the creation of appropriate institutions, or the existing ones reformed, that are

¹² *Report of the Political Bureau*. Vol. 2, 346-359.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 298-325.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 559-654.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 372-395.

considered indispensable for the sustenance of the new political order. Some of these institutions include: an impartial judiciary that is insulated from the influences, pressures and dictates of the executive arm of government; a vigorous press that could serve as an enlightenment and mobilisation agent for the people and unfettered its receipt and dissemination of information, promoting and emphasising the unifying factors of the multi-ethnic Nigerian society; a Code of Conduct bureau and a Code of Conduct Tribunal that would act as watchdogs on society, ensure the highest standards of integrity and efficiency, and punish public officials for acts of misconduct; a National Population Commission with adequate expertise that could conduct a credible census for the country; a National Revenue and Fiscal Mobilisation Commission that would the responsibility of ensuring equitable allocation of federally derived revenue to the components states of the country; and a National Electoral Commission to be charged with the responsibility of conducting all elections in the country as well as monitoring the activities of the political parties to ensure that they conducted their affairs within the law for the success of the democratic project.¹⁶

In the domain of the Nigerian economy, the Bureau made robust and far-reaching recommendations. Conscious of the dialectical relationship between a new socio-political order and the promotion of the welfare of Nigerians, in particular, and the development of the country in general, the Bureau undertook a careful review of the Nigerian political economy and noted that the 'nature, character and structure of dependent capitalist ideology and development' constituted 'the basis of instability, social justice and inequity of the Nigerian social order. The Bureau, therefore, reasoned that self-reliance in political development and economic production, social justice, and equity in distribution and exchange would be the basic doctrines of the new social order for the country. It noted that development must be geared towards self-reliant growth achieved through the control and active participation of the people.¹⁷

On the above score, the Bureau made several recommendations aimed at fundamental restructuring of the political economy of the Nigerian state. Some of these were: a socialist-oriented socio-economic philosophy of government midwifed by capitalism in which the state would control the commanding heights of the economy while encouraging private and individual participation in the other sectors; a bill of economic rights, including the right to participate in managing the country's economy, gainful employment; right to compulsory free education for first nine years of schooling; right to good health, safety, old age, and insurance; right to full residence opportunities anywhere in the country, as well as equal treatment before the laws of the land. Further recommendations were made on all other aspects of the country's political economy. These included the cost of governance, land, and rural development, agriculture, industry and the distributive sector, multi-national corporations, finance, transport, energy, government parastatals, the contract system and labour, income distribution, property ownership, and the reward system.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 223-235; vol. 2, 230-333, 396-416, 535-558.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol.1, 63-82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol 1, 116-161.

The government accepted and implemented many of the recommendations touching on the specific sectors of the economy, but was vehement in rejecting the socialist-oriented socio-economic philosophy of the government. The major bone of contention between the government and the Bureau in the management of the Nigerian economy was the role of the state and market forces. Indeed, structural reforms, as a development strategy, were inevitable in the circumstances, the rejection was not unconnected with the influences of the Bretton Woods institutions—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). On the need for massive mobilisation and political education of all segments of the Nigerian population, both civilian and military, to support the new social order, the government accepted the Bureau's recommendations but these were poorly implemented. The Bureau had noted that 'A politically conscious, effectively mobilised, properly motivated population is the greatest deterrent to bad government'. Social mobilization, according to the Bureau, is not 'merely informing or consulting with the people and imposing ideas and policies on them'. It should rather be seen as 'involving the people in taking part actively and freely in discussions and decisions affecting their general welfare, the overall aim being to increase their level of awareness or cognition of political and other issues so that they can apply their energies positively in the social and political life of the country'. In this wise, the Bureau recommended the establishment of the National Directorate of Social Mobilisation and Political Education for the country¹⁹. But the government went ahead to establish MAMSER and the National Orientation Agency (NOA), which to an appreciable degree achieved the objectives as spelt out by the Bureau.

Apart from the rejection of a socialist socio-economic system mediated by capitalism, the government deviated from some other important recommendations of the Bureau, and it was in these areas that the Third Republic encountered the most difficult problems: a true federal structure and the relative roles of the three tiers of the government; interests of the minorities and under-privileged groups; human rights; the economy; the creation of more states in the interest of a balanced federation; and the role of the military in governance.

Although the agitation for the rotation of the nation's presidency has been a recurring decimal in Nigeria's political debates over the years, the issue was deliberated by the Political Bureau and the Abuja Constitutional Conference of 1995. The agitation and debates have been triggered by the dubious monopoly of power by the North since Nigeria's independence. Though the argument of the proponents of rotation was quite cogent as it is 'the fundamental right of every Nigerian to aspire to the highest political office in the land', the Bureau did not endorse the idea of 'a constitutional provision for rotation', noting that such a provision is tantamount to 'an acceptance of our inability to grow beyond ethnic or state loyalty; what we need are truly integrative national institutions'.²⁰ As germane as this line of thought is, it is crucial to note that any country that aspires to greatness must endeavour to emphasise the ideals of unity and integration, and not to institutionalise the things that divide her people in the constitution of that country.

¹⁹ See for details, *Report of the Political Bureau* vol.2, 523-535.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.1, 171-173.

The issue of whether Nigeria is practicing true federalism has also agitated the minds of many Nigerians as it has been on the front burner of political debates in the country. In the opinion of the Political Bureau, 'the growth and development of Nigeria federalism has been fraught with a lot of trauma'.²¹ No doubt, Nigeria has been practicing a skewed federalism, a situation in which the tail is wagging the dog, not the other way round. Part of the contentious issues has been the degree of involvement of the federal government in the socio-economic activities of the country. It has been alleged, and rightly too, that the federal government does not leave adequate room for the initiative and operations of the states and local governments that constitute the component units of the federation. In several instances, the federal government has taken over the responsibilities that rightly belong to the states under a federal system of government, such as in the areas of education, health, and agriculture. A fundamental restructuring of the Nigerian state is, therefore, of paramount importance as it will go a long way in exploring the latent talents and ingenuity of the component units of the federation.

The agitation for the creation of additional states within the federation was also deliberated by the Bureau. While noting its historical antecedents, the Bureau reasoned that such a creation was a means of redressing the imbalances in the Nigerian federal structure, which would go a long way in allaying the fears of domination of the minority ethnic groups by the majority. Such a move will also serve to ensure the rapid economic growth of the multifarious ethnic groups, increase participatory democracy, and act as an insurance against political instability. In addition, it will enable the minority ethnic groups to exercise some measure of control over the resources of their land and ensure national security in the country. The Bureau its wisdom recommended the creation of six additional states, noting that the agitation for states was a function of the political realities of the country and that in so far as the matter is left wide open, it would 'always be invoked to whip up support by politicians'. The Bureau further recommended 'that after the creation of the new states proposed there should be constitutional provisions barring the creation of new states for at least 25 years... for the country to settle down politically and tackle more fundamental issues of national development which have tended to be swept under the carpet by the issue of state creation'.²²

Conclusion

The Political Bureau of 1986, no doubt, is one of the most profound, fundamental, and robust initiatives of the Babangida administration for a total restructuring and transformation of the Nigerian state. Though some of the most important recommendations of the Bureau were rejected and some poorly implemented, it is important to note that this negligence is still hunting the country to the present; the first episode that tended to mar the good fortunes of the Bureau's recommendations and our democratic experiment being the controversies that resulted in the annulment of the June 12, 1993, presidential elections. It is our candid opinion and suggestion that the present and future leaders of Nigeria should re-visit the

²¹ *Ibid.*, 180-207.

²² *Ibid.*, vol.2, 416-449.

Bureau's report and implement its recommendations given their genuineness and appropriateness for our tortured, but still vibrant country.

Elsewhere, it has been argued that Nigeria is at present wobbling through the vicissitudes of nationhood. This arose from the inept handling of its national affairs and the deliberate denial of economic and socio-political opportunities to its citizens with roots in the colonial period – deprivations that led to the emergence of ethnic militias, separatist agitations, religious fundamentalism and insurgency in the post-independence era across the country. There is no doubt that these upheavals and tensions will continue until the Nigerian political leadership begins to maximise the country's human and material resources while granting equal and unfettered access to gainful and legitimate opportunities to all Nigerians.²³

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²³ C. N. Ajaebili. 'A Century after Amalgamation: Reflections on History and Nation Building in Nigeria, 1914-2014', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. Vol. 24, (2015), 95-107.