

## Contesting Multiculturalism

### *Federalism and Unitarism in Late Colonial Nigeria*

Wale Adebani, University of Oxford

This chapter examines the different approaches to multiculturalism among Nigeria's three core and competing regions in the period of decolonization.<sup>1</sup> The key questions that are confronted here in focusing on the contention over the nature and dynamics of multiculturalism in this era are these: Is multiculturalism the best way to deal with diversity in an emerging but divided (African) nation-state? Is multiculturalism antithetical to nation-building and mutual recognition of equal value among different ethnic-nationalities within African polities? What happens when multiculturalism simultaneously constitutes the basis of political architecture as well as the fundamental problem of political organization in a multi-ethnic state?

I suggest that engaging with these questions can be helpful in understanding the unending political instability in contemporary African states caused largely by the unremitting antagonism between the constituent groups. The chapter explains the historical sociology of the politics of ethno-cultural diversity in Nigeria in relation to the struggle to construct a suitable political architecture for the governing of a vast country, an architecture that was strong enough to respond to as well as manage Nigerian's diversity while ensuring unity. Generally, I suggest that contemporary problems in multi-ethnic postcolonial African states concerning the best approaches to national unity, diversity, party politics, power sharing, and so on, are rooted in different visions of multiculturalism, as exemplified in the Nigerian case.

Will Kymlicka recently argued that "ideas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity have been in a state of flux around the world for the past 40 years."<sup>2</sup> However, Kymlicka reflects a dominant trend in the literature

in the West,<sup>3</sup> in which contemporary multiculturalism is assumed to be largely a Western experience or problem.<sup>4</sup> Even while admitting that multiculturalism is a phenomenon that has been around for many centuries and that even in the contemporary era, “in very few countries can the citizens be said to share the same language, or belong to the same ethnonational group,”<sup>5</sup> thus making multiculturalism “a normative response to that fact,”<sup>6</sup> yet the focus and examples drawn by many scholars from, or based in, the West are almost always from Euro-American contexts (extending sometimes to Australia). In this context, multiculturalism, for the most part, is captured either as a phenomenon defined by the social, economic, political, and policy responses to increased immigration from the developing world to the West,<sup>7</sup> or as represented in the challenges faced by minorities (racial, ethnic, religious, or gender) in contemporary Western societies<sup>8</sup>—or both. Perhaps because of its peculiar experience of state racism that survived up the last decade of the twentieth century, South Africa is the only country in Africa that has attracted sufficient attention in the literature on multiculturalism.<sup>9</sup>

Kymlicka, among others, also dates the “struggle for multiculturalism and minority rights” as having emerged “in the late 1960s,” as one of the three “waves” of movements that arose against the backdrop of “this new assumption of human equality [which] generated a series of political movements designed to contest the *lingering presence or enduring effects of older hierarchies* [emphasis added].”<sup>10</sup> Contrary to this position, the Nigerian case—as evident in several other African countries, including Kenya, (South) Sudan, South Africa, Cameroon, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania, and the Central African Republic—shows that the struggle for multicultural diversity in Africa preceded this period, even if the specific language of “multiculturalism” was not used at this point. Also, many cases in Africa point to the fact that the struggle for multiculturalism regarding “the lingering presence or enduring effects of older hierarchies” is not only one in which minority groups are pitched against dominant majority groups. In some cases, such struggles set dominant or marginal majority groups against one another or even marginal majority groups against dominant minority groups.

Against this backdrop, Amy Gutmann’s definition of multiculturalism as “the state of a society or the world containing many cultures that interact in some *significant way* with each other [emphasis added],”<sup>11</sup> is one of the most useful ways of approaching this phenomenon. However, as the African experience has shown, although multiculturalism is potentially a positive principle in multi-ethnic societies and states, its practices may not necessarily produce beneficial consequences. The uses to which dominant groups, systems, or parties put multiculturalism may in fact portend danger for the democratic principles inherent in the idea. As Asef Bayat has argued, although multiculturalism “calls for equal coexistence of different cultures within a national society,” its politics is paradoxically also steeped in “the language of separation and antagonism [as well as] cultural superiority and ethnocentrism.”<sup>12</sup>

To account for this, it is important to pay attention to the historical context of multiculturalism in understanding its contemporary successes or failures in actually existing societies. Examining particular contexts of multiculturalism also helps to explain what it means in different societies and at different points. Here, I examine the debate between those who have imagined multiculturalism as (semi-)separatism—called by all sorts of names, including “Pakistanisation” and “tribalism”—and those who have approached multiculturalism as a critical basis for the survival of a deeply divided and plural society, such as Nigeria. I want to use the “solutions” provided in the Nigerian experience to reflect on the questions I pose above by reflecting on British colonial legacy in Nigeria, the decolonization-era debates on the best political architecture for a multi-ethnic state, the principles that inform the positions taken, the responses that these positions generated, and how the Nigerian experience speaks to the phenomenon of multiculturalism in general.

#### THE (POST)COLONY AND THE CHALLENGE OF MULTICULTURALISM

*Since 1914, the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country. But the people are different in every way, including religion, custom, language and aspirations. . . . We in the North take it that Nigeria's unity is only a British intention for the country they created. . . .*

—ALHAJI SIR ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA, NIGERIA'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER

In August 2014, over five hundred delegates, representing different groups, particularly ethno-regional groups, concluded five months of contentious deliberations on the existing divisive political structure and the future of Nigeria. The fundamental crisis of nation-building that provoked the convocation of the National Conference, the fourth of its kind in post-independence Nigeria, as the BBC reported, “has seen bitter conflicts between [Nigeria's] numerous ethnic, religious and linguistic groups.”<sup>13</sup> At the end of the conference, over six hundred resolutions were passed. Based on these resolutions, a 335-page report was produced and submitted to President Goodluck Jonathan. The chairman of the National Conference Committee, former Chief Justice Idris Kutigi, reportedly stated that fears expressed in some parts of the country that the conference would lead to the disintegration of the country had been dispelled.<sup>14</sup>

However, the fact that questions are still being raised about basic issues of national unity fifty-four years after independence and six decades after the key structural issues regarding unity were assumed to have been resolved at the pre-independence constitutional conferences points to the lingering problems regarding the multicultural nature of Nigeria. Mohammed Haruna, a leading journalist and one of the most vociferous defenders of northern interests and Islam in Nigeria and an antagonist of the idea of a national conference in Nigeria, told the BBC that

“virtually every [post-independence] constitutional conference in this country has come with a *hidden agenda* by its convener and virtually all of them have come to grief [emphasis added].”<sup>15</sup> What Haruna calls a “hidden agenda” is the suspicion among the political elite of the core northern region that post-independence national conferences in Nigeria promoted by the southern political elite were designed to limit the influence of the north in the country. Therefore, the region has always been opposed to all post-civil war national conferences and the struggle for “political restructuring” of the federation, championed mainly by southerners. Indeed, it is significant that all the successful (national) constitutional conferences were the ones held in the late colonial period. These conferences determined the fundamental structures of the Nigerian federation. Every other major successful instance of tinkering with the structure of the federation since independence was by the military, mostly led by northern soldiers. The only major change under a non-northern military ruler, General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo (southern) military ruler, was one of the factors that provoked a counter coup (in July 1966), which ultimately led to civil war (1967–70). The Ironsi regime had abolished the federal system and replaced it with the unitary system (of provinces). This was reversed after Ironsi’s assassination in July 1966.

In the light of the fact that all attempts to fundamentally reshape the Nigerian federation through democratic processes has failed, it is important to reexamine the original positions and debates among the country’s three regions and their leaders, which continue largely to determine the current attitudes toward multiculturalism in Nigeria.

Diversity or plurality is one of the most important issues constantly raised in, and about, Nigeria. The recognition of the multicultural nature of the country evident in the old national anthem,<sup>16</sup> and the national “aspirations” encoded in it, could as well have served as a reflection of the controversies and contestations over Nigeria’s unity and nationalism in the two decades preceding Nigeria’s independence. This was especially true as the leaders of the different ethno-regional formations fought hard to ensure the recognition of their different political and cultural identities. The Nigerian experience is no surprise, though, given that, as David Theo Goldberg argues, “multiculturalism and commitments to diversity emerged out of [the] conflictual history of resistance, accommodation, integration, and transformation.”<sup>17</sup> Against this backdrop, a central question that arose in late colonial Nigeria, as reflected in the struggles between those who wanted independent Nigeria to be a federal state and those who favored a unitary state, was this: Is multiculturalism a menace?<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, before the British amalgamated the northern and southern protectorates in 1914 to form Nigeria as a single colony, and even more so since, difference and multiculturalism *were* largely constructed by important sections of the national political elite—including even those who affirmed their own identities—as a menace. The British colonialists themselves also believed and exhibited this,

even while insisting that the fate and fortunes of the different ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in Nigeria were tied together. As Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, one of the leaders of the Northern People's Congress (NPC)—who later became Nigeria's first and only prime minister—put it, since the amalgamation “the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country.” Balewa saw this as a futile effort, because he considered the people who made up the country as “different in every way, including religion, custom, language and aspirations.” He concluded that “Nigeria's unity is only a British intention for the country they created.” The differences among the components parts of Nigeria, Balewa submitted, were too deep to make unity possible.

John N. Paden, biographer of Sir Ahmadu Bello, the late first premier of the Northern Region of Nigeria, recalls an encounter in the mid-1960s between two of the three Nigerian leaders whose attitude to multiculturalism helped to shape Nigeria's future—against the backdrop of the powerful effects of the colonial architecture. Bello and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the first premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria and, later, the country's first ceremonial president, are said to have had a meeting in which the latter demanded of Bello, “Let us *forget* our differences . . .” to which Bello responded, “No, let us *understand* our differences. I am a Muslim and northerner. You are a Christian and easterner. *By understanding our differences, we can build unity in our country* [emphasis added].”<sup>19</sup>

Even though Bello and Azikiwe did not specifically use the language of multiculturalism in this encounter, their preceding and succeeding statements and actions constitute further evidence of their different and differing attitudes to cultural diversity among Nigeria's many ethnicities and faiths. If multiculturalism is, at the core, “a principle [that indicates] respect for the pluralism of cultures,”<sup>20</sup> then *forgetting* differences might connote disregarding the pluralism of cultures, while *understanding* difference might mean accepting the reality of such plurality, just as Bello insisted. He and his party, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), strongly challenged the assimilationist policy championed by Azikiwe and his party, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), even though Bello envisaged multiculturalism in restrictive terms, as applying only along ethno-regional and religious lines.<sup>21</sup>

Before Bello and Azikiwe had this encounter, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the third of the triumvirate Nigerian nationalist leaders and first premier of the Western Region, had led a contentious debate between his political party, the Action Group, and Azikiwe's NCNC about the best structural political and constitutional arrangement to guarantee Nigeria's multicultural realities. This debate revolved around whether federalism or unitarism would be the best political system for a multi-ethnic state such as Nigeria after independence from Britain. Incidentally, the two sides agreed that the question of Nigeria's multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature was a critical one that ought to be confronted through the political arrangement that would succeed British colonial rule. Azikiwe and the NCNC, for the

most part, identified the multicultural nature of Nigeria as a *menace* or a *problem* that ought to be transcended, if not *solved*, through assimilationist or (politically) *centralizing* policies, starting with a unitary system of government. In this model, a central government would be supreme, and all subnational units would exist by the authority of the central government. On the contrary, Awolowo, and later Bello—both with different inflections—argued that Nigeria’s multiculturalism should be approached as a *strength* that ought to be recognized and honored, through *decentralizing* policies, which would constitute essential building blocks in the struggle for national unity and development.

This debate was not limited to Nigeria; in much of Africa during the late colonial and early independence era multiculturalism was regarded as a “menace.” Colonialism created most modern African states, with the possible exception of Somalia, as multi-ethnic entities, but federalism was viewed in most parts of the continent as disuniting, separatist, or secessionist.<sup>22</sup> In many instances, federal systems collapsed, among them the federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953–63), where Nyasaland became Malawi and Northern Rhodesia became Zambia at independence in 1964; Cameroon (which switched to a unitary system in 1972); Kenya (where the Majimbo (“regions”) constitution with federal features was changed to a unitary system under Kenyatta); and Uganda (where President Milton Obote dropped the asymmetrical relations between the center and the provinces in 1955).<sup>23</sup> The dominant attitude in African states to federalism has produced different consequences, including authoritarian rule, the silencing of ethnic, religious, and cultural minorities, the imposition of unitarist forms of government, and one-party (or one-dominant-party) states. At independence and for much of the first two decades thereafter, most African states attempted officially to *forget* their inherent multiculturalism rather than *recognize* it. In the few cases where multiculturalism was accommodated to some extent, extreme centrifugal forces eventually encouraged the victory of centripetal forces. In the late colonial and early independence eras in Africa, multiculturalism was thus regarded as a threat to nation-building, “national unity,” “peace,” “progress” and economic, political and social “development.”<sup>24</sup> Despite this, however, no African country could avoid the challenges of multiculturalism. Each country faced these in different forms and responded in different ways, depending on their historical circumstances.<sup>25</sup>

#### MULTICULTURALISM, BRITISH COLONIALISM, AND INDIRECT RULE

No robust analysis of multiculturalism in Africa can proceed without understanding the historical context. In the case of Nigeria, in particular, the structuring—as well as epochal—powers of the indirect rule system introduced by the British colonial administration and its consequences in determining the nature of the

multiethnic state are critical. The “principle of ruling through the native chiefs” imposed on Nigeria, as its chief architect, Frederick Lugard,<sup>26</sup> the first British governor-general of amalgamated Nigeria, described the indirect rule system (or Native Authority System), was one in which “racial dualism” was “anchored in a politically enforced ethnic pluralism,” as the Ugandan academic Mahmood Mamdani puts it.<sup>27</sup> And because this “ethnic pluralism” was underlined by “the contradictory character of ethnicity,”<sup>28</sup> when the bifurcated states created by colonialism were deracialized in much of Africa, they were not democratized.<sup>29</sup> Hence, though inherently a democratic phenomenon, process, and policy, multiculturalism has remained more of a (democratic) potential than reality in much of Africa. In most of the countries, struggles to achieve democratic multiculturalism—whether violent or nonviolent—have been the rule rather than the exception.

Given that the indirect rule system was a form of “decentralized despotism,”<sup>30</sup> multiculturalism was *produced* and *entrenched* as a technology of rule rather than as a democratic tool for recognizing difference and diversity. The multi-ethnic African postcolonial states that succeeded the colonial states therefore reproduced forms of multiculturalism that were a dimension of power as well as a form of resistance, part of the problem as well as part of the solution.<sup>31</sup>

From 1900 to 1906, Lugard was the high commissioner of the British Protectorate of Northern Nigeria where he established the practice of administering the colony through emirs and local chiefs.<sup>32</sup> In 1914, he was appointed as the governor-general of the amalgamated territories (of the Northern and Southern Protectorates) called the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. Although the indirect rule system was most suitable for the Northern Protectorate (largely dominated by the Fulani emirs), less so for the western part of the Southern Protectorate (with its monarchical system), and most unsuitable for the acephalous societies of the Igbo areas of the eastern part of the Southern Protectorate, it was nonetheless extended over the whole of colonial Nigeria, thus producing specific forms of struggles for multiculturalism that Nigeria still contends with today.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the British approached multiculturalism in contradistinction to unity. Lugard’s successor, Sir Hugh Clifford, found the idea of a “Nigerian” *nation* “dangerous” and encouraged multiculturalism as a means to “divide and rule.” He observed:

Assuming . . . that the impossible were feasible—that this collection of self-contained and mutually independent Native States, separated from one another, as many of them are, by great distances, by differences of history and traditions, and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers, were indeed capable of being welded into a single homogeneous nation—a deadly blow would thereby be struck at the very root of national self-government in Nigeria, which secures to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality and its nationality, its chosen form of government; and the peculiar political and social institutions

which have been evolved for it by wisdom and by the accumulated experience of generations of its forebears.<sup>33</sup>

Evidently, Clifford did not accept the “premise of multiculturalism as a principle [of] respect for the pluralism of cultures.”<sup>34</sup> What he articulated was fear of such pluralism as the basis for constructing mutual peace, justice, and equity among cultures. In his *Background to Nigerian Nationalism*, James Coleman captures this attitude, which didn’t change significantly as Nigeria approached independence: “The artificiality of Nigeria’s boundaries and the sharp cultural differences among its peoples point to the fact that Nigeria is a British creation and the concept of a Nigerian nation is the result of the British presence. . . . The present unity of Nigeria, as well as its disunity, is in part a reflection of the form and character of the common government—the British superstructure—and the changes it has undergone since 1900.”<sup>35</sup>

Such was the depth of the differences between the administration of the two hitherto separate northern and southern protectorates that “the different policies and conceptions of colonial administration which evolved in each of the two protectorates during the fourteen years of their separate existence continued to dominate official thought and action.”<sup>36</sup> The bureaucracies in the two areas operated separately, and the colonial officials in the two protectorates also represented the two areas as if they were representatives of two different countries.

However, the process that led to the bifurcation of the north and the south and the further bifurcation of the south into western and eastern regions, for the most part, glossed over the several minority groups in these three regions, thus imposing the three largest majority groups, Hausa-Fulani (north), Igbo (east), and Yoruba (west) over more than three hundred minority groups. By the late 1940s and 1950s, it became apparent that “ethnicity, and the need to accommodate disparate ethnic nations within the proposed Nigerian independent territory, would pose a sizeable challenge. . . . [Because the] ethnic minorities were not to be pacified by the usual rhetoric and promises.”<sup>37</sup> Given the agitations of the minority groups as Nigeria approached independence—as evident in the 1957 Conference on Nigeria’s (Independence) Constitution at Lancaster House in London—a Minorities Commission was set up by the British government. Despite this, before, and even a few years after the creation, in 1963, of the first minority region in Nigeria (the Mid-West Region), the struggle for multiculturalism in Nigeria was largely defined by the tripartite arrangement involving the original three regions, that is, the Northern Protectorate and the western (including the Lagos colony) and eastern sections of the Southern Protectorate. This rendered “cultural minorities vulnerable to significant injustice at the hands of the majority, while exacerbating ethnocultural conflict.”<sup>38</sup> The hierarchical subdivision of the country during colonial rule into provinces, and districts or divisions, which were supposedly based on “territorial boundaries of indigenous political units,”<sup>39</sup>

encouraged these provinces and districts—in which the minority groups were the majority—to “become the focus of a new loyalty and thus . . . [progress] from the status of an artificial administrative unit to that of a political unit possessed of its own individuality.”<sup>40</sup>

These two factors—indirect rule and hierarchical subdivision of the country during colonial rule—as Nigeria moved toward independence particularly in the 1950s, when different regions of the country fought for and gained a measure of autonomy, ensured that, to use Mamdani’s words, “participatory forms (“empowerment”) that stress[ed] the autonomy of a bounded group—only to undermine any possibility of an alliance-building majority-based representation” eventually justified and strengthened “the most undemocratic forms of central power.”<sup>41</sup> In the context of the British government’s attempt to develop Nigeria into a unitary state, which Awolowo dismissed as “patently impossible,”<sup>42</sup> multiculturalism thus became a big challenge for the emergent country.

“Nigeria is not a nation [but] a mere geographical expression,” Awolowo had contended in his *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947).<sup>43</sup> The Oxford historian of the British empire Margery Perham shared that view, observing in her foreword to Awolowo’s book: “There is at present . . . no Nigeria but the one traced on the map by Britain and held together in a state-system maintained by this country [Britain].”<sup>44</sup> She added: “If Mr. Awolowo is right, as I believe he is, that in face of the deep divisions of race, culture and religion in Nigeria, political advance through natural groups and regions is the only way to a wider unity, then Britain may for long be required to provide the framework which holds three groups together until they are able to fuse into unity or federation.”<sup>45</sup> One of the most salient controversies in this era, therefore, was whether the best system by which “the main groups [could] come together at the centre to pool and share their traditions and resources” was a federal or a unitary system.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in the decolonization period, the colonial government and the representatives of the Nigerian groups confronted the question of how to protect and preserve multiculturalism within the independent nation-state.

Multiculturalism can be understood in the Nigerian context as a strategy for the political management or protection of the country’s multi-ethnic reality (including the imbrication of this with religious differences, especially along ethno-regional lines. It also connotes, as evident in many parts of Africa, what Tariq Modood calls “political accommodation of minorities.”<sup>47</sup> However, the politics of *minoritization* in Nigeria is politically salient and thus more regularly expressed in the language of *marginalization*. Thus, minoritization or marginalization is not limited to ethno-linguistic groups that are politically categorized as minorities; it also involves majority groups that at one point or the other have imagined themselves to have been, or likely to be, marginalized by other groups. Furthermore, in Nigeria, multiculturalism is not only a response to the politics of identity; it is also critical for the politics of resource distribution and access to political power.

Additionally, it can be argued that, in the decolonization and immediate post-independence eras, multiculturalism in principle constituted a rhetoric for preventing the breaking up of the country in the light of the threats or attempts by the three regions of the country to secede at different points.

“WHEN WAYS OF LIFE COLLIDE”

Nigeria is one of the stark examples of “what actually happens when issues of group identity are made the focal point of public attention and political argument in the inevitably rough and ready tumble of real politics [in Africa].”<sup>48</sup> The leaders of both the Northern Region and the Southern Region approached the question of when Nigeria would achieve self-government as one that reflected the “essential” difference between the two hitherto separate territories. In one strand of what I describe as the *cultural discourse of duality*—which in colonial Nigeria constituted the backdrop to this difference—northerners, generally, were constructed by their leaders and the British colonial officers as “restrained,” “dignified,” “cultured,” “respectable,” and “respectful” of their British overlords; southerners were constructed by the same people (northern leaders and the British) as “rash,” or “impatient,” “aggressive,” “disdainful of the ‘backward’ north,” “eager to dominate the north,” and “disrespectful” of their British overlords. In the alternative strand of the cultural discourse of duality, southerners, generally, were constructed by their own leaders as “progressive,” or “radical,” “freedom loving,” “forward-looking,” “modernity-embracing,” “enlightened,” “developed” (comparatively) and opposed to perpetual foreign domination; northerners were constructed by the southerners as “backward,” “conservative,” “feudal,” “unenlightened stooges of imperialists,” and opposed to the unity and independence of Nigeria.<sup>49</sup>

No doubt the reality was far more complex than the simplistic attitudes and discourses alternatively deployed by these leaders, their supporters, the press, and British colonial officers; but this cultural discourse of duality was at the center of the question of multiculturalism in colonial Nigeria, reflecting both the dimensions and the limitations of multiculturalism in the late colonial era. As the pressure for self-government became more intense after the end of World War II, with the British Empire expressing willingness to bring its former colonial possessions into the British Commonwealth, the challenge of managing multiple identities in these colonial possessions moving toward independence became a central concern. However, managing the multiple identities could not be done in a vacuum, and the pressure for self-rule also quickened the pace of constitutional advance,<sup>50</sup> given that the constitutional or legal process was the best guarantor of the right to difference. The pace of constitutional development in the colonies, in turn, stimulated the development of political parties,<sup>51</sup> given that the power to protect difference and identities during that period could not also be acquired

in a vacuum—particularly, where cultural, ethnic, communal, and other identity groups were insufficiently powerful to dictate the sharing of political power.

In the case of Nigeria, the indirect rule system, which promoted decentralization, left a contradictory political legacy in relation to the emergent need for centralized parliamentary democracy. Although British imperial interests and conservative chiefs and traditionalists favored the continued development of the native authority system, most Nigerian nationalists favored a move toward parliamentary institutions.<sup>52</sup> However, even among those who favored the latter, there were deep disagreements regarding the details and the pace.

Given the existing unitary structure imposed by the British, the first constitutional attempt at federalism in Nigeria was the constitution promulgated in 1945 under Governor Sir Arthur Richards.<sup>53</sup> The concept of regionalism was the most important and acceptable feature of this constitution.<sup>54</sup> This was a compromise between regional separatists, who wanted three separate states, and the strong federalists, who wanted a central parliament. For Richards, the “embryonic, quasi-federal structure” created by the 1945 constitution was a “practical means” of ensuring two major objectives. It had the potential both to promote national unity in Nigeria, and to accommodate diversity within that unity.<sup>55</sup> Responding to those who argued that regionalism would promote separatism, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, one of Richards’s predecessors, stated that “in fact, this measure represents not the division of one unit into three, but the beginning of the fusion of innumerable small units into three and from these three into one.”<sup>56</sup> Despite the objections of the three regions to some parts of this constitution, all the major parties and the leaders of the three regions, particularly the Northern Region, applauded the regional arrangement.

Why did all the regional leaders at this point embrace regionalism in the context of multiculturalism? What constituted the historical circumstances that dictated this position in each case, and what were the responses? What were the differences in their approaches to regionalism in relation to multiculturalism and nationalism? I will attempt to answer these questions in the following sections.

#### MULTICULTURALISM: BETWEEN BURKEAN AND JACOBIN NATIONALISM

As I suggested earlier, the constitutive challenge of multiculturalism in Nigeria should be understood and analyzed mainly against the backdrop of the legacy of colonialism, particularly late colonialism—a period during which “prevailing communal forces reinforced regional networks of power and patronage that dominated political behavior.”<sup>57</sup> By bringing together two separate territories and governing these for a few decades as two or three separate territories with two or three “distinct” *cultures*, the British, with the ironic collaboration of the

leaders of the ethno-regional political parties in the colonial era, created a politics in which multiculturalism became a *crisis* or a problem to be confronted and transcended, rather than an asset to be embraced and managed. In Nigeria ethnic and ethno-regional self-consciousness thus produced a situation in which “relationship among groups was one of ethnic stratification...rather than ethnic coexistence.”<sup>58</sup> This problem was exacerbated, as Coleman correctly noted, by the uneasy balance between the main three groups, which left them “as in all situations of bi- or tripolarity, vulnerable to the delicate balance of their ethnic duality or plurality suddenly giving way to a polarization into total ethnic bloc opposition or rivalry.”<sup>59</sup>

Since no territorial or political unity had existed before, no real unity was achieved, despite the fact that most of the nationalists paid lip service to, or indeed desired, national “unity-in-diversity.” As Rupert Emerson observed: “Where there is original unity, nationalism serves further to unite; where there is a felt ethnic diversity, nationalism is no cure.”<sup>60</sup> It is important, therefore, to understand the different approaches of the major pre- and immediate post-independence ethno-regional blocs, political parties, and regional leaders to multiculturalism through the lens of the traditions of Jacobin and Burkean forms of nationalism.

*Jacobin Nationalism: Azikiwe, the NCNC, and the Eastern Region*

The National Council of Nigerian Citizens, under the leadership of the Nigerian nationalist, journalist, and anti-colonial agitator par excellence, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe—an Igbo from eastern Nigeria—was Nigeria’s earliest example of a political party driven by a Jacobin approach to multiculturalism. Although the NCNC was later identified with the Igbo-dominated eastern region of Nigeria, it was founded, Azikiwe stated, “in order to unify the various elements of our communities . . . and to emancipate our *nation* from the manacles of political bondage [emphasis added].”<sup>61</sup>

The mantra of the Jacobin form of nationalism, emerging from the French experience, is *la nation une et indivisible* (the nation, one and indivisible). Its goal was to combine “the heritage of the different regions . . . in one national heritage; producing a republican monocultural universalism from disparity.”<sup>62</sup> As Tom Furniss would have described it, the NCNC’s form of nationalism was a “modernizing nationalism that sought to replace local identities and differences with a homogenized national politics and culture.”<sup>63</sup>

Among the nationalist leaders, Azikiwe, using the NCNC and his chain of newspapers, particularly the *West African Pilot*, was the most vociferous about creating a nation that sidestepped or transcended the existing “tribal” (ethnic) groups and emergent ethno-regional arrangements. Despite Azikiwe’s rather ironic position as the president of the Ibo State Union, and his statement at the 1949 conference of the union that “it would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo [Igbo] nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages,”<sup>64</sup> he and his chain newspapers were opposed to the building of what the *Pilot* called

“ethnic shrines.” Azikiwe, the NCNC, and the *Pilot* insisted that they were championing an “integral nationalism” and offered themselves “as the protector of morally superior national values and interests,” to use André van de Putte’s words.<sup>65</sup> Azikiwe argued that the recognition and validation of ethnic particularities were antithetical to the emergence of a strong and united Nigeria. Despite its multicultural heritage, Nigeria ought to become a melting pot rather than a potpourri, he argued. This position was adopted by many Igbo leaders and intellectuals in late colonial Nigeria and thus became not only the NCNC’s position, but also the “Igbo position,” given the preponderance of Igbo support for the party and its leader. The *Pilot* dismissed any contrary position as “pakistanization,” a metaphor for the feared balkanization of Nigeria (along Indian/Pakistani lines) by those championing federalism.

Azikiwe at some points supported the adoption of a federal system for Nigeria, even though federalism involves a fundamental recognition of difference and diversity, allowing complex societies to manage their common affairs at a central level while also guaranteeing the independence of constituent units in the management of their local affairs.<sup>66</sup> Between 1943 and 1948, he advocated that Nigeria be divided into eight protectorates, some of which roughly coincided with ethnic boundaries, in a federal colony. In 1948, in its Freedom Charter, the NCNC also advocated a federal system based strictly on ethnic units.<sup>67</sup> This was a clear acknowledgement of the country’s multiculturalism.

However, in 1951, Azikiwe and the NCNC leaders suddenly changed their minds. The party stated that “in view of recent *divisionist tendencies* in the country and to accelerate the attainment of our goal for a united Nigeria, a unitary form of government with the acceptance of the principle of constituencies will be better for Nigeria [emphasis added]”<sup>68</sup> The excuse for the new position was that the colonial government “and anti-NCNC Nigerians were using *federalism as a cloak for dismembering Nigeria* [emphasis added].”<sup>69</sup> As Coleman correctly notes, other, perhaps more critical, reasons for the change were the emergence of a strong and well-organized political party in the Western Region, the Action Group (AG), and the structure and organization of the 1951 Macpherson Constitution—which succeeded the Richards Constitution. Based on a more democratic process than was followed in the adoption of the Richards Constitution, the Legislative Council in Lagos appointed a select committee to consider the question of the status of the national capital, Lagos. As a member of the committee (representing the NCNC), Azikiwe wrote a minority report in which he objected to the tripartite division of the country into regions, or what he called a “tri-sected Pakistanized country.”<sup>70</sup> He argued for “the division of the country along the main [ten] ethnic and/or linguistic groups in order to enable each group to exercise local and cultural autonomy.”<sup>71</sup> The position of Azikiwe and the NCNC might seem inconsistent, but the emergence of the Yoruba-dominated AG in the Western Region (which at some point included Lagos), where the NCNC had held sway, meant that the party

faced the possibility of defeat in the Regional House of Assembly under a federal system, as indeed happened later in the 1951 elections.<sup>72</sup>

Azikiwe and NCNC members insisted that their party—unlike the others, particularly the AG, and later the Northern People’s Congress (NPC)—was championing the building of a “homogeneous” nation. It was not until 1954 that Azikiwe and the NCNC again accepted the federal system in the march toward Nigeria’s independence. However, it was obvious to the other parties and regions of Nigeria, that this was a grudging acceptance of the reality, resulting from the rigidity of the stances of the Action Group/Western Region and the NPC/Northern Region. Indeed, Azikiwe and the NCNC never abandoned their position that regionalism and ethno-regional parties were manifestations of “division” rather than diversity. In the rhetoric and writings of Azikiwe and the spokesman of the NCNC, multiculturalism was portrayed as a problem for any emerging African nation-state. What the others saw as the refusal of Azikiwe and the NCNC/Eastern Region to accept the reality of Nigeria’s multicultural composition by canvassing for a unitary system was linked to fears of what the other two major ethno-regional groups described as an attempt at “Ibo [Igbo] domination” of Nigeria. This continued to hover above ethno-political relations, thus defining the relationship among the three major groups. It also partly provoked the counter coup led by northern soldiers against the Igbo-led military regime in July 1966 and, eventually, the Nigerian Civil War (1967–70).

*Burkean Nationalism: Awolowo, the AG, and the Western Region*

In contrast to the Jacobin form of nationalism championed by Azikiwe and the NCNC, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Action Group articulated a Burkean notion of nationalism, which fitted Nigeria’s multicultural nature, even though it had the potential to acerbate ethnic tension and deepen existing conflicts, particularly between the two major southern ethnic groups, the Igbo and the Yoruba.

In arguing against French “revolutionary nationalism . . . whose centrist and potentially totalitarian tendencies he represents as destructive of the sense of nation,”<sup>73</sup> Edmund Burke supported “such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit, and not by a sudden jerk of authority,” adding that “the love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality.”<sup>74</sup> For Burke, local attachments, identifications, and loyalties were not barriers to national ones, but only prepared the mind for larger loyalty. In advocating for a hierarchy of loyalties, “each supreme in its own sphere,”<sup>75</sup> Burke pointed to the form of multicultural nationalism that Awolowo and AG advocated for Nigeria.

Unlike the NCNC members and its leader, who emphasized their pan-Nigerian identity, Coleman argues that, “more in the tradition of Burke, Awolowo had always been a Yoruba nationalist first and a pan-Nigerian nationalist second.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, from “the beginning . . . there was a fundamental difference in attitude regarding the ends toward which the nationalist movement should be directed.”<sup>77</sup> When the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa) was

formed as a cultural organization for the Yoruba, first in London in 1945 and later in Nigeria in 1948, the group advertised two of its objectives to include the acceleration of “the emergence of a virile modernized and efficient Yoruba state with its own individuality within the Federal State of Nigeria,” while striving “earnestly to cooperate with existing ethnic and regional associations and such as may exist thereafter, in matters of common interest to all Nigerians, so as to thereby attain to unity in federation.”<sup>78</sup>

The Egbe later became the basis of the creation of a political party, the Action Group, devoted to capturing power in the Western Region in the decolonization period. The party, led by Awolowo, resolved that “under the circumstances then prevailing in [late colonial] Nigeria the only certain avenue to power was a regional political party.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, one of its most important campaign strategies for mobilizing support in the region was opposition to Azikiwe, the NCNC, and the threat of “Igbo domination” under the unitary system.

In his autobiography, Awolowo states that he wanted to rebuild Yorubaland to ensure that every cultural group would have its rightful place in a multicultural Nigeria. This attitude and the activities geared toward validating it were dismissed by the NCNC and Azikiwe’s *Pilot* as a process of the “pakistanization” of Nigeria. The *Pilot* regarded AG’s version of multiculturalism as a “determination to remain difficult to Nigerian unity” through the imposition of “the evils of regionalization.”<sup>80</sup> The AG was described as a “parochial party,” pursuing “parochial nationalism” and engaging in “tribalistic demarcation of the country,”<sup>81</sup> as opposed to the NCNC, which had a “national policy.”<sup>82</sup>

In *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Awolowo emphatically rejected the unitary system, arguing that “since the amalgamation, all the efforts of the British Government have been devoted to developing the country into a unitary state. . . . This is patently impossible.” He added that although the existing three regions were “designed for administrative convenience, a truly federal system would require boundary readjustments to ensure that each group, however small, is entitled to the same treatment as any other group, however large. . . . Opportunity must be afforded to each to evolve its own peculiar political institution.”<sup>83</sup>

In the end, by leveraging Yoruba cultural nationalism, Awolowo and the Action Group not only contested the Jacobin “revolutionary nationalism” preached by Azikiwe and the NCNC but successfully promoted a Burkean recognition of a hierarchy of loyalties in a multicultural federal state in which each component part of the federation, at least notionally, was supreme in its own sphere. However, Awolowo and the AG did not succeed in making ethno-linguistic units the component parts of a multicultural Nigerian state. The units remained three (later four) multi-ethnic regions until 1967, when they became states.

#### *Neo-Burkean Nationalism: Bello, the NPC, and the Northern Region*

Given its delayed and reluctant encounter with European modernity, the Northern Protectorate, the huge, conservative laager constructed around the Fulani-led

caliphate that emerged from the 1804 jihad, had an understandably different attitude to the struggle for national unity as Nigeria moved toward independence. Apart from the factors already mentioned above, several other factors also provided the context for the specific approach that the Northern Region, its dominant party, the Northern People's Congress (NPC), and its preeminent leader, Sir Ahmadu Bello, adopted in responding to the challenges of national unity after the two protectorates were amalgamated to form a single British colony.<sup>84</sup>

These included the insulation of the Northern Protectorate from Christian missionary conversion and the enlightenment campaign—including expansion of opportunities for Western education—which strengthened existing differences and ratified it strongly along ethno-regional lines; a shift in the production of cash crops for export;<sup>85</sup> and the expansion and consolidation of Islamic influence and dominance based on the numerical strength of the combined ethnicities of the Hausa and the Fulani (Hausa-Fulani) in much of the Northern Region. The British colonial officers in the Northern Protectorate too were instrumental in this process. Such was their commitment to making the north distinct from the south, despite the amalgamation, that between 1923 and 1947, the northern leaders were not represented in the central Nigerian Legislative Council in Lagos, the capital of colonial Nigeria. Therefore, the north lagged behind the south in engaging with modern democratic institutions and practices. These led to fears of southern domination, the policy of “northernization” in the late colonial and early postcolonial eras, the north's initial opposition to Nigeria's independence in the mid-1950s and a unique outlook on multiculturalism that admitted of a different standpoint for the multicultural region from the one adopted for the whole of Nigeria. Thus, while northern leaders, led by Ahmadu Bello, were eager to unify the Northern Region and transcend cultural, ethnic, and religious differences within the region, particularly among the region's many minority groups,<sup>86</sup> they insisted that Nigeria was a multicultural polity, in which the Northern Region must be recognized as a single cultural whole as well as a united political community. This was despite the fact that “the Northern Region is not a cultural or a historical unit.”<sup>87</sup> Indeed, “from a tribal standpoint,” Coleman observed, “the north is far more heterogeneous than the south,” notwithstanding that the “integrative bonds of Islam and the Fulani Empire, however, [gave] a large part of the north a certain feeling of identity.”<sup>88</sup> This background is important, because the reality in the north, or the way in which that reality was understood by the leaders of the NPC in relation to the rest of Nigeria, dictated their approach to multiculturalism, particularly in response to the most suitable political system for Nigeria as the country approached independence in the late 1940s and the 1950s.

Even though both Bello and Awolowo preached Burkean nationalism, the Bello NPC's articulation of why and how federalism was the most suitable political system for “understanding” and protecting differences was qualitatively different from the Awolowo AG's. It emerged from a different reading of history

and comparative experience. The AG-Awolowo position emerged from a deliberate, elaborate analysis of both local and global experiences of multiculturalism and was influenced by desire for power in the emerging political configuration, whereas the Bello-NPC position was influenced largely both by fears of southern domination in a unitary system and the associated disagreement with the southern leaders over a proposal, favored by the AG and NCNC, that Nigeria be granted independence in 1956. The leaders of the Northern Region felt that the region was not ready and thus risked the substitution of internal (Southern Nigerian) "colonialism" for the British variety. The northern leaders' position followed a pattern adopted by groups that felt disadvantaged by the move toward independence and thus attempted "to slow down the march to independence or to gain special concessions," as famously noted by Donald Horowitz.<sup>89</sup>

While Bello and NPC focused on and campaigned for *regional multiculturalism*, that is, the recognition of each region as a cultural unit within the federation of Nigeria, and the primary form of affiliation/nationalism, Awolowo and the AG favored *ethno-linguistic multiculturalism*,<sup>90</sup> that is, a federation of nationalities, with ethnic nationality as the primary form of affiliation/nationalism. Awolowo emphasized the country's multiculturalism, noting that groups called "tribes" were actually "nations," and cited ten such groups recorded during the 1931 census, the Hausa, Ibo (Igbo), Yoruba, Fulani, Kanuri, Ibiobio, Munshi or Tiv, Edo, Nupe, and Ijaw.<sup>91</sup> There was "as much difference between them as there is between Germans, English, Russians, and Turks," he observed, and the fact that they had "a common overlord [the British] does not destroy this fundamental difference." The languages of these groups "differ. . . . Their cultural backgrounds and social outlooks differ widely; and their indigenous political institutions have little in common. Their present stages of development vary. . . . It is evident from the experiences of other nations that incompatibilities such as we have enumerated are barriers which cannot be overcome by glossing over them. They are *real*, not imaginary, obstacles."<sup>92</sup> Bello shared this position only to the extent that the differences were limited to external regional differences, not differences internal to the region, particularly his own Northern Region. Thus, for Bello, the Northern Region was a cultural unit, while for Awolowo, the ethno-linguistic group ought to be the cultural unit. Therefore, for Awolowo, the Hausa-Fulani (ethno-cultural group) would be a federating unit rather than the north (region), as favored by Bello.

After the crisis over the date of independence, as Bello notes in his autobiography, the Northern Region decided to "take a modified line."<sup>93</sup> He elaborated on this by stating that the Northern Region "must aim at a looser structure for Nigeria while preserving its general pattern—a structure which would give the regions the greatest possible freedom of movement and action; a structure which would reduce the powers of the Centre to the absolute minimum and yet retain sufficient national unity for practical and international purposes."<sup>94</sup> He advocated for

a “federal principle” in which “what happened in Lagos [the federal capital, would not be] of great consequences . . . in the north.”<sup>95</sup>

Eventually, the federal system adopted by Nigeria at independence was largely a compromise between the Bello-NPC-Northern Region and Awolowo-AG-Western Region positions. As one of the earliest scholars of Nigerian federalism notes, these two were the most vociferous in “repeating that they would not be dominated by other areas of tribal groups.”<sup>96</sup> However, even while notionally encouraging multiculturalism, structurally, the federal system adopted in Nigeria before independence leveraged multiculturalism while limiting it largely to ethno-regional differences. This became a problem in the post-independence era, since minority groups in the three regions demanded greater recognition of their differences from the three big ethnic groups.<sup>97</sup>

#### THE LIMITS OF REGIONALIST FEDERALISM

Some scholars have argued that one of the primary steps that must be taken to achieve a “fuller conception of multiculturalism” in the quest to “deal with diversity” is to break down “the false opposition between unity and difference, between solidarity and diversity, or . . . between universalism and particularism.”<sup>98</sup> Against this backdrop, they propose that multiculturalism should be approached in multiple ways as (i) “a critical-theoretical project,” (ii) “an exercise in cultivating new conceptions of solidarity in the context of dealing with the realities of pervasive and increasing diversity,” (iii) “a response—or a set of responses—to diversity that seeks to articulate the social conditions under which difference can be incorporated . . . and order achieved from diversity.”<sup>99</sup> Hartmann and Gerteis argue for bringing these different approaches into a “productive tension with each other” in order to reconcile different “visions of difference.”

The Nigerian case examined here illustrates the fundamental challenges faced in the attempt to reconcile “visions of [multicultural] difference,” as well as the problem of constructing a workable political system to accommodate and address the difference. Even though the federalists won the debate in the late colonial era, with Nigeria becoming a federation at independence, it was specifically the *regionalist* version of multiculturalism that triumphed, insofar as the struggles by minority groups for recognition beyond tokenism were largely ignored in the tripartite arrangement—a Hausa-Fulani-dominated Northern Region, an Igbo-dominated Eastern Region, and a Yoruba-dominated Western Region—that was established. However, the attempt to return the country to a unitary system after the January 1966 coup had disastrous consequences including the civil war, in which more than a million people died. Multiculturalism is not antithetical in principle to nation-building, but it has served contradictory purposes in the Nigerian federation. Though the multicultural nature of the country is not always respected and honored, recognition of the multicultural nature of the federation and the limitations

and responsibilities this imposes on political leaders have, on the one hand, prevented Nigeria from fully achieving its potential as a rich, powerful nation in the developing world, and, on the other hand, averted the total disintegration of the country. Also, although there is a popular view in Nigeria that the recognition of the country's multiculturalism has thwarted national integration, there is also a conflicting popular recognition of the fact that even the existing instrumental recognition of multiculturalism helps in the unending struggle to ensure that all the major cultures are given a measure of, if not equal, space and value.

Shortly before the civil war, the political elite seemed to have reached a consensus regarding the wisdom of some of the country's leaders who had earlier advocated multiple territorial division of the country beyond the three regions (later four in 1963) inherited from colonial rule. Even though the twelve states that emerged from the four regions before the outbreak of civil war did not exactly match the ethno-linguistic divisions proposed in the 1940s and 1950s—apart from the fact that this was specifically geared toward discouraging the minorities in the old Eastern Region from supporting the Igbo-led attempted secession—the creation of more states pointed to greater recognition of the multicultural reality of the Nigerian federation. It was evident, as James Coleman had predicted in his 1958 book *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, that the country could not survive on the basis of exclusive regional multiculturalism with the (structural) region-based federalism that was adopted at independence.

The end of the civil war (1967–70) witnessed greater recognition and accommodation, even if not totally satisfactory, of minority interests, and a greater embrace of Nigeria's multicultural realities. Structural unitarism was adopted by a succession of the misnamed federal military governments (1966–79; 1983–99) in the guise of federalism, but in spite of the structural unitary system, the division of the country into more and more states (three regions, four regions, twelve states, nineteen states, twenty-one states, thirty states, and now thirty-six states) has to some extent decreased tension over the nonrecognition of difference. Nonetheless, this solution constitutes what Eghosa Osaghae calls a “broad catch-all” policy.<sup>100</sup> Still, the fundamental questions regarding the terms of national relations remain critical and in “productive tension,” in Nigeria,<sup>101</sup> particularly because bi- or tri-polarity still largely determines the nature of power sharing at the highest level of national relations. This has since been further divided administratively into six zones: north-west, north-east, north-central, south-east, south-west, and south-south.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Nigerian experience, as reflected in the debates on the best political system in the late colonial era, points to the failure of assimilationism in multi-ethnic polities in Africa. The attempt to deny the mediating role of ethnic and cultural groups and “deal with difference by removing it,”<sup>102</sup> championed by the Azikiwe NCNC,

did not succeed. What triumphed in the late colonial era was what Hartman and Gerteis have described as “fragmented pluralism,” based on “strong preexisting group boundaries,” with a strong emphasis on the maintenance of “distinctive group cultures.”<sup>103</sup> This is the opposite of assimilationism, of course, and it was what the Bello NPC and the Awolowo AG supported and practiced. The orientation to diversity in this model is “closest to the standard definition of multiculturalism.” In late colonial Nigeria, the ethno-regional group was regarded as the *valid* group. In this sense, because the three (later four) regions and even the ethnic groups subsumed under them were also based on what Durkheim described as “mechanical solidarity,” “group boundaries [were] policed in the way that social boundaries [would have been] in assimilationism.”<sup>104</sup>

Yet, although fragmented pluralism was triumphant in the pre- and immediate post-independence period, what the pluralists actually *preached* in the emphasis on “understanding difference,” as Bello articulated it, was a “better” form of pluralism, that is, “interactive pluralism.” I suggest that this is what the Burkean notion of nationalism actually aims for. It is what Nigeria’s postcolonial leaders, despite their actions, have also publicly valorized. As explained by Hartman and Gerteis, interactive pluralism emphasizes “mutual recognition and respect of difference,” even while insisting on “the importance of the [ethno-regional] groups as primary basis for association in society.”<sup>105</sup> However, because the “groups in interaction” were based on mutual fears and negative evaluations of the other groups’ assumed intention, Nigerian multiculturalism in the late colonial and early postcolonial era was fragmented rather than interactive. Though much hope was expressed for an emergent unity in the future that would honor and respect multiculturalism, token efforts were undertaken in terms of “substantive commitments” to produce sustainable democratic federalism. However, despite the fact that federalism has survived without being entrenched in post-independence Nigeria,<sup>106</sup> the survival has been sufficient in keeping the multicultural state together, even if the nature and ideal of multiculturalism continue to be contested.

#### NOTES

1. A version of this chapter was published in *Commonwealth and Comparative Studies* (2017). The author thanks the publishers of the journal, Taylor & Francis, for permission to republish it.

2. Will Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism: Success, Failure, and the Future* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2012), 1.

3. See also Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Anne Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Tariq Modood, *Multiculturalism* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007); Paul Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and George Crowder, *Theories of Multiculturalism: An Introduction* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013).

4. For a few exceptions, see Charles R. Hale, “Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34 (2002): 485–524.

5. Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1, and Crowder, *Theories of Multiculturalism*, 2.
6. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, 6.
7. See Will Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Kymlicka, *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism*; Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*; Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Crowder, *Theories of Multiculturalism*; Modood, *Multiculturalism*; and Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*.
8. See, among others, Phillips, *Multiculturalism without Culture*.
9. See Donald L. Horowitz, *A Democratic South Africa? Constitutional Engineering in a Divided Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Crain Soudien, "Dealing with Race: Laying Down Patterns for Multiculturalism in South Africa," *Interchange* 25, no. 3 (1994): 281–94; and Simon Bekker and Anne Leidé, "Is Multiculturalism a Workable Policy in South Africa?" *International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 5, no. 2 (2003): 121–36.
10. Kymlicka, *Multiculturalism*, 6.
11. Amy Gutmann, "The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 22, no. 3 (1993): 171.
12. Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 186.
13. Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, "Analysis: What Did Nigeria's National Conference Achieve?" BBC, August 24, 2014.
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*
16. "Though tribe and tongue may differ / In brotherhood [*sic*] we stand," the anthem proclaims.
17. David Theo Goldberg, "Introduction," in *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 7.
18. Hale, "Does Multiculturalism Menace?" contends that even if multiculturalism is not inherently a menace, it nevertheless has the potential to menace.
19. John N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 3.
20. Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide*, xi.
21. Bello viewed the northern regional community "as a 'trans-ethnic' community, or a federation within a federation." Paden argues (*Ahmadu Bello*, 314), but in fact, he approached multiculturalism primarily in terms of the differences between the northern region (with majority Muslim population) and the southern region (with majority Christian population).
22. Nigeria and Ethiopia (since 1995) are the two fully federal systems in Africa. A few other nations have quasi-federal systems or systems with federal features.
23. See Isawa Elaigwu, "Federal Systems Not New to Africa," *Federations*, December 2010–January 2011.
24. One of the most important factors that also informed this attitude was authoritarian rule prevalent in independent African nations.
25. See Bekker and Leidé, "Is Multiculturalism a Workable Policy in South Africa?" and Soudien, "Dealing with Race."
26. Frederick Lugard, *Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1922), 199. See also Anthony Hamilton Millard Kirk-Greene, *Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record* (London: Frank Cass, 1969), 70.
27. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7.

28. Ibid., 8.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., 52.
31. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 8; and Olufemi Vaughan, “Ethno-Regionalism and the Origins of Federalism in Nigeria,” in *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria: Critical Interpretations*, ed. Wale Adebaniwi and Ebenezer Obadare (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 230.
32. Richard L. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in an Emergent African Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 18
33. James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 194.
34. Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide*, xi.
35. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 45–46.
36. *Ibid.*, 48.
37. Michael Vickers, *A Nation Betrayed: Nigeria and the Minorities Commission of 1957* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2010), 3.
38. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 5.
39. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 48.
40. Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 5.
41. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 298–99.
42. Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 47.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Margery Perham, “Foreword,” in Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 14.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. Modood, *Multiculturalism*, 5.
48. Sniderman and Hagendoorn, *When Ways of Life Collide*, xi.
49. Strands of these discourses are gleaned from the major accounts by the leaders, their biographers, the classic texts on Nigerian politics, and Nigerian newspapers in the 1940s and 1950s. See also Wale Adebaniwi, *Nation as Grand Narrative: The Nigerian Press and the Politics of Meaning* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016).
50. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 87.
51. *Ibid.*, 87.
52. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 273.
53. British colonial officials who supported the northern region were also fearful of a unitary system in Nigeria because the “educated elements in coastal towns [meaning Lagos and other parts of the south] would become predominant.” See Coleman, *Nigeria*, 275.
54. *Ibid.*, 276.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*, 276–77.
57. Vaughan, “Ethno-Regionalism,” in *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria*, ed. Adebaniwi and Obadare, 231.
58. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 129.
59. *Ibid.*, 129.
60. Cited in *ibid.*, 130.
61. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Zik: A Selection from the Speeches of Nnamdi Azikiwe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 163.
62. André van de Putte, “Nationalism and Nation,” *Ethical Perspectives* 1 (1994): 114.
63. Tom Furniss, “Cementing the Nation: Burke’s *Reflections* on Nationalism and National Identity,” in *Edmund Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France: New Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. John Whale (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 138.

64. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 347.
65. Van de Putte, "Nationalism and Nation," 14.
66. K. C. Wheare, *Federal Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 19.
67. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 347.
68. *Ibid.*, 324.
69. *Ibid.*, 348.
70. Azikiwe, *Zik*, 173
71. Quoted in Coleman, *Nigeria*, 348.
72. The late Nigerian political scientist Billy Dudley pointed out, however, that the Western and Northern regions, which benefitted most from rising commodity prices in the 1950s, were the strongest advocates of federalism, and that Nigeria's political leaders were "positively attracted" by the Australian academic Sir Kenneth Clinton Wheare's collegial model of federalism as a "method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each within a sphere co-ordinate and independent" (K. C. Wheare, *Federal Government*, 4th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 11). These may have been supporting factors, but I think that the leaders' articulation of their reasons, as examined here, do not support Dudley's conclusion. See B. J. Dudley, "Federalism and the Balance of Political Power in Nigeria," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* 4, no. 1 (1966): 16–29.
73. Furniss, "Cementing the Nation," 136.
74. Quoted in *ibid.*, 138.
75. Carlton Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Modern Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 93.
76. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 351.
77. *Ibid.*, 351.
78. S. O. Arifalo, *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A Study in Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism, 1945–1965* (Akure, Nigeria: Stebak Books, 2001), 107–8, and Wale Adebaniwi, *Yoruba Elites and Ethnic Politics in Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo and Corporate Agency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 53.
79. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 350.
80. *Pilot*, July 19, 1952, 2.
81. *Pilot*, October 1, 1952, 2.
82. *Pilot*, July 19, 1952, 2.
83. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 324.
84. See *ibid.*; C. S. Whitaker Jr., *The Politics of Tradition: Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1966* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970); and Vaughan, "Ethno-Regionalism," in *Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria*, ed. Adebaniwi and Obadare.
85. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 353.
86. "Our aim," Bello said in an address to the people of the northern region, "is to unify the North and make all tribes living in the Region feel that they are one and the same people. The people of the North are in fact already one" (Paden, *Ahmadu Bello*, 151n32).
87. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 354.
88. *Ibid.*
89. Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 4.
90. In his *Political Blueprint of Nigeria* (1943), Azikiwe, too, "envisaged a federal commonwealth of Nigeria made up of eight "protectorates," whose boundaries roughly followed ethnic lines" (Coleman, *Nigeria*, 324). He later changed his mind.
91. Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, 48.
92. *Ibid.*, 48–49.
93. Ahmadu Bello, *My Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 136.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*, 227.
96. John P. Mackintosh, "Federalism in Nigeria," *Political Studies* 10, no. 3 (1962): 223.

97. See Eghosa E. Osaghae, “Federalism, Local Politics and Ethnicity in Nigeria: Do Ethnic Minorities Still Exist in Nigeria?” *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 24, no. 2 (1986): 151–68; Osaghae, “Ethnic Minorities and Federalism in Nigeria,” *African Affairs* 90, no. 359 (1991): 237–58; Osaghae, “Managing Multiple Minority Problems in a Divided Society: The Nigerian Experience,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 36, no. 1 (1998): 1–24; Rotimi Suberu, *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001); and Suberu, “Federalism in Africa: The Nigerian Experience in Comparative Perspective,” *Ethnopolitics* 8, no. 1 (2009): 67–86. For the background to this, see Vickers, *Nation Betrayed*.

98. Douglas Hartmann and Joseph Gerteis, “Dealing with Diversity: Mapping Multiculturalism in Sociological Terms,” *Sociological Theory* 23, no. 2 (2005): 221.

99. *Ibid.*, 222.

100. “By taking states rather than ethnic groups as the units to be represented and balanced, the federal character principle favored majorities and powerful minorities, as opposed to the ordinary (or ‘residual’) minorities which were dominated in the states” (Osaghae, “Managing Multiple Minority Problems,” 19).

101. Such “productive tension” is partly responsible for the rise of fundamentalist religious groups such as Boko Haram that seek to obliterate Nigeria’s multicultural society and establish an Islamic state.

102. Hartman and Gerteis, “Dealing with Diversity,” 226.

103. *Ibid.*, 230.

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

106. See, e.g., Suberu, “Federalism in Africa,” 67.