Journalism and Politics in Nigeria
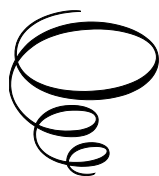
Journalism and Politics in Nigeria:

Embers of the Empire

By

Mercy Ette

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To:

Mary Michael Umoren, my mother.
Mary Louise Archibald and Agnes Mary McLaren, my mentors.

My teachers, they shaped my life.

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This book has been on a long journey. Due to many unexpected detours, several paths not taken, and boulders on the road, the deadline for its completion was regularly pushed backward. Thanks to COVID-19, I finally had an opportunity to work on it. And completing it has been an exhilarating experience.

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INTRODUCTION

JOURNALISM AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

> Nigeria is the key country in Sub-Saharan Africa for the success of American policy and interests, but is poorly understood by policymakers. Nigeria is an African powerhouse blessed with a large growing economy, huge reserves of oil and natural gas, the largest population in Africa, a rich cultural diversity, and powerful regional influence. Nigeria is also beset by chronic internal strife and unstable governments, corruption, poor human development and human rights records, and is a hub for international crime. Although currently enjoying a period of democracy and economic growth, the forces that balance Nigerian unity are fragile and may yet fatally fracture Nigeria's polity and state integrity.
> —Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr.
> Director, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College

Nigeria is a patchwork of disparate elements. It is also an idea, a story of diverse strands of narratives. But, probably more importantly, it is an enigma and a substantial source of contradictions. Although it is endowed with immeasurable natural resources, entrepreneurial and ambitious citizens, a rich culture, traditions, languages and boundless potential for greatness, it is also home to some of the poorest people on earth. The self-acclaimed giant of Africa is routinely lampooned as the "gi-ant" of the continent by its own citizens. Every year, an unknown number of them lose their lives trying to escape from their country in search of opportunities to survive in hostile parts of the world. Nigeria tops global league tables for undesirable achievements. What should constitute areas of strength for the country are, paradoxically, critical fissure points. These include the diversity of the people who occupy the geopolitical space called Nigeria, the rich natural resources that abound in many parts of the country and one of the youngest populations in the world. This absurdity of potential greatness is amplified by the country's failure to meet the expectations of its citizens and of the world. Commentators within and without attribute the country's failure to a variety of factors, one of which is the process through which Nigeria emerged as a political entity.

Nigeria is a former British colony, a spinoff of imperial adventures. In other words, it is a British 'contraption', and this heritage is seen as a critical obstacle to meaningful success. The colonial encounter is not, for sure, the sole cause of Nigeria's failure to achieve its potential for greatness, but it did change the internal dynamics of the country. It is hard to think of any other intervention that could have produced a political entity such as Nigeria. To understand the paradox of the country's variegated socio-political and cultural landscape, it is, therefore, rational to attempt to grasp how that colonial experience altered Nigeria's narratives. This approach enables us to elucidate social and historical forces that shaped and continue to define Nigeria as a country and illustrates how an interplay of those forces explains the nature of the state.

A good starting point for attempting to understand the impact of the colonial experience requires a recognition of the processes that produced the country.

The Making of New Systems

Nigeria, as it is known today, is a geopolitical construct comprising autonomous cultural and political units that were forged together during British colonial adventures in West Africa. Starting from 1861, when the British formally occupied Lagos to protect its trading interests and enforce an anti-slavery campaign, the territory that morphed into Nigeria gradually came under foreign control and has been in a state of flux politically, economically and socio-culturally ever since. The political landscape encompasses many culturally homogenous and heterogeneous communities that in 1914 were arbitrarily amalgamated to 'create' Nigeria. As explained in several sections in this book, the 'Nigerian' identity was foisted on a disparate group of people who were not directly involved in the creation of that new identity.

British adventures in West Africa transformed the geographical space that became Nigeria and reshaped it politically, socially, culturally and economically. Diverse pre-colonial societies that had no shared cultural traits or similar customs were compelled to find common values and norms to undergird a new kind of relationship imposed by an external force. One of the offshoots of the colonial experience was the introduction of new structures of governance, and today, Nigeria's political system is a manifestation of the foreign domination of areas that were webbed together by the British because political development in the 'constituted' country followed a trajectory shaped by a foreign agent. A common political structure, a democratic system, was necessary for the new entity,

it must be acknowledged, due to the diversity of the groups of people who were coerced into a relationship. But there is no doubt that while democracy has become the preferred system of government in Nigeria, its alien root cannot be denied. The idea of multi-party electoral democracy is without doubt at variance with the political culture of the various pre-colonial societies that now belong together. For starters, liberal democracy is "too parochial for Africa's sociality, negotiability, conviviality and dynamic sense of community" (Nyamnjoh 2005, 21).

The emphasis on individuality and autonomy, which are key elements of liberal democracy, challenges the notions of community and interconnectedness that are paramount in African political cultures. Nigeria's political system is now a domesticated version of the United States' presidential system, but the country at the time of independence started out as a parliamentary system patterned after the British model. Both systems are foreign replacements of indigenous governance structures, although the presidential system is said to have a "close similarity with traditional African political pattern[s]" partly because the "political economy of Nigeria is imitative of [the] American capitalist arrangement" (Ayeni 1988, 1). That possible similarity notwithstanding, there is no doubt that Nigeria's contemporary political system is an outcome of the impact of colonial intervention and a replacement of indigenous political structures and arrangements. Moreover, the system that has been adopted is underpinned by norms, values and practices that evolved under a network of influences that do not resonate with the areas that became Nigeria.

Similar to the political structure, what is regarded today as the Nigerian press is an artefact of the colonial interlude and a derivative of the British newspaper system. It takes its bearing from traditions that emerged in the West. As a result, most of the cultural, economic and political factors that shaped the British press were products of its environment but unfamiliar to pre-colonial Nigerian society. And despite domestication and indigenisation, contemporary journalistic practices in Nigeria still reflect their alien roots. Against this backdrop, Nigeria's political system and journalistic practices can be conceptualised as embers of the colonial experience.

Intersection of Politics and Journalism

Nigerian politics and journalism are dynamic areas of study, and there is already, to be sure, a rich body of literature on them. However, this volume offers a fresh overview of the intersection of politics and journalism as legacies of the colonial experience. Journalism and politics are conflated in this study because, structurally, they were introduced into

what became Nigeria as parts of the colonial experience. As noted earlier, the Nigerian political system and journalistic practices were not indigenous to the societies that made up what became Nigeria but were foisted on them by the British. At least, they were initially imported, and although arguably they are now socio-culturally nuanced and domesticated, their origins can still be traced to the West. On the political side, Bretton astutely observed that the legal-political framework within which Nigeria became an independent country was "developed by the British rulers in part to assure, as far as it was possible and feasible, some degree of continuing control and influence after the legal and formal separation" (Bretton 1962, 9). Within indigenous political frameworks, an extension of British control and influence over Nigeria during and after a period of colonial rule would not have been feasible or achievable.

I take the view that the interplay of politics and journalism in Nigeria is emblematic of the colonial experience. These two cultural expressions are strong reminders of the encounter between the British and pre-colonial communities in West Africa. The issue here is not colonialism, or even politics and journalism; studies in those areas abound. However, there has been, to my knowledge, no discussion of the lingering impact of the colonial experience on two critical areas of public life in Nigeria. The basic premise of this book is that politics, specifically partisan party politics, and journalistic practices in contemporary Nigeria are imports that still manifest their natural roots in spite of domestication and indigenisation.

The current political system in Nigeria has mutated from imported governance structures that worked in their natural environment into formats that have faltered in the country despite years of practice. Multi-party politics seem to trigger conflict and divisiveness. In addition, there is a disconnect between the imported political structure and communal needs. The norms and logic of multi-party politics feed polarisation, and this has become an acceptable fixture of Nigerian politics. As a result, two seemingly contradictory processes pose challenges in Nigeria. One is the problem of conflict fuelled by ethnicity, and the other is the demands of democracy for a pluralist political system. These impact on each other in different ways. Democracy calls for the opening up of political life to competition, but that fosters ethnic conflict, which serves as a mobilisation tool for electoral success. Ironically, to participate in political life, politicians often have to appeal to primordial bonds embedded in ethnic affiliations to be successful. Thus, democracy seems to give ethnicity longevity. In other words, ethnic conflict is driven by political processes.

Smouldering Embers

This book attempts to connect historical and contemporary dots in the context of two important social and cultural aspects of national life. It presents a stimulating perspective on two critical systems in Africa's most populous country. Its title draws attention to the enduring effect of the colonial inheritance on Nigeria and how the intersection of politics and journalism in the country accentuates a historical disruption in a geographical space. This view is predicated on the understanding that the colonial experience shaped the course of the story of the nations that were webbed together to create Nigeria and that the 'creation' process produced unintended consequences that remain problematic.

In recognition of the centrality of the press to Nigerian political and public discourse, this book explores the intersection of politics and newspaper journalism in the context of the country's colonial legacy. It traces the pivotal role of the press in Nigeria's political development and discusses the relationship between journalism and politics during critical periods in the country's political history. *Journalism and Politics in Nigeria* provides an interpretative analysis of the impact of the colonial interlude on Nigeria's journalism and politics by concentrating on newspaper journalism because the print media for a long time was the most influential institution supporting democratic freedom in Nigeria. Even in the age of social media, journalism is still a dominant force in Nigeria and a conduit for the expression of political views. Journalism mediated deliberations about the amalgamation of the different units that make up the country and continues to reconstruct the reality of the impact of the emergence of a single political entity out of a mosaic of diverse groups of people.

This book offers students of Nigerian politics, journalism and African studies an accessible and authoritative analysis of political issues and debates in Africa's most populous country. The book also provides a critical and grounded consideration of the complex relationship between journalism and politics in Nigeria. It does not pretend to be a definitive analysis of that complex interface, but it presents a discussion that is supported by 'thick descriptions' of empirical examples of newspaper coverage of politics to illustrate the journalism-politics connection within specific contexts. By drilling into newspaper coverage of military-sponsored transitions to democracy programmes, critical political periods in Nigeria's history, this book captures and freezes those significant events to forestall time eroding the memory of those moments. Examining those direction-changing programmes through the prism of journalism acknowledges

the importance of newspapers in Nigeria's political story. It illustrates how the introduction of journalism as a particular form of communication brought about lasting changes in the social, political, educational and economic experiences of a colonised people. In short, this is a book for anyone who is keen to understand the dynamics of Nigerian politics and the critical role of the press. Given that politics is conceptualised and operationalised in Nigeria simply as a contest for the spoils of office, this book attempts to explain how the colonial intervention provides an explanation for the nature of Nigerian politics.

In drawing attention to the connection between political activities and the colonial heritage, I take the stance that independence did not eradicate the impact of British colonial rule on the fabric of Nigerian society; rather, the colonial experience provided a bedrock for vital institutions in the country. The vestiges of the colonial encounter continue to smoulder in different areas of life in the country, particularly in political activities and journalistic practices. More than 100 years after the 'creation' of Nigeria, the people who were brought together in one political entity are still uncertain they belong together because they had no say in the emergence of the country.

This examination of long-lasting effects of the colonial experience on Nigerian politics and journalism makes the point that independence did not free the country from the clutches of the colonial power. The colonial interlude clearly restructured class relations, political institutions and modes of communication. Although some pre-colonial institutions did survive, they were adapted to meet new challenges brought about by colonial rule and to perform new roles. In principle, colonial rule officially ended on 1 October 1960 when Nigeria gained political independence, but the values, norms and practices that characterised it are still salient enough to distort political and journalistic experiences at many levels in the country. Consequently, Nigeria's contemporary socio-cultural development reflects the long-tail impact of the colonial interlude.

This book is the outcome of many years of work and started its life as my PhD thesis. It mutated into its present form as a response to questions that I grappled with when I returned to the newsroom after a stint in the classroom as a graduate student. I was curious about the nature of Nigerian journalism. One key argument in my thesis focused on how Nigerian journalists, in their attempts to conform to normative standards of journalism, became agents of stability and not of change, especially during military-sponsored democratisation periods. Ordinarily, that should not have been problematic, but given that stability meant maintaining the status quo in terms of the consolidation of military dictatorship instead of

championing change that could have resulted in a successful transition to democracy, journalistic support for the military undermined the political development of the country. From this standpoint, I was keen to understand the provenance of Nigerian journalism and its intersection with politics. In this book, I attempt to explore how these practical activities were introduced into the areas that became Nigeria by colonial agents and which have now been domesticated. This approach, I believe, offers a fresh insight into the enduring impact of the colonial legacy. Although these two institutions have taken on the colouration of their environment, it is pointless to deny the impact of their roots on their functionality in Nigeria. There is no doubt that contemporary Nigerian political activities do not reflect political systems that served pre-colonial societies; thus, the provenance of multi-party politics is traceable to the colonial intervention. As Olufemi Taiwo (2010, 2) astutely observed, the colonial legacy included the implantation of:

- a democratic model of governance built on the consent of the governed;
- a system of governance based on the periodic election of representatives;
- elected officials who swear to uphold the rule of law; and
- a constitutional regime in which every citizen is equal before the law.

Regardless of one's view on the impact of the colonial experience, the encounter had an enduring effect on Nigeria. While it could be argued that the colonisers did not completely dispose of existing modes of governance but rather strengthened them through 'indirect rule', it is worth noting that the strategy was not altruistic. Opting to work with existing feudal structures in the northern part of the country, for instance, limited the involvement of British administrators in the running of the country and was a cost-saving strategy. More involvement would have entailed deploying personnel from the mother country to areas that were reputed to be home to life-threatening diseases like malaria and bugs such as mosquitoes and tsetse flies. On the surface, indirect rule suggested a preservation of indigenous modes of governance, but "the evidence is overwhelming that the indigenous institutions were altered, destroyed, and for the most part severely distorted" (Taiwo 2010, 41). By exploiting the services of native institutions and traditional chieftains, colonial administrators succeeded in reinforcing divisions among the people and introduced political conflict in some parts of the communities that were amalgamated to create Nigeria.

More problematically, retreating from the direct administration of some parts of the new political entity conveyed legitimacy to religion – Islam, to be specific – as a political tool in some parts of the country because elites who were primarily Muslim leaders were co-opted to play political roles. Consequently, those elites were able to unify their areas of influence into Islamic communities, a move that is now a critical feature of contemporary Nigeria. Thus, while most parts of Nigeria were not homogenous in terms of ethnic groups, during the colonial period, Islam facilitated a sense of belonging in some sections of the country and enabled Muslim leaders to exercise political control in addition to their religious responsibilities. It also limited, to some extent, the tension between adopting new values introduced by colonial authorities and preserving indigenous norms in the affected areas.

Indirect rule worked in areas where existing governance structures provided a foundation on which to build another layer of authority. That was not the case in other parts of the country, especially in areas where attempts to foist a new structure of governance introduced conflict into communities. In the absence of traditional rulers who could exercise power on behalf of British administrators, Warrant Chiefs were appointed unilaterally by the British, but the chiefs lacked traditional authority and legitimacy in addition to not being recognised by their communities. Consequently, the application of indirect rule was a failure in some parts of the country.

Some of the ideas explored in this book have been published in journal articles and book chapters before, but they are unpacked here to develop and present a more detailed argument about the nature of the relationship between the press and politics in Nigeria. It is worth pointing out that the focus on print media is indicative of the power of journalism in Nigerian public discourse, partly because of the de facto power of the written word (Abdi 2007). Or, as Nwabueze notes, "the fascination and the hypnotic appeal of the printed word" (1993, 82) enable the press to rally society around certain principles and ideas. Moreover, the written word is equated with power in society, especially as that power is demonstrated in a non-indigenous language that privileges elites and the powerful. Prior to the deregulation of broadcast media from 1992, newspapers were considered to be more credible sources of information while radio and television, which were owned and controlled by state and federal governments, were regarded as mouthpieces and microphones of those in power. The liberalisation of broadcast media has expanded the reach of both broadcast media and journalistic practices.

As discussed in various sections of the book, journalistic practices and political activities in Nigeria have evolved over the years, but their roots are embedded in the colonial inheritance. The mosaic of nations that were webbed together by the colonial authorities had different cultural and traditional practices that were seen to justify colonisation because those indigenous norms were considered as being inconsequential and were replaced with new realities. One of the critical strategies in the transformation of the constructed geopolitical space was the exposure of the people to Western-style education. This facilitated colonial activities and contributed to the emergence of a class of elites who owed their social status and identity to their response to foreign domination. With the benefit of a Western education, they were able to challenge the colonial order and presented themselves as successors to the British. Such a unified approach to resistance to foreign domination would not have been a considered option without the amalgamation of different nationalities into one political entity by colonial authorities. If the different nations were not webbed into one, they probably would not have been able to sustain a campaign for independence from many fronts, as would have been necessary without the amalgamation.

Colonial rule facilitated the emergence of a class of nationalists and heroes. It redefined the trajectory of social mobility with status and power no longer dependent on physical prowess, or, as Chinua Achebe, the novelist, put it, on "solid personal achievement" (1958, 3). Literacy skills, oratory and the ability to communicate in English were tickets to a new social class of educated elites who challenged the colonial order and sought liberation from alien domination. Most of the campaigns against the colonial authorities were staged on the pages of newspapers. It is on that premise that we can understand politics and journalistic activities and practices as offshoots of the colonial inheritance.

The relationship between politics and journalism is illustrated by democracy to the extent that journalism is seen as being intertwined with democratic values. Norris (2000, xv), for example, argues that "journalism is often venerated as a beacon of light that helps to sustain democracy, a force for freedom lying between venal government and the citizens, a protector of the innocent." This journalism-democracy nexus is an imposed perspective that informs journalistic practices in Nigeria, but it lacks indigenous roots in pre-colonial 'Nigerian' societies. Thus, the relationship between journalism and democracy as operationalised by Nigerian journalists is problematic because it lacks resonance with indigenous cultural practices. This idea of a disconnection is one of the issues discussed in *Journalism and Politics in Nigeria*.

This book is divided into eight chapters. This introduction outlines the focus of the book and its main arguments and is followed by seven substantive chapters. The first chapter concentrates on historical moments in the colonial history of Nigeria and the intersection of journalism and politics in the country. It outlines the socio-economic and political context of the amalgamation of two British protectorates into one geopolitical entity and discusses the consequences of the unification project on the new country's politics and journalism. In chapter two, the focus shifts to the evolution of the press, starting with its emergence and the factors that shaped its character. The chapter also traces the growth and development of the press as a derivative of the British newspaper system and outlines its contributions to political processes through a close examination of the relationship between politics and journalism, especially the politics of independence struggles. The chapter also discusses the emergence of newspapers as the megaphones of frontline nationalists and illustrates how politics was the centrepiece of the newspaper business and the driving force of journalism from the outset. The intersection of journalism and politics is examined to delineate how the Nigerian press is a product of the country's political system. From this standpoint, the chapter outlines the impact of the colonial legacy on the Nigerian press and how this, in turn, influences journalistic practices in the country.

To contextualise the argument developed in this book, chapter three examines the nature of the Nigerian state against the backdrop of historical, economic and social processes that have shaped the country since it came into existence as a political entity. It discusses the impact of the political structures and institutions that were created by the colonial authority on Nigerian politics and how the nature of the state reflects the colonial experience. This is followed by a discussion on the conflictual relationship between the Nigerian press and the military. The objective of chapter four is to explore the impact of the military on the press, especially in the context of politics. This is considered pertinent in view of the colonial legacy on both the military and journalism in Nigeria. Both institutions are vestiges of the colonial experience. As a product of colonial intervention, the military has had a profound impact on Nigerian politics and journalism.

Chapter five examines the connection between the Nigerian press and political development through a detailed examination of the first military-mediated return-to-civil-rule programme to illustrate the nexus of journalism and politics. The chapter highlights the paradox of the military, which is inherently undemocratic, taking on the responsibility of democratising the Nigerian state. This paradox is evident in the protracted transition

programme sponsored by the General Ibrahim Babangida administration. That programme, which was noted for its twists and turns, is the focus of chapter six. These two chapters outline how a selection of national newspapers exemplified the tension between a normative understanding of the responsibilities of journalism and domesticated journalistic practices in the country at critical political moments. Building on the view that the Nigerian press and politics are products of the colonial experience, chapter seven discusses the legacies of colonialism and how these have shaped contemporary political and journalistic practices. The chapter also pulls together the different threads that run through the book to illustrate how journalism and politics in Nigeria can be seen as embers of the Empire. Against this backdrop, the next chapter outlines the socio-economic and political factors that underpinned the "creation" of a new country during the colonial period.

CHAPTER ONE

TRIBES AND TONGUES DIFFER:
A HISTORICAL AND ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the intersection of journalism and politics as artefacts of Nigeria's colonial inheritance. It outlines the socio-economic and political context of the amalgamation of two British protectorates into one geopolitical entity and discusses the consequences of the unification project on the country's political activities and journalistic practices. Taken as a point of departure is the view that this historical perspective provides a framework of meaning for explaining journalistic practices and political activities in contemporary Nigeria. From this standpoint, it is argued that while Nigeria's present-day political system cannot be blamed completely on the colonial experience, that historical interruption in the country's affairs should not be elided or deemed to be irrelevant in the context of contemporary realities. The idea here is to view modern journalistic and political practices and activities through the prism of the past, that past here being the colonial interlude in Nigeria. This historical reckoning facilitates the identification of trends from the past that have become interlaced into the present. While this may not provide a comprehensive explanation or reference points for journalistic and political processes in contemporary Nigeria, it could provide a guide or framework to understanding the enduring impact of the colonial experience. This is by no means a revisionist approach to the past but an informed attempt to deconstruct narratives that frame the story of Nigeria. In other words, it is vital to acknowledge that British colonial rule shaped the territorial unit known as Nigeria by exploiting and denigrating pre-existing political and communication values and norms. As a result, the interlude etched systems that structured and continue to shape contemporary realities in Nigeria.

Examining the historical antecedent of foreign, though now domesticated, journalistic and political practices, therefore, can elucidate patterns of influence, which in turn can provide insight into ongoing processes. This approach also serves as an acknowledgement that British imperial rule

pockmarks the history of Nigeria. As Frantz Fanon noted (1961), colonialism did not merely hold colonised people in its grip but also turned to their past to distort, disfigure and destroy it. The colonial period is a fulcrum around which Nigeria's past and present coalesce, and though political systems and practices that were imported into Nigeria might have become indigenised and domesticated, they still manifest their antecedents. Those imports were shaped by foreign cultural and social values that have not been completely disentangled from their past. While viewing contemporary political and journalistic practices through history's lens could be seen as being unnecessarily retrospective or as an attempt to simply hark back to a period of disruption, it does offer an option to map out outcomes of that interference. By looking back at the past, an attempt is made to situate contemporary realities within a historical context to promote reflexivity. Chinua Achebe, one of Africa's foremost novelists, essayists and political commentators, recommended a similar approach when he observed that people who do not know where the rain began to beat them cannot tell where they dried their bodies. This is an attempt to locate when and how new strands were introduced into political and journalistic narratives of the space that became Nigeria.

Exploring the legacy of the colonial experience on Nigerian politics and journalistic practices empowers us to identify the forces that have shaped two critical institutions in Nigeria. It also acknowledges the extent to which Nigeria's colonial heritage is intertwined with contemporary realities, just as tentpoles of our politics and journalistic practices are embedded in the past. To understand this interconnection, it is expedient to retrace their roots because partisan party politics and professional journalism did not emerge directly from traditional African experiences but were foisted on the people through colonial rule. The invading practices usurp spaces that had been occupied by pre-existing modes of governance and communication, and just like other invading species, they supplanted home-grown practices, took control and relegated them to the margins. While the foreign practices can be said to have become domesticated, they are not truly organically rooted in Nigerian culture and traditions. Against the backdrop of the colonial legacy, politics, especially multi-party politics, and journalism can be recognised as keystones of Nigeria's history. Whatever the state of modern Nigerian politics and journalism, the influence of their colonial roots is still discernible in their current forms. As a result, these two institutions – the press and the political system – can be conceptualised as residues of the British Empire, the colonising power, and understood in relation to the conflation of power at specific historical moments.

Situating the Embers

The term 'embers' is used here as a condensational symbol to epitomise overt and subtle residues of the colonial interlude. Fundamentally, the term encapsulates the destructive and transformational impact of the encounter between the colonial authorities and the people who occupied the space that is now modern Nigeria. The embers are the continuing processes of cross-cultural and socio-political domination by an external power. They symbolise the crosscurrents of the past and the contemporary, an acknowledgement of how colonialism empowered Britain to successfully assume political, economic and social control over a large territory by exploiting the subjected area for its benefit. The residues of that encounter still have the potential to ignite a 'fire' in different areas of life in modern Nigeria, and have, indeed, fanned a smouldering fire of political conflict in the country at critical moments. To date, for example, many people still associate the place and role of the military in Nigerian politics with the colonial experience. Farooq Kperogi, for example, asserts that *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo,* a Hausa language newspaper of note, was set up to "encourage northern Nigerian males to enlist in the British colonial army to fight in World War 2" (2020, 45). The colonial authority's recruitment drive and its encouragement of young men to join the military resulted in what is now northern Nigeria producing more senior military officers than the southern part of the country. Moreover, when Lord Frederick Lugard, the colonial administrator who 'created' Nigeria, took control of the West African Frontier Force in 1898, ninety per cent of the troops were from the northern areas. Colonial rule, therefore, provided a pathway to the military, and that inadvertently worked in favour of northerners who have over the years exercised political power over the rest of the country, especially during the protracted periods of military autocracy.

The discussion presented here is grounded on the understanding that since contemporary Nigerian politics and journalism do not have indigenous roots and are not innately embedded in the country's traditions and cultures, they can still be perceived to be foreign cultural practices and lacking in historical logic. Moreover, the colonial encounter dislodged the traditional and cultural glue that held communities together and provided frameworks of meaning for relationships. Shared values and norms fostered a sense of community and belonging, but these were replaced by imposed values and practices that produced new social and political structures. This is particularly significant because of the way in which these values and norms were introduced or imposed on the country during the British imperialist adventure in West Africa. These practices manifest

features and characteristics that are not endogenous to the diverse cultures in the geographical space that became Nigeria. Besides, these cultural forms successfully silenced indigenous voices and continue to subdue them many decades after the end of formal domination.

An examination of the impact of the colonial legacy on Nigeria's political system and journalistic practices offers insights into how the traditions that were introduced into the country created tensions that have outlasted the colonial experience. It is unlikely that without the colonial experience these two important institutions could have evolved in the ways that they have done, given that the indigenous societies in the area that became Nigeria had different political and communication systems that had served the people for centuries and were effective as social and cultural bonding agents. These indigenous societies had established socio-political structures and were forged on what Dan Agbese, a veteran Nigerian journalist, describes as "the anvil of our collective belief" (2020). Shared understanding ensured power was not invested in a single individual, as is often the case in contemporary Nigerian politics, with god-fathers being custodians and gatekeepers of public spaces. Put differently, the invaded indigenous societies had time-tested traditions for managing community affairs. Some of these societies, Falola and Heaton (2008) observed, had been strong regional powers with decentralised political structures that ensured power was not invested in a single centralised administration. However, these pre-colonial governance structures were supplanted by new systems and institutions that were foisted on the communities during the period of British colonial rule.

Pre-colonial Setting

The traditional systems of governance that colonial authorities might have deemed 'primitive' and tribal structures were complex and sophisticated institutions that met societal needs and were products of the cultural and traditional milieu from which they emanated. They resonated through the shared experiences of the people, educing an effective and emotional impact because they were reservoirs of knowledge. Traditional social and political institutions had integrity as expressions of belief systems of the communities. Prior to the colonial experience, women in many of the traditional societies, for example, enjoyed power and autonomy and played significant roles in their communities. However, they were relegated to subordinate positions when male-dominated political ideas were imposed on the people. As primary food providers, women were recognised as important members of their communities, but as Tamale

observed, "a systematic and deliberate colonial policy ensured that African women were excluded from politics" (2000,10). Moreover, colonial administrators denigrated women's political and economic activities. Lowering the status of women reduced their chances of active engagement in politics, and their absence from "meaningful political representation in independent Nigeria can be viewed as showing the strength of the legacy of single-sex politics that the British colonial masters left behind" (Okonjo 1976, 58).

On a macro level, the colonial interlude forcefully integrated a motley mix of people from different cultures, beliefs and governance systems for sheer expediency and introduced complexities that corrupted traditional and indigenous structures and continue to impact the Nigerian political system. To compound the problem, the colonial authority entrenched a political culture that was driven by conflict and legitimised separatist proclivities. The point being made here is that the notion of competitive multi-party politics, which is now the dominant political practice, is foreign to indigenous Nigerian culture even though it has now been institutionalised in the country. Indigenisation has not homogenised partisan party politics to the point of effacing its alien root. Consequently, decades after Nigeria achieved political independence, the residues of the colonial experience are still redolent and interwoven into the culture and intricate mechanism that underpins Nigerian politics.

The disharmony that permeates the Nigerian political system can be traced back to colonial administrative practices that constructed the foundations on which the post-colonial state was consolidated. That disharmony was advanced through the legitimisation of ethnic identification and consciousness and is evident in political conflicts. Today, politicians still exploit conflict along ethnic lines to exacerbate tensions among the different nationalities that were brought together during the colonial period. Put differently, the legacy the British Empire left behind has not been discarded because it was woven into institutions and practices that emerged during the colonial period. Although British colonial rule was not protracted, it imposed political ideas and values on what became Nigeria, and that heritage is embedded in contemporary Nigerian culture to the extent that the vestiges of the imperialist adventure have been indigenised and are now taken for granted. Without the colonial interlude, the political system would have evolved along different trajectories because of the diversity of the nationalities that make up the country.

Emergence of a New Class of Elites

British imperial rule significantly changed Nigeria's historical trajectory by introducing a foreign political system as part of its administrative strategy. By the time Nigeria gained political independence, most of the country's political elites had been socialised into the British political system through a gradual transfer and conferment of power, and as a result, there was "a certain degree of identity of interests between Europeans and Nigerians" (Bretton 1962, 24). Staggering the transfer of power to emerging political leaders ensured a relatively smooth restructuring of the political system. It has been argued that "in order for the colonial masters to administer the colony, it was necessary to orientate Nigerians toward Western values" (Damachi 1972, 3). This imposition of a new value system means most post-independence leaders were "products of colonial politics, of choices made by colonial rulers from among a group of competing claimants" (Damachi 1972, 59). To quote James Chiriyankandath (2008, 38), "[t]he impact of colonialism was transformative rather than transitory. As well as shaping economic and political reforms, it also changed the way people, especially the Western-educated elites, came to see the world."

Nigerian political leaders who emerged during the colonial period honed their statecraft through the campaign for independence. They successfully applied the ideas they acquired from their Western-style education to their demand for an end to colonial rule. Their response to the domination of their society by an external power conveyed on them social and political status. Over time, the emerging elites achieved relevance through sustained attacks on imperialism and were recognised as the voice of the people. "These leaders were indeed often the product of the colonial system and had limited power foundations in pre-colonial societies" (Englebert 2000, 11). Thus, it could be argued that their prominence on the political stage was a product of the colonial experience because they were able to employ their nationalist rhetoric and political skills to make claims for 'self-government' and presented themselves as "qualified by natural rights to lead their fellow nationals to higher political development" (Njoku 2006, 6).

British imperialism impacted what became Nigeria in different ways, but it was the export of its political practices that has extended its influence to the present day. Without the colonial legacy, it is difficult to imagine how a common political system could have evolved in the area now known as Nigeria. In other words, the political party system that is now the standard in contemporary Nigeria has its roots in the colonial

legacy because independence did not completely efface the impact of that historical phenomenon. Nationalists had to form parties to contest elections, a requirement that was not needed in pre-colonial traditional societies. Political relationships were organised to reflect socio-cultural norms and practices that resonated within communities, and each community had a political system and governance structure that met its needs. In most cases, the political systems were embedded in the social fabric of the communities. However, with the introduction of Western political values and practices, the 'constructed' Nigerian state had to incorporate critical elements of the colonial state as it sought legitimacy and entry into the global scene as a sovereign member of the "international state system" (Young 1994, 107). As Crawford Young noted, "the potent legacy of the colonial state in Africa was embedded in its post-colonial successor" (1994, 103). Young cogently argues that post-colonial statecraft practices, such as autocratic habits, command mentality and "extractive relationship with the peasant sector, are legacies of the colonial experience" (1994, 111).

With state formation being closely linked to the economic benefits of the colonising power, it was inevitable that it would result in the realignment of existing institutions and systems that could undermine or challenge the power of the state. Colonial intervention entailed the introduction of new techniques and cultural models, the appearance of new processes of social differentiation, and a reorientation of the social structure. As noted earlier, the colonising power foisted alien political ideas and practices on Nigeria, which were overlaid on the political cultures of the different nationalities that occupied the space that became Nigeria. Colonial rule, as Falola and Heaton observed, "made transformative changes to Nigerian societies in many ways, particularly in southern Nigeria, which saw the most significant alterations to political institutions and economic orientations" (2008, 110). Colonialism, as Margery Perham acknowledged (1963), entailed dominations that allowed a state to profit "from the land and labours of other peoples." Britain exploited what became Nigeria and reshaped its history in significant and long-lasting ways.

The impact of the new socio-political structures was the emergence of social classes that owed their relevance to their association with colonial authorities and in which bizarre sinecures were sometimes the norm. The emerging elites were not active participants in the creation of the new values that were introduced into their society, but as Young explains, the burgeoning political leaders "were forced to identify with a nation that rose from their own collective experience as defined by an alien power.

The object of patriotic allegiance was indeed a foreign creation in which they had been involuntarily included" (1994, 24). The colonial interlude transformed and leveraged the nations that made up Nigeria into a dynamic but conflicted entity. As a result, politics has been an exceedingly divisive force in Nigeria. "Without a well-rooted national, political, or ideological identity, Nigeria can then be seen less as a single nation-state and more as a complex region resulting from many interacting influences and conflicting pressures over its long rich history" (McLoughlin and Bouchat 2013, 19).

To Oyovbaire, colonial rule was a scaffolding and superstructure that reinforced social, cultural and political differences among the nations that were brought together: "All colonial rule did in the context of national unity was to 'amalgamate and divide' for its own purpose of domination and exploitation" (1979, 83). Basically, the colonial intrusion did not produce a united country. Moreover, as Eleazu observed, "the establishment of Nigeria with all the paraphernalia of the colonial situation created a problematic situation for the existing political cultures whose adherents were after independence required to become citizens of Nigeria" (1977, 31).

From Talking Drums to the Written Word

In addition to the introduction of a new political culture, the colonial intervention also imported a new mode of mass communication: journalism into Nigeria. As a mode of communication and a cultural form, journalism is not native to Nigeria. It is a product of political, socio-cultural and economic imperatives that were alien to Nigeria when it was first introduced. In its simplest form, journalism describes the activity of "gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. [Its purpose is] to provide people with verified information they can use to make better decisions, and its practices, the most important of which is a systematic process – a discipline of verification – that journalists use to find not just the facts, but also the 'truth about the facts'" (American Press Institute, n.d.). Journalism, Tony Harcup (2014) asserts, is about making public information that could otherwise have been unavailable in the public domain. To Denis McQuail, a mass communication scholar, journalism is "the construction and publication of accounts of contemporary events, persons or circumstances of significance or interest, based on information acquired from reliable sources" (2013, 14). Taking Brian McNair's view that "journalism was born as a commodity for sale in the cultural marketplace"

(2006, 28) alienates the concept of journalism even more from the traditional Nigerian mode of communication.

As a cultural practice, journalism is laden with values of its original socio-cultural landscape. While the sharing of information is an intuitive attribute, the imperative to package information in ways that make it commercially viable as a commodity is a Western invention. Jean Chalaby, a press historian, holds the view that "journalism is an Anglo-American invention" and traces its evolution to the period between the 1830s and the 1920s. Chalaby writes: "…the emergence of journalism is not only historically but culturally marked. Indeed, this discursive revolution did not occur universally. Journalism is not only a discovery of the 19th century, it is also an Anglo-American invention" (1996, 304). According to John Nerone, "a hegemonic model of journalism appeared in the West in the late 19th and early 20th century…. It was exported to the developing world along with many other western beliefs and practices" (2013, 447).

The occupational ideology of journalism presents it as performing certain functions in society. These include empowering citizens with information to enable them to make informed decisions about who can exercise political power, keeping citizens informed about current events and issues, promoting acceptable values and norms, and setting the agenda for public debates and opinions. Fundamentally, journalism plays a watchdog role in society, and this is closely tied to democracy. The watchdog ideal assigns journalists the responsibility of monitoring the activities and performance of the powerful. Journalism, from a normative perspective, thus plays a critical role in politics. Traditional modes of communication were not functional and instrumental in the same way. From this perspective, it is apparent that Nigerian journalistic practices are by-products of the colonial experience because professional standards and values associated with journalism do not reflect local contexts or modes of communication.

Following the introduction of journalism into what became Nigeria, newspapers over time became "the most iconic outlet for news and other types of written communication" (Ugah 2009) and "the most reliable vaults of historical records, the most readily accessible chronicles of contemporary national events and memories, and the most dominant form of mass communication for the educated elite in the country" (Kperogi 2011, 25-26). It may seem obvious, but it is worth stressing that journalism is concerned with packaging and disseminating information, ideally for the public good. In practice, it is also about reconstructing stories to capture audiences to sell to advertisers. At the root of modern journalism is a close