

Self-Governing Protectorate-Panacea to Yoruba Self Determination? A forensic Assessment of the Feasibility, Pros and Cons

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Short communication

'Nigeria, like many parts of Africa, has suffered from the careless, some will even say criminal methods by which the different parts of the newly discovered parts of Africa were divided during the grab for colonies by the rival European powers. One has only to look at the map to see how little account was taken of natural features or tribal groupings. There was thus imposed upon a large part of the continent an artificial system for which there was no basis for national unity' -Harold Macmillan (British Prime Minister 1957-1963) in autobiography Pointing the Way.

On Friday, August 21, 2012, the headlines of a major Nigerian newspaper screamed "Yorubas demand regional autonomy" [1]. A general assembly of Yoruba self-determination groups/Elders demanded the Nigerian government grant the south western parts of the country (Yorubaland) freedom to, among other things, conduct their own foreign policy, trade and most controversial of all run their own police force. Younger readers found these demands bizarre but senior citizens still recalled that this was the status quo when The British granted Nigeria independence in 1960. It took a military coup six years later and a bitter civil war for the monolithic Nigeria of today to emerge. Today Nigeria is a third world failed state. She ranks number 16 on the list of 20 failed states [2]- 3 steps below Pakistan and 5 steps below Iraq. A terrorist organization boko haram has made Nigeria a household name around the world generating even more bad publicity than internet scammers have for the country. Superstition is rife, and people (including children) are often killed for being "witches". But it was not always so.

At independence, the Yoruba (south western) part of Nigeria was progressive and prosperous-recording an amazing series of firsts (by third world standards)-including the first television station on the continent of Africa (1959)-just 6 years after high tech Japan! Even before colonization by Britain Yorubas were known for their trade, administration and urbanism [3] and news of these

people that defied 19th century stereotypes had sparked interest in the western world more so when archaeologists began excavating bronze statues at the Yoruba Royal City, Ife [4]. Yorubas today remain trapped in a third world country- the south west part of Nigeria being just marginally better than the other parts. Obviously Yorubas got a raw deal in a clash of civilizations with Colonial Britain. Many are still baffled how, given their relative state of advancement, Yorubas came to be colonized in the first place.

Corruption, of course, is Nigeria's number 1 problem. While some have opined that sub-Saharan Africa is backward because of the limited intelligence of the sub Saharans themselves [5] this is not the case. Some of the most intelligent people on this earth are Nigerians. Nigeria is a mess because it has a massive web of corruption, so strong and intricate the Nephilia spider will turn green with envy. The victims of this web of corruption (which cuts across both government and individuals) are too numerous to mention here. Many westerners have fallen prey to Nigerian online swindlers. The Nigerian web of corruption confounded Sir Richard Branson and even this intrepid entrepreneur who made it into the Guinness book of records [6] did not prevail. His Virgin Nigeria project fizzled out like a bad firework [7]. Hillary Clinton has described Nigeria's level of corruption as "unbelievable" [8]. Many fears this web cannot be dismantled from within, only from without. Some even say this web existed before the British vacated the colony; it only grew more extensive after independence.

As early as March 1942 a Nigerian politician declared- "I hope the time will never come during my lifetime, but if it must come I beg you, Sir, to have me enrolled now, when you are ready to hand over the Government to the natives to exercise authority over the land again as in days gone by, to go with you and all English people wherever they go" [9]. During World War 2 another Nigerian stated- "It is a great pride that we are numbered among the British Commonwealth of nations and as British Subjects it is the fervent

prayer of each and every one of us that the British shall win the war and the British shall continue to rule over us" [10]. These statements are ridiculous and naïve, but what was the mindset of the men who made them? These men were not bootlickers, traitors or what African Americans used to call "Uncle Toms" (sellouts). They were expressing genuine fears about Nigerian corruption being unleashed.

The question now arises, which first world country is ready to 'adopt' The Yorubas as its 'Protectorate'. Obvious choices will be countries that already have such arrangements. This narrows the search down to countries like The United States of America (Puerto Rico etc.) Great Britain (Bermuda etc.), China (Hong Kong etc.) and France (French Guiana etc.). A NATO, EU or UN monitored Protectorate is also possible. A hypothetical name for such a commonwealth could be "Subsahara" or "Savanna" or better still "The Democratic Confederated Yoruba States of The Cocoa Coast" or simply "Cocoa Coast"- Cocoa has always been the major cash crop of South Western Nigeria. A confederacy will be best since Yorubas were living in vibrant self-governing fiercely independent city states for centuries before British colonization occurred in the late 1800s.

Being a commonwealth/protectorate has its upside and downside. Most difficult for Yorubas to swallow will be the stationing of thousands of foreign troops and military bases. But Yorubas will have to endure, like it even, as the price to pay for peace and security. There's no shame in having foreign troops on your soil. Japan is a proud industrialized first world nation and yet has thousands of foreign troops on her soil. Saudi Arabia also had foreign troops. Even if a mere 'autonomous region' is opted for, there will have to be foreign troops, or it will be just a joke. Yet the tendency for the parent country to try to dominate its "protectorate" with puppet leaders is real-the short lived "Manchukuo" (with figure head Emperor Pu Yi) carved from China by Japan in the 1930s comes to mind. Another effect is that there will be a demographic shift. A black country will no longer be possible- a zebra (white and black) nation will emerge. We may even have a giraffe nation ("yellow" and black) -if China is chosen. The nation cannot be ethnically uniform and Yorubas should get ready to live and work among people of a different color on a continuous basis. This should not be a problem-Yoruba hospitality is well-known all-over Africa. Now to the advantages. The demon of corruption will finally be caged and hopefully exorcised. Modern infrastructure, transportation and industry will be built. Millions of jobs will be created and there will be a massive foreign investment. Political stability, exposure to first world standards of health, education, justice, law enforcement etc.

will follow in this new nation based on an agricultural economy and light industry. After a decade or two, full sovereign status can then peacefully be resumed.

The bottom-line is that the advantages of being a Self-Governing Commonwealth far outweigh the disadvantages. The choice is clear-either Yorubas swallow their pride and submit to first world guidance-or continue to stifle in third world corruption and misery. The hard, painful fact though is that 99.9% of the Yorubas calling for regional autonomy are not serious at all. Anecdotes abound of Yoruba "patriots" who called for autonomy, even secession, only to be offered millions in bribes or plush government jobs. They immediately backtracked and started to enumerate the many benefits of "one Nigeria". If Yorubas really wanted to secede or obtain regional autonomy they would have done so following the June 12, 1993 fiasco. When however, Yorubas become serious about self-determination (something I doubt will ever happen)-a Self-Governing Protectorate in close association with a first world country is the only reasonable, peaceful and realistic option. If not, Africa's most populous nation will descend into a frightful ethnic/civil war that will make the present boko haram insurgency look like a kindergarten scuffle. Already some youths are calling for ethnic violence to affect a secession [11]. People may scoff, but some scoffed in Rwanda in 1994 too, until it became too late. The United Nations and Its Court at The Hague should kindly note this discourse- so that the likes of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide are NEVER repeated in Africa again.

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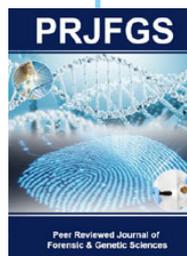
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