

## Book Review: Sam Momah, *Nigeria Beyond Divorce: Amalgamation in Perspective*, Ibadan: Safari Books Limited, 2013

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Received: July 10, 2013 Accepted: July 26, 2013 Online Published: August 30, 2013

doi:10.5539/jpl.v6n3p227

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/jpl.v6n3p227>

This twenty-one chapter book of 277 pages is a convergence of the ideas and experience of General Sam Momah as well as an expression of his abiding faith in the corporate existence of Nigeria. In this lucid narrative, the author in four parts takes the reader on a tour of Nigeria from the colonial era to present day. Prior to that, in the prologue, the author contend that Nigeria with all its potentials is yet to be a nation not to think of being a great nation. He then goes on to appraise some of the contending issues militating against nationhood such as the need to give equal weight to state of residence and state of origin. To the author, the constant clamour for state creation and complaints about marginalization are some examples that Nigeria is yet to be a nation. In this regard, education which should serve as a bellwether in the quest for nationhood is being challenged by an insurgent group known as Boko Haram. This unfortunate situation, the author laments, has been met with a studied silence by those Northern leaders who fashioned it as a militant tool with which to rest power from Southern politicians, and for them to respect the political party arrangement or understanding within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for a rotational Presidency. Beyond the Boko Haram monster, the author identifies other militant groups in the country and a host of other grotesque social pathologies not least of which are kidnapping, ritual killing and the “419” scheme. In conclusion, he observes that the life of the rich and the poor are unbearable and both experience sleepless nights.

What is more, the author describes some of the corrupt transactions that have contributed in the retrogression of Nigeria. Namely, Nigeria holds the unenviable place of being a major crude oil exporter and one of the greatest importers of finished products; a country that has spent 16 billion dollars on electricity and the end result is more darkness; a country that pays militants for a “peace of the graveyard” instead of “a permanent peace with honour”; a country with about a half trillion in security vote but with an increase in insecurity; a country with comatose textile industries valued at 640 billion naira but planning a centenary jamboree; a country where its religious leaders “junket” in private jets while their flock wallow in abject poverty; a country that has vehicle assembly plants but massively import vehicles.

Yet another paradox: Nigeria while possessing virtually all the templates for a failed state, her citizens are voted by Forbes magazine at various times as the World’s Happiest People as well as the World’s Saddest People. Nigeria, the author notes is where certain groups, institutions or organizations detest the use of her local currency and some exchange dirty currency notes at 20 per cent less of the value.

In concluding the prologue, the author warns that a disintegrating Nigeria is an unthinkable prospect. However, if it is embarked upon, the war that would ensue may last for over fifty years like that of Sudan which is about 58 years. But the glimmer of hope is that since Nigeria has survived for one hundred years, what is required is for her to build on that success utilizing her enormous resources. In doing so, Nigeria would restore hope, gain her pride and respect in Africa and the rest of the world.

Part one of the book comprise of four chapters that discuss the British Colonial governance of Nigeria, the amalgamation and constitutional development. This part also identified some of those colonial policies that brought about the lopsided development of the country and which lay the foundation for the post colonial challenges. In chapter three, the author outlines a twenty-eight point suggestion on how to make the marriage, that is the amalgamation, inseparable. Chapter four is a discourse on the various military governments from 1966 to 1999. It also has a table identifying each administration and comments on some of their programs.

Part two is a ten chapter catalogue of the glaring problems with Nigeria. The title of each chapter is self-explanatory. They include the following: bloated bureaucracy and irresponsible creation of states; poor infrastructure and bad management; a federal political structure but the practice of a unitary system of government; endemic insecurity; endemic corruption and a population “bulge”; poor productivity as a result of the wrong application of the Federal character; lack of responsible and proven leadership; and finally, the growing religious tension in the country. While discussing these problems the author proffers solutions and inundates the reader with statistical data. Such data would be ideal for any researcher on Nigeria.

Part three which consist of four chapters are some experiences worthy of emulation by Nigerians and the Nigerian government. For instance, the significance of President Obama’s victory is to eschew ethnicity and corruption, enthrone fairness and equity and project humility in success. Likewise, in Rwanda, the selflessness of the leaders, the systemic zero tolerance for corruption, the forthrightness of Kagame the political leader, and the country’s ability to put aside their past, that is their experience of genocide, are examples to be borrowed. Elsewhere, in Singapore, the fortitude and exemplary leadership of Lee Kuan Yew in catapulting Singapore from a Third World country to a first world nation in a few decades is a marvel worthy of emulation by Nigeria. Finally, and also worthy of emulation is the manner in which Japan has managed its constitutional issues, their regard for and importance of the family, environmental and economic development as well as the emphasis on merit and population control.

Part four has two important chapters of which one is a comparative overview of countries that have broken up and countries, despite forces to break up, have managed to stay together. The verdict, which is the thesis of this book, is that staying together is better than breaking up. In chapter twenty, the author recommends a two phased plan on how to re-structure the Nigerian polity. The pages, following thereafter is the epilogue of the book which takes the reader through the good times to the present tough times and the hope for the future. The book ends with two appendices: first, is a list of some high profile kidnapping, while the second is a list of some Boko Haram bombing locations. This book is highly recommended.

All in all, this book is a must read for any person interested in the growth and development of Nigeria. The author has skillfully intersected history, developmental ideas and experience in this book. It is a veritable primer for any study of Nigeria since 1914. It is replete with statistical data for the doubtful, the policy maker and implementer, or better yet the researcher. This book could not have come at a better time, on the eve of amalgamation of Nigeria one hundred years ago.

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