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## FEDERALISM, ETHNIC POLITICS, STATE AND RELIGION IN NIGERIA

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***Abdur-Rahman Olalekan Olayiwola***  
*Department of Political Science*  
*Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria*

### **INTRODUCTION**

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The mistake of 1951 was added to the mistake of 1914. Attempts have been made to correct both mistakes.... This situation is further complicated by the fact that arithmetical justice does not necessarily translate to socio-political justice. ... Nigerian political parties are highly similar. They all lack defining ideologies. They are, therefore, porous and facilitate party-hoping... The 'concept of federalism has died'. It suffered death by qualification... Unfortunately, federalism has great propaganda appeal for the Nigerian political class. Sloganeering killed the promise of federalism in Nigeria. All the constitutional tinkering have come to naught and must come to naught as long as the power to make the constitution is held by leaders with monarchical ambition or those for whom power is an inevitable life-support system... For federal character to approximate to the equal weighting that the framers of the constitution envisaged the problem of measurement must be addressed. This will be a tortuous process and Nigeria is not known for handling matters of delicate political details. The solution is the responsibility of the political class which, up till now, appears unprepared and unwilling (Ayoade, 2009).

### **Aims and Objectives of the Paper**

This paper on Federalism, Ethnic Politics, State and Religion in Nigeria attempts to achieve the following lofty aims and objectives.

(1) To reflect on Professor Ayoade's preoccupation with, and contribution to effective leadership, political stability and consolidation of Nigeria's Democracy and the extent to which he succeeded or otherwise in proffering workable solutions to Nigeria's federal, ethnic, religious and socio-politico-economic problems over the years. Until his recent retirement from active university teaching, researching, publishing and community service nationally and internationally, Professor John Adebunmi Ayoade, B.A. Ph.D., mni, was three times Head of Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, (1983 – 1984; 1989 – 1990; 2004 – 2007); Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, (1997 – 1999); Founder, Executive Director/Director General, The Institute of Social Science and Administration (TISA), past President of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) and a distinguished participant in the National Political Reform Conference at Abuja, Nigeria (March 15 – June, 2005).

With expertise, knowledge, experience, qualifications, professionalism and specialization in the areas of Federalism, Ethnic Politics, State and Religion. Professor Ayoade for over three decades had distinguished academic career and acquired national and international status having taught in many universities at home and abroad including the University of Pennsylvania, United States of America, U.S.A. He was an avid explorer and builder of minds and nations in the field of Political Science and History – Studies. In brevity, Professor

Ayoade was/is famous for his remarkably outstanding scholarly exploits as a federalist cum ethnic study. While his contemporaries were investing in stocks and shares and thereby accumulating personal and family wealth, Professor Ayoade in his part was busy investing in the future of Nigeria, and Nigerians, immortalizing himself by producing men and women of no mean status in political science discipline, publishing articles and books which are enduring and everlasting legacy for even generations yet unborn and contributing immensely to the development of human capital capacity building, effective leadership, political stability and democratic consolidation. The epigraphic character of the title of this paper is, therefore, not fortuitous. It is a felicitous study offered in recognition of the outstanding contributions of this guru, an icon, an institution, and an iconographic mind in the field of Political Science, History and Psephology.

### **Monumental Works of Professor Ayoade**

Among the numerous monumental papers of Professor Ayoade that will be examined, bisected and analysed are:

- (a) Nigeria and the Squandering of Hope (Ayoade, 1997);
- (b) Nigeria: Positive Pessimism and Negative Optimism (Ayoade, 2010);
- (c) Federalism in Nigeria: The Worship of An Unknown God (Ayoade, 1982);
- (d) Federalism and Revenue Sharing in Nigeria: An Interim Survey of the New Local Government Finance (Undated);
- (e) Electoral Laws and National Unity in Nigeria (Ayoade, 1978);
- (f) Factors of Political Instability in Nigeria: A Theory (Ayoade, 1979);
- (g) African Political Leadership: Sweet Nightmares (Undated);
- (h) Federalism in Nigeria: The Problem with the Solution (Ayoade, 1988);
- (i) Political Constraints and Parastatal Management (Ayoade, Undated);
- (j) Federalism in Africa (Ayoade, 1978);
- (k) The Changing Structure of Nigerian Federalism (Ayoade, 1996);
- (l) Intergovernmental Relations in Nigeria (Ayoade, (1980);
- (m) Secession Threat as a Redressive Mechanism in Nigerian Federalism (Ayoade, 1980);
- (n) Teaching African Politics: Problems and Prospects (Ayoade, 1980);
- (o) Food and African Survival (Ayoade, 1984);
- (p) African Political Thought and Institution ((Ayoade, Undated);
- (q) Ethnic Management in the 1979 Nigerian Constitution (Ayoade, 1987);
- (r) Handbook of Election Monitoring in Nigeria, (Ayoade, 1999);
- (s) The Federal Character Principle and Search for National Integration (Ayoade, 1998).

The second objective of this piece is to contribute to ways of achieving a stable political order, effective leadership, national integration and democratic consolidation (Olayiwola, 1996). By analysing the factors that affect the practice of federalism, the theory and practice of ethnicity and ethnicity of theory, and by making constructive, meaningful and well-considered suggestions that may guide policy-makers, be they in the legislative, executive and/or judicial arms of the Nigerian governments, this research effort also attempts to contribute to an investigation of the underlying causes of perennial seemingly insurmountable problematic problems of political instability in Nigeria and how these can be

minimized or completely eradicated. Nigeria is a good example of an unstable country in Africa. The country has witnessed a series of coups, countercoups, abortive coups, rumours of coups, demands for coups, civil war, ethnic riots, mass demonstrations, incessant workers' strikes, and general violent disagreements since it became independent in October 1960 (Olayiwola, 1991). Only recently, (January 2012), a state of emergency had to be declared in some parts of the Northern States, while frequent Boko (Gboko) Haram attacks, bombings and killings of innocent people by armed robbers including invasion of banks all over the country as well as kidnappings and general national insecurity have continued to hunt Nigeria (Olayiwola, 2011). The declaration of a total, comprehensive and indefinite strike by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) on December 4, 2011 because the Federal Government failed to implement the agreement signed with the union since 2009; the abrupt removal of oil subsidy by the Federal Government of President Jonathan on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, and the declaration of National total strike and demonstration by Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012 have all been combined and euphemistically tagged/nicknamed "419."

The third objective of this write-up is to critically examine the place of religion in the Nigerian state, government and politics. Has religion served any integrative or disintegrative purpose in Nigeria? Is Nigeria a truly secular country as provided for in the Nigerian Constitution? Do religions fan embers of disunity or terrorism in Nigeria? How can religions and religious bodies/groups be used for political, socio-economic stability and democratic consolidation in Nigeria? This study attempts some answers (Olayiwola, 2009, 2010, 2011).

The fourth objective of this project is to make a brief comment on the author's areas of specialization. Comparative Government and Politics/ Political Communication; Constitutional and Administrative Law and Human Rights; State and Religion with particular reference to Islam; British approach to government, politics, law and litigation. A brief report is made on the author's research efforts in those areas and how they supplement and compliment social scientists' concern to achieve stability in all its ramifications (Olayiwola, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1993). The fifth, the last but not the least objective of this academic enterprise is explanation. If a comparison in the areas of federalism, ethnic politics, state and religion reveals differences in relation to the achievement of political stability and democratic consolidation, and attempt must be made to explain such difference. (Olayiwola, 2011)

## **FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA: THEORY AND PRACTICE**

### **Theoretical Conceptualization and Conceptual Clarifications**

It is no exaggeration to assert that in discussing the theory and practice of federalism generally and federalism in Nigeria, theory and practice in particular, many analysts usually begin with the published views of Professor K.C. Wheare, F.B.A., former Rector of Exeter College, Oxford and Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration in the University of Oxford, as issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, Britain. (Wheare, 1963). Being federal is tantamount to having a system of government in which the individual states of a country have control over their own affairs, but are controlled by a central government for national decisions. Generally, regarded as the

doyen of contemporary federal theories, Wheare defines federalism as "the delimited and co-ordinate division of government functions." He added, federalism or federal government is "... the method of dividing power so that general and regional governments are each within a sphere co-ordinate and equal."

Wheare's idea of what federal government is, was determined by the United States of America. He made a distinction between the federal principle, the federal constitutions and the federal governments. Also, Wheare prescribes how a federal government should be organized, how it works and what prerequisites a federal government should possess. Many writers on the theory and practice of federalism have demonstrated that Wheare's model is parochial, anecdotal, static, Eurocentric, legalistic and rigid. For this reason, it may not be applicable to describe federalism in non-western societies especially those developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America (Ayoade, 1978). In his own contribution, Ayoade conceptualized federalism as "a conditional alliance characterised by considerable tolerance of competing centres of power." (Ayoade, 1988). To him, many federalists expect from federalism what it is not desined to give with experience showing that federalism is incapable of proving to be a good device for integrating plural societies into a single political system. Professor Dudley suggested a typology for recognizing and identifying a federal government viz:

- (a) A federal constitution with federal practice,
  - (b) A non-federal constitution but federal practice;
  - (c) A federal constitution but non-federal practice;
  - (d) A non-federal constitution and non-federal practice
- (Dudley, 1963).

A federal state is a state with a written constitution which apportions the sovereign power between a central or "federal" legislature on the one hand, and a system of local legislatures on the other, in such a way that each is sovereign within its prescribed sphere. The purpose is to hold minor communities together, or to reconcile national unity and power with the maintenance of state rights; there is union without unity.

### **The Practice of Federalism in Nigeria**

Writing on the Nigerian Federal experience, Ayoade states that Nigeria was put together giving the impression of an aggregative federation. (Ayoade, 1978). He noted that the Nigerian federation was a design error or it is an error by design. To him, the conditions of Nigerian federalism in practice squandered "common charismatic hopes of a federation." (Ayoade, 1997). Ayoade concluded: Federalism is the building of an empire on an anti-imperial philosophy. That philosophical foundation encapsulates the goal of a federation. It is aimed at unity without uniformity and order without freedom. In another work, Ayoade describes Federalism in Nigeria as the worship of an unknown God. He discusses the viability of federalism under four headings:

- (1) The Federal Instinct.
- (2) The Federal Ideology.
- (3) The Federal Character.

- (4) The Federal Dialectics.  
(Ayoade, 1982).

The choice of federalism for Nigeria since 1954 when the country was still under colonial rule, subjugation and imperialism, has been described as automatic. But on each occasion it was clear that the choice was based on a wrong premise. Federalism was adopted as a form of territorial democracy. Nigeria represents a polity with a federal constitution to some extent but non-federal practice. This is perhaps the greatest bane of Nigerian federalism. The British left a legacy of federalism in Nigeria not as an act of faith but as an act of convenience to a nation which Napoleon correctly dubbed a nation of shop-keepers (Ayoade, 2010). Since 1954 when the foundation of classical federation for Nigeria was laid, the system is still far from being problem-free. The story is one of both political and governmental instability. (Ake, 1988). To the consternation of observers, political scientists, historians and researchers, Nigeria's federalism has remained fragile, almost impossible (Ojo, 2009; Ayoade, 1996, Onyeoziri, 2005; Mazrui, 1971 and Adebisi, 1989). It must be emphasized that if one is looking for a good example of federalism in practice, it is not sufficient to look at constitutions only. What matters just as much is the practice of government.

### **Emergency Powers**

The Nigerian constitution of 1960 purports to establish a federation and it clearly bears many of the characteristics of that system. However, emergency powers are given to the parliament of Nigeria which, when invoked, suspend the division of legislative powers between the general and regional governments. As exercised in 1961, for example, they led to the suspension of the government of the Western Region and its direct administration under the general government. In practice, Nigeria has not provided a good example of federal government. In its history as illustrated since 1954 to independence in 1960 to all the military regimes 1966, 1975, 1983, 1985, and the intermittent democratic rules 1979, 1989, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, the strength of the emergency provisions has been depicted more than the strength of federalism. Under Section 305(1) Part II – miscellaneous provisions of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended in 2011, the President may issue a proclamation of a state of emergency in the Federation or any part thereof. These emergency powers were used in January 2012 by President Jonathan to declare a State of Emergency in some parts of Northern Nigeria.

Nigerian federalism suffers from an uncritical faith by Nigerians that it is the panacea for Nigeria's problems. Nigerian political leaders believe more or less that Federalism was a divine gift for Nigeria. The Constitutions being produced are always haunted by Nigeria's turbulent past. They have neither cured past ills nor prevented future ones. According to Ayoade, perhaps the error is a strategic one of whether the past should determine what the constitution should be or whether what we desire to be should determine the constitution. Consequently the operation of the Constitution reflects several contradictions. Federalism is incapable of guaranteeing unity in a society that is moved to adopt a federal system because of disunity. The effect has been that the states assume a sovereign status which makes nonsense of federalism. Any attempt to halt this trend by the states has been resisted at

every stage to an extent that the Nigerian political system is now somewhere between a federation and confederation i.e a federative republic.

### **Solutions to Problems of Nigerian Federalism in Practice**

It is not easy to stem this development of uneasy calm. But one sure solution offered by Ayoade is a progression from territorially-based to community-based federation. The purpose of this development that is advocated is to kill the states and liberate the individual in order to foster civic solidarity. But, in the meantime and before this ideology takes root, Nigerians must accept the fact that federalism requires, above all things, a sense of restraint on the part of power holders. Indeed the more power that is held exclusively, the greater the restraint that must be exercised. The scope and frequency of subtle federal executive infiltration into state spheres must be limited. Furthermore the privileged position of the Federal Government, as the only goose that can lay golden eggs must not be abused because in the ultimate analysis, it is Nigerian citizens that suffer. The rank order of the several governments should not be fixed such that each level of government should be master in its own field. In place of the present theistic view of the Federal Government as the god-centre of the Universe, we should substitute the humanistic view which sees the individual as primary. It is on the individual that all governmental activities converge and unless such governments make sense at the point of convergence federalism will deny the individual of his legitimate expectations from government.

## **ETHNIC POLITICS IN NIGERIA: THEORY AND PRACTICE**

### **The Theory of Ethnicity and Ethnicity of Theory**

A theory is defined as systematically related generalizations suggesting new observations for empirical testing. The theory-building process involves related and overlapping processes of problemation (question selection), observation (classification), generalization (explanation), confirmation (testing), and application (prediction). (Bill, 1994). There are theoretical and conceptual problems which touch on the fundamental nature of ethnicity. There is a claim that "ethnicity is connected to birth and blood but not absolutely so." (Horowitz, 1985). A theory is a formal set of ideas that is intended to explain why something happens or exists. Six main attributes of ethnic community all of which capture the essence of ethnicity have also been put forward.

- (1) A collective proper name;
- (2) A myth of common ancestry;
- (3) Shared historical memories;
- (4) One or more differentiating elements of a common culture;
- (5) Association with a specific homeland; and
- (6) A sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.

### **Ethnic Politics in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the fluidity or rather the conceptual confusion in the meaning attached to ethnicity and ethnic affiliations is something that comes out clearly. Otite (1990) has identified 374 ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, Otite qualified his classificatory schema with the observation that "the unpredictable and incomprehensible juxtaposition of changing

socio-linguistic and socio-political variables in Nigeria, including the fact that many ethnic group members are found outside their natal or aboriginal or ancestral territories, had combined to obscure ethnic group identification and affiliation in the country. Iwaloye and Ibeanu (1997) used the following criteria to conclude that about fifty-six ethnic nations are identified in Nigeria based on:

- (1) geographical space.
- (2) The relative size; and
- (3) Topographical continuity of language groups.

Ethnicity is arguably one of the most powerful forces shaping political processes and the architecture of political institutions in contemporary Nigeria; since its influence, for good or ill, is undeniably present in the Nigerian society. Ethnicity is problematic for the Nigerian state because it raises vexing issues of justice, equality, minority rights, loyalty, citizenship, tolerance, freedom, self-determination, and autonomy, which remain unresolved by the Nigerian State up till today. This may well be because of what Kymlicka and Norman (2000) describe as lack of the state autonomy and its manipulation to serve their particular interests by competing hegemonic ethnic groups in the state. This failure is a manifestation of a substantive problem, which ethnicity, with its focus on collective group rights, poses for the liberal theory of the state.

### **Politics**

Definitions of politics are legion. Politics is the exercise of power; it is communication; the resolution of conflicts; politics is consciousness formation; it is social mobilization; it is contestation; it is institutionalized struggle; politics is transcendence, the bringing about of change both at the level of the person and at the systematic and sub-systemic levels. (Olayiwola, 1991, 1984). In relating ethnicity to politics as defined above, it needs to be accepted that in general, accommodation, compromise or cooperation, in the form of coalition across the ethnic divide, is necessarily compatible with the concept of an ethnic group. In point of fact, accommodation can be a political resource or capital, deployed as a survival strategy, as much as conflict is, in the armory of the political leadership of ethnic groups, dictated by the rationality or logic of particular situations in which ethnic groups find themselves. Ethnic political leaders may play a bridge-building or brokerage role across the ethnic divide.

Nevertheless, the situation of ethnic politics in Nigeria has been problematic since independence and up till today 2012, the Seventh Republic Ethnic groups in Nigeria as far as politics is concerned, have been polarized among themselves, like other human groups. This, for instance, has happened over strategies to pursue in competitive conflict situations with other ethnic groups, over leadership succession, over "zoning" of political offices, as well as in their internal economic and political arrangements, causing deep divisions within their membership. The Nigerian ethnic groups are found scattered in all the six geo-political zones of the country and their component 36 states and the Abuja Federal Capital Territory. Although, Otite (1990) identified 374 ethnic groups while Iwaloye and Ibeanu (1997) mentioned about fifty-six ethnic nations, Nigeria is usually described by many historians,

political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and a host of other researchers as having a population that is made up of 250 ethnic groups. Three of them: the Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá are the major ethnic groups and constitute over 40% of the population. In fact, about 10 ethnic/linguistic groups constitute more than 80% of the population.

The other large ethnic groups are Tiv, Ibibio, Ijaw, Kanuri, Nupe, Gwari, Igala, Jakun, Idoma, Fulani, Itsekiri, Edo, Urhobo, Ijaw (Ijo) and the Efik to mention just a few. If one speaks of Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Lagos, Ondo and Ekiti States, one could similarly speak of a 'West'; if one speaks of Anambra and Imo States, one is referring to the 'East',; and if one speaks of Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto States amongst others, one is speaking of a 'North'. Again, the ethnic variable is crucial to these references: the 'East' in a sense, is Ibo, the 'West' Yoruba, and 'North', Hausa/Fulani. There are also the ethnic minorities which are often geographically defined – Northern minorities, middle-belt minorities, western minorities and eastern minorities. In ethnic terms, the peoples of those states mentioned above as 'Yorubas', 'Ibos', 'Hausa' etc behave alike in many matters. However, when it comes to retrenching workers or to filling the few vacancies in the civil service or in the educational institutions, those states define same ethnic groups in their states as "foreigners." Good examples abound and are found in all those ethnic groups and states (Olayiwola, 2011).

It is also pertinent to mention that there have been occurrences of ethnic conflicts in ethnic politics in Nigeria since independence. Such conflicts have increased tremendously in recent years. And up till today, 2012, the Seventh Republic in Nigeria, ethnic conflicts have continued unabated which in some cases have led to ethnic cleansing. Examples abound: Ife-Modakeke conflicts, Ijaw-Ugbo Ilaje crisis, Eleme-Okrika conflict, Odi crisis, Yorùbá farmer/Fulani herdsman conflict, Warri crisis, Zangon Kataf crisis, Oduduwa People's Congress-Cattle dealers clash, Manbila-Fulani conflict, Jos crisis and the Tiv-Junkun conflict. Others are the protracted fratricidal conflict among the three contiguous communities of Aguleri, Umuleri and Umuoba Anam of Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State which left the area sordidly devastated, as several hundreds of lives, houses and economic valuables including motor vehicles were lost (Newswatch, 1999). It is important to note furthermore, that the ethnic war in Taraba State was perhaps the most complex and sophisticated in Nigeria. It was centred on efforts at the control of Takum by three ethnic groups, the Jukun, Chamba and Kutep – which dates back to the colonial days. (The News, 2001 and TELL 2001).

The consequences of these ethnic conflicts include loss of lives and properties, increased number of displaced persons and increased sense of insecurity. There are also associated feelings of uncertainty, higher disposition to conflicts or potential for recurrence of conflict due to heightened sense of distrust, prejudice and vengeance among members of same ethnic or opposing groups. One solution to cure ethnic conflicts is offered by Alhaji Maitama Sule. In this country, all of us need one another. Hausa need Igbos, Igbos need Yorubas and the Yorubas need the Northerners. Everyone has a gift from God. The Northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities. The Yoruba man knows how to earn a living and has diplomatic qualities. The Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and technological innovation.

God so created us individually for a purpose and with different gifts. Others are created as kings, servants, teachers, students, doctors—we all need each other. If there are no followers, a king will not exist; if there are no students, a teacher will not be required, etc. The world knows that Nigeria is a vast and gifted country. If we are allowed to live in peace with one another we will definitely become a great nation, a great influence in the world. (Ayoade, 1997).

## **STATE AND RELIGION IN NIGERIA: THEORY AND PRACTICE**

### **The Concept of the State**

The state is arguably the most central concept in the study of politics and its definition is therefore, the object of intense scholarly contestation. Marxists, political sociologists, and political anthropologists usually favour a broad definition which draws attention to the role of coercion-wielding organizations who exercise clear priority in decision-making and claim paramountcy in the application of naked force to social problems within territorial boundaries. In international law, a state is a people permanently occupying a fixed territory, bound together into one body politic by common subjection to some definite authority exercising, through the medium of an organised government, a control over all persons and things within its territory, capable of maintaining relations of peace and war, and free from political external control.

The most influential definition of the modern state is that provided by Weber in politics as a vocation. Weber emphasizes three aspects of the modern state: its territoriality; its monopoly of the means of physical violence; and its legitimacy (Weber, 1948). The state is an assemblage of organised citizens occupying a definite territory, having a recognized government with a nationalistic instinct, and possessing sovereignty over the use of legitimate force based on the consent cum cooperation of its citizens to accomplish its aims including the happiness and general welfare of the citizens. Its characteristics are population, territory, government, sovereignty etc.

### **Conceptualising Religion**

A religion is the belief in the existence of a god or gods, and the activities that are connected with the worship of them. It is also one of the systems of faith that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular god or gods: the Jewish religion, the Christian religion, the Islamic religion and a host of other world religions. Almost every human being believes in a Supreme Being (with different local names), who controls the universe – the seen and the unseen worlds. He sets a moral standard to be attained by man, and capable of punishing man here and hereafter etc. The endeavour of man to please the Supreme Being, especially to secure a favourable place for himself hereafter is known as religion. It emanates from innate tendency and hence personal because one is free to believe or to disbelieve. (Olayiwola, 2011).

### **State and Religion in Nigeria**

The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended in 2011 prohibits any state religion. The Government of the Federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion (Section 10, CFRN, 2011). Unfortunately, constitutional provisions are not always complied with in Nigeria. Many politicians and members of the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government as well as many other political office holders have overtly and covertly employed religion as an instrument of political ascendancy and retention of power. Impartial observers in and outside Nigeria are now beginning to wonder where religion is leading the Nigerian state to, as things are now. The situation has reached a stage where the impact of religion and its divisive role on the political, social and economic stability of the country as well as on democratic consolidation and effective leadership are now of great concern.

It is being feared that as epitomized by various religious riots, violence and disturbances in Nigeria in recent years, Nigeria is reaping the poisonous fruits of inter and/or intra-religious squabbles and bigotry with their attendant huge human and material loses. If care is not taken and quickly too, Nigeria is approaching the calamitous stages of places like Lebanon, Israel, Afghanistan, Sudan to mention just a few. And if the religious militancy permeating the nooks and corners of the country with its ugly head is not checkmated, Nigeria may overtake or surpass those troubled states mentioned earlier, it is doubtful if there will be anything called Nigeria after we might have experienced this stage. May God forbid! The irony of it is that, then, people (the bigots), who had thought of gaining from the flame of religious fire embers and squabbles, would discover to their utter dismay, disbelief and shock to death, that they have lost everything, but it will be too belated. Even many of them who eye heaven and martyrdom now, (some of them do not have any spiritual motive other than political folly), would discover that the Supreme Being (God), whom they are purportedly fighting for, would denounce them. He is likely to tell them something like: You hypocrites! I am God of peace and not of violence. Violence belongs to the devil, and so you have all along been devilish and serving the devil. So, depart from Me and follow the devil into eternal fire/hell." (Olayiwola, 2011).

Fifty years of research into the political cultures and societies of democratizing developing countries, especially those of Africa, has demonstrated the vital importance of religion in shaping their politics, society and economy. Religion has been both a disintegrating and an integrating factor in those societies. Religion permeates all aspects of the society. In Nigeria, the three main recognized religions – Christianity, Islam and Traditional – have followers that cut across all the six geo-political zones of North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East and South-South and their 36 component states. In addition, there are pockets of adherents of other religions as well as atheism. Religion has served historically as a primary glue in democratizing societies and as a primary motivator in their socio-politico-economic development. Religion has served as both a positive force in nation-building and a negative major line of social and political tensions in the past and the present.

In the case of the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) the North was identified with Islam while 'Biafra' (or the East) was identified with Christianity. In reality the Nigerian civil war was mainly ethnic - but Biafra's public relations machinery successfully created the impression among many westerners that Ibo Christians were fighting a war in defence of Christianity. In spite of the fact that General Yakubu Gowon, the head of the Federal Government of Nigeria, was a Christian, and much of his support came from other non-Muslims, Biafra brilliantly managed to suggest that - a *jihad* was being waged against the Ibo. Even the Vatican seemed for a while to have bought that version. The cultural differences primarily exemplified in the make up of the country have been a challenging dilemma, particularly as it concerns the religious dichotomy; the Islamic north versus the Christian south; a population division that is almost equal in the country. Religion has been a fundamental part of the Nigerian electoral process for as long as can be recalled. Although the country is supposed to be secular, it is hard to separate the impact of the two main religious groups and at times of election, rivalry and suspicion are heightened.

Writing on the State, Religion and Politics in Nigeria, Ayoade (2010), under a section titled "Religion in the Service of Sin" explained that Nigerian political leaders have resorted to both secular and sacred religion. Their secular religious appeals come in the forms of civic axioms. Shehu Shagari, in the closing days of his administration, admonished the Nation to embrace an ethical revolution. Most Nigerians saw his pious pleas as a ploy and ridiculed the effort. Gen Buhari in his days as military Head of State popularized the maxim "We have no other country that we can call our own". Truth is true but the operative socio-political environment determines the credibility of truth. Buhari was catching on when his regime was terminated in a coup that came on the platform of human rights but ended by abrogating the electoral wishes of the people. Babangida made the point that legal justice is not social Justice. He established MAMSER as a civic education outfit but it ended up as a government image-making machine. The panel of consultants told MAMSER too that only citizen-friendly performance can endear people to the government. Even Gen. Abacha was not left out in this game. He sermonized that "Nobody loves Nigerians more than Nigerians." This propounds an ideal that the general political environment created by Abacha's dictatorship made untrue. Nigerians saw through the psychological manipulation. Abacha had intended to pitch Nigerians against international human rights protests from the West. The harsh political environment which he purposely created necessitated resistance to the appeal.

Religion has also come in handy as an instrument of citizen control even when it is clear that the leaders-lack authentic life and spiritual integrity. Oftentimes Muslim political leaders remind Nigerians that "Power comes from God and He gives it to whoever He pleases". Following this principle. Shagari advised that the electorate should reject those who offer themselves for election in favour of those who are drafted by the people as in his own case in 1979. He concluded that that is the position of Islam (The Sun. August 1, 2010). Some Nigerians however feel that those dragged into elective offices in the past have not proved that they deserved it. Similarly, Governor Ibrahim Geidam of Yobe State said that the eight year tenure of Saminu Turaki as Governor of Jigawa was a testimony to the willful disobedience of the cardinal principles of Islam and that people resort to religion because

they believe in their capacity to cheat providence. People like that want to serve God as advisers. Geidam concluded (*The Sun*, August 5, 2010): When an individual simply wants to emotionalize issues or escape from moral predicaments and burdens, he mischievously turns to religion. ... By embellishing any issue with the religious flavor, at least two or more people might care to 'taste'.

Nigerian political leaders have been employing religion for quite some time. Tafawa Balewa had the badge of a God-fearing man although it is difficult to tell who really fears God. Considering the behaviour of God-fearing [Nigerian political leaders, born again or regenerated, one wonders whether God does not have enough reason to avoid them. In the First Republic, Nigerians went up to Senegal to consult the Imam of Kaolack. There were rumours that some Nigerian leaders imported diviners from the Congo. Abacha camped a host of Imams to recite the Koran a million times. And while Nigerians anxiously awaited information about Yar'Adua's state of health, the Nation was advised to pray. Niyi Solanke was unhappy about the bad uses of prayer and thus said: The military stole us blind, they asked us to pray. Politicians are stealing us blind, they ask us to keep praying. Bankers are stealing us blind, they ask us to keep praying. EFCC cannot successfully prosecute those that it has been set up to prosecute, yet we are asked not to be tired of praying. This is how not to make prayer warriors. Politicians themselves may not even trust in prayers. On August 3, 2010 at the PDP headquarters in Abuja, charms were seized from a party member from Osun State. He said he brought the charms for protection and to fortify himself. A Police Corporal at the beat turned to the journalist and said he and his colleagues need to fortify themselves ahead of the 2011 elections. He then concluded: "Maybe Jega needs to revise his budget for the election to make provision for this miscellaneous item" (*Punch*, August 4, 2010).

In spite of the antics of politicians, Nigerians still recommend an appropriate cosmic and spiritual balance for the Nation. Accordingly, Justice Kayode Esho, at the Institute of African Studies on May 4, 2010 enjoined Nigerian judges to "... have the fear of God at heart because He is the Judge of judges". Tarn David-West added his voice on August 11, 2010 when he advised politicians to take their religion into politics to sanitize the system and launch the country into prosperity (*The Sun*, August 12, 2010). And at the same venue, Buhari recommended a leadership that will rule with the fear of God. The Church is becoming uncomfortable with the immoral deployment of religion and there might be an active ecclesiastical intervention in public affairs. The Awka Diocese of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) criticized the prevailing state of politics as "a competitive business venture" (*Vanguard*, August 8, 2010). Pastor Enoch Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God admonished his congregation to register, vote, and protect their votes. He warned 'from now, if anybody messes up with our votes, we will fight. We love INEC and will pray for INEC but we will fight anybody that messes up with our votes this time" (*Vanguard*, August 15, 2010). Dr. Tunde Bakare of the Latter Rain Assembly who later became Vice-Presidential Candidate for Buhari of CPC was the "Coordinator of Save Nigeria Group (SNG) which organized rallies against the secretive handling of President Yar'Adua's illness. The SNG promises to cooperate with a political party to sanitize the electoral process.

Nigeria is a country characterized by intense political, social, economic, religious, cultural, tribal, ethnic and a host of other disturbances since the colonial period, the independence, the post independence, the military and successive republics era. The country has witnessed coups and counter-coups, abortive coups, demand for coups, armed robbery, bombings, killings, maimings, assassinations and general violent political disagreements that nearly culminated in national disintegration. (Olayiwola, 1996, 2011). Since independence, the country has particularly demonstrated a very high propensity for violent politico-ethno-religious conflict. All these have led to serious insecurity of life and property in Nigeria. (Oloso, 2009).

In point of fact, the origins of insecurity in Nigeria have been traced by researchers. They include: the colonial administrative origins, political origins, socio-economic origins, and external factors and actors. Currently, in 2011 and 2012, there have been armed robberies morning, afternoon and evening in all parts of Nigeria, bombings, the Niger Delta violence; the South-Western killings of innocent people by factions of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) especially in Ibadan, Lagos, Benin, Abeokuta, to mention just a few. The Boko (Gboko) Haram disturbances in the North especially in Borno, the killings of Youth Corpers, and general insecurity fuelled by political thugs as well as police and other security agents incompetence and complicity coupled with non-challance and fear of the people. In more recent times, there has been a rise in the level of religious fanaticism and extreme sense of ethno-religious intolerance resulting into numerous cases of religious uprisings with or without ethnocentric disposition. The conflict generated by the politicization of religious identities in contemporary Nigeria has also become ferocious and alarming for more than four decades. Religious violence has come to occupy the centre stage. The incidences as well as the ferocity and volume of destruction of lives and property that have accompanied them and the palpable tension and animosity it has generated in the relationships between different ethno-religious groups in the country cannot be underestimated. (Mustapha, 2004).

Some of the prominent examples included the spate of Maitatsine riots which ran between 1980 and 1984 in Awaki ward in Kano (1980), Bulumkutu near Maiduguri (1982), Rigasa in Kaduna and parts of Kano (1982) and in Jimeta, near Yola (1984). Others are the Funtua religious riots of 1993, the Christian/Muslim disturbance of 1986 in Ilorin, the face-off between Muslims and Christians at the University of Ibadan the same year, the Kafanchan riots of 1987, and the Bauchi riot of 1991. It is estimated that the Maitatsine riots in Kano in 1980 alone claimed about 4,177 lives, while that of Jimeta in 1984 and Rigasa in Kaduna 1992 led to 763 and 175 casualties respectively. (Ikehan, 1994). No doubt, religious violence casts a serious doubt on socio-political and economic stability of the country. Since May 1999 and up till today 2012, there has been an upsurge in religious violence. The first was the outbreak of religious violence in Sagamu in 1999; trouble started when an Hausa woman allegedly flouted "Oro" religious cult tradition. Some Hausa ladies believed to be harlots/prostitutes supported by their male counterparts refused to heed the warning of the masquerades that women are forbidden to see "Oro" and should stay away from the streets at night. The action of the Hausa drew annoyance of the "Oro" masqueraders and in a

dispute which ensued an Hausa lady was killed. On hearing of the woman's death, the Hausas mobilized themselves and attacked the Yoruba community.

Over one hundred shops, hotels, banks, an Arabic school, hospitals, houses and five petrol filling stations were completely razed. (Gyamfi, 1999). In 2000, many killings were recorded from religious disturbances. From February 21 to 22, an estimated 3,000 people lost their lives in a clash between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna State. There was a reprisal attack in Aba, Abia State and about 450 persons were killed. The riot was initially sparked up by the introduction of Islamic criminal law in some northern state. Also, from May 22 and 23, Kaduna was again brought to its knee when Muslims and Christians; clashed. Over 300 lives were lost. In 2001, the religious clash between Muslims and Christians in Tafawa Balewa local government area of Bauchi State, which began on June 19 and ended on July 4, resulted in the death of over 100 persons. (Olukorede, 2002). In the fourth week of November 2002, religious violence rocked the city of Kaduna after an English newspaper, *ThisDay*, made a disparaging remark about Prophet Muhammads (Peace Be On Him (P.B.H.O.)). The remark was made in the context of an international beauty pageant being staged in the country. Many Muslim organizations and some political leaders had objected to the holding of the Miss world Contest in Nigeria. Members of a militant Muslim group had gone on the rampage in Kaduna, targeting churches and private property, a day after the report appeared. The rioting briefly spread to Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory The newspaper had to tender an unconditional apology and the author of the article resigned. There was also a violent reaction from the minority groups. More than 200 people lost their lives and thousands were rendered homeless. (Cherian, 2002).

Plateau State is notorious for being a theatre of war, as a result of frequent ethno-religious crises; apart from massive killings of innocent people, there were systematic humiliation, wanton destruction and large scale displacement of people which had changed the sobriquet of Plateau from "Home of Peace and Tourism". Plateau war started as a conflict between those that considered themselves the aborigines and their seemingly settlers over land like the Tiv/Junkun crisis. But in 2001, religious undertone crept in. In September 2001, Jos experienced an eruption of violence which was unprecedented. Between September 7 and 12, over 500 persons were killed. About 1,000 others were injured. From September 2001 to date, crises between the settler Hausa/Fulanis and the natives had become a recurring decimal in the state. Example abound. On February 23, 2004, Hausa/ Fulani militants murdered about 48 persons in a Church and also, on Christmas Day 2012, many people were killed at a church in Mandala and in May 2004, there were reprisal killings of many Muslims in Yelwa, Plateau State. A reprisal attack over Yelwa incident in Kano State on May 2, 2004, led to the killings of non-indigenes by the Hausa ethnic militants. In the mayhem, more than 40 people were killed, several hundreds injured and over 30,000 people displaced, property valued at billions of Naira were touched, vandalized or looted by the rioters who employed all manner of dangerous weapons during the attack. That of Kano in January 2012 was the worst ever, many people were bombed to death.

On 8 June 2004, religious violence erupted in Numan town, headquarters of Numan Local Government area, Adamawa State, leaving more than 17 persons dead and some worship centres destroyed. The violence was believed to be the climax of two weeks of tensed relations between the native Bacchama Christians and the local Muslim community over the location of the town's Central Mosque, a few yards away from the Bachama paramount ruler's palace. The reconstruction of the mosque, which was destroyed during a similar religious clash in the town in 2003, had ignited passions among the native Christians who thought that building the mosque's minaret higher than the Hama Bachama's (Bachama paramount ruler) palace was an assertion of dominance in the town. (Shobayo, 2002). Murray and Ajose (2004). These religious riots have continued till today.

### **REFLECTIONS, CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Federalism, ethnic politics, state and religion in Nigeria have all adversely affected the emergence of an effective leadership, maintenance and sustenance of political stability as well as democratic consolidation. In its over fifty years as a sovereign independent state, Nigeria has experienced many successful coups, abortive coups, general insecurity of lives and properties, ethnic and religious crises, bombings, killings, mornings, afternoons, evenings days and nights, incessant political disagreements and a Civil War. As pointed out earlier, Kenneth C. Wheare listed relative size as a crucial factor in the capacity of states to work a federal union. Federalism has not worked successfully in Nigeria and there is no iota of doubt the problem will continue to persist.

Nigeria politicians since independence have attributed political instability in Nigeria to the seemingly insurmountable problems of the practice of federalism in Nigeria. One solution to the problem is even development (Ayoade, 1979; Azikiwe, 1965; Adejuyigbe, 1973; Olayiwola, 2011). Yet, the pathologies of the Nigerian federal system should not lead to the trivialization of the real achievements of the system in holding together the country's multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and diverse peoples and communities. Rather, these deficiencies can, and should, stimulate rigorous thinking and bargaining on desirable and feasible reforms that may make the federal system serve Nigeria better in terms of needs for inter-ethnic amity, stable democracy, good governance and socio-politico-economic development. Nevertheless, human experience has proved that hope can be an elixir. But when hope is dashed too frequently, it is frustrating.

Nigerians expect from the practice of federalism the satisfaction in the provision of the basic necessities of life – food security, 'democracy of the stomach'; habitable and affordable accommodation/housing, efficient medical health care, effective, qualitative quantitative and free and compulsory education; good roads and efficient transportation systems, electricity, security, good pipe borne water; effective communication systems, social security for the elderly, the physically challenged, the needy, destitutes and the poor (the Wretched of the Earth); employment, trading and business incentives; equality of opportunities and better, safer, cleaner and greener environment (Olayiwola, 2011). However, Nigerians are already exhibiting signs of hope fatigue. There is an urgent need for serious political attention. According to Ayoade, (1997), federalism is an artful political device for creating

understanding out of incompatibilities. It is a system for the institutionalization of differences, the elimination of which will eliminate federalism itself. Federalism is not a stratagem for political conquest or domination. What keeps a federation strong and happy is the preservation of the uniqueness of the difference so that the identity of each group in the federation is maintained. Any attempt to wipe out the differences that confer identity and individuality on the groups will hurt the groups. The resistance by those whose interests are hurt will affect those who hurt such interests and the federation will not be a completely happy union.

The purpose of federations is to be great. The justification for a federal association is the advancement of the general and the specific interests of the associating parts. The federation must, therefore, be a building block and not a stumbling block. We have always hoped that Nigeria can be great. In fact, we have said so in many words; but boasting of glory does not make glory, just as singing in the dark does not dispel fear.

To make Nigeria great, strong and reliable:

1. Nigeria must convene a Constitutional Conference based on the collective national resolve to make Nigeria work. An association must be beneficial to all its members before it can be worthwhile, and power-holders must stop regarding the groaning of its victims as ingratitude. Frederick Douglas is eternally correct in observing that "the whiteman's happiness cannot be purchased by the blackman's misery
2. Nigeria must stop arrogating more and more powers to the Federal Government at the expense of the States. We must return to the good old days when State constitutional powers were respected. States must be allowed to live up to the mandate of their own people. In order to strengthen this resolve, States must be given their own constitutions and have freedom to hold their elections when they want. The suffocating federal might and muscle must be relaxed in order that Nigeria may not remain a disabled sovereign.
3. The Federal Government is overloaded because of the imperial ambition of federal office-holders. There must be a reassignment and observance of legislative powers such that the Federal Government is limited to what it can accomplish. Nigeria can only be renewed and strengthened through political decentralization. After all federalism is a kind of wedlock in which the twain are one without losing their individualities. This will reduce the acrimonious competition for control of the Federal Government.
4. The application of the principle of federal character must be revised. It must give succour to the weak and marginalized, and limit the power of the strong. The principle should be applied such that 70% of appointments are on merit, 20% on the equality of State, and 10% on ecological grounds. Secondly, the quality of appointments must be weighted because quantity is not a sufficient guarantee of fairness. In a real sense, there is the possibility of the afunctionality of quantity. The present system creates widespread citizen alienation, and those who rob Peter to pay Paul can only rely on the support of Paul.

On State, Religion and Politics in Nigeria, I believe that nobody wants Nigeria to reach the unpleasant stages of places like Israel, Lebanon, Rwanda, Sudan, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia etc. even including the bigots who are now working (albeit unwittingly) towards it. The writers of our constitution recognised the volatile issue of religion in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic milieu like ours, hence they ensured the entrenchment of a secular state, where religion will have no official role to play.

To ensure political stability (which is a pre-requisite for economic viability, given the level of misgivings about religion in the country now, the government should not only re-emphasise the secularity of the country, but should take steps to convince all that the government of the country is far from being a quasi-theocratic set-up. Such steps should include:

- (1) Convince all with clear actions that no religion is subservient to another and no religious group is made to feel that, "yes, we are in the saddle, we can do and undo. Secularity of the nation should not be allowed to be re-defined to suit selfish ends.
- (2) Hands off all religious matters in schools. Religion in schools, like outside the schools, should be a matter of private affair.
- (3) All religious holidays should be stopped. The situation where religious celebrations fall on weekends, and yet still have to set aside a working day for the observance is ridiculous and merely portray us as a lazy, rather than religious nation.
- (4) Hands off all religious pilgrimages to Mecca, Jerusalem or other place within and outside the country. If the government does not make any special arrangement for the person travelling out for summer holiday, there is no reason in a secular entity, why it should be involved in pilgrimages because both are supposed to be personal matters.
- (5) Stop building churches and mosques anywhere in the country with public money. All those already built contrary to this should be converted to mundane uses.
- (6) Allow religious laws and courts to operate only where they are set up and wholly financed by religious bodies, and exclusively for their members.
- (7) Abstain from joining or flirting with any association whose aims have religious leaning.
- (8) Ensure that no person, or group of persons are molested or allowed to molest others as a result of religious belief or practice as provided in the constitution.

If the above had been observed in the past, we could have been spared the controversies over school uniform, the barbaric killing of innocent and defenceless citizens and the Kafanchan and other riots or the Maitasine riots; the U.I. Cross crisis; the OIC imbroglio; ABU election crisis; pig issue at Ibadan Queen's School; burning of opposing places of worship and a host of others. Until the steps above are sincerely taken, any measure taken toward political and social stability in the country would be tantamount to merely polishing the air. The bigots would continue to flex muscles even against the government. Apart from the above crises that could re-occur, even in greater intensity, there can never be genuine census, and elections; and hence there can never be enduring political stability and economic viability, either under the military or civilian administrations. Lebanon, Sudan, Iran, Ireland etc, are here for us to fear from. It is in the interest of all that

we should not wait until Nigeria becomes another Lebanon or Sudan. This nation must be saved from religiously inspired doom so that our efforts at unity in diversity, socio-politico-economic stability and democratic consolidation will not be in vain or an exercise in futility.

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