
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES OF FEDERALISM: THE POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL STRUCTURES TO A RESOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND CONTENDING ISSUES IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The debate on Minorities, Federalism and Politics in Nigeria has continued unabated. The result of many disputes about Nigerian Federalism, ethnic minority-majority contradictions, possible solutions to inclusive state and sustainable national development, is, arguably, what the French call a 'dialogue of the deaf, where nobody hears the other side's argument. This paper examines the theoretical and conceptual perspectives of Federalism and the possible contributions of Federal structures to a resolution of contemporary political problems and contending issues in Nigeria as far as minorities-majorities relations are concerned. The paper begins with a theoretical exploration of the Federal Government conceptualization and practice generally and particularly in Nigeria. It examines the contending issues in Nigeria and notes that minorities have not been treated fairly under the Nigerian Federal Structure, The paper notes that since 1954 when the minorities in the country first bombarded the colonial government with an avalanche of requests for the creation of autonomous divisions in order to ensure equity and justice in an unfolding Nigerian Federal Structure, the demands for the creation of additional states and localities have become a fad. Yet, empirical indications abound to confirm that minorities in Nigerian federalism have suffered tremendously from structural imbalance, political power, economic development, domination, distribution of power and resources, participation in nation's affairs, allocation of development projects, provision of amenities, and appointment into key political offices to mention just a few. Attempts have been made by successive governments - both civilian and military to address the minorities question, fear, dissatisfaction and agitations. Such attempts have included Federal Character or quota system provided for by the 1979 and 1999 Constitutions as amended. The experience of ethnic minorities world wide has also shown that several approaches can be adopted to manage the problem. These include assimilation, ethnocide, genocide, constitutional safeguards, reversal of status and territorial solution, which otherwise is known as, state and locality creation. How best can the minorities-majorities issues be addressed in Nigerian Federal Structure? What are the contending issues relating to minorities-majorities relations in Nigeria and how best can they be tackled? This paper attempts some answers. The paper concludes by making recommendations including;

1. That the Nigerian Constitution should be further amended to guarantee a stronger constitutional provisions that will protect the rights of minorities and majorities.
2. That the Federal Character principle, quota system, rotation of political power among a host of other attempts to address the issue of minorities-majorities relations in Nigerian Federal Structure should be made justiciable so that rights provided for are capable of being enforced in courts of law.

3. That Nigeria must convene a National Constitutional Conference on the National Question of minorities-majorities relations and make a collective national resolve to make Nigeria work and decide once and for all either to live together or sink together.
4. That the issues of religion, ethnicity, minorities within minorities, majority monopoly of power-political, economic, military, census manipulation, political intimidation, creation of more States and more Local Governments, and Revenue Allocation to mention just a few should be resolved.
5. That we are running against time and time is of the essence. We need to move fast and now to avert terrible horrible ethnic cleansing incidents the type that occurred in Rwanda and Bosnia and are currently happening in the Middle East and Palestine to mention just a few parts of the world.

INTRODUCTION

Federalism, the theory or advocacy of Federal principles for dividing powers between member units and common institutions was adopted in Nigeria since 1954 before independence. Unlike in a unitary state, such as Britain, sovereignty in Federal Political orders is non-centralized, often constitutionally, between at least two levels so that units at each level have final authority and can be self governing in some issue area. Citizens thus have political obligations to, or have their rights secured by, two authorities. The division of power between the member unit and centre may vary, typically the centre has powers regarding defence and foreign policy, but member units may also have international roles. The decision-making bodies of member units may also participate in central decision-making bodies. However, there are dilemmas and opportunities facing federal Nigeria. Arrangements to accommodate differences among populations divided by ethnic or cultural clearages, yet seeking a common, often democratic political order have been to no avail in Nigeria.

- Issues of Constitutional and institutional design- composition, distribution of power, power sharing,
- Sources of stability or instability,
- Division of power or lack of it,
- Distributive justice and practice
- Democratic theory and practice
- Politics of recognition among a host of other issues have trailed the minorities-majorities relations in Nigeria.

Some people have suggested a confederation, i.e. a political order with a weaker centre than a federation, often dependent on the constituent units. They argue that In a confederation:

- a) Member units may legally exist;
- (b) the centre only exercises authority delegated by member units
- (c) the centre is subject to member unit veto on many issues
- (d) centre decisions bind member units but not citizens directly,
- (e) the centre lacks an independent fiscal or electoral base, and/or
- (f) the member units do not cede authority permanently to the centre. They submit that a confederal system may help Nigeria since confederations are often based on agreements for specific tasks, and the common government may be completely exercised by delegates of the member unit governments.

Ethnocentrism, tribalism, religious persecution, and prebendalism have played a visible role in Nigerian politics both prior and subsequent to independence in 1960. What theoretical and conceptual perspectives of federalism are so peculiar to Nigeria that have taken it away from the classical whearean federal system and have made it unworkable especially as far as minorities – majorities relations are concerned (Wheare, 1963). This paper attempts some answers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Chapter II of the Nigerian Constitution, 1999, as Amended: Fundamental Obligations of the Government

It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this Chapter of this Constitution. The first problem is that the provisions of the Constitution are not conformed to, observed or applied by the organs of government as far as minorities – majorities relations are concerned.

The Government and the People

- 14-1 The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and Social Justice. Principles of democracy and social justice are not complied with.
2. It is hereby, accordingly, declared that:
 - a) Sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from whom government through this Constitution derives all its powers and authority.
 - b) The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. No security and no welfare for the Nigerian people.
 - c) The participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution. Political participation eludes the minorities in Nigeria.
 3. The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few States or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies. All these are not complied with. Federal character principle is not justiciable. There is national disunity. A coterie of selfish people has taken over the country.
 4. The composition of the Government of a State, a local government council, or any of the agencies of such government or council, and the conduct of the affairs of the Government or council or such agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the peoples of the Federation. Diversity is not recognized. And a sense of belonging and loyalty is not promoted.

POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

- 15-1 The motto of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress. There is no unity, no peace, no progress.
2. Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited. There is national disintegration and discrimination is encouraged.
3. For the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the duty of the state to:
 - a) Provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the Federation. No free mobility of people. Only recently, Youth Corpers are barred from serving in some States by the Government.
 - b) Secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation
 - c) Encourage inter-marriage among persons from different places of origin, or of different religious, ethnic or linguistic association or ties; and
 - d) Promote or encourage the formation of associations that cut across ethnic, linguistic, religious or other sectional barriers.
4. The State shall foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples of the Federation, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties.
5. The State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power. There are corrupt practices and abuse of power galore. All the Legislative, Executive and Judicial arms of Government are involved and have been implicated at various times and in various reports.

ECONOMIC OBJECTIVES

- 16-1. The State shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in the Constitution:
 - a) harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, a dynamic and self-reliant economy;
 - b) control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity;
 - c) without prejudice to its right to operate or participate in areas of the economy, other than the major sectors of the economy, manage and operate the major sectors of the economy;
 - d) Without prejudice to the right of any person to participate in areas of the economy within the major sector of the economy, protect the right of every citizen to engage in any economic activities outside the major sectors of the economy.
2. The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring:
 - a) The promotion of a planned and balanced economic development
 - b) That the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good;

- c) that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and
 - d) That suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.
3. A body shall be set up by an Act of the National Assembly which shall have power:
- a) to review from time to time, the ownership and control of business enterprises operating in Nigeria and make recommendations to the President on same; and
 - b) To administer any law for the regulation of the ownership and control of the enterprises.
4. For the purposes of subsection (1) of this section:
- a) the reference to the "major sectors of the economy" shall be construed as a reference so such economic activities as may, from time to time, be declared by resolution of each House of National Assembly to be managed and operated exclusively by the Government of the Federation; and until a resolution of the contrary is made by the National Assembly, economic activities being operated exclusively by the Government of the Federation on the date immediately preceding the day when this section comes into force, whether directly or through the agencies of a statutory or other corporation or company, shall be deemed to be major sectors of the economy;
 - b) "Economic activities" includes activities directly concerned with the production, distribution and exchange of wealth or of goods and services; and
 - c) "Participate" includes the rendering of services and supplying of goods.

Social Objectives

- 17-1. The State social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality and Justice. There is no freedom, no equality and no justice.
2. In furtherance of the social order:
- a) Every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law;
 - b) the sanctity of the human person shall be recognized and human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced;
 - c) Governmental actions shall be humane;
 - d) exploitation of human or natural resources in any form whatsoever for reasons, other than the good of the community, shall be prevented; and
 - e) The independence, impartiality and integrity of courts of law, and easy accessibility thereto shall be secured and maintained.
3. The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that:
- a) All citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment;

- b) Conditions of work are just and humane, and that there are adequate facilities for leisure and for social, religious and cultural life;
- c) The health, safety and welfare of all persons in employment are safeguarded and not endangered or abused;
- d) There are adequate medical and health facilities for all persons;
- e) There is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or on any other ground whatsoever.
- f) Children, young persons and the aged are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect;
- g) Provision is made for public assistance in deserving cases or other conditions of need; and
- h) The evolution and promotion of family life is encouraged.

Educational Objectives

- 18-1. Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
- 2. Government shall promote science and technology.
- 3. Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide: N.B: When practicable should be removed and amended to read "compulsory and justiciable".
 - a) Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
 - b) Free secondary education;
 - c) Free university education; and
 - d) Free adult literacy programme.

Foreign Policy Objectives

- 19. The foreign policy objectives shall be:
 - a) Promotion and protection of the national interest;
 - b) Promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
 - c) Promotion of international co-operations for universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
 - d) respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
 - c) Promotion of a just world economic order.

Environmental Objectives

The State shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wild life of Nigeria.

Directive on Nigerian Cultures

The State shall:

- a) Protect, preserve and promote the Nigerian cultures which enhance human dignity and are consistent with the fundamental objectives as provided in this Chapter and
- b) Encourage development of technological and scientific studies which enhance cultural values.

Obligation of the Mass Media

The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people. Some of the mass media have not complied with the professional, journalistic ethics of objectivity, impartiality and balancing as far as majority-minority reporting is concerned.

National Ethics

The National ethics shall be Discipline, Integrity, Dignity of Labour, Social Justice, Religious Tolerance, Self-reliance and Patriotism. No discipline, no integrity, no dignity of labour, no social justice, no religious tolerance, no self-reliance, no patriotism.

Duties of the Citizen

It shall be the duty of every citizen to:

- a) Abide by this Constitution, respect its ideals and its institutions, the National Flag, the National Anthem, the National Pledge and legitimate authorities;
- b) Help to enhance the power, prestige and good name of Nigeria, defend Nigeria and render such national service as may be required.
- c) Respect the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interests of others and live in unity and harmony and in the spirit of common brotherhood.
- d) Make positive and useful contribution to the advancement, progress and well being of the community where he resides;

These are the problems. This paper discusses these problems in the context of theoretical and conceptual perspectives of federalism, the contending issues in Nigeria and they can best be resolved.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVES OF FEDERALISM: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

The primary constitutional principle with which nations have tried to accommodate diverse regional interests within a single governmental structure is federalism. This principle allows for both an accommodation of regional interests at the centre as well as some measure of control and self-determination by the region over some of its own regional interests. Susu, (1991) says:

"Federalism as a normative basis for a nation's socio-political structure would seem to be primarily a functional and pragmatic accommodation of the opposing principles of unity and separatism, integration and regional autonomy. Such accommodation is obviously based on the recognition of the need (within a particular socio-political

context) for national unity and a centralized system of governance while acknowledging the differences, diversities and unique interests of the various federating communities. The primary focus in federalism would, therefore, be the creation and maintenance of some equilibrium between such opposing principles and consequent objectives thus emphasizing the role of conflict management in this process of Governance”

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 Exceter 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 government 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 characterized by considerable tolerance of competing centres of power”. (Ayoade, 1988). To him, many federalists expect from federalism what it is not designed 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 soveign 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. It is no exaggeration to assert that the practice of federal government in Nigeria has precipitated many crises.

THE SERIOUS CHALLENGES AND CRISES FACING NIGERIA

Of the various challenges which Nigeria has faced and continues to face, the current crisis is the most serious. It calls for understanding and immediate action. We are now accustomed to speaking of crisis all the time. We talk of insecurity crisis, Boko Haram crisis, armed robbery crisis, kidnapping crisis, corruption crisis of bribery in the legislative, executive and judicial arms of federal, state and local governments, unemployment crisis, fuel subsidy crisis, pension funds crisis, trade union crisis, and education crisis.

SOCO-POLITICAL ECONOMIC CRISES

Other current crises in Nigeria include economic crisis, social crisis, political crisis, religious crisis, poverty and inequality crisis, the crisis of legitimacy, ideological crisis, cultural crisis, crisis of the ecology and environment. Even in talking of the economic crisis, we sub-divide it into agricultural crisis, food crisis, industrial crisis, agrarian crisis, debt crisis and balance of payments crisis. We also talk of development crisis, theory and practice, of moral crisis or crisis of confidence, accumulation crisis of social reproduction and crisis of livelihood.

THE CRISES OF EDUCATION, UNEMPLOYMENT AND FUNDING

In relation to crisis of education, the most pernicious and damaging is the crisis of graduate unemployment and underemployment. Scarcity of opportunities of employment has led to cut edge competition in pursuit of more academic certificates. This in turn has led to increase on educational institutions within which the learners compete against each other even as their institutions compete with similar educational institutions coupled with proliferation of Universities – Federal, State and private. The adverse effect of these contradictions and complications that one hates to remember and one remembers to hate is that Nigeria today stands dangerously on the brink of the precipice of disaster. The geographical, economic and political entity built over the years is cracking so badly that there are now grave signs that it will sooner or later perhaps sooner than later – collapse and shatter to pieces. A society that is unjust, unfree, corrupt, deeply divided, devoid of equality of opportunity including educational opportunities, is bound to be inherently unstable and in crisis.

NIGERIA: A NATION OF CRIMINALS?

One former Head of State noted: "In the past few weeks, there was hardly a day without stories of either armed robbery, smuggling of dangerous drugs and other related violent crimes occurring at our seaports, airports and cities". "I am aware that things are hard but this should not be an excuse for our youths to take to crimes as a means of sustenance, which tends to portray us as a nation of criminals". The fact of the matter is that the persistent crisis has forced not just the youth to take crimes as a means of sustenance but the entire Nigerian bourgeoisie since political independence have behaved as if criminal means to affluence is justified under the cover of the state. Various probe reports have documented how Nigeria has been systematically plundered by the ruling class. The crisis has intensified this tendency.

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, 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. However, Dasuki the new security Adviser to the President said on Thursday 05-07-2012 on Radio Nigeria while visiting Plateau State that he does not support emergency powers to achieve peace.

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 Nigeria political system is now somewhere between a federation and confederation, i.e. a federative republic. Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and one of the world's most deeply divided societies, has trodden a complex turbulent and contradictory political trajectory since gaining independence from Britain in 1960.

In Five decades of independent statehood, Nigeria has fashioned many separate federal constitutions, witnessed the rise and replacement of many different national administrations, and straddled the political poles between democratic pluralism and military authoritarianism, between pseudo-federalism and institutionally balanced federalism between Westminster – style parliamentary government and American – type Presidentialism and between inter ethnic reconciliation and fierce often violent ethnic conflicts. Nigerian system of federalism has been characterized variously as 'peculiar', 'bizarre,' 'irregular,' 'misleading,' 'purely distributive' or 'failed', and as representing a 'hollow federation,' or 'a unitary state in federal guise'. (Olayiwola, 2011, 2012, Mackintosh 1962:233, Diamond 1988:155, Bach 1997:346). These characterizations point to certain specificities and pathologies in the evolution and operation of the Nigerian Federation. Onimode, (2002) observed that the current state of Nigerian federalism is characterized by five main features – unitarism rather than decentralization and national integration, distributive federalism, the controversies of federal character and indigeniety; the politicization of ethnicity; and the increasing tension of federalism marked with sporadic conflicts. Much of the euphoria that accompanied the inauguration of civilian rule in Nigeria in May 1999 reflected the popular expectation that the restoration of democratic governance would end, and perhaps reverse, the systematic

vandalisation and desecration of federal structures and processes by the military. Yet, the new post military dispensation is challenged by at least two fundamental obstacles to genuine federalism;

1. The first is Nigeria's array of structurally and fiscally weak sub-federal administration, which depend, on the average, on the federation account and other external sources of revenue for some 70 percent of their expenditures.
2. The second onerous challenge of post-military federalism involves the division of powers in the 1999 constitution, as amended which has restored the highly centralized and contentious construction of the 1979 constitution.

In essence, under the new constitution, there 'are few', if any areas in which state governments can act independently of the Federal Government (Joye and Igweike, 1982:94). Nigeria has demonstrated a capacity creatively to nurture "unity in diversity". It has also betrayed a vulnerability to disintegrative sectarian conflicts. The Nigerian experience shows that the installation of a vertically and horizontally balanced system of Federalism, and the implementation of both formal and informal strategies for national integration and ethnic accommodation, can help to contain the threats to institutional stability inherent in a multiethnic developing state. The same experience instructs that the distortion or decline of federalism, the transgression or abortion of basic democratic processes, and the general underdevelopment of institutions of political restraint could inflame the issues of a plural society and precipitate the disintegration of an otherwise reasonably manageable multi-ethnic state. After five decades of independence, the forms and character of Nigerian federalism have been described as 'failed,' 'collapsed,' 'criminalized,' 'rhizome,' 'invisible,' 'shadow' and 'crippled giant' (Amuwo, 2004: 316-317, Osaghae, 1998, Olayiwola, 2012). The perception of this paper is that contemporary political problems and contending issues in Nigerian federalism including minorities – majorities relations in Nigeria need to be addressed to ensure national integration, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, a free and democratic society, political stability, a nation free from religious and ethnic crises and achieve sustainable national development.

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND CONTENDING ISSUES IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

"In the final analysis, the Nigerian tragedy has been bedeviled by a set of oppositions – generalized, stereotyped, not necessarily of the same order and may be imaginary, yet each widening the wound and reducing the hopes of healing it; north vs South, Islam vs Christianity, alleged feudalism vs assumed socialism, federal vs unitary preferences, traditional authority vs achieved elitism, haves vs have-nots, each with sinister undertones of tension, irreconcilability and threatened withdrawal. None was quite entirely accurate. Nevertheless, each opposing set had sufficient seeds of truth within it to permit, and even fertilize the growth of feared fact from the semi-fiction of its existence." (Kirk-Greene 1971:5).

The following are some of the contemporary political problems and contending issues in Nigerian Federalism.

1. Minorities – majorities relations in Nigeria.
2. The sovereign National Conference to address the National Question and appraise the contending Issues.
3. The Issue of National Integration
4. The Fundamental Imbalance in Nigeria’s Federal Political Structure and the Asymmetric power Relationship.
5. Ethnicity
6. State and Religion
7. Creation of more states and more Local Government Councils.
8. Revenue Allocation
9. Security, Electricity, poverty, inequality and Economic Development.
10. Corruption, Leadership, Military intervention, secession threats, the mass media and challenges of unity, participation and peaceful co-existence to mention just a few.

Minorities – majorities Relations in Nigeria

Duchacek, (1977) says:

"The problem for most ethnic minorities is that they are permanent minorities and the ruling group a permanent majority. In inter-ethnic relations therefore, the convenient democratic game of numbers – majoritarian decision-making in the framework of a broad consensus – does not work since the unalterable power symmetry between permanent majority and permanent minorities impedes the formation of a consensual community. The quota system satisfactorily guarantees jobs, educational opportunities and presence in decision-making bodies but no quota system can be really so generous as to transform a minority into a majority. No quota system can therefore fully protect a minority against the tyranny by the majority in a legislative body unless it is coupled with a veto power over central issues. Then, however, as the history of Cyprus shows, government may become impossible"

The issue of minorities and the accommodation of their interests have been a recurring problem from the time of the Greek City States. The primary concern of most modern international instruments on the question of rights is with the development of the rights of distinct groups or indigenous peoples caught within the strictures of a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-tribal, multi-religious and multi-faith nation like Nigeria. (Olayiwola, 2011). Such diversity could rest on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, culture, history and geographical location. The fear of the marginalization of the interests of such groups has been underlying the process of constitutional development of most modern democracies. By the time of Independence in 1960, over fifty years ago, two basic but interrelated issues remained unresolved and they still remain unresolved up till today 2012, thus constituting some of the contemporary political problems and contending issues in Nigerian Federalism.

1. The fundamental imbalance in Nigeria’s Federal political structure which fanned and continues to fan the embers of suspicion, mutual distrust, fear, and aggressive ethno-regionalism;

2. Fears by minority groups of domination by majorities in the context of Nigeria's federal structure.

As one former Head of State of Nigeria once pointed out:

"There has always been fear of domination in Nigeria-domination by size, population, or religion. There was even the fear of domination through skill. In some parts of the country, people would say that because of the size or population of a particular region, it was dominating the rest. In other parts, they would say that because people from another part of the country were educated as a result of earlier contact with Europeans, they were dominating the less educated ones..." (Gowon, 1968).

WHO ARE THE MINORITIES IN NIGERIA?

The minorities in Nigeria are usually defined in ethnic terms and all ethnic groups that fall outside the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups are considered as minorities: Therefore, groups such as the Ijaw Kanuri and the Tiv to mention just a few though with a considerably large number of members are categorized as minorities. The definition of minorities in Nigeria can also be extended to include the religious minorities in the various parts of the country e.g. the Christian minorities in the far North or the Muslim minorities in the Middle Belt and the South. The minority – majority relation question or agitations by minority groups are centred on the continued dissatisfaction by the ethnic minorities with the distribution of power and resources in the nation. This has affected development in their areas adversely. Jobs, scholarships, political appointments, government infrastructure, contracts, and social amenities to mention just a few issues have all become the focus of intense competition, often structured around competing ethnic, regional demands, minority and majority groups in Nigeria.

THE SOVEREIGN NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO ADDRESS THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND APPRAISE THE CONTENDING ISSUES IN NIGERIAN FEDERALISM

There have been incessant calls for a sovereign National Conference as a key solution to Nigeria's inherent problems giving the State of the nation. In point of fact, some people have argued that for Nigeria to convene a sovereign National Conference is not only important but compulsory. Such a conference will provide a forum for each geo-political zone, tribe, religion etc. to voice out their issues and concerns. The conference will also be able to address the National Question which is a shorthand for what in essence is a cluster or multitude of Questions relating to a common denominator-the political well-being of Nigeria as an entity. (Edoh, 1985). Professor Nzimiro, for instance, argues that the Nigerian Federal structure and public service are parts of the National Question. "The Nigerian public service does not extend its services to the majority of the population. For example, the social conditions of the rural peasantry are characterized by (i) extreme poverty (ii) malnutrition; (iii) disease ... our rural societies are denied the basic social infrastructures viz: (a) medical care (b) schools with adequate and qualified teachers; (c) constant water supply; (d) a good network of roads; (e) satisfactory housing and environmental conditions"

The Issue of National Integration

Ali Mazrui (1972) identified five interrelated aspects of national integration thus:

- 1) The fusion of norms and cultures (including the sharing of values, mode of expression, life and a common language);
- 2) The promotion of economic interdependence;
- 3) The narrowing of the gap between the elites and the masses, the urban and the rural areas, rich and poor, etc. social integration;
- 4) The resolution of emergent conflicts; and
- 5) The sharing of mutual experiences so that people can discover that they have undergone some important experiences together.

National integration is a positive aspect. It reduces socio-cultural and economic differences or inequalities and strengthens national unity and solidarity, which is not imposed by any authority. People share ideas, values and emotional bonds. It is feeling of unity within diversity. National identity is supreme. Cultural unity, constitutional territorial continuity, common economic problems, arts, literature, national festivals, national flag, national anthem and national emblem etc. promote national integration. National integration is a very broad statement. To achieve national integration, the country has to pool resources, viz human, cultural, religious, scientific, natural etc to achieve oneness in all spheres of life of the citizens of the country, so that progress can be achieved. With the progress, the citizens can enjoy fruits of prosperity and happiness, living in harmony irrespective of the politics, creed, language, religion, ethnicity and cultural leanings professed by each one for them as individuals. National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different political parties, religions and regions, ethnic groups and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. This kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation in Nigeria.

National Integration in Nigeria

The problem with national integration in Nigeria is that people are made to feel like strangers in their fatherland; whereas as stated earlier, chapter II paragraph 15(2) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended states that:

Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, while discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited.

Chapter II, paragraph 15(3) of the same constitution also states, inter alia, that "for the purpose of promoting national integration, it shall be the duty of the state to provide adequate facilities for and encourage free mobility of people, goods and services throughout the federation, (b) secure full residence rights for every citizen in all parts of the federation and; (c) encourage intermarriage among persons from different places of origin or of different religious, ethnic or linguistic ties. Many ordinary Nigerians have become woefully impoverished, traumatized and helpless in the face of unprecedented abuse by the

consecutive reactionary governments and political leaders. Ethnic and religious considerations have replaced the traditional patriotic consideration in the governance of the country; pervasive corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation. Nigerian leaders have failed to address the very real concerns of Nigerian masses. The leaders have lost touch with the Nigerian people and communities. Leaders lack the commitment and political will to serve the people. Nigerians get a rough deal from their leaders. Re-branding Nigeria is an exercise in futility. The government should first expedite action in addressing developmental, political, social, economic and security problems confronting the nation. The issue goes beyond noise-making or propaganda. The government needs to dissipate its energy on energy, address the problem of epileptic supply of electricity, fix deplorable death trap roads, channel resources to combat insecurity problems, armed robbery, kidnapping, Boko haram, bombing and improve primary health care, education, accommodation, communication, medication, transport etc.

THE FUNDAMENTAL IMBALANCE IN NIGERIA'S FEDERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND THE ASYMMETRIC POWER RELATIONSHIP

Many Nigerian politicians are convinced that the fall of civilian regimes in Nigeria has partly been a function of the unequal size of the states and this has been the greatest threat to Nigerian unity. Azikiwe, (1965), who was President of Nigeria from 1963 to 1966, took the opportunity of the crises of 1964 and 1965 to state that:

In order to evolve into a near perfect union, the whole of Nigeria should be divided and so demarcated geographically and demographically that no one region would be in a position to dominate the rest.

In the same vein, Awolowo, (1966) argued that:

The abnormal imbalance in the constituents of the federation was one of the evils that afflicted Nigeria and brought about the ruin of the First Republic

Okpara, (1965) a very prominent participant in the politics of the First Republic also attributed the ruin of that Republic to two twin factors, namely:

The practice of regionalism and the disparity in the size of the constituent region.

But Adejuyigbe (1973) argues the opposite position that, in spite of the size of the North for example, it was never able in the First Republic to dominate political decision-making. Oyediran, (1979) opines that the seeds of political instability and the military take-over were sown in the 1950s with the formation of political parties on ethnic and regional basis. Adamolekun, (1985) summarized the causes of the fall of the First and Second Republics when he said:

There is abundant evidence to support the view that parliamentary government collapsed in Nigeria in January 1966 because the values and norms appropriate for the successful functioning of the governmental system were either non-existent or not sufficiently widely shared among relevant actors in the governmental

process...Presidential system failed because there were serious conflicts and contradictions in the national consensus that was intended to underpin its operation.

Perhaps, the most controversial contemporary political problem and contending issue in Nigeria’s federal political structure is the asymmetric unequal power relationship as far as the fundamental imbalance of the country’s structure is concerned. As a matter of fact, this issue is one of the seemingly intractable and insurmountable perennial problems which have not only defiled all past solutions but also have a tendency to evoke high tensions and emotions on the part of all and sundry whenever it is raised: This is the contending issue of who becomes the president of Nigeria and for how long. Osondu, (2010) reveals which Zone(s) of the country has upper hand in terms of wielding executive powers. Percentage and number of months were used. The Table below is a graphic representation of the time period used by each zone of the country holding executive position in percentages.

TABLE I: Nigerian Heads of State 1960-2010 (600 Months) Geo-Political Zone

S/no	Names and Period	North East	North West	North Central	South-West	South-East	South-South
1	Tafawa Balewa (Oct. 1 st 1960-Jan. 15,1966)	63.5					
2	Aguyi Ironsi (Jan. 15, 1966-July 29,1966)					5.5	
3	Yakubu Gowon (July 29, 1966-July 29,1975)			108			
4	Murtala Mohammed (July 29,1875-Feb, 13 1979)		6				
5	Olusegun Obasanjo (Feb. 13,1976-Sept. 30,1979)				43.5		
6	Shehu Shagari (Oct. 1,1979-Dec. 31,1983)		51				
7	Mohammed Buhari (Dec. 31,1983-Aug. 26,1985)		20				
8	Ibrahim Babangida (Aug. 27,1985-Aug. 25,1993)			96			
9	Ernest Shonekan (Aug. 26,1993-Nov. 14,1993)				2.5		
10	Sani Abacha (Nov. 15,1993-Jun 8,1998)		55				
11	Abdulsalam Abubakar (Jun 9, 1998-May 29,1999)			12			
12	Olusegun Obasanjo (May 29,1999-Nov., 30,2007)						
13	Umaru Yar’Adua (May 29,2007-Nov. 30,2009)		30		96		
14	Goodluck Jonathan (Dec. 1,2009-Oct. 1,2010).						10
	600 Months	63.5	162	216	142	6.5	10
	Percentage %	11	27	36	23.5	1	1.5

* Source: The Sun, Lagos, October 1, 2010, 74

From the above table, the Northern part of the country taken together had been in power for 441.5 months translating to 73.6%, while the Southern part had been in power for some 158.5 number of months also translating to 28.4% of the total time period since independence.

ETHNICITY

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 incomprehensibly 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 geopolitical 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 Yoruba 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, Yoruba farmer/Fulani herdsmen 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

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.

Conceptualizing 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 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 - & *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. On State, Religion and Politics in Nigeria, we 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 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.

CREATION OF MORE STATES AND MORE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS

From a federal structure of four units in 1960 (federal and three regions); Nigeria now has a staggering number of 37 units along with the federal capital territory and 774 Local Governments.

Factors for creation of more states have included:

1. The need to minimize conflicts between States and among states;
2. The need for unity in the country;
3. The need for government to be nearer to the people;
4. The need for maintenance of worthwhile cultural peculiarities and economic development.

However, the then federal military government of Nigeria adopted the following criteria while creating more states in 1967:

1. Recognition of federal principle
2. Geographical contiguity,
3. Economic viability and uniformity; and
4. Administrative convenience.

Up till today, there are still agitations for creation of more states and more Local Government Councils and the Nigeria National Assembly in 2012 announced that efforts are being made to address the issue through consultation and constitutional amendment.

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 night, 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 vigorous 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 destitute 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. According to Suberu, (2004) a number of specific, but conflicting and contradictory, constitutional amendments are proposed. These include: enhanced powers for states and localities, including provisions for sub-national resource control and the decentralization of the police; a strong anti-coup clause to deter future political adventurism by the military; single terms of office for political executives to facilitate ethno-regional power-rotation and deter electoral malfeasance by political incumbents; constitutional recognition for traditional pre-colonial political institutions; the entrenchment of residency, minority, gender and socio-economic rights; effective political insulation for key regulatory bodies, including the judicial, electoral and anti-corruption agencies; and the liberalization or abolition of the constitutional guidelines for party formation (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2001; Citizens Forum for Constitutional Reform 2001). Yet, any amendments to the Nigerian constitution will generally require the endorsement of a two-thirds majority of all the members in each house of the National Assembly, and the supporting resolution of the legislative houses in two-thirds of the states. This is a tall order in Nigeria, given the conflicting motives, agendas and priorities of the country's putative constitutional reformers. Not surprisingly, the constitutional review movement has all but stalled in Nigeria.

Susu, (2009) has suggested a possible Constitutional Remedies thus: A constitutional arrangement that would adjust the basic principles without major contradictions has to be evolved. The suggestion being made is what I would call the "unique interest double vote." This means that with interests that can be designated as unique to a state, states or region, the concerned regional representatives at the federal level would have the right to double voting power. This will keep the decision-making process democratic while making the essential accommodation for the minority to impact more effectively on decisions on their own interests. It provides the leg up in the political process and stops the majority activity from being too stifling. The zoning policy, although not recognized formally under the constitution, would also help in the implementation of the special interest voting scheme. For zoning block impact would definitely be more effective on a national vote count than the double or even triple interest vote of a single state. In Nigeria's case, the "double voting rights" will be helpful to check the gross impact of majoritarian policies with regards to important regional interests. However, it might not provide a cure all for every minority issue especially in nations where the minority is part of the general society and has no regional

demarcation of its own. Of course, the primary problem with the implementation of this principle will be how to designate the issues that are volatile and should be handled under this special vote category. Again, one could suggest that as long as the interest is unique to the region and does not affect directly the human rights of other citizens of the country; such an issue is eligible for consideration for inclusion in this special interest vote. This is not a new legislative list nor is it an addition to the concurrent list or remedial list. Rather, it should be a short list in which some special unique interests for different states, zones or regions, allowing them greater self-determination within a federal democrat system are recognized. Revenue Allocation is another contending issues in Nigerian Federalism. Also, problematic and of paramount importance are the issues of security, electricity, poverty, inequality, economic development, corruption, leadership, military intervention, secession threats, the mass media, and challenges of unity, participation and peaceful co-existence (Olayiwola, 2012) However, time and space do not permit us to dwell further on them in this paper.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has discussed the minorities-majorities relations in Nigeria in relation to theoretical and conceptual perspectives of federalism. It examined the contemporary political problems and contending issues in Nigeria and makes the following recommendations:

1. That the Nigerian Constitution should be further amended to guarantee a stronger constitutional provision that will protect the rights of minorities and majorities.
2. That the Federal Character principle, quota system, rotation of political power among a host of other attempts to address the issue of minorities-majorities relations in Nigerian Federal Structure should be made justiciable so that rights provided for are capable of being enforced in courts of law.
3. That Nigeria must convene a National Constitutional Conference on the National Question of minorities-majorities relations and make a collective national resolve to make Nigeria work and decide once and for all either to live together or sink together.
4. That the issues of religion, ethnicity, minorities within minorities, majority monopoly of power-political, economic, military, census manipulation, political intimidation, creation of more States and more Local Governments, and Revenue Allocation to mention just a few should be resolved.
5. That we are running against time and time is of the essence. We need to move fast and now to avert terrible horrible ethnic cleansing incidents the type that occurred in Rwanda and Bosnia and are currently happening in the Middle East and Palestine to mention just a few parts of the world.

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