ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA; THE BANE OF NATION BUILDING

Vincent Stephen Kabuk
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

Nigeria is usually characterized as a deeply divided nation where major political issues are vigorously contested along the lines of complex ethnic, religious and regional divides. Ethno-religious violence is a violence that is ignited by ethnic and religious bias. Since independence, Nigeria has produced a catalogue of ethno-religious conflicts that resulted in an unquantifiable loss of lives, psychological and material damages. Indeed, there is a consensus among observers that it provides one of the best case studies of ethno-religious conflicts in the world. The Nigerian situation, many writers observe, is such that boycotted the due course of legitimization at its formation stage and posits serious consequences for its stability at the moment. Using the philosophical tools of exposition, analysis and critical evaluation, the paper identified the nature and causes of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria with the purpose of outlining some possible remedies.

Keywords: ethnicity, violence, religion, conflict, politics, development.

1. Introduction

It is admissible that man, whether faintly or deeply, often identifies with one kind of religion or the other. Religion thus is universal, because people generally, acutely or passively, practice it. Religion is construed to be more inclusive as it is by nature a universe of belief of a loose collectivity of individuals who espouse similar philosophy or point of view. Nigeria like the rest of Africa is intensely religious. Though Nigeria since independence has been considered a secular state[1] but religious influences have permeated every sphere of its socio-political life. Political matters that involved religion are conflict prone; this perhaps could be as a result of the complex composition of Nigeria ethnically. As a result, Nigeria has undoubtedly suffered enormous violence with unestimated loss of lives and properties recorded since independence.[2]

All forms of social violence have permeated the national, regional and sub-regional affairs and deter it from meaningful development. Different

researchers have decried the state of the institutional frameworks in managing the problem; either that they are grossly inadequate in terms of expertise, required material resources and other logistics or they are non-existent. Administrative recklessness which characterizes Nigerian polity is said to encourage the problem, as not much has been done by the political leaders and the populace to scuttle the menace. Therefore, Nigerians collectively remain pessimistic, and continue apportioning blames on others – especially on the British colonialists – without much done to arrest the problem.

It is against this background the research evaluates the nature of violence among the diverse ethnic composition in Nigeria with the aim of highlighting possible solutions to the problem.

2. The Complex Composition of Nigeria

Nigeria came to be when the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 by the then Governor General, Lord Fredrick Luggard. Flora Show, a British journalist referred to this enclave *Niger Area* in her reports, which later became Nigeria. The mergence of the two protectorates (North and South) was carried out to bring the diverse cultures together and unite them politically as one people as such the Nigerian nation is endowed with exceedingly cultural pluralism. These include the pluralism of language, religion, socio-political and economic formation as well as administrative styles, social norms and personality types. Similarly, there are diversities among them resulting from factors of historical evolution, disproportionate population sizes, unequal economic resources and educational attainments. There is also plurality in social wants, needs and preferences as well as in talents and opportunities.[3]The mergence of the North and South by the Europeans was intended to achieve certain specific objectives. And this meant to serve as a steering mechanism to properly give focus and locus to attempts at collective identity and distributive politics. In view of the fore going, it is important here to unveil the tribal identities of ethnic composition in order to understand the political agenda of Nigeria.

2.1 The Hausa Socio-Political Identity

The people of the Northern region of Nigeria are often projected as predominantly Hausa. Their ethnic identity consists of a mixture of Hausa/Fulani who conquered and invaded some portions of the North in the 1800s. The mixture of Hausa/Fulani and other numerous minority groups gives the Hausas an ethnic and numerical political force that accounts for their increasing roles in Nigerian contemporary society. The absolute monarchy which the rulers of the north enjoy often makes the Emirs or Sultan assume they have divine rights over their subjects. According to Udaku, the overwhelming authority which the emirs enjoy makes it difficult for the people to dethrone them even when their leadership seemingly become outmoded or inefficient; they are untouchable, irreplaceable or unmoveable like the *Northernstars*.[4] The personal shortcomings and the strengths of a ruler

in the North are not only his own, but those of the whole population; since they affect both the population and the entire land. As such, the decisions of the emir(s) are often considered infallible.[5]Udaku further opines that:

> This type of leadership has encouraged perpetual domination on the lower class and over dependence of the people on the authority of the king. This type of administration could undermine personal initiative on the part of the citizenry and encourage sycophancy, which deters genuine human development. One of the advantages of this absolute monarchism is that it promotes homogeneity and political consensus among the members of the emirate which gives them upper hand in present day Nigerian politics. Furthermore, their political agenda is always linked to their religious affiliations as seen in Islam.[6]

2.2 The Yoruba Socio-Political identity

The historical facts one gets from the pages of school textbooks about the Yoruba is that they are located in the Western part of the lower Niger, whose traditional political structure is a stratified hierarchical monarchy. Unlike the highly centralized system in the North, the Yoruba Kingship is semi-centralised, with council of chiefs that serve as advisers to the Oba. And it is within the powers of the constituted council as mandated by the community to dethrone the Oba when his leadership becomes obsolete. Since the consequence of inefficiency was dethronement, suicide or exile, these have inspired the monarchs to have high sense of obligation in leadership style.[7]

When compared with other parts of Nigeria, the Yoruba have more natural geographical advantage. Udaku asserts that the seaport in Lagos facilitates communication with the outside world; and the "advent of western education placed them on a higher socio-economic and political pedestal."[8]

2.3 The Ibo Socio-Political Identity

The Igbo are located in the South-Eastern Nigeria. Unlike the Hausa in the North, the Ibo do not have a central government or leadership such as a king whose duty is to rule and organize the social welfare of the entire *NdiIgbo* as an entity. Rather, each clan constitutes a political and social system, and have a way of organizing themselves as autonomous community with a council of elders at the helm of decision making. The group is believed to be nurtured and sustained by Ibo communalism which encourages collective responsibility. Everyone has a role to play in the community: the members of a kindred, the heads of each family group, the elders, the titled men, the clan daughters, the age grade group; "these different groups assist in making the Ibo community a home where social control, power distribution and general well-being underlie the life of individuals and the community".[9]

The saying ***Igbo enweeze*** (the Igbo have no king) demonstrates the lack of a common king that is powerful, like it is found among the Northerners, who may not be challenged or dethroned. Therefore, no one is regarded as the 'father of all' in Igboland.[10]Udaku reiterates that:

> It is within the community that an overview of how the political life of the Igbo people is developed, nurtured and defined. Igbo politics is developed on the principle of who *NdiIgbo* are; they constitute a republican society which combines personal enterprise, prowess and independence with moral commitment to solidarity and devotion to the communal good. The spirit of republicanism is based on the social structure of *NdiIgbo* where everyone contributes something to the common good.[11]

The political structure of the Ndi Igbo is a stateless democracy which prevents centralized political set-ups, and this however puts the Igbo people at a disadvantage with respect to the other two ethnic groups: Yoruba and Hausa where centralized government and authority inform their day to day life and politics. He (Udaku) concludes that, lack of central governance or authority in Igbo land and "the erroneous interpretation of the phrase *Igbo enwaeze* have made it seemingly impossible for the present day Ibo people to have a common political agenda and vision in present day Nigerian politics.[12]

3. Forms of Violence in Nigeria

> One of the national dailies recently carried a cartoon that captures effectively the fear of death that now haunts everyone in the land. The cartoonist says in part: *"I retire to bed these days and sleep with an eye open. Reason: I'm not sure if domestic staff would-be assassins! ... When I'm being driven to and from work, my eyes keep darting from left to right. Reason: the driver of the car next to mine might be an assassin! ... I can no longer confidently check in at a five star hotel. Reason: A bomb might have been planted somewhere! ... Hmm. Finally I decided to go to church to pray about all these – I had to pray with an eye open. Reason: One can never be too sure these days... The woman standing next to me might want to crack my head with a bottle!."*[13]

The above quotation from Ehusani's *The Dynamics of Violence* captures Nigeria's situation and highlights how history of Nigeria's struggle for meaningful governance is punctuated by many setbacks. The challenge of the pathetic human condition in Nigeria is undeniably compounded by a number of key factors. The land is now held under siege and ruled by fear, no doubt, Nigerians are today perpetrators, victims and witnesses of multiple violence.

Violence thus becomes a major feature of socio-political life. Reports and commentaries in the national and, especially, international mass media often centre on violence. Scholars argue that violence is a constant element of human society all over the world; perhaps, the world is simply awash with violence as there is abundant evidence that human socio-political experience has been closely tied up with violence; both are inseparable.[14] Nigeria, which consists of a conglomeration of ethnic groups and fatherlands that are heterogeneous in many respects has indeed through the years suffered violence of different forms and degrees. However, political, religious or ethnic (etc) violence are construed to be distinct species of violence.

3.1 Political Violence.

Regardless of whether we accept it or not, political violence is a species of violence; and, it occur partly because nature endowed humans with the physiological and mental attributes to engage in it, and partly because the social context in which men/women live always compel them to resort to it. It might not be totally out of place if we reason normatively that political violence is philosophically a 'necessary evil' in some situations. Therefore, the question *what is political violence?* has remained a contending issue among scholars. According to Ayani-Akeke, the answer to this question is perhaps not simple partly because "there is no agreement on each of the words, political and violence, out of which the term is formed and partly because the actual events like terror, torture, war and the like that the term is supposed to refer to are numerous and imprecise." However, attempts have been made severally to succinctly define the term. Political violence is construed to be a very broad phenomenon encompassing behavioural or physical as well as structural violence. Ayeni-Akeke believes that "political violence is conceived in physical terms as a form of deliberate behaviour by citizens or functionaries of states intending to disrupt social processes or visit serious harm upon person or valuable private or public property."[15]On the other hand, the Marxian tradition holds the idea of political violence differently from all forms of physical disturbances, it rather take cognisance of the behavioural conception of damages, suffering and death inflicted by the silent and imperceptible operations of the inequitable socio-economic and political structures that is commonly found in the modern free economic world or the capitalist society which discriminates against the worst offs or the disadvantaged group. In the words of Ayeni-Akeke, few are enriched to exploit the labour and produce of the majority who, regardless of their efforts, suffer and die due to poverty, hunger and disease. This form of political violence is not from any physical attack against the worst offs, but from a deliberate physical incapacitating economic privations, humiliations and psychic injuries that emanate from the operations that can be blame on the wilful act of some individuals or institutions that form unequal socio-political structure.

However, Nigeria has suffered extremely from all sorts of political violence from independence till date. The political violence that are common are in form of riots, rebellion, terrorism, insurrection, institutional violence, genocide, political vigilantism, civil war, revolution, demonstration, strikes etc. These have, in some ways, crippled the structural and economic development of the nation.

3.2 Ethno-Religious Violence.

It is believed that defining and conceptualizing religion is a notoriously difficult task. Huntington asserts that, "in the modern world religion is central, perhaps the central force that motivates and mobilizes people…"[16]Throughout the world it is implausible to think that the religious factor can be isolated from life's general context. The reason is not farfetched, irrespective of which faith we refer to, religions are believed to provide necessary concepts and ideas to answer people's existential questions.[17] The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English however defined religion as a "belief in the existence of a supernatural ruling power, the creator and the controller of the universe, who has given to man a spiritual nature which continues to exist after the death of body." According to Funk and Wagnalls' Standard Reference Encyclopaedia, a "…belief based upon man's ultimate relations to the universe or God." Jeffrey Haynes points out that:

> While religions often differ greatly in terms of their beliefs and content, they can be divided into two broad categories: theistic – where a God or gods are worshipped – and non-theistic. Theistic religions can be divided further into a monotheistic group – where one God is worshipped – and a polytheistic group, where more than one god is the focus of attention. All three Abrahamic religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism, as well as Sikhism which derives from Hinduism, are theistic…[18]

Nze re-echoes Haynes' view when he claim that, "as a large substratum, religion harbours different people with varying levels of understanding of the sophisticated construct in which they inhere or that holds them...".[19]

Since independence, inter-religious violence became a common feature of life in Nigeria, primarily involving Muslim and Christian communities. One of the worst-hit regions of the Northern part are the States of Kaduna in the North-West, Plateau and Nassarawa in the North central and recently, the entire North-East states. It is on record that, Nigeria has a high level of religious violence in the African continent that claimed several thousand lives and properties, both public and private, worth trillions of dollars; Kaduna, Plateau, Bauchi and Kano were indeed the main areas of the deaths – and now Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and the Federal Capital of Abuja have suffered great hits by the Islamic extremists.

It is a state source that Nigeria has no state religion. Of course, the secular nature of the Nigerian state is said to have been established at independence in 1960, which has been reaffirmed under successive government regimes. Nevertheless, the role played and the place of religion – especially Islam – in domestic and foreign scene has been contentious in the recent history of Nigeria. The nature of Nigeria's secularity has however been vigorously debated upon.[20]

Nigeria is polarized into two irreconcilable halves where the Northern axis is dominated by Muslims and the South by Christians. The socio-cultural and religious orientations differ sharply. While North under the Sokoto caliphate was the centre of a pre-colonial Islamic empire, thus looked to the Middle-East and the wider Muslim world for solidarity and socio-political example, the South on the other hand is largely Christian whose major socio-political influences are West and Traditional Africa.

Indicatively, the perceived differences amongst these regions have been a source of political disagreement and suspicion between them since the colonial era. No doubt, mutual suspicion was heightened with the adoption of Sharia criminal legal system of Northern Nigeria Muslim-majority in 2000 and 2002.The objection of Sharia adoption by the Christian met with serious clash with the Muslims, in which thousands were killed, property destroyed and maimed, hundreds of thousands displaced. Ochonu stresses that, the ethnic groups in Southern Nigeria which are largely Christian are often fiercely targeted by Muslim mobs in the Northern cities; this often leads to brutal reprisals in the Southern cities against the Northern Muslims.[21]

The fear of domination by one part of the country has always made the other to be dead-set or charged against any tendency. That is not all, the two regions, North and South, contain ethnic and religious minorities who nurse grievances against the ethnic majorities they perceived as hegemonic oppressors. In Northern Nigeria for instance, "minority ethnic groups, mostly Christians, defined and still define themselves against the Muslim Hausa-Fulani majority, under the rubric of Middle Belt, which is usually a stand-in for non-Muslim". Consequently, these grievances are often expressed, observed Ochonu, "through sectarian crises, stacked by political elites and incendiary media rhetoric, and through violent insurgencies."[22]

4. Reasons for Ethno-Religious Clashes in Nigeria.

There are a number of reasons that are believed to be the causes of ethno-religious up-rising in Nigeria. A lot of human and material resources have been committed to study and understand the possible causes of religious violence that is seemingly within ethnic lines.

At the topmost list of every finding, the glaring adversarial agendas which every ethnic-religious community increasingly strive to emphasize always heighten mistrust among them, and therefore, breed a premonitory cause for religious tension in the country. The fact that Nigeria is already a

charged environment where religion functions as the primary idiom of political identity cannot be denied. Struggles over resources, political offices and other social goods often assume a religious colouration, with one religion pitted against the other. It is established that the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities among the people of Nigeria created diversity of interests, opinions and political leanings as well as endemic and epidemic rivalries.[23]This perhaps points out to the fact that there are a number of irreconcilable factors which encourage ethno-religious strife in Nigeria; these include ethnic and religious consciousness, and socio-cultural orientations etc.

4.1 Ethnic Consciousness.

There is little doubt that Nigeria is largely segmented within the ethnic divides based on the largest influential tripod tribes, namely: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. Udaku decried that "the deferent units that should have supported the tripod structure are falling apart." This tripod structure often emphasize political rivalry, unjust distribution of common good, strife and competition; and sad enough, "most Nigerians prefer to identify themselves with their tribal distinctiveness and preference than to project themselves as Nigerians whose goal should aim at transforming the possibilities for a more solid national identity."[24] We find this more often in the Nigeria's political agenda where Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo always see themselves as Yoruba, Hausa and Ndi Igbo respectively before seeing themselves as Nigerians.[23] These ethnic groups pay allegiance and consider the good of their respective nations before the good of the entire Nigerian nation.[26] We have to contend with the fact that ethnic consciousness or ethnicity is one type of political groupings within the framework of the modern state, which often function as informal interest groups involving elements of rational goal-oriented behaviour and effective attitude. Usoh believes that:

> Since ethnicity owes its continued vitality to the keen nature of the struggle for power and resources in a context of scarcity, insecurity or lack of confidence in official norms and regulations, as informal groupings, it cannot function in the same way as trade unions or other professional associations. Thus, ethnicity is characterized by a common consciousness of being one in relation to the other relevant ethnic groupings. Exclusiveness is also an attribute of ethnicity. Ingroup and outgroup boundaries emerge with it and, in time, become marked, more distinct than before, and jealously guarded by the various ethnic groups. This fact of exclusiveness is usually accompanied by nepotism and corruption, merit is sacrificed on the altar of ethnic chauvinism and solidarity.[25]

The new political dispensation, current happenings in the Nigeria's polity has aroused the ethnic consciousness of the minority groups against the dominant

tribes, especially in the North. The alliance between the Middle-Belt region with the Niger-Delta region during the just concluded national conference is a pointer to this. These minority tribes have been victims of the ideology of ethnicity for long. In the north, for instance, the middle-belt is always brought to the political mainstream by the Hausa/Fulani hegemony under the guise of the nineteen Northern states, when struggling to grab political power, but eludes when they succeed.

4.2 Religious Consciousness.

Judging by external manifestations of religiosity, Nigeria clearly projects the image of a religiously divided nation. The divisive tendency of Nigeria along the religious line is glaring. There are elites who believe that to play upon religious mistrust was sure way to seize power and wealth for themselves. Since the ordinary person is persuaded to believe that his or her platform of patriotism or citizenship could be seen in that of one's ethno-religious group. The emerging political leaders who are dead set to burst their material wealth and social status often introduce religious distrust in the minds of ordinary persons; hence play their political game within this line. To highlight how religion plays a central role in Nigerian politics, during the 2003 election, some ill utterances were accredited through the media to the former Head of State, General Mahammadu Buhari, calling Nigerians to cast their votes within religious lines. It was all over the media commenting on the aftermath of 2011 election where he (Buhari) said *karejini, birijini* (dog and baboon soaked in blood).[28] There was outright condemnation of President Jonathan's administration not because he was completely incompetent to rule Nigeria; partly he comes from a region that is considered a minority, and partially he does not belong to some circle of creed. The 2015 election in Nigeria saw gruesome campaigns of calumny by desperate politicians who were dead set to gain power at all cost thereby by undermining the ethics of the game. They did this through the media and other possible means they believed their targeted audience could be reached.[29]

The clamouring for the return of power to the North does not mean that the first qualification for the ruler is efficiency, but we from the Northern axis know that the clamour is always that the candidate should be a Muslim first. Also in some parts of Southern Nigeria (South-East and South-South), for one to emerge as a flag bearer his first qualification is that he must be a Christian, and not competency. It appears that religion is one of the big problems of the nation; the problem is with its misuse and abuse in the society, which is triggered by sectional, social or economic interests, political ambition or ethnic consideration.[30]Therefore, the ethno-religious consciousness which is institutionalized in the Nigerian politics always results in mutual distrust, and this equally breeds violence.

On a general note, the researchers' findings would not be complete without stressing the role played by the colonialists which established the

basis for using politics of identity as a means of accessing political and economic resources. According to Ochonu, colonialism did not only caused the primordial conditions and identities that generated tensions and conflicts between Christians and Muslims, but worsen it.[31] The Indirect Rule policy of the colonialists which is construe to be a *divide-and-rule* enthroned religion and ethnicity as the preeminent markers of identity and pushed exclusionary identity politics into the mainstream of Nigeria's political arena.

In the same vein, the indigene/settler dichotomy, corruption, incompetent leadership, insightful remarks, inequitable sharing formula for distribution of resources and opportunities, political thuggery and vigilantism, and injustice etc have added more wrinkles that make religious politics and ethnic exclusivity more appealing. Socio-cultural orientation and ethnicity which may not be completely different from ethno-religious consciousness is also a contributory factor to the Nigeria's ethno-religious problem which exerts direct negative effects or setbacks on the Nigeria's economic development.

4. Possible Remedy to Ethno-Religious Violence in Nigeria.

> ...the way up and the way down are the same... and the same is true of other opposites such as day and night, winter and summer, and war and peace... they are changing into each other. Day replaces night, and night day. Indeed, without the day there would be no night. The strife between opposites will never be resolved, and none will ever triumph permanently over its counterpart. The struggle between them is cosmic justice; and all things come through strife.[32]

The above quotation explains Heraclitian dictum of 'strife in the Plurality of things'. Heraclitus made 'clash of the opposites' the masterpiece of his work on nature. He conceives the struggle or strife of the opposite to be characteristic of all beings or existence. This perhaps explains the current global situation. There is a perpetual strife of the world at large and Nigeria in particular. The vicious clashes Nigeria has recorded since independence is part of the strife Heraclitus describes in his dictum. The continuous wanton killing of lives and destruction of public and private properties is as a result of Nigeria's refusal to come to terms with the possible unity in the midst of plurality, or, in a more proper sense, our inability to delineate the pattern of our ethnic diversity.

Ethnic politics which has been seen as being loyal to one's own ethnic group in a multiethnic state through a socio-political behaviour has plagued the Nigerian society. This ethnic loyalty must have propelled the southern youth to join militancy and those of the North to become insurgents.

It is as a result of this simple fact that building a healthy national state in Nigeria has seemingly become a mirage. This perhaps made Usoh to

conclude that "diversity of ethnicities has contributed more in negative terms than in positive terms to nation building".[33] Prior to Usoh's assertion, there have been bizarre remarks about Nigeria even by our nationalists. Sir TafawaBalewa who was the first prime minister of Nigeria said "since the amalgamation of Southern and Northern provinces in 1914, Nigeria had existed only on paper. It is still far from being united".[34]This perhaps is not different from Awolowo's utterances where he claimed that, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression....[35] On his part, the Sadauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello perceives the Nigerian project as "the mistake of 1914".[36]These and many utterances portray Nigeria as a geographical entity that was forcefully conjoined in 1914 by the colonial masters, where the various traditional societies seemingly were not duly consulted. It has been argued that, instead of integration as it is the case with nations like USA, United Kingdom etc, "ethnicity has not in any way enhances Nigerian nation building",[37] it has rather enthroned divisive struggle and rivalry within the multiethnic divides of the nation – which is conflict prone. Usoh inclined that, it is only true federalism that "may serve as a very convenient means of securing a balance between regional, ethnic autonomy and a larger viable compound political entity charge with providing a common defence and other functions better performed by its government."[38] Perhaps, his claim must have been informed by the fact that, federal arrangement is often meant to forge unity out of diversity in a multiethnic society and in a territorially large country, such as the United States. He therefore puts it succinctly clear that:

> Competition does not imply war or enemy of cooperation, but a healthy competition among individuals... promotes interdependence which is needed to build cooperation and a virile nation. True federalism may also translate a destructive conflict into a healthy and constructive competition which requires an agreement to structure a political order that permits liberty and self-government. This is to say, various ethnic groups and religious groups may find a common shelter for their core values within the constituent governments under a secular true federal government....[39]

Apart from ethnicity, religion has been a source of constant eruption of violent conflict in Nigeria. Religion however has become a focal issue generating conflicts, riots, violence, massacre etc which enhances the volatile nature of the Nigerian polity that threaten its stability. Despite the secularity of the Nigerian nation the Christian-Muslims polarity has become a new pedestal in its power politics. Whereas the strife between African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity in the Southern part of Nigeria hardly go" beyond faith-commitment and a change of underlying worldview, ...except in Yoruba

land where the brand of Islam rarely knows any hostile environment".[40] The Middle-Belt region where there is a significant number of Muslims and the Northern region which is predominantly Muslims have recorded high profile massacre of human lives and destructions of both public and private properties. The prevailing fragility of peace in the Middle Belt and the North is as a result of the religious consciousness which form their social orientations and commitments.

On a plausible assumption, ethno-religious violence can be reduced to a minimum degree only if secularity is emphasized in the Nigerian polity to curtail high influence of religion in the socio-political arena. Nevertheless, the Middle Belt and the Northern axis which are conflict prone areas should learn from the Yoruba of the West how to recognize and tolerate other people's religion. Religious tolerance and recognition is only possible if Christians and Muslims of the Middle Belt and the North allow some affiliations such as inter-religious marriages and cultural cohesion like the Yoruba in the West, ethno-religious violence would continue to prevail.

Nigeria, of course, is not meant from eternity to be for a particular ethnic group or a circle of creed, for there were diverse ethnic groups with all forms of beliefs that existed even in the pre-colonial Nigerian society. Therefore, ethno-religious domination in the public circle must be deemphasized and allow the citizenry to participate freely as disinterested persons. By so doing, peace would be given a chance.

The problems of ethno-religious clashes in the North can be resolved if the place of other so-called minority tribes is recognized by the Hausa/Fulani hegemony operating under the umbrella of the nineteen Northern States.

Conclusion.

Despite the fact that efforts have been made to address some national questions in the Nigerian federation through state creation, federal character or quota system, creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, the Almajiri Model School system, Conflict Management Study centres, National Boundary Commission, Electoral Tribunal, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) etc, the recurrent issues on ethno-religious affliction of Nigerians and their direct implication on the country's political stability however still prevails. Still persist are the endemic problems of ethno-regional, religious and sectarian bigotry institutionalized by the public office holders for their selfish ends.

Unless the ethno-religious influence on political matters, incited utterances by politicians, politics of exclusion, indigene/settlers problem, imbalance on the sharing formula on the economic benefits and public offices, religious bigotry, denial of rights and basic liberties of Nigerians, injustices in

the legal system etc are deemphasized, rivalries and mutual distrust among the diverse groups and interests in Nigeria would not be resolved.

Again, reports of committee of enquiry should always be looked onto and implemented accordingly; when necessary steps as suggested by the committees are properly followed, and offenders, irrespective of their social status, should face the law; these would help in checking recurrent incidences of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria.

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27.   F. Usoh, *True Federalism as a Remedy for Ethnic Politics in Nigeria.* The Oracle:

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28.
These utterances were allegedly attributed to Gen. Muhammadu Buhari which became subjects of Public debates on independent local televisions and other Social networks in 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections. The utterance on voting on religious line was allegedly made when he was contesting against the then incumbent, Gen. Matthew Olusegun Obasanjo in 2003, while the last utterance is said to have been made in 2011 when he lost out to the incumbent warning that "next time dogs and baboons will soaked in blood". The then party secretary of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Engr. Buba Galadima who appeared to be a diehard supporter and spokesman for General Buhari earlier made an inflammatory statement also on VOA Hausa substation at about 6:25 am on the 18th April, 2011 calling on their supporters in Hausa language to be alert should they lose out to President Jonathan. In the evening of that day a lot of Nigerians were killed, properties worth billions of dollars were burnt to ashes in the Northern axis immediately Pres. Jonathan victory was announced.

29.
Campaigns of calumny were the order of the day during the 2015 elections. It was all over the media politicians sponsoring false or slanderous statements or jingles against one another with malicious intent. This led to some of them to seek legal redress over what the perceived as deformation of character against them. For instance, Bola Tinibu against African Independent Television, Osibanjo against Fani-Kayode, Fani-Kayode against the APC publicity secretary, etc.

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F. Usoh, *True Federalism as a Remedy for Ethnic Politics in Nigeria.*P.92

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F. Usoh, *True Federalism as a Remedy for Ethnic Politics in Nigeria,* 92.

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F. Usoh, *True Federalism as a Remedy for Ethnic Politics in Nigeria,* 107

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