Solving Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Violence in Nigeria's Fourth
Republic: The Prognostic Inadequacy

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Abstract

This paper notes that both ethnic and religious
conflicts and violence in Nigeria are intertwined.
This is to the extent that even though the ethnic
aspect in some circumstances occurs
independently; the religious dimension usually
occurs conjunctively with the ethnic and that
both have indeed remained mutually reproduced
by the character of the Nigerian state. The two
propositions that form the core of the analysis
here are that ethnic and religious conflicts and
violence are outcomes of the limited democratic
character of the Nigerian state; and that public
policies meant at solving ethnic and religious
conflicts and violence in Nigeria's Fourth
Republic have failed largely due to the low
holistic manner in which these phenomena are
addressed. The paper is mainly a qualitative
analysis. It utilized data from government
documents including those that are published in
the internet and other reliable sources. The
research also utilized deductive reasoning in
which theoretical propositions formed the initial
points of departure to empirical illuminations.
The findings are numerous but generally purvey
the consequences of low democratic character of
the Nigerian state and its public policies for
solving ethno-religious conflicts in the country's
Fourth Republic.

Introduction

Ethno-religious conflicts and violence are here seen as differing levels of antagonism and armed battles that occur between and amongst ethno-religious bodies and groups. Even though these conflicts and violence occur at the ideological realm (that is at the realm of ideas, beliefs and consciousness), they necessarily underscore significant aspects of social contradictions in given societies. Included in these contradictions is the economic dimension. This is the dimension of the production relations within society. It is invariably the primacy of human society. Here, ethno-religious conflicts and violence are represented at the realms at which ethnicity and religion intervene in the contradictory relationship between the producer class and the owners of the means of production; creating and in some cases diverting consciousness from social exploitation and alienation into differing levels of altercations over ethno-religious identities, ideas and beliefs.

The representation of ethno-religious conflicts and violence at the political realm is more direct than the economic. This is because ideologies are materialized at the realm of political rule. Accordingly, ethno-religious conflicts reproduce politico-ideological disagreements and belligerence which do have far reaching implications for the inadequacy of political rule.

The position of this study is that the representation of ethno-religious conflicts and violence at all facets of human social living duly implies that solving them would require a more holistic attention including in particular resolving the contradictions that produce them at the economy, the political or the state, and of course the ideological instance. In the study of solutions to ethno-religious conflicts and

violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic here, the character of the Nigerian state is given key analytical value. As Jega (2007) observed,

> To be able to solve a problem, one has to understand and analyze its underlying causes holistically, in all ramifications. There are many causes of ethno-religious tension and conflicts in Nigeria, and quite a number of them are actually interrelated. Critical to understanding these, is an appreciation of the nature and character of the post-colonial state in Nigeria. Many scholars...have identified capitalist rent seeking; patrimonialism and prebendalism as the major characteristics of the postcolonial Nigerian state (Jega, 2007: 119).

Indeed in an earlier study, (Jega, 2000: 19), it had been noted that the Nigerian state "tends to resort to politics of identity for its legitimation, while those excluded tend to resort to identity politics to contest this exclusion. The state, thus, is projected as the critical variable in identity transformation, and the resurgence of identity politics"

While Nnoli (1998 & 2008) analyzed the historic-materialist foundations of ethnic politics and conflicts in Nigeria (Nnoli, 2008) and in Africa (Nnoli, ed, 1998), Ake (2003), analyzes the interface between ethnic conflicts and democratization. As Ake (2003: 92) observed, "As Africa democratizes, there is considerable concern that the liberties of democracy will unleash ethnic rivalries whose embers are forever smouldering in African conditions and destroy the fragile unity of African countries". It is nonetheless important to note that it is a minimalist conception of democracy especially when it is restricted to

elections that there is an easy association of democracy with the resurgence of ethno-religious violence in particular.

This thrust appears to have informed the submission by Jega (2007: 116) that "It seems as if decades of bottled up anger under military rule has suddenly exploded and found expression in violent ethnic-religious and communal conflicts, in the context of the little democratic space, which has opened up since May 29, 1999". But Jega (2007: 117) provides a more reflective comment on the occurrence of ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic thus:

> Under the current democratic transition, competitive partisan political activities are being used as avenues through which groups are exploited, identities rigidly reinforced, often infused with excessive religiosity. Violent youth gangs and militias are formed and armed, and with ethnic tensions and conflicts are thereby facilitated. As the elite pursue zero-sum political engagements, all means, including violent ones, are used to achieve narrowly defined ends.

In the same text, (Jega, 2007), a number of solutions have been suggested. These include: changing elite attitudes and value-orientations to reduce greed and self disposition; entrenching tolerance and harmonious relationship; entrenching democratic political culture in civil society; de-escalation of ethno-religious and regional tension by all stakeholders; guarding of utterances by political leaders, inspiring confidence and assuaging fears by the actions of these leaders; and finally reduction of poverty in the country. In concluding these recommendations, Jega (2007: 125) submitted that:

> Government needs not only to be fair but to also be seen to be fair. Positive, tolerant preaching by religious leaders is essential. We have to deliberately cultivate cordial and harmonious inter-ethnic interaction and relationships. We also have to ingrain values of tolerance, dialogue, healthy debate and accommodation.

Jega (2000 & 2007) have been quite useful to the present study especially in defining the research problem. In the first place, it is from these sources that a pointer to the implications of the defunct Structural Adjustment Programmes to identity politics and conflicts has been gleaned. Also the studies have provided satisfactory anecdotes to the current problem under discussion. Nonetheless, this paper provides more indepth analysis of strong association between the limited democratic character of the Nigerian state and the persistence of ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the country's Fourth republic.

Low Democratic Character of the Nigerian State, Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Violence in the Fourth Republic

The low democratic character of the Nigerian state derives from the following:

- The limited presence of the core values of liberal democracy in Africa including Nigeria which necessitated the submission by Ake (2003) that there is a limited feasibility of democracy in Africa including Nigeria.
- The failure to engender popular democracy as an alternative to the limited feasibility of liberal democracy in Nigeria (Nyongo, ed, 1987; Umezurike, 2010, 2012).

- Low citizen perception of democracy in Nigeria (Ibeanu and Egwu, 2007).

The above are effectively supported by Nigeria's low placing in the global Human Development Index, HDI. Accordingly, the HDI is used here to illuminate the current global divide in which Nigeria has afforded little democratic dividends to its citizens. At the moment, the HDI of Nigeria is 49% which is about half of the high income OECD countries at 95%.

- **The limited presence of the core values of liberal democracy in Nigeria**

In a posthumous publication entitled: The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa, Professor Claude Ake had noted that:

> One serious danger, which looms large for democratizing Africa, is the daunting task of operationalizing the principles and values of democracy in historical conditions that are markedly different from those of the established liberal democracies...liberal democracy is a child of industrial capitalism, a product of a socially atomized society where production and exchange are highly commodified and thus of a society which is essentially a market. It is a product of a society in which interests are so particularized that the very notion of common interest becomes problematic, hence the imperative of democratic participation...Contemporary Africa remains a far cry from this. It is still predominantly pre-capitalist and pre-industrial. Primordial loyalties and pre-capitalist social structures remain strong. Apart from the urban enclaves, most African rural societies are still constituted as what Durkheim calls mechanical solidarity; they are still communal, and it is communalism which

> defines the peoples' perception of self-interest, their location in the social whole. Liberal democracy presupposes individualism but there is little individualism in the communal societies of rural Africa; it assumes the abstract universalism of legal subjects, but that applies mainly in the urban enclaves (Ake, 2003: 31).

In that same text, Ake (2003) had actually articulated what are considerably the core values of liberal democracy which he wasted no time in conflating with market societies. As he puts it, "in sum, the values of the market are essentially the same as the core values of liberal democracy: egotism, property, formal freedom and equality" (Ake, 2003: 23).

It is important to note that political economy deregulations in Nigeria's neoliberal regime which have lasted since 1986 till date have abjectly failed to redress these specificities of the Nigerian society which have been incapacitating the practice of liberal democracy in the country.

- **The failure to engender popular democracy as an alternative to liberal democracy in Nigeria**

Long before the publication of Professor Ake's seminal work on the feasibility of democracy in Africa, a number of African social scientists including Ake had interrogated the state in Africa and in the process suggested popular democracy as a more feasible democracy for African countries. It was indeed the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes, an IMF neoliberal recipe that really sparked off this enquiry. The overall conviction of African scholars on the matter is that the state in Africa should be a state of the popular classes (Nyongo, ed. 1987).

Nyongo' (ed, 1987) came at the resumption of neoliberal regimes in Africa and indeed a year after the inauguration of Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria. Even though devoted primarily to the political question, Samr Amin in his contribution to the preface of the book necessarily related to the economic. But Amin (1987) does agree with the book editor that "...the essential lesson of what we are indeed obliged to call failure of the development of independent Africa is the impossibility of achieving anything significant economically in the absence of a popular national state..." (Amin, 1987: 1).

In certainty, both Amin (1987) and Nyongo' (ed 1987) corroborate on a number of crucial issues to the questions of democracy and development in Africa. Visiting the matter quite penitently, Nyongo' (ed 1987) noted that:

> Questions of development and problems of economic crisis cannot therefore be meaningfully discussed without discussing problems regarding the nature of state power, the form of popular participation in the processes of government, and the question therefore of democracy. The state cannot just acquire or re-acquire the capacity and ability for positive socio-economic transformation: it has to be somebody's state. It must be a state responsible to the demands of the social forces that provide it with its power base, its legitimacy, its ability to hold social conflicts in check and its capacity to ensure the reproduction of society as a whole (Nyongo', 1987: 20).

The demand to inaugurate popular democracy in Africa including Nigeria has not been taken quite seriously by its leaders. So far, the

petty bourgeois character of this leadership has been perpetuating undue collaboration with the metropolitan bourgeoisie to undermine the democratic lives of African peoples. The masses of the people have been enmeshed in abject poverty. The Gini coefficient index shows that there have been rising income inequalities in all of Africa especially over the years of neoliberal deregulations (Umezurike, 2012).

- **Low Citizen Perception of Democracy in Nigeria**

African scholars have also responded to the most current efforts been made to measure democracy or the quality of democracy made popular by a number of leading world scholars (see for instance: Morlino and Palombella, 2010; Morlino, Dressel and Pelizzo, 2011; Thomas and Silander, 2011; Denk and Silander, 2012 amongst numerous others). Quite alluring, the quality of democracy debate has submitted that participation and competition are the main determinants of democratic qualities. Leonardo Morlino in particular formulated the character of democratic regimes in terms of procedural, content and outcome (Morlino et al, 2011: 494). The subcategories for the measurement of the quality of democracy under these dimensions are elaborated as follows:

> Among the procedural dimensions, rule of law is assessed on the basis of government respect for the physical integrity of its citizens, government effectiveness, and the degree of corruption. Electoral accountability is measured on the basis of freedom of the press and electoral self-determination. Inter-institutional accountability is measured on the basis of oversight capacity

and the effectiveness of constraints on the
executive power. Political participation is
measured on the basis of voter turn-out, and
political competition on the basis of the number
of parties and the difference in the number of
parliamentary seats held by the largest and
second largest party. The content of democracy
dimension pertains to the ability to promote
freedom and equality, which we measure
respectively on the basis of the Freedom House
Index and the Gini coefficient. Finally, the
quality of democracy is assessed in terms of
outcome on the basis of how satisfied citizens
are with the way democracy works in their
country (Morlino et al, 2011: 494).

The above parameters have been used to measure the quality of

democracy in several parts of the world including the countries of

Africa. The problems with the quality of democracy measurement in

Africa are numerous suggesting that genuinely, only negative results

will continue to emerge from the assessments. First and foremost, the

institutions of democracy in Africa are grafted from the advanced

countries and have for close to a century now continued to face the

problem of rootinization. Second the low democratic content of these

institutions and the fact that they are primarily focussed at by external

assessors of democracy in Africa has continued to foreclose meaningful

attention to the real democratic struggles of African peoples. There is of

course no society in which democratic struggles are not taking place.

The distinction which African countries purvey is that these struggles

are not materializing in democratic dividends for African peoples.

Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) nonetheless carried out a comprehensive

assessment of citizen perception of democracy in Nigeria. This was a

part of Nigeria's self assessment within the framework of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The APRM "is a self-monitoring and self-regulating instrument willingly adopted by African leaders to ensure conformity with basic goals and values enshrined in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance" (Ibeanu and Egwu, 2007:6).

Adopting very rigorous methodologies, Ibeanu and Egwu (2007) focussed specifically on a comprehensive assessment of the progress attained by Nigeria since independence in the sphere of democracy and political governance. The results are expectedly not quite salutary as they are reportedly numerous challenges to the Nigerian democratic experiences since political independence in 1960. For instance, chapter three of the book highlighted the problem of ethnic, religious, regional and cultural diversities that make Nigeria a deeply divided society; noting that the character of the Nigerian political economy has ensured that these realities have continued in the social crisis and intense violence.

Implications of the Low Democratic Character of the Nigerian State on the Pervasiveness of Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Violence in the Fourth Republic

Nigeria's Fourth Republic has witnessed a conflagration of ethno-religious conflicts and violence There are two forms in which the conflagration has been consummated. The first is in terms of the frequency of these conflicts and violence; while the second is in terms of the heavy destructions of lives and property over the period of study.

Between 1999 and 2012, there have been not less than 30 major cases of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria (Nnoli, 2008; Umezurike, 2009; 2012; Adebayo, 2010; Ojo, 2010).

To begin with, the low democratic character of the Nigerian state has transmuted into ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the country's Fourth Republic in the following manner. The first is that the democratic experiment of the Fourth Republic has been conditioned by neoliberal political economy deregulations and has invariably failed to genuinely address such socioeconomic vices as poverty and unemployment (Umezurike, 2012). The intensification of these vices has been facilitating ethno-religious consciousness and mobilization in the Fourth Republic. All these have constituted a funnel of causality for ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the Fourth Republic. Second, the democratic activities of the Fourth Republic including elections and the party system have been grossly inadequate for assimilating the democratic requirements of the Nigerian people. The alienatory trends in these activities as can be seen in high electoral apathy and high authoritarianism of the public policy process have been leading to high violent confrontation of the Nigerian state in the Fourth Republic. Third and finally, political rule in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has failed to follow popular democratic path in which it can safely utilize ethnicity and religion as instruments of political mobilization rather than as antagonists or evil collaborators. More advanced democracies have actually adopted this instrumental uses for their retinues of ethnicity and of religion in particular.

An illumination of the first point raised above is that the majority of ethno-religious violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been taking place in the poorest regions of the country at the same time as available data show that there has been rising unemployment and income inequalities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Indeed between 1980 and 2004, Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics shows that in descending order, the North East geopolitical zone (at 72.2% in 2004); North West (at 71.2% in 2004) and North Central (at 67.0% in 2004) remained the poorest sections of Nigeria. Despite the paucity of data, this trend has been consistent as the South East (at 26.7% in 2004); South-South (at 35.1% in 2004); and South West (at 43.0% in 2004) have generally been less poverty prone. It is rather quite intuitive that it is in these poorest geopolitical zones that most of the violent ethno-religious conflicts have taken place. Of the 30 major ethno-religious violence which have occurred between 1999 and 2012, a total of 12 took place in the North East geopolitical zone alone. And yet neoliberal reforms have done quite little to alleviate poverty in the Fourth Republic.

Between 1980 and 1986 when neoliberal regime in Nigeria was inaugurated, the average poverty rate in the country had been 37.3%. But three years into Nigeria's Fourth Republic in which neoliberal reforms had fully been resumed (1999-2002), average poverty rate in the country stood at 65.5%. It was in due recognition of this that the Federal Government of Nigeria hurriedly embarked on a poverty eradication programme by introducing NAPEP in 2001. Also, the rate of unemployment in Nigeria has been above single digit since 2000. Unemployment in Nigeria actually rose from 13.6% in 2002 to 21.1%

in 2010. Indeed, this rate has been growing thus portraying a limited extent to which the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty in the country by 2015 can be attained.

The above are clear pointers to the alienatory character of Nigeria's Fourth Republic democratic experiments. Infact, neither the elections nor the political party mobilizations has been able to assimilate Nigerian people into a proper democratic society. In an earlier study, it has been shown that there is high electoral apathy and that the public policy process is highly authoritarian. For even though four transfers of power have been recorded through the electoral process, the elections have left a lot to be desired. The party in control of the Federal Government namely the Peoples Democratic Party has been in control of over 70% electoral offices in the country. This is inspite of the fact that at the moment, a total of 63 political parties are registered in the country. This massive registration of political parties is in consonance with the avowed deregulation of the political environment by the current political regimes in the country.

Low voter turn-out is a clear demonstration of the growth in political apathy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Even though the mean percentage of voters' turnout in the four elections of the Fourth Republic is on the average, the credibility of the data is highly dubious. But it is also important to note that this average rating has been influenced by high voter turnout in the Presidential elections for the various election years. In the 1999 and 2003 General Elections for instance, the turnouts for the Presidential Elections were 52.3% and 69.1% respectively. On the other hand, the turnouts for the same periods for the Senate and House

of Representatives were 42.1% ; 40.7% and 49.3% and 50% respectively (Umezurike, 2012). It is indeed quite clear that Presidential elections in the Fourth Republic have been used by the Nigerian governments to give the outside world an impression that democracy has actually began to fertilize in the country.

Coupled with the reduced welfare role of the Nigerian state on account of neoliberal deregulations the growth in political apathy has continued to ennoble the pertinent effects of ethnicity and religion in the political process. Outside proper instrumentalization by the Nigerian state, these largely idyllic forces have inescapably manifested in violence.

The last issue on the implications of the low democratic character of the Nigerian state on the pervasiveness of ethno-religious conflicts and violence concerns the low instrumentalization of ethnicity and religion in Nigeria's neoliberal regime. Historically, both ethnicity and religion had been properly instrumentalized for political mobilization in Nigeria. The colonial masters for instance relied on them to garner support for their highly oppressive political rule. Subsequently, the emerging Nigerian petty bourgeoisie attempted the utility of these ideological forces to garner domestic support in its political governance. A clear difference however occurred. The Nigerian petty bourgeoisie lacked adequate democratic orientation and therefore put ethnicity and religion in the midst of its divisiveness and incoherence. Massive ethno-religious conflicts and violence thus became the immediate outcome.

Neoliberal reforms invariably became another opportunity beyond decolonization for the Nigerian petty bourgeoisie to readdress its poor democratic orientation. Expectedly, neoliberalism has failed to make

positive changes. Rather, the attendant deregulations have been fostering low democratic credentials. The well known institutions for political mobilization in liberal political rule namely political parties and interest groups have not functioned properly in the case of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Similar fate has befallen ethnicity and religion. The situation in the Fourth Republic is that in some cases, the ideological struggles that take place under ethnicity and religion antagonize the Nigerian state, leading to violence amongst others. In other cases, the Nigerian state collaborate with these ideological forces to foment conflicts and violence in the Nigerian society.

Solving Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Policy Incapacitations

Solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic requires above all solving the incapacities of the Nigerian state for democratic governance. At the foundation of these incapacities is the class contradictions of this state; a reality that continues to persuade it to adopt policies and prognosis for action that evidently worsen rather than solve these conflicts and violence.

The incapacities of the Nigerian state for solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the Fourth Republic derive substantially from the incongruities of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This Constitution is supposed to provide the broad framework and guideline for the policies and programmes of the Nigerian governments that are designed for solving these conflicts and violence. But the position of this paper is that this Constitution in the same

manner as the previous ones has been modelled after extant Constitutions in the advanced democracies rather than emerge from the resolutions of social contradictions in the Nigerian society. In addition, the Constitution has generally provided for the alleviation of the fears of the Nigerian petty bourgeois governing class concerning national unity and integration. These two basic concerns explain why the 1999 Constitution has generally emphasized national integration without the requisite popular fervour. For rather than make provisions that empower the Nigerian people, the Constitution took refuge in abstract laws that have more meaning in the advanced liberal societies where it is modelled. As will be shown later, a reasonable portion of its avowed citizenship rights are ambitious enough for Nigerians but are nonetheless mere shibboleths. Thus, just like the Nigerian state that was historically created by colonialism, the current Nigerian Constitution obliges the diktats of advanced democracies and its surrogate local elites in which significant socioeconomic and political contradictions in the contemporary accumulation process have been resolved into laws. This Constitution has in certainty remained at variance with the popular needs of the Nigerian people. It rather circumvents these needs.

The external modelling of the 1999 Fourth Republic Constitution of Nigeria is not in doubt. The Constitution has been a repackaging of the abrogated 1989 Third Republic Constitution which also had been a repackaging of the 1979 Second Republic Constitution of Nigeria. The 1979 Second Republic Constitution was prepared by the Nigerian Military as an aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70) in which national integration was strongly challenged. The Military thus

jettisoned the British Parliamentary model which had been in practice for the American Presidential model. In the preference for an executive presidency, the Constitution also upheld some aspects of military rule. But of most relevance is that the Constitution was designed to superintend over a population of 250 ethnic groups of high religious divides between Native Worshipers, Christians and Moslems. Its primary task in this regard is to achieve national integration.

In points of facts, externally modelled Constitutions have deviated from the proper legal codes for dealing with the popular needs of the Nigerian people including particularly the question of solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence. This is illustrated with some relevant portions of the 1999 Fourth Republic Constitution of Nigeria. Thereafter, the inadequacies of the key policies that have been enunciated for solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the Fourth Republic against the backdrop of these Constitutional guidelines will be analyzed.

The Preamble of the 1999 Fourth Republic Constitution clearly gives out the overwhelming concern for national unity and integration as it unmistakeably uses the following terms: "We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria"; "To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign Nation..."; "...for the purpose of consolidating the Unity of our people". Under General Provisions in Chapter 1; Part 1 of the 1999 Constitution, it is further noted as follows:

1-(1). This Constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

1-(2) The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall not be governed, nor shall any person or group of persons take control of the government of Nigeria or any part thereof, except in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution...

2-(1) Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

2-(2). Nigeria shall be a Federation consisting of states and a Federal Capital Territory...

3-(5). There shall be seven hundred and sixty-eight Local Government areas in Nigeria as shown in the second column of Part 1 of the First Schedule of this Constitution and six area councils as shown in Part 11 of that schedule.

Even though the above provisions may sound innocuous, they do reveal the attempt by the Constitutional draughtsmen to model the Constitution after the 1787 Constitution of the United States in which a more perfect union was been sought for the 13 former colonies of Great Britain. The lower-tier governments in the case of Nigeria have differed because they are been created on the basis of ethnic balancing. Also provisions are made for citizenship (Chapter 111, Sections 25-32), as well as fundamental rights (Chapter IV, Sections 33-46) in the Fourth Republic Constitution of Nigeria without adequately qualifying them with the primordial conditions of human existence in the country. In other words, the 1999 Fourth Republic Constitution of Nigeria glosses over significant attributes of human living in the country. As will be shown in the later part of this paper, the confrontation of the Nigerian state by ethno-religious conflicts led to the enunciation of legislations

that began to recognize the realities of prebourgeois existence only to the advantage of the elite class rather than the Nigerian popular masses. These legislations include the Land Use Decree of 1978 and the Federal Character Commission which has been entrenched into the 1999 Constitution.

Even though the Nigerian state lacks the character to play neutral roles to ethnic and religious struggles, the 1999 Constitution still went ahead to declare its stand against state religion; a matter which it has clearly equivocated in practice. This appears as follows:

10-The Government of the Federation or a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion.

38-(1). Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

(2). No person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instructions or to take part in or attend any religious ceremony or observance if such instruction, ceremony or observance relates to a religion other than his own or a religion not approved by his parents or guardian.

(3). No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any place of education maintained wholly by that community or denomination.

The above provisions have been largely abused by governments in the country. Several religious crisis in Nigeria have for instance arisen from the implementation of Islamic laws known as Sharia by a number of State governments in the country. A good example is the Kaltungo crisis in Gombe state on 8th September, 2000. The discrepancy between the Constitutional provisions and the practice underscore the limited extent in which the Constitution represents significant degrees of resolutions of socioeconomic and political struggles. And yet the Constitutions have served as key framework for the numerous policies and programmes that have been enunciated for solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the country.

A Critical Review of the Key Policies for Solving Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Public policies geared towards solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria's Fourth Republic are numerous but are mainly disparate. They are disparate in the sense that they do not find all encompassing bearing with the limited democratic character of the Nigerian state already discussed in this paper. Nonetheless, a number of these policies have the object of engendering national unity and integration at their core. Also some of these policies are carry-overs from previous Republics while some others have been enunciated newly during the current Fourth Republic. The key ones that have been identified here are as follows:

- Policies for the maintenance of internal security and territorial integrity of Nigeria by its governments.

- Establishment of the National Youth Service Corps.

- State and Local Government Creation.

- Membership of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, OIC; formerly Organization of Islamic Conference.

- National Poverty Eradication Programme, NAPEP.

Following are brief critical reviews of each of the above itemized policies and programmes.

- **Policies for the maintenance of internal security and territorial integrity of Nigeria by its governments**

Policies in this respect are traditional to governance and have been based on two interrelated premises. The first is that as provided in the Constitution, governments in Nigeria have obligations to the maintenance of internal security and territorial integrity of the country. The second premise is that both ethnic and religious conflicts and violence constitute threats to these security and territorial integrity of the country. The Fourth Republic Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is clear on the issue of public order and security. It stipulates as follows:

11-(1). The National Assembly may make laws for the Federation or any part thereof with respect to the maintenance and securing of public safety and public order...

11-(3). During any period when the Federation is at war the National Assembly may make such laws for the peace, order and government of the Federation or any part thereof with respect to matters not included in the Exclusive Legislative list as may appear to it to be necessary or expedient for the defence of the Federation.

11-(4). At any time when any House of Assembly of a State is unable to perform its functions by reason of the situation prevailing in that State, the National Assembly may make such law for the peace, order and good government of that State with respect to matters on which a House of Assembly may make laws as may appear to the National Assembly to be necessary or expedient until such time as the House of Assembly is able to resume its functions...

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the President or the Chief Executive of the Federation and the Governors or the Chief Executives of the State-tier governments have the mandate for executing all these laws and policies concerning national security and public order as well as initiating a number of them. These governments have however misapplied these mandates as excessive force has been mostly used in quelling militancy in the Niger Delta and the current spate of religious uprisings in the country. The low efficacy of the use of military and police forces as against higher commitment to democratizing society has become evident in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. When state coercion continued to prove inadequate, the late President Yar' Adua finally capitulated to an amnesty programme extended to the militants.

- **Establishment of the National Youth Service Corps**

The NYSC is yet another institution designed to legislate national unity and integration into existence in Nigeria. Established in 1973, the NYSC provided for a one year youth service by graduates of universities and later all tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The NYSC also legislated that youth corps members were to serve in states other than their own states of origin. Only very few exceptions were made to this

rule. The one-year service year for youth corps members are split into some weeks of paramilitary training in orientation camps and some days of preparations for and passing-out parade at the orientation camps.

For close to 40 years of its existence, the NYSC has served as a veritable facility for encouraging inter-communal mobility of Nigerian youths. Some youths in the country have found it exciting and indeed adventurous. Inter-communal marriages both between serving corps members and between them and members of their host communities have been contracted. Choice settlements in the places of service by former corps members have been made. Above all, some government and non-governmental agencies that have utilized the services of youth corps members have ended up providing them with full time employment. In addition, the programme has facilitated some public services including elections in the country.

However, despite its suitability for youth empowerment, the NYSC has witnessed significant challenges. The first is that some prospective corps members have rejected postings outside their immediate environments. Excuses for rejection have ranged from marital to health reasons but have also included unwillingness to serve outside acceptable communal cum religious environments. Even when some corps members have accepted their postings, a number have insisted on doing their primary assignments in organizations that can add more pay to their normal service allowance as well as retain them in employment after the service year. The most challenging aspect of the NYSC has been in relation to the most recent ethno-religious conflagrations in

which a large number of serving corps members in the Northern parts of the country lost their lives. In the States of Bauchi and Gombe in particular, NYSC members were victims of suicide bombing in 2011. In the light of these numerous challenges, the NYSC is no longer seen as a veritable policy for resolving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria.

- **State and Local Government Creation**

A clear specificity of state and local government creation in Nigeria is that they are used for ethnic, sub-ethnic and communal balancing in the country's federalism. The exercises of state creation in the country began with the creation of the Mid-Western Region in 1963 to bring to a total of four Regions in Nigeria's First Republic. When the defunct Republic of Biafra commenced its secession, the Federal Government of Nigeria under Yakubu Gowon responded by creating twelve States out of the erstwhile four Regions. By so doing, the minority ethnic groups in erstwhile Eastern Region were granted their own States; while the secessionist Igbos were clamped into one State called the East Central State.

Since 1966 till date, a total of 774 local government areas and 36 States have been created in the country. Six geopolitical zones have also been created which include: North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East and South South geopolitical zones. There are adequate claims that while the North West and North East are predominantly Muslims, the North Central is almost balanced between Christians and Muslims. The South West has a fairly large population of Muslims but are also mainly Christians and Native Worshipers. The

South East and South South are predominantly Christians. At the moment, the clamour for state creation in the Fourth Republic has been rife. The Igbos who constitute the South East have complained that the other major ethnic groups, namely the Hausa-Fulani and the Yorubas have more states than them. This trend has no doubt shortchanged them as the States have been used to determine quota into a number of Federal institutions including the Nigerian Military, Police, Immigration amongst others. Other forms of resource allocation have followed suit.

- **Membership of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, OIC; formerly Organization of Islamic Conference**

Two related factors have made Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation a problem to solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the country. The first is that the low democratic credentials of the Nigerian state and therefore its limited capacity to maintain objective and neutral stand on matters of religious worship have made this state a suspect to the two main religious worshipers in the country namely Christians and Moslems. This is notwithstanding the Constitutional stand against state religion in Nigeria. The second is that over the years, every step taken by the Nigerian state on religious grounds have been interpreted by the other religions as contrary to its own perpetuation in the country. It was therefore of little surprise that the initiation of Nigeria's membership of the OIC by the General Babangida administration instantly drew the flaks of Christians in the country.

As has been noted, the OIC aspires to a representation of the Muslim world (Ummah) and in that conviction pursues the collective interest of the Muslims across the globe. It has a permanent delegation to the United Nations and infact is claimed to be the largest international organization outside the UN. The OIC was actually formed through the initiative of Saudi Arabia and has its headquarters in Jeddah. When the OIC was formed in Rabat, Morocco in 1969, Nigeria sent an observer representation. This has been interpreted to have been in response to pressure on General Gowon who was at the time prosecuting the Nigerian civil war.

On April 11, 2009, Nigeria repeated what it had done 23 years ago by quietly joining the OIC. Infact it was noted that the Nigerian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Abdullahi M. Garba Aminchi quietly signed Nigeria's membership with the Secretary General of the OIC, Ekmelddin Ihsanoglu. While Muslims in Nigeria have applauded this action, Christians have on their part claimed that such membership will continue to worsen ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the country.

- **National Poverty Eradication Programme, NAPEP**.

This is another economic policy directed at mitigating the hardship of neoliberal reform and its attendant ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria. In point of fact, NAPEP came in response to both the World Bank Poverty Reduction and Strategy Papers and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. Of course these have had identical objects of ameliorating contemporary global decay.

According to programme implementers, NAPEP serves as the Secretariat of the National Poverty Eradication Council, NAPEC, the apex body for the formulation of policies in the country. NAPEC is chaired by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with the Vice President as the Vice Chairman and Secretary to the Government of the Federation as the Secretary. Its membership is quite encompassing; it includes the Ministers of 17 core Ministries, selected for the poverty reduction content in their statutory missions, the Economic Adviser to the President and the National Coordinator of NAPEP.

Both as an interventionist as well as a coordinative institution on poverty alleviation in Nigeria, NAPEP has not really achieved much. It has failed to even substantially address relative poverty in Nigeria before one can begin to talk about the absolute aspect. As the rising values of the Gini Coefficient Index shows, poverty and income inequality especially amongst the oppressed in the country have been rising with the implementations of neoliberal political economy reforms since the mid-1980s.

Conclusion

Ethno-religious conflicts and violence are the most manifest aspects of socioeconomic and political crisis in Nigeria's history. They have become most virulent in Nigeria's Fourth Republic owing to the unbridled pursuit of neoliberal political economy reforms by political regimes in this Republic. The extant literature referred in this paper has already analyzed this consonance of ethno-religious conflicts and

violence with the neoliberal conjuncture in Nigeria (see for instance, Jega, 2000&2007; Cafentzis, 2002; Nasongo, 2004; Harrison, 2005; Umezurike, 2010&2012).

Given its perversity, finding solutions to ethno-religious conflicts and violence has been a major preoccupation of political governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Nonetheless, this paper has noted that the low democratic character of the Nigerian state has been at the core of its limited capacity for solving the problem. Rather than address this trend, the Nigerian state has been pursuing policies and programmes that have been expanding the problem.

The first task that the paper pursued in the process of proofing the limited capacity of the Nigerian state for solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the Fourth Republic was to delineate the fact of its low democratic character. In the first place, the paper noted that liberal democracy has limited feasibility in Nigeria and that the Nigerian state has failed to engender popular democracy as a viable alternative. The low feasibility of liberal democracy in Nigeria is informed by the persistence of primordial loyalties and pre-capitalist social structures in the Nigerian society in contrary to the core values of liberal democracy which include egotism, property, formal freedom and equality as are available in industrialized countries. Due to these conditions, the acknowledged features of liberal democracy such as rule of law, electoral accountability, inter-institutional accountability, political participation, political competition amongst others have been shown to always be in the negative in much of Africa including Nigeria. Moreover, the low placing of Nigeria in the global Human

Development Index continues to testify to the low democratic prospectus of the country.

The paper accordingly noted that the low democratic character of the Nigerian state has transmuted into ethno-religious conflicts and violence in the country's Fourth Republic in a number of forms. First in the manner in which the democratic experiment of the Fourth Republic has been conditioned by neoliberal political economy deregulations. Second by the low extent to which the democratic activities of the Fourth Republic including elections and the party system have been able to absorb the democratic requirements of the Nigerian people. Third and finally by the persistent refusal to mobilize Nigerians along the lines of popular sovereignty.

The paper further noted that at the heart of the inadequate prognosis for solving ethno-religious conflicts and violence in Nigeria is the Nigerian Fourth Republic Constitution of 1999 which has two key inhibitions in this respect. The first is that it is modelled after extant practices of Presidential Constitution of the United States of America. Added to this is that the Constitution carries the agenda of the Nigerian petty bourgeois governing circle. The paper therefore noted through references to the provisions of the Constitution that even though certain palatable provisions of the Constitution for democratization do exist, they are merely imitations of the practices of advanced democratic countries from where the Constitution is modelled. Too the Nigerian petty bourgeois governing class has been much more concerned with national unity and integration to the neglect of the populist constitutional requirements of the Nigerian people.

In the final analysis, the paper itemized a list of the policies made by the Nigerian state towards resolving ethno-religious conflicts and violence and noted that more failures than successes have been the lot.

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