

ETHNIC MILITIA AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA
1960- 2003

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Abstract

The paper seeks to unveil the historical antecedent of the phenomenon of ethnic militancy in Nigeria premised on the high level of deprivation, marginalization, injustice, corruption and inequitable distribution of natural resources; especially among different levels of government and the political class which are deduced to be harbinger of youth restiveness and ethnic militia. The paper employs the use of historical methodology to depict the moribund consequences of the phenomenon to the nascent democracy, and presupposes that the 1999 constitution was fatally flawed. In the corollary, the paper posited that until a new constitution is drawn up by Nigerians through an all inclusive, process-led, open and transparent mechanism, the search for a panacea for an enduring democratic order and nation building remains a mirage.

Introduction

Over two thousand years ago, the bible set out a remarkable accurate social profile of our time. It stated, “In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, disloyal, betrayers, headstrong and not open to any agreement.”¹ Only few would deny the fact that those negative traits have become more common in our time. They become manifest in many ways including greed, prejudice, antisocial, corruption and extreme financial inequalities which paradoxically are the root cause of ethnic militia.

In more recent time, one of the most worrisome groups that unleashed varying degrees of violence to Nigeria’s nascent democratic order is the ethnic nationality identity movement otherwise known as the ethnic militia movement. The most worrisome aspect of the escalation is its threat to Nigeria’s corporate existence and the noble ideas of nation building. The dissatisfaction with the structure, operation and power configuration under Nigeria Federalism has been deduced for the unprecedented emergence of these groups. Though the increase in crime rate and the helpless attitude of law enforcement agencies towards this have been conjured to claim legitimacy to some of these militant groups by their founders and

¹Holy Bible: 2 Timothy 3:1-4

admirers, the activities of these groups have assumed a dysfunctional dimension and threatened the objectivities of peaceful coexistence.

Each year, tens of thousands of families are torn apart, hundreds of thousands of lives are ruined, and millions of naira worth of properties is destroyed. So endemic is the scourge to the society that it is not hard to imagine future historian categorizing the late twentieth century Nigeria not as the “space Age” but as the “Antisocial Age”, the time when society went to war against itself². And since the activities of these seem ethnic junta had began to attract public attention, several questions has come to mind. Among the questions are: to what extent is the existence of these gory tales compatible with democracy? Or is the existence of these movements an outright negation of the lofty democratic order?

Ethnic Militias in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

Before the advent of colonial rule in Nigeria, cleavage conflict tended to occur more within, rather than between geographical zones occupied by ethno-regional constituencies now considered been culturally united and homogenous entity³. If any ethnic religion conflict had occurred in pre-colonial Nigeria, except in consideration of the relation “between the conquering Fulani and their Hausa

²Awake! The cry for Justice. Watch Tower Bible and Tract society of New York, Inc. May, 2012. P.3

³Paul -SewaThoroetin, “ Ethnic Militias and Political Violence in Nigeria (1999-2003)” in Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria ed. AyinlaSaadu Alanamu, (Ilorin: Hamson printing Longman Publication 2005) P76

subject. Otherwise, most ethnic groups in pre-colonial Nigeria co-existed peacefully in trade and other related matters until the coming of colonialism.⁴ The emergence of colonial rule and its attendant “freezing” of history as means of creating a governable state saw the epoch of inter-ethnic schism and the upgrading of ethno-regional and allied cleavages which became a dominant model for group’s mobilization for political and socio-economic actions. On other sphere, some ethnic groups also used religion as the required tools for the expansion of the political horizon during the later part of British rule in Nigeria. This was as a result of the institutionalization of racial and cultural difference between the Muslim and non-Muslim group⁵. This has resulted in the creation of a sharp difference between the two major religious groupings in Nigeria – the Muslims and the Christians and the formation of religious extremist groups garbed in the toga of ethnic groupings.

It is glaring evident today that Nigeria are divided along more lines than just the ethnic lines. Nigeria is divided along cultural, religious and international affiliations. The northern part is affiliated to the Islam Arab world while the southern part is affiliated to the Christian Western world. Of all these lines of division, the most volatile and often the most turbulent has been religion. As a result, Nigeria has a long history of social unrest, traceable to religious differences.

⁴Komolafe B. “Beyond OPC Conundrum”. This day Newspaper, Sept 12 2001.

⁵Okofor, S.O. Indirect Rule: The Development of Central Legislature in Nigeria. (Lagos: Longman Publication, 1982) P. 120.

Often those religious disturbances assume an ethnic coloration. This is so because the various ethnic groups are identifiable with one religion or the other. There is therefore little difference between ethnic and religious divisions. What starts most at times as a religious disagreement soon assumes ethnic dimensions and vice-versa⁶. Even what starts as a political struggle is often misconstrued or misinterpreted as a religious or ethnic struggle. The contradictions and confusion played a major role in obfuscating or darkening issues involved in the military coup of January 1966⁷. What started as purely political struggle within the class structure of the Nigerian Army soon assumed an ethno-religious dimension that led to the worst case of ethnic killings in the history of Nigeria.

However, digressing from the view above, militant groups or ethnic militancy operating on the basis of purely ethnic agenda are relatively new, except the case of the earliest militant groups of the 1966, under political and economic agenda, led by Isaac Adaka Boro, on the issues of marginalization by the then Eastern Region government to the present state of Rivers and Bayelsa. The armed struggle was quickly pulled down and the leader charged with treason⁸.

⁶ Solomon O. Akingboye, "The matrix of Ethnicity and Ethno-Religious Crisis in Nigeria's Nascent Democracy" in *The Humanistic Management of Pluralism: A formula for Development in Nigeria* ed E. Agwoholobo. (Lagos: Murtab Press for the Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos. ALF publications.)

⁷ Okofor, S.O. *Indirect Rule: The Development of Central Legislature in Nigeria*. (Lagos: Longman Publication, 1982) P. 93

⁸ Oseghae, E. E. *Ethnic and its Management in Africa: The Democratization Link*. (Lagos: Maithouse Press Publisher, 1994)

More so, the Nigerian civil war of 1967 - 1970 was ethnically based and after the civil war, there have been several other records of civil and religious disturbances, riots and social disorder etc. While these incidents pass for social instability, they are not considered as cases of ethnic militancy. But after the civil war, against the degree of social instability and the discontent of the various sections of the country occasioned by the long chain of military dictatorship and especially during the period of General Sanni Abacha, the emergence of ethnic militias became the order of the day with series of hidden agenda. These ethnic militias did not only exist but they operate secretly while opposing several programmes of the military juntas. Thus by May 29, 1999, with the rebirth of a new democratic government, the activities of these ethnic militias became more pronounced. Hence at the terminal period of transition from military to civil rule in 1999, there came a resurgence of aggressive sub-nationalism, which had hitherto been under the suppression of the military and General Abacha in particular⁹. At the hand over period, there arose a latent aggressive sub-nationalism, which exploded to violence, thereby triggering-off the emergent of the ethnic militias' one after the other to either contain or engage the activities of the existing ones and the governments.

⁹Anifowose, R. "Urban Violence in Nigeria: The Case of the Oddua People Congress (OPC) Militia" In Industrialization Urbanization and Development in Nigerian 1950-1999 and Beyond. (Proceedings of Faculty of Social Science Conference of the University of Lagos: 2002

In a final glimpse, this politics of engagement and containment amongst the ethnic militias underlines the observations of Uma Eleazu, that one of the effects of the over-centralization of power in a purported federal structure, especially in a military regime was always the emergence of a strong centrifugal force, which felt disadvantages in the scheme of things. Thus under the present polity many of the suppressed ethnic groups and militia found reason to question the so called Nigerian federation and the basic essence of nation building.

Youth Restiveness and Ethnic Militias in Nigeria from 1999

The phenomenon of the rise of youth restiveness and ethnic militia in Nigeria did not just start overnight. It arose as result of certain circumstances in the body politics that the ordinary people on the street could not tolerate any more. It is generally believed that the goat cannot bite. But if the goat is pushed to the wall there is the tendency that the goat will bite. Ethnic militia group have become a major part of Nigeria's present political landscape, often inflicting or threatening to inflict violence for political and economic advantage. Though ethnic, communal and even religious conflicts are not new to Nigeria considering the diversity and heterogeneity that are characteristic of the country, the frequency and ferocity with which these violent clashes have occurred since the inception of the present democratic rule, have made them one of the challenging monsters to nation building!

The reasons for these violent clashes are diverse and manifold. They include those generated by continuous conflict and contradiction between citizen and indigene's rights, religious fanaticism, ethnic and communal intolerance, environmental degradation, historical animosities, political competition, hunger and tension arising from the dynamics of everyday life¹⁰. On many occasions, the increasing problem of unemployment served as a ready-made source for the hungry and angry youth to be recruited for violent acts. Deprivation and marginalization, injustice and inequitable distribution of natural resources especially among different levels of government and the political actors, are deduced to be harbingers of youth restiveness and ethnic militia. According to New York Times Editorial (March 21, 2000) "... most violence are also exploiting popular discontent with a deteriorating economy, the collapse of social services, widespread corruption and a system of governance inherited from the military that places disproportionate power in the hands of those that control the federal government".

It is no gain saying that youth restiveness and ethnic militias has taken the front burner in contemporary discourse on Nigeria's emerging democracy. Since the commencement of democratic rule in Nigeria on May 19, 1999, there have been the emergence and proliferation of vigilantes, ethnic and sectional militias and separatist groups. Prominent among these include, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), the Anambra Vigilance Service (Bakassi Boys), Egbesu Boys of Africa,

¹⁰Thoroethin, Ethnic Militias and Political Violence, P.79

Arewa People's Congress (APC), Operation Zaki-Zaki, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), etc. The dissatisfaction with the structure, operation and power configuration under Nigeria federalism has been deduced for the unprecedented emergence of these groups. Though the increase in crime rate and the helpless attitude of law enforcement agencies towards this have been conjured to claim legitimacy to these militant groups by their founders and admirers, the activities of these groups have assumed a dysfunctional dimension and threaten the objectivities of peaceful co-existence. Their activities have exceeded the limits imposed by societal consensus. These however have a direct correlation with Nigeria's tradition of political brinkmanship which involve threats and counter-threats of breakdown of rule-induced and system-supportive behavior in contexts etched by the tendency of the political elite to prefer fission to fusion, and coming apart rather than sticking together at moments of great national crisis¹¹.

From records, post-colonial Nigeria state displays a high rate of ethnic militia than it was during the colonial era. One of the areas to which the prevalence of violent conflict in Nigeria could still be traced was the Nigeria civil war. It is assumed that some of the demobilized soldiers who were used to the rough and tough life of the war front could not be properly re-oriented and reintegrated into the

¹¹Agbaje A. "The Historical Antecedent of the Phenomenon of Ethnic Militia in Nigeria". A paper presented at the Conference on Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and Challenged of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria. 2002.

post-war environment¹² . In this manner, some Nigerians see violence as the major way of addressing perceived differences. And the tool for achieving this is through the formations of militia groups.

In the same vein, the disintegration of Nigeria's borrowed institutions, such as, the government, the police force and the judiciary has remained an antidote for the emergence of ethnic militia groups. Over the years, some of these groups have emerged ostensibly to combat rising crimes waves in a face of the inability or failure of the Nigerian Police Force to effectively deal with the menace of armed robbery and other forms of violent crime¹³. For instance, the Anambra Vigilance Service (Bakassi Boys), came up when the crime situation in the South-East had gone out of control. Operation Zaki-Zaki was formed to combat crime in most part of the North-East, Egbesu Boys in the Niger-Delta, while OPC on the South-East etc.

More importantly, militant gangs of all descriptions erupted on Nigeria political scene during the military regimes of General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. These regimes occasioned monsters that masqueraded themselves in different reformist guises. These militia groups were therefore formed in response to these un-usual developments. Some of them however posed as pro-democracy groups. OPC was one of such groups. This group was able to fight for democracy

¹²Nwanchuky O. "Police, Public Differ on OPC", Daily Champion Newspaper, October 2, 2000.

¹³Nwanguma O. "Militia Groups and Democracy in Nigeria, "Guardian Newspapers, December 14, 2001.

especially as it affects the Yoruba race. The Self-Determination result of the OPC opened the way for other militia groups that had hitherto been in deep slumber. For example, the Kaiama Declaration of Egbesu Boys, the emergence of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), was encouraged by this development¹⁴.

It is worthy of note to reiterate that youth restiveness and ethnic militia groups and their activities are more pronounced under the fourth Republic than its predecessor military regimes. This might not be unconnected with the relative liberal environment created by democratic and its degree of tolerance. Democracy entails hearing different shade of view and making the best out of those views. But due to lack of proper orientation, this liberalized democratic posture encourages banditry and has ironically popularized violence as a means of seeking redress and settling old scores. Examples of these abound and are spread through the country like a rash of alignment spots. Under the forth republic, there are reported cases of violent clashes between the Hausas and Yoruba, between the Hausas and the Igbos, between ethnic militia groups and government forces, and in some cases intra-ethnic clashes. To depict the heart-rending activities of this sects, a chronology of some

¹⁴Theroethin, *Ethnic Militias and Political Violence*, P. 78

significant categories of ethnic militia attacks experienced in 1999 - 2003 have been documented as follows:¹⁵

1. On 31 May, 1999, Ijaw and Itsekiri militias engaged in violent clash in Warri town, Delta State. The violent conflict erupted over Olu of Warri throne and recognition.
2. On 4 August, 1999, Arogbo-Ijaw and Ilaje in Ondo State involved in violent killings of each community members over the disagreement between the two communities.
3. In July, 1999, the violent clash between Hausa and Yoruba in Sagamu, Ogun State.
4. In 1999, 144 people died in ethnic crisis between Hausa and Yoruba traders in Mile 12 Ketu Lagos over leadership of the market etc.
5. In 1999, 100 people died in Apapa, Agege, Oworonshoki all in Lagos in a spill-over of Ketu crisis.
6. In October 1999, OPC attacked Ijaw, Itsekiri, Urhobo indigenes (Egbesu) in Ajegunle, Lagos, over disagreement between a resident and vigilante (OPC).

¹⁵Asamu Festus Femi. "Ethnic Militias and their Threat to Nigeria's Democratic Order in Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria" ed. Ayinla Saadu Alanamu, (Ilorin: Hanson Printing Communications, 2005) P. 104-109.

7. On 8 November, 1999, Egbesu group killed a policeman in Odi. The remote cause of the incident was the kidnapping and killing of policemen by Egbesu Youth in retaliation for the killing of their members. The government later deployed soldiers, who killed and almost wipe out the town of Odi in Bayelsa State.
8. On 10 March, 2000, many people died in an intra-ethnic violence between Ife and Modakeke communities in Ife-Modakeke, Osun State over the issue of local government sitting, plus ancestral rivalry (historical animosity).
9. On 18 March, 2000, the resumption of communal crisis between the Eleme-Okirika in rivers caused the death of several people.
10. On 4 May, 2000, many lives were lost in the renewed communal conflict between Ife and Modakeke communities in Osun State.
11. On 16 May, 2000, a bloody ethnic feud between Akasa and Igwama communities in Bayelsa State claimed many lives on both sides. Ethnic crisis championed by the Youths.
12. On October 17, 2000, OPC's led attack in a bid to change the emirate system in Ilorin, Kwara State, led to the death of many people. The attack was both on Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba ethnic nationalities.

13. On 28 June, 2001, many lives were lost in Azara town, Nasarawa State when the Azara people revenged the killing of their traditional leader by the Tivs.
14. On 7 September, 2001, many people were killed in Jos ethno-religious violence in Jos, North Plateau.
15. On 15 September, 2001, a reprisal of Jos crisis in which some Igbos were victims led to the attack on the Hausa/Fulani in Onitsha.
16. On 29 October, 2001, 19 soldiers were killed by the Tiv/Junkun, Taraba, Benue, in an escalation of ethnic hostilities.
17. On 2 November, 2001, the relocation of local government headquarters spark off ethno-religious crisis in Gwantus town, Kaduna. The violence caused the destruction of worship places and wanton killings.
18. On 12 February, 2002, OPC sacked the Hausa residents in Idi Araba Lagos. Misunderstanding between Hausa resident and the Yoruba degenerated into OPC violet attack on non-indigenes.
19. On 12 June, 2002, 15 people killed and many injured when Youth Militias of Ozoro and Okpaile communities clashed in Isoko, Delta State.

20. On 25 April, 2008, the attack on Navy and Army by Ijaw militias left ten deaths in Warri and their Radio communication intercepted.
21. On 1 May, 2003, Ijaw Militias attacked government forces and oil installation in Opuniani Tank Farm, Okerenkoko, Delta State.
22. On 2 May, 2003, Ijaw militias attacked government forces and oil installation in Effurun, Delta State. Etc.

The Effects of Ethnic Militias on Nation Building

Central to the concern of Nigerians including their political actors is the consolidation of the hard-earned democratic rule in the country. Right from the inception of democratic governance, the country had witnessed unprecedented rise in political and ethnic violence ranging from increasing crime wave, political assassination, religious upheavals, communal crisis, kidnapping, inter and intra-ethnic clashed and the lots. Initially, the violence appeared as a means by which Nigerians expressed themselves, but the devastating aftermath and the unimaginable extent of the manifestation cannot but be explained beyond that of freedom of expression¹⁶. The scourge had become so hydra-headed that one could not imagine the scope of its operation. These groups have arrogated considerable and

¹⁶AdemolaAzeez, "Political Violence in Nigeria: Implications and Options for Democratic Consolidation" in Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria, ed. Ayinla Saadu Alanamu (Ilorin: Hanson Printing Communication 2005), P.16

unimaginable power to themselves and have turned out to be above the laws of the land. Primarily, they have usurped the police powers of investigation and arrest; seized the power of the state to prosecute criminal cases and wrestle from the courts the power of trying and convicting accused persons. The question therefore arises in the words of Baker, “how much internal violence can a nascent democracy like Nigeria sustain or whether the violence itself can be sufficiently contained for a democratic institution to flourish.”¹⁷

Consciously, it has been observed that ethnic-militias did not only drain government resources and direct attention from other government issues, but frequently provokes undemocratic responses from the state in the form of security force acting outside the law, and legal processes being suspended among others. Sporadically, state of emergency had been declared on some states and local government areas thereby putting to retardation the socio-economic sphere of that locality. To Nwolise, violence had led to loss of several hundreds of lives, destruction of private and public properties worth millions of naira, discouragement of foreign and domestic investments and retardation of national unity and integrations, damage to the nation image and psyche, and slow pace of national development among others¹⁸.

¹⁷Baker B “Can Democracy in Africa be sustained”. Commonwealth and Comparative Politics. Vol. 38 (2000) No. 3 p.9

¹⁸Nwolise, O.B.C “Formula for Training Domestic Conflict”, Nigeria Tribune, Ibadan 24, 2002:p12

Addressing the United State Senate Foreign Relations Committee in October 1997, Mr. William Twaddel, former United State Ambassador to Nigeria, depicted Nigeria as a state in which:

Rampant corruption, the lack of transparency in decision making, rule by military decree and the precipitous decline of government institutions, undermine prospects for Nigeria as a coherent state. Instability or war in Nigeria could have profound humanitarian, political and economic consequence for West Africa and other regions including the United State¹⁹.

Along the same lines, Karl Maier, who reported on Nigeria for The Independent for much of the 1990s, has publish a book which captures the wild play of centrifugal forces in Nigeria in order to infer that “This house has fallen”²⁰, to underline the tentative status of the nation-state project in Nigeria.

In the same vein, there is no gain saying the fact that the problem of ethnicity has posed serious challenges to the survival and peaceful co-existence of Nigeria. In more recent times one of the most worrisome groups that unleashed varying degree of violence and terror to Nigerian’s nascent democratic order is the ethnic nationality identity otherwise known as the ethnic militia movement. As earlier stated, these ferocious conflicts tends to occur more frequently since the inception of the fourth republic and have tended to evolved into more violent and

¹⁹Cross Road Lagos: USIS Publication, 1997 p.1

²⁰Maier Kari, This House has fallen: Midnight in Nigeria. New York Public affairs, 2000.

organized ethnically based movements with stated ethnic agenda²¹. Note worthy among these ethnic militias include the Egbesu Boys of Africa, the Niger-Delta Volunteer Force, the prominent pan-Yoruba enclave, Oodua People's Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and the Arewa People's Congress (APC). These groups and their structural make-up according to Oke-Chukwu are only interested on what they can get from the state. On a conscious observation, these groups are not only a threat to the unity of the state and democracy, but had a preponderance overture of dislocating the sovereignty of the Nigerian State²². Agbu also argues that these groups are not just contesting for political space and the democratic dividend, but also resource control as part of the liberalization of the political environment.²³

Drawing from the precedence, the most worrying aspect of the escalation of these ethnic juntas in Nigeria, seems to be its threat to its corporate existence and the prospects of democratic consolidation. As Nigeria's contemporary history shows, period of great socio-political instability are usually chained with overthrow of the civilian government and the assumption of power by the military as their so-called "Corrective regime". But away from this notion, the present ethnic structure

²¹Edlyne A. Is. Democracy Really the Answer: State of Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria? (Lagos: Clopas Publications, 2002) p15-18

²²Okecuku C.P. "Ethnic Militias, Democracy and the Treat to Nationhood: A Negative Dimension toward Nigerian Polity". A paper presented on Nigeria Society Under Democratic Rule 1999-2003, Organized by the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin. P4

²³Agbu, O "Ethnic Militias and the Threat to Democracy in Post-Transition Nigeria". News from the Nordic African Institute (Uppsala), No 1. January 2002. P1.

seems to be very complex as many of these groups have acquired sophisticated arms and weapons to rubbish the state system. Beside the threat, the growing domestic instability and turmoil, especially the recent upsurge of the faceless Boko Haram with their high-tech suicide-squad bombardment of government and domestic installations and institutions in the country, has seriously negates the lofty ideals of democracy and Nigeria's corporate existence. The swelling activities of these seem ethnic junta has begun to attract public attention, and several questions have come to mind: Is this an outright negation of democratic order, or to what extent is the existence of these gory tales compatible with democracy and nation-building?

Conclusion

It is often asserted even at the level of the individual that self-preservation is the first law of nature, that unless one can be assured of his physical security or safety everything else will be meaningless. Thus the protective role of the state is paramount if democracy is to be sustained²⁴. The tendency has always been to emphasize the nexus between economic health of the state vis-à-vis democracy at the expense of national security. According to Wit, the traditional efforts to maintain law and order also must be included in any discussion of the government objective of internal security²⁵. By this he meant that maintenance of law and order is an essential aspect of governmental authority because of its bearing on government's monopoly of extreme coercion. The inability of a government therefore to maintain order is a sign of the decay of its power and hence its failure to successfully pursue any attempt at sustaining a democratic value²⁶.

Following from the foregoing, an insecure, crisis and violence ridden polity can never attract foreign investments. For example, despite Obasanjo's relentless trotting to various industrial nations of the world in search of investment, no

²⁴Zabadi, I.S. "Fundamentals of Strategy" a lecture at the National War College Abuja, September, 2001

²⁵Wilt, D. Comparative political institution: A study of modern Democratic and Dictatorial systems. (New York: Holt Reinhart and Winston Inc. 1853) P7

²⁶Azeez, A. "The Nigerian Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation: An Overview of the Nexus" Political Review, 2002. Vol 3 No. 1 & 2

investor knowing full well that the policy is a security risk would venture his capital there. A survey by the German Industrial Found for example, revealed that the most important constraint to investment in Nigeria is the difficulty in dealing with government authorities and the security challenges. Where the polity is militant ridden and scares away foreign investments, the economy become stagnant and democratic dividend equally becomes a mirage. Whereas, the general assumption is that democracy must necessarily bring about better living condition. But where democratic processes do not yield economic return, a regression to dictatorship and anarchy cannot be ruled out.

However, from the above discussion, it is perhaps expedient to explore some plausible options towards consolidating democratic rule in Nigeria. Since the recurring ethnic militias and political violence in Nigeria has been attributed to the varying differences in terms of ethnicity, religion, history, language and other notable differences of the different nationalities that populate Nigeria, there is no way we can escape pluralism and secularism in our attempt to proffer solutions to the malaise of ethnic militia and political violence. As a corollary of the above, Azeez, notes that a federalism which shares power between the central and recognizes component units is strongly advocated²⁷. In short, true federalism is considered the most appropriate framework for governing multi-ethnic societies like

Nigeria. For “Federalism and ethnicity form a solidarity couple”²⁸. Federalism which Mazrui, defined as “an institutionalization of compromise relationship” is not only democratic, complete with the institutionalization of most essential ingredients, but creative and flexible enough to incorporate several accommodation formulas. Therefore a situation where every component of the state, especially local government units go cap in hand to seek resources allocation from the all-powerful federal government calls for restructuring and institutional reorganization. In this case, the 1999 constitution is so fatally flawed that a new constitution should be drawn up by Nigeria’s through an all-inclusive, process-led, open and transparent mechanism. And this bring to the fore the convocation of a genuine national conference to afford Nigerians to freely decide for themselves how they want to live together and under what constitutional framework or arrangement.

References

¹ Holy Bible: 2 Timothy 3:1-4

² Awake! The cry for Justice. Watch Tower Bible and Tract society of New York, Inc. May, 2012. P.3

³ Paul-SewaThoroetin, “ Ethnic Militias and political violence in Nigeria (1999-2003)” in Issues in Political Violence in Nigeria ed. Ayinla Saadu Alanamu, (Ilorin: Hamson printing Longman Publication 2005) P76

⁴ B. Komolafe, “Beyond OPC Conundrum”. This day Newspaper, Sept 12 2001.

⁵ S. O. Okofor, Indirect Rule: The Development of Central Legislature in Nigeria. (Lagos: Longman Publication, 1982) P. 120.

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⁸ E. E. Oseghae, Ethnic and its Management in Africa: The Democratization Link. (Lagos: Maithouse Press Publisher, 1994)

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¹⁰ Thoroethin, Ethnic Militias and Political Violence, P.79

¹¹ A. Agbaje, “The Historical Antecedent of the Phenomenon of Ethnic Militia in Nigeria”. A paper presented at the Conference on Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and Challenged of Democratic consolidation in Nigeria. 2002.

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²⁵ D. Wilt, Comparative Political Institution: A study of Modern Democratic and Dictatorial Systems. (New York: Holt Reinehart and Winston Inc. 1853) P7

²⁶ A. Azeez, "The Nigerian Civil Society and Democratic Consolidation: An Overview of the Nexus" Political Review, 2002. Vol 3 No. 1 & 2

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²⁸ A. Azez, "Political Violence in Nigeria: Current Trends and Manifestations" Political Science Review 2004, Vol 3 No. 1

²⁹ I. Duchecek, "Antagonistic Cooperation: Territorial and Ethnic Communities". Public: The Journal of Federalism 1977 Vol. 7 No.1

