

## HUNDRED YEARS OF BRITAIN'S NIGERIA: A HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSES OF THE IDEA OF A "NON-NEGOTIABLE UNITY"

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### **Abstract**

*Nigeria has a fundamental existential malady: the fact that she does not appear to meet the standard of a well-formed state (wfs). She, therefore, does not meet the logical standard of a well-formed formula (wff). The fear of failure for the frail and fragile formula of the Nigerian formulation is at the foundation of the frequently and fragrantly fronted mantra, "Nigeria's unity is non-negotiable". This paper, therefore, analyzes the logic behind the idea of a "non-negotiable unity" and shows that it is an insult on the sensitivity of the peoples of the ethnic nationalities within the Nigerian geographical space whose sovereignties were imprisoned by the 1914 amalgamation. The paper equally observes the impossibility of a unity that is non-negotiable, and via the application of expository, historical and critical analysis, shows that it is (paradoxically) disunity that the powers that superintend over Nigeria's affairs end up engendering. The paper gives some socio-political, economic and religious reasons why some forces want the status quo to remain the same and proves historically that the lure for economic control and religious domination are the hub that turns the unity-at-all-cost agenda. The paper concludes by showing that unless we have a no-holds-barred, unconditionally-negotiated unity, the militancy, insurgence, demand for fiscal federalism, resource control, self determination, secession etc that have characterized the Nigerian state in the past decade or thereabout would most likely bring Africa's largest country to her feet. For man cannot be held for long against his will.*

**Keywords:** Federalism, Nation-State, Philosophical Analysis, Religion, Unity

### **Introduction**

We have released Northern Nigeria from the leading strings of the treasury. The promising and well conducted Youth is now on allowance on his own and is about to effect an alliance with a southern lady of means. I have issued the special license and Sir Frederick Lugard will perform the ceremony, may the union be fruitful and the Couple content.- Lord Lewis Vernon Harcourt (1913)<sup>1</sup>

Obsessed by two manias, the segregation fad and the *furor Faciends leges*, for Frederick by means of the one, consciously or unconsciously endeavored to intensify, in the colony and southern provinces raced antipathies between blacks and whites which had never been suspected nor dreamt of during the palmy days of old colony of Lagos..... Whilst by means of the other, a classified as bad and in different and are distinguished more for their repressiveness and brutality, rather than for their juridical lure and enlightened statesmanship.... Sir Fredrick has also won for Nigeria the unenviable distinction of being the greatest ordinance-ridden colony within the British Empire. - The Lagos Weekly Record (1919)<sup>2</sup>

Holding this country together is not possible, except by means of the religion of the prophet. If they want political unity, let them follow our religion -Conference of Northern Chief (1942)<sup>3</sup>

These southerners who desire a united Nigeria should first embrace Islam as their religion -Sultan of Sokoto (1944)<sup>4</sup>

Since 1914, the British government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their background, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite. Nigerian unity is really a British intension for the country. -Sir. Ahmadu Bello (1948)<sup>5</sup>

Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one, particularly some of the press people. This is wrong, I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside this chamber. The southern tribes, who are now pouring into the north in ever increasing numbers, and are more or less domiciled here do not mix with the Northern people and we the North look upon them as invaders. -Alhaji Abuakar Tafawa Balewa (1948)<sup>6</sup>

Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh or French. The word "Nigeria" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not -Obafemi Awolowo (1947)<sup>7</sup>

Suffice it to say that putting all considerations to test-political, economic as well as social- the base for unity is not there or is so badly wrote, not only once, but several times. -Yakubu Gowon (1966)<sup>8</sup>

Nigeria never was and can never be a united country. The very nature of Nigeria inevitably gave rise to political power groups, goaded by sectional rather than national

interest. These groups were clearly defined and perpetuated by the constitution itself. The veneer of unity generated and maintained by the veiled became exposed with the coming of disjointed mass.... Nigeria was not united the Nigerians knew it. - Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. (1969)<sup>9</sup>

We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God... on the principles of freedom, equality and justice...Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. -1999 constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria (2011 as Amended)<sup>10</sup>

We have chosen to start this essay with the above quotes from the so called founding Fathers of Nigeria, British and "Nigerian", so that we can get from the onset what sort of attitudes and conditions that informed the birth of Nigeria. We have decided to chronicle these positions in order to help us search deeply into the depth so that we can unearth the reason why the question concerning the unity of the peoples within the geographical space of Nigeria became so inevitable, irrevocable and sacrosanct that it has to be enshrined in the *grand norm* - the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 - that Nigeria is "indivisible" and indissoluble".

But granted that the social, political and economic relations of the people in Nigeria could be (and indeed, has been) existing indivisibly," does it then mean that something called "unity" can also be so externally decreed? Is the indivisibility and indissolubility of Nigeria as well as the "non-negotiability" of the "unity" of her peoples so flaunted because it is impossible in principle, logically invalid or conceptually inconceivable? Or are there other reasons? Besides, what does a unity that is "not negotiable" look like? And is there such a thing as a "non-negotiable unity"?

This paper would be very critical and analytic in approach. With the intensions of the British colonial masters, the way Nigeria has been in a hundred years, and the historical facts available to us, we shall philosophically analyze the often repeated mantra, "Nigeria's" unity is non-negotiable". Our objective is to show that the mantra is an insult on the sensitivity of the ethnic nationalities that occupy Nigeria's geopolitical space as well as a logical impossibility. Sometimes the mantra is expressed as a divine pronouncement; that is, as the Biblical law of Medes and Persia, which is not subject to any changes. But our position is propelled by the historical truth that nation-states that would endure, survive

and prosper must be product of agreement, or what has been called a “social contract”. But since its British birth, Nigeria has been the product of “force”. Her citizens are called upon to “defend her unity”<sup>11</sup>

Since it is said to be “one nation bound in freedom, Peace and unity”<sup>12</sup>. This is a country that puts the cart before the horse. Otherwise, how does one explain the desire “to build a Nation where PEACE and JUSTICE shall reign”,<sup>13</sup> instead of one where justice and peace shall reign. How can a country that has put justice in prison expect peace to be released to her? But how possible is it to defend a non-negotiable, and consequently, non-existent unity?

Our discovery is that the protagonists of a non-negotiable unity are paradoxically, those who do not want unity, who want to keep Nigerians continually divided so as to continue to rape the country’s wealth. We follow Chinweizu to identify the root of this Mantra in “Caliphate Colonialism,” a concept that we shall be explaining and drawing from in this paper.

What are the grounds and circumstances under which the British put Nigeria together as an amalgam? Why has the unity or “one Nigeria” slogan become a basic political good in Nigeria? What are the historical and philosophical bases for Nigeria’s and Nigerian unity? What is the possibility of a non-negotiable unity? Why has the fear of the failure of the Nigerian experiment produced such a chilling tension that hangs over the country like the sword of Damocles? Would something happen essentially and existentially to the Oluwoles, Okoros, Harunas, Dipriyes, Okons, Aminas, Attas, Agbo nifos ifeomas, etc within the Nigerian space if, by design or decision, the country named “Nigerian” ceases to be a geopolitical entity and a subject of international law? These questions (and similar ones) shall provide the orbit around which this paper shall revolve. But we shall be ending with a postmodernist reflection on the concept of Unity. Let us proceed.

### **Clarifications**

As a matter of necessity, it is important for us, in the manner of all matured philosophizing, to make our discussion simple and easier to follow, by explaining some of the terms that inform our paper, especially the ones in the title. Words must communicate meanings and these meanings become understood, via communication (verbal or Written) on the basis of shared meanings<sup>15</sup>. And with the somewhat tacitly acknowledged condition that

philosophy thrives more in the midst of dispute, it would not be a bad idea to reduce the areas of such disputations by clarifying the terms we use. And shouldn't that be a basic need in a work whose method is "analysis" and whose theme is "unity"? Consequently, we would attempt to clarify the following:

### **Britain's Nigeria**

Implicit in this phrase is the idea of "amalgamation". There is also the inherent implication that what we call "Nigeria" is not a creation of Nigerians but that of Britain. Like this author bears the surname "Agbo" the (progenitor), so the surname of Nigeria should be "Britain" and although we do not subscribe to the position that the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Lugard is the *only problem* in Nigeria today, we argue that it is the *major root* of Nigeria's current fixation.

### **Analysis**

A crucial method of this essay, "analysis" is very important because it displays the logical structures of concepts and expressions. It involves the process of breaking down such concepts into more simple parts. In analysis, "the meaning or truth conditions of propositions would be displayed by a process that revealed Hidden logical structure beneath the surface form of statements" <sup>16</sup>

We therefore, intend to analyze the ideas of a "non- negotiable unity" and point the way forward to the logic hidden behind that frequently used phrase, by Nigeria's rulers. However, we would Endeavour to avoid unnecessary and unreasonable analysis, especially when we realize that concept that do not permit uncontroversial analysis are grossly very few.

### **Idea**

A word that comes from the Greek word *eidos*, which means "visible form", *idea* begins as subjective, internally-Present reality in the mind. Yet it is said to have a bearing on something in the world "out there" although "ideas provide the way in which objective knowledge can be expressed."<sup>17</sup>

There is the no doubt that ideas begins subjectively as something present in the human mind. And in this paper, we have carefully chosen to refer to the "non-negotiable unity" mantra as an "idea" and not a concept", since the latter involves "recognizing when the term applies and being able to understand the consequence of its application" <sup>18</sup>

Nigeria's rulers during and after the war with Biafra, conceived the "idea" of a "non-negotiable unity" in the subjective interiority and have been attempting to express it as an objective reality, with eternal, marble-cast truth-laden. But we argue in this paper that their failure to "conceptualize" that "idea" of a "non-negotiable unity" becomes a water low of some sort for Nigeria because they do not know "when the term applies nor do they care of the "consequences of its application" to the true survival and progress of the Nigerian peoples. The subjectivity, mental imagery and internal nature of ideas make them private to their holders and may, more often than not, betray and in fact, display the individual interests of their holders.

Other concepts used in this paper shall be analyzed and explained in the body of the paper, since they form the crux of this essay. These include, "unity", "non-negotiable", "amalgamation", "sovereign national conference", "state", "nation state", "state building", "ethnic nationality" etc.

### **Still On Well-Formed States (WFS)**

Any average scholar, marginally interested in Nigeria, does not need to be a historian to know or say something about the "birth" of Nigeria as a subject of international law. When the big European nations (Britain, France, Portugal, Germany Belgium, etc) met at the infamous Berlin conference of 1884-5, in order to amicably resolve the famous "Scramble for Africa", the area that later became Nigeria was ceded to Britain. Earlier before then, Lagos had become a British colony in 1861, following the forceful annexation of the territory and the inhuman banishment of its king (Kosoko) was exiled. That a king in a far away land, somewhere in Buckingham palace in England (King George V) would decide to wield together peoples of diverse cultures, religion, languages and identities, without *their consent*, has become the biggest tragedy that hit these peoples. In the words of Sir Fredrick Lugard on January 1, 1914:

His Majesty, the king has decided that from today all the country" from the sea to near the desert in the north and from the French country in the West to the German Kamerouns, in the East shall be one single country under one Governor General, so that there may be no jealousy or rivalry between the north and the South, and all may cooperate together for the advancement of peace and prosperity... it would be my earnest Endeavour to promote peace and justice for all men, to protect every man in the observance of his own religious faith and to administer equal justice alike

for great and small.. I trust that as one united country, Nigeria would increase in prosperity and wealth and its people in happiness <sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that even at the onset, the British amalgamators were aware of a simmering and (sometime) blossoming “rivalry and jealousy” among the peoples of Nigeria. Again, it is “His Majesty, the King” that “decided”, not the peoples of within Nigeria. The implication is that “Nigeria” is a foreign product. Furthermore, it seems to me that there was awareness by the amalgamators that religion would be a thorny matter in Nigeria. And, also from Lugard’s quote, we see that the illusion of building a society where “peace” would come before “justice” was the false foundation upon which Nigeria was laid. And in line with the principles of IGNORANCE (one of the 3 basic principles upon which the rudder of the Nigerian system turns), we have groped in the dark, in search of a Nigerian identity-all to no avail. And, no doubt about it, Nigeria has grown in “prosperity and wealth”, but to the people of Nigeria, “happiness” is an alien.

The implication of the above words from Lord Lugard, and proceeding analysis from it, is that Nigeria does not appear to meet the standard of a well formed state (WFS), an analogous derivative from the concept of a “well formed formula” (WFF). In my essay, “Transforming the Formless: The Inevitability of a New Constitution For The

Survival and Development of Nigeria,”<sup>20</sup> I argued that Nigeria cannot be transformed since she has not been “formed”, drawing from the logical idea of a well formed formula I demonstrated that Nigeria is not a well formed state. The emergence of modern nation states is function of a social contract among the people. It is people that decide the nature and character of the state that would be so formed and the form of administration (government) that would be best give that state its respiration. Unfortunately for the African states of today, they are products of colonialism and all the fraud associated with it. Abdulahi smith expresses the dilemma of modern African state in this regard, in the following words:

No one is likely to dispute the suggestion that the most important of political problems facing the African continent today, is that relating to the formation of states further, so many “new states” have been theoretically created over night during the past 2 decades by the sudden passing of constitutional laws or the signing of constitutional agreements

that the process of state formation would seem to be one of almost magical simplicity. Yet, we also know that practice and theory in this matter are far divorced from each other and that no amount of waving the wand of independence can make a state if the human conditions, in which the attempt is made to create it, are not appropriate. And it is our bitter experience that human conditions do not change overnight nor do new allegiances suddenly develop without long and complicated processes of social adjustments <sup>21</sup>

From smith's position above, we see that the states that exist in Africa today are not products of meticulous and carefully-entered contracts. They emerged by the whims and caprices of external powers who, after the so called independence, handed over power to those who would continue neocolonialist and imperialist intensions. How could a nation-state emerge in such a simplistic and brazen manner and then we turn around and imagine that it would produce magical, enduring and integrating foundation for people of diverse cultures? This is what smith calls "magical simplicity", where the theoretical emergence of states does not tally with the practical "human conditions" for such creation.

The case of Nigeria is even a more painful because the British overlooks knew the country cannot be united and they still felt they could hold the country together by what Chinua Achebe has called "delicate.... Artificial lattice <sup>22</sup>

But for Achebe, it was not just Nigeria that suffered this fate. He states that the Berlin Conference "created new boundaries that did violence to Africa's ancient.

Societies and resulted in tension prone modern states'<sup>23</sup> Nigeria, with over 250 ethnic groups and languages was formed without even the courtesy of informing the peoples. And with the words of its so-called "founding fathers", which we deliberately showed at the beginning of this paper, is it any wonder why there has not been (and would probably never be)unity in Nigeria among the various peoples within her territory, whose allegiance has always been (expectedly and naturally too) with their ethnic foundations? The way in which Nigeria's rulers celebrate the fact that Nigeria has "remained together" since independence is both laughable and annoying. It is laughable to those outside Nigeria, who know the enormous potential inherent within the Nigerian state and annoying to those of us within her territory who remembers that while Edwin Buzz Aldnn was landing in the noon on July 29, 1969, Nigeria was using Russian MIGS and

Delphin fighter bombers, driven by Egyptian pilots, to pound her own people (the Biafra's) in a bid to force a non-existent (non-negotiable) unity. Writing in the *Daily sketch* newspaper of October 3, 1995 (when Nigeria turned 35 as an independent country), Olusegun Oladipo said that the country should look beyond survival; that is, beyond the "chest beating about how the country has survived as one entity since independence", noting that a people need much more than survival in order to be able to cope with the enormous challenges of human existence in today's world" Oladipo argues that "we have all along been travelling in the wrong direction" and locates the genesis of this existence in her colonial formation. For him:

A fact of our historical development as a nation whose implications we need to grasp is the fact that Nigeria started its life as a colonial creation. The purpose of its creation was not to enhance the capacity of the people to achieve a better life for themselves and their offspring's. on the contrary, Nigeria was invented to create the conditions for the maximization of returns from the colonial enterprise. Essentially then, the colonial state was an instrument of exploitation, and since it is not easy to exploit a normal people with their cooperation, the colonial state also had to be an instrument of oppression... our leaders at independence, simply inherited the structures left behind by the colonial masters, without giving much thought to the issue of their suitability for the task of national reconstruction. They all shared in the illusion popularized by Kwame Nkrumah, when he said, "seek ye first the political Kingdom and everything shall be added there to" <sup>24</sup>

Nigeria, thus, is not a well formed state and so cannot expect magic to happen overnight. And since she has equally entered the stage of what Chinweizu calls "Caliphate Colonialism," <sup>25</sup>

She cannot expect any real unity. Reading this Chinweizu's latest and explosive analysis of the Nigerian situation shows that Caliphate colonialism is even more devastating, hegemonic, strangulating and destructive for Nigeria than British colonialism. But we shall return to the book later.

I am neither a proponent of statelessness, *ala* Marx, nor am I an anarchist *ala* proudhorn-I do not demand the "withering away of state" nor am I opposed to government or governance. However, the crises exacerbated by states not "well formed" (and thus weak and orphaned) as well as governments that lack

legitimacy have become the biggest challenge of the global community, one of the most consistent and critical reflectors on the origin nature and scope of stateness in our world today is Francis Fukuyama. Although popularized by his “end of history” article and book <sup>26</sup>,

Fukuyama has, over the years, dedicated much attention to how to strengthen of weak and failing (or failed) states because of the danger they pose to the international community.

In his book, *State Building*, Fukuyama set out to show that state building “is one of the most important issues for the world community because weak or failed states are the source of many of the world’s most serious problems, from Poverty to AIDs, to drugs, to terrorism” <sup>27</sup> He argues that although his position (that states should be “built”) may appear “perverse” in an age when the call for the cutting down or limiting the powers of the state (even with some calling for outright statelessness), yet “the task of modern politics has been to limit the power of the state, to direct its activities toward ends regarded as legitimate by the people it serves and to regulate the exercise of power under a rule of law” <sup>28</sup>

But it is obvious that Fukuyama’s concern for “building” of state becomes both necessary and possible only when the proper “foundations” have been laid. When there are no foundations at all or when the foundation is very weak, when institutions are lacking, how can states be “built”? The attempt to construct a “state out of the many “nations” within Nigeria, without their consent, is perhaps the reason why there may never be unity in Nigeria among the peoples within her territory. And Fukuyama makes the point of the relationship between nation buildings and state building when he writes that the terminology, “nation building”;

Perhaps reflects the nationals’ experience in which cultural and historical identity was hearty shaped by political institutions, like constitutionalism and democracy. Europeans tend to be more aware of the distinctions between states and nation and points out that nation building, in the sense of the creation of a community bound together by shared history and culture, is well beyond the ability of any outside power to achieve. They are, of course right. Only states can be deliberately constructed. If a nation arises from this, it is more a matter of luck than design <sup>29</sup>.

Consequently, when the chips are down, allegiances go to the “nation, and the alien “state” (Nigeria, for example) employs repression in order to extract obedience. The state is seen as illegitimate, as the “Other”, as an outside, when ordinarily, “it is the perceived legitimacy of the government that binds populations together and makes them willing to accept its authority”<sup>30</sup>

Nigeria is an “alien power controlling the peoples, the nationalities within her territory. In fact, she appears like an “occupation force” within their borders both conceptual and geographical.

The import of what we have written so far is to show the logical and conceptual impossibility of a Nigerian unity or a unity of Nigerians, even at birth. Having, therefore, failed to meet the standard of a well formed state, the question of surviving to meet the needs and aspirations of her “bound” citizens became something that any one that is reasonably informed would not expect to happen. In his frank, sole-searching and critical analysis of the Nigerian situation, Author Nwankwo had asked: “the Nigerian Experiment: is it working?”<sup>31</sup>

His answer is that the experiment is not working because of “systemic injustice”, “blind conservatism” and then concludes that not only is it not working, it is not showing “any sign that it will ever work”<sup>32</sup>

From the quotations we deliberately put up at the introductory part of this paper, from colonial conception through the comments and positions, of her founding fathers to the uncritical constitutional provisions, we see then that Nigeria has no *seed* of unity. Why then is there a sudden demand for *fruits* of unity in a soil deliberately infected with acidic substance? Why, if it is clear that this experiment is not working, is it difficult to “pull down” the current experiment, undertake serious observations of the conceived past failed experiment in order to come up with reasonably conceived hypothesis, on the basis of which we can set up a new, workable experiment? Let us attempt to find out.

### **Political unity in Nigeria: A historical Exploration.**

If we decide to use the 1914 amalgamation as the beginning of the attempt at the political unity of Nigeria, would it be correct/those who answer it in the affirmative would be quick to point out that it was at that time that Nigeria came under one Governor General, Lord Lugard. But those that might hold the opposite view would point to the fact that; one, an amalgam is different from a compound and two, even in the midst of the amalgamation, not only did the

British overlords not bother about Nigeria's unity (they were interested in "administrative" convenience), they even went further to sow seeds of discord and disunity among the people within Nigeria. In his interesting essay, "one hundred years of Nigerian Nationhood: Drifting from Amalgamation to Amageddon," Akubor Emmanuel Osewe, after a historical examination of both the amalgamation and the happenings in Nigeria since then, argues that:

The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. Its structures, institutions and composition are super imposed by the colonial overloads. As a result, its activities are external in orientation and stand aloof the society. The state is inherently violent and repressive, right from colonial time... from the amalgamation till date; Nigeria has been experiencing violent crises, political antagonism and religious intolerance.... This is the result of the faulty foundation on which the amalgamation was built <sup>33</sup>.

If the 1914 amalgamation sewed discordant seeds among the peoples within her territory and if the pre-independent leaders were not really interested in actual unity, how did unity enter into the political unity of Nigeria and why is it being sustained even at the cost of the human beings being told or made to unite?

In what can be said to be the greatest political irony in Nigeria, it may surprise those without a sense of the history of whatever could have been rescued of Nigeria that it is actually the rejection of unity that ensured that whatever could have been rescued of Nigeria was lost. The only Nigerian leader who talked about unity, who meant it, and actually went out of his way to practice it, was major General Johnson Thomas Ummunnakwe Aguyitronsi. After taking power, following the first military coup led by major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966, General Aguyitronsi (who was not part of the coup), promulgated Decree N0. 34 on 24<sup>th</sup> May, 1966. Writing on the promulgation of this unification decree, Onyefuru says:

It would appear that this decree was what angered Northern army officers the most this decree sought to make the country operate as one composite entity, without due recognition to ethnic and regional factors this would imply, overtly or covertly, and abolition of the quota system, favour of merit only. Whether this was what the iron's government meant or not, this was exactly how the north, and perhaps, the greater bulk of the nation understood it. It was, perhaps, obvious that if such a policy was implemented in the country, it would have meant that the southerners,

especially the igobo, who appeared to be better placed education wise would take all the privileged positions in the country <sup>34</sup>

Our interest as political philosophers is to raise questions around the philosophy of the decree No. 34. What is the “why” and “how” of that Decree? Was there a justification for such a Decree at that time in Nigeria? And realizing our earlier discovery that Nigeria, at birth, was not united was ironsi naïve, idealistic or ignorant in enacting the decree? Could there have been better ways of responding from the North, apart from what Collin Legum of the London *observer* called the “polgrom”, which began 5 days later (May 29, 1966)?

The question of whether the Ironsi government mistook military like centralization for unity or if the Unification Decree was really meant to arrest the continuous drift of the country into anarchical balkanization, would tilt to the latter when certain other indices are collated. First, Ironsi agreed to the request of the leaders of the North that the strong unity base of the Igbos the Igbos state Union (ISU), should be disbanded by executive fiat. Ironsi did it, inspite of being an Igbo himself just to help win the support of the North. And for J. Chiozie Chukwuokolo, Naigbo has never been the same again since then <sup>35</sup>.

Secondly, Ironsi, in a bid to encourage unity, also made a Northerner, T.Y. Danjuna (then a captain) his ADC, which ended up to be his waterloo. During the counter coup of July 29, 1966 coup, mentioned was that those he called “politeers” seek to “keep the country permanently divided so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at look big for nothing before international circles <sup>36</sup>

Following from the above, therefore, it may not have been unusual for ironsi to imagine he could solve the problem of the “permarient division” which Nzegwu mentioned in his broadcast. But were the planners and executors of the January 1966 coup unaware of the positions of the leaders of Nigeria, that Nigeria is not and cannot be one country? Or did they choose to ignore those comments? Perhaps, Achebe was right when he talks of the naively idealistic coup of January 15, 1966”, which for him “proved a terrible disaster” because “it was interpreted with plausibility, as a plot by the ambitious Igbo of the East, to take control of Nigeria from the Hausa/Fulani North” <sup>37</sup>

The merely “among the first couples may have come from the fact that in change of those holding political power would change in Nigeria and for Nigerians. Of course, they are idealistic on the ground that they felt that Nigeria could be

united, even when the cultural, human and historical conditions do not appear to support it.

Available historical records show that northern leaders never believed in the concept of a “united” or “one” Nigeria, even after the amalgamation. And the idea of a united Nigeria couldn’t have meant anything to Northerners because the British colonialists had created not only a caste dichotomy between the whites and the blacks, but equally among the many black nationalities in the metropolitan cities in the North, especially Kano. Akubor Osewe observes that “while the colonialists were celebrating the amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914, the same system had succeeded in creating 3 different the indigenous population; Tudeen Wada, housing non-indigenous Northerners; and Sabon Gori, for Southerners, whom the colonialists referred to as “native foreigners”<sup>38</sup>

And till today, these separate settlements are still there and have grown in leaps and bounds, with the gaps even widening more and more.

The Hausa language word “Araba” (which means “share” or “divide”) had been the slogan or cliché on the lips of those who perpetuated the Sabon Gari riots and massacres of May, 1953 as well as the May and July 1966 pilgrims. Corroborating this Onyefuru writes (concerning the July, 1966 coup) that at this time the Northerners, as during the May riots, chanted their slogan, which was like the theme of their action, “Araba”, meaning, “let us separate”, a desperate cry for northern secession”<sup>38</sup>

Those ignorant of Nigeria’s history imagine that the word, “secessions” within the Nigerian context, first came to the fore in the Biafran declaration of independence on May 30, 1967. But disunity, lack of unity or division of Nigeria was originally a northern agenda, from what we have shown so far. The question then becomes: how did the idea of an at-all-cost-unity enter into the Nigerian space and why?

The idea of “one Nigeria” that should be indivisible and indivisible was hatched in 72 hours, between July 29 and August 1, 1966. And once again came from the British and American diplomats in Nigeria, especially the former. British, sensing that their plan to use the North to maintain her dominance of Nigeria, quickly moved in to convince Gowon and the North not to secede from Nigeria. According to Ojukwu:

Gowon in fact, personally told me over the phone (and the conversation was duely recorded) that the North wanted to secede. Much as the idea shocked me at the time, I told him that if that would lead to peace, they could go ahead. Gowon had left the Lagos Island to go to Ikeja Barracks, where the Northern flag of the new Republic of the North was flown.... It was the British and American diplomatic representatives in North, who intervened and stopped the North from seceding... the British high commission in Lagos, after expounding the opportunities now offered to him and the Northern people for the domination of Nigeria, also assured Gowon of the British government pledge to give him every support to maintain that domination <sup>39</sup>

As Onyefuru further posits:

The British convinced Gowon that the North need not settle for a part, when they had already won the whole, which they could keep for as long as they wanted. Frantic last minute modifications were made to Gowon's broadcast to the nation on August 1, 1966; but part of the original intensions still filtered into the address... Gowon, much to the consternation of those who had known his stand previously, declared himself head of state of Nigeria. Those who were conversant with the historical issues in the country, laughed themselves to scorn, when Gowon was recorded as "fighting to keep Nigeria one"<sup>40</sup>

From the foregoing, the name "Gowon" was turned into an acronym: Go On With One Nigeria (GOWON). The British "eye-opening" of the North to the crude oil in the South of Nigeria meant that any attempt by the North to secede from Nigeria would mean an automatic loss of the lure of the wealth in the South

The petroleum Decree of 1969 changed the "Derivation Formula" of revenue to "Allocation" the "unity" intended by Ironsi was conceived as centralization. States in Nigeria became a creation of the federal government. And once resources in Nigeria became a matter of centralized distribution, population figures became politicized since it is what determines what each state gets, by 1979 when civil rule was to be restored, the then head of state, Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo favoured the American presidential system rather than the Cabinet system of the first Republic, which it inherited from the British colonial masters. why would people be called "invaders" of the North, maltreated, massacred, and almost-extermiated, yet are not allowed to be on their own? Why should the North, that or originally had no faith in amalgamation or in unity and actually

had always wanted to pull out, now consider it abominable if another region or group want to secede?

When all the above is put into context, we see that there is a philosophy behind the insistence that “Nigeria’s unity is non-negotiable”. This insistence is so strong, so permeating and so-desperately enforced that even genocide is not only not ruled out, but even encouraged. According to Chinweizu, the caliphate colonial agenda is so strongly driven that “their insistence on ruling Nigeria in perpetuity and on exploiting the south, to gather with the resistance of that insistence, is the dynamic behind the recurring instability and mayhem in Nigeria’s history”<sup>41</sup>

This desperation, this attempt to enforce the Surduana’s Nigeria-is-the-Northern-estate declaration of 1960 (and re-emphasized by Alhji Maitama Sule in 1992 in Kaduna<sup>42</sup>), Is the basis for the unbelievable call of s Northern members of the House of Representatives for genocide in the Niger Delta. On the floor of the House and before the whole world, Bala Ibn N’Ala had said:

What is happening in the Niger Delta is pure criminality of the highest order arising from total disregard for constituted authority. In Irag, thousands of people lost their Lives because of an insurrection against the government during the reign of former Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein. We can do away with 20 million militants for the rest 120 million Nigerians to live<sup>43</sup>

Coming from Kebbi state, the base of the Caliphate; we can see that N’ala’s thoughts are not the musing of a deranged person. He knew exactly what he was saying, and given the chance, he could detonate a nuclear warhead on the Niger Delta, and go to sleep. Hitler’s extermination of close to 6 million Jew has remained a horror for humanity. But over 60 years later, a man wants to annihilate 20 million of his “fellow Nigerians” for the sake of a unity that is non-existent. Of course, having played his role well, the same Bala Ibn N’ala is now (in 2016) a member of the senate. Can anyone reflect on the type of laws he would advocate for?

The lure for the wealth in the south and the desire to have “followers” for the Northern “kings” are, thus, the bases for the unity mantra. Add these to the plan by the British imperial power to continue, to “do Nigerian business” with the north (instead of the shrewd southerners, especially the Igbos) and one then gets

a clearer picture of why those who want to keep Nigeria together will do it at all costs, human and material.

### **On the Possibility of a “Non-negotiable” Unity**

We want to subject the mantra that gave rise to this essay to critical analysis. Our purpose is to prove that such a unity is not just practically unrealizable, but equally a conceptual and logical impossibility. In order to achieve our purpose, we need must subject certain concepts, notions or ideas employed in this context, to critical clarifications.

What does the word “unity” mean? Even from the dictionary, the word “unity” is a noun from the verb “unite”; the latter meaning “to become or make people or things become one, to come or bring people or things together”<sup>44</sup>

When the process of “unity” is something that “becomes” or that one or something “comes” into, it is smoother and, perhaps, more natural. However, if that unity is one that an external body attempts to “makes” or “bring” about, then certain conditions must be met before that uniting process would be successful. In the first place, if it is human beings, their consent must be sort; two, their compatibility for co-existence must be examined; certain structural and institutional frameworks must be established. Only then would the term “unity” refer to “the state of being united or in agreement: thus “being one” is a process that involves a “becoming” or “making”. Uniting, consequently involves both a being and an acting together in oneness.

On its part, to “negotiate” is “something that is done *with* someone, or for or *about* something and it means “to try to reach agreement by discussion” and “negotiable”, following there from, means “that can be settled by discussion” as a being-with other humans, Man is by nature a negotiating being, even in the Hobbesian “state of nature” when the prefix “non” (which means “not”) is added to “negotiable” becomes “non-negotiable” which, in our analysis, would mean “not able to reach agreement by discussion. The logical conclusion that would be drawn, following our interpretations above, from the brandished mantra “Nigeria’s” unity is non-negotiable”, is thus the following: “Nigeria’s state of being united or in agreement is not settled by discussion. But is this possible? How can something be said to be in a particular “state” (or condition) and yet it is “not settled”? Besides, how can agreement be reached without discussion? To be “in agreement” presupposes that a particular issue was tabled, opinion sought and perhaps, some level of consensus reached.

The above analysis renders any unity that is non-negotiable impossible. To have been or become united presupposes an initial state of disunity, with the latter being annulled and the former coming into effect by negotiation. How can ethnic nationalities that have existed for years and established *civilizations* that existed before colonial imposition be *made* to belong to something called a “modern nation-state” without their discussion of the nature and dynamics of that union? The truth that must be reflected upon is that it is not the ethnic groups in most African states (Nigeria, for example) that is the problem of these states. It is rather theater way round. It is the hoisting of a power called “state” upon these ethnic groups, without their consent, that is at the root of the many challenges within African states. A people’s “ontological distinctiveness from the other, which is grounded in the memory of common origins and ancestry”<sup>45</sup>

Cannot be wished away or forcefully bent “in the image” of something called “state”. This recourse to ontological distinctiveness it known as ethnic primodality or Ethnic Essentialism. Realizing this kind of ontological distinctiveness, “making” a modern state requires more than a pronouncement by a sovereign external power. Certain frameworks must be created and certain human conditions must be present. Unity in Nigeria has become a fugitive because it has largely ignored the ontological distinctiveness among Nigeria’s ethnic nationalities whose possibility of political co-existence can only be negotiated. No wonder Brue Gilley defines ethnicity as “that part of a people’s identity which is drawn from one or more markers like race, religion, shared history, region, social symbols or language”<sup>46</sup>

The ontological difference which a people possess, which makes them unique and identifiable, demands that any desire for unity must be necessarily anchored on negotiation. Of course, in the case of Nigeria, when her rulers, especially those ravaging her resources for personal gains, talk about her “unity” being “non-negotiable”, what they want is the maintenance of the centralized *status quo* that have ensured that her vast population live below the poverty line. No doubt, any unity that cannot be negotiated exists only in the imagination of those who think it.

### **Religion, Federalism and the Fear of Failure**

Having seen that without agreement reached by discussion, unity for the various ontologically distinct nationalities in Nigeria would not only be difficult but equally impossible, we must turn now to consider the problem of the lack of true federalism in Nigeria and the role played by religion in the disequilibrium in

Nigeria, all these have, unfortunately, placed Nigeria in the 14<sup>th</sup> position in the index of failed states <sup>47</sup>.

All the indices of determining a “failed state” point to Nigeria being one huge failed state. However, in a country where nothing appears to work, talking about the “failure” of the state might seem very normal. That is why in every October 1 (so-called Independence Day), the only achievement we celebrate is that “Nigeria has remained one country”.

The fear of failure, or more precisely, the fear of total disintegration has loomed over Nigeria since the federal arrangement became a central arrangement with the coming of the military. Nigeria, appears to be in such structural and institutional confusion that the more the central government tightens its grip on the lives of the people, the more, it (paradoxically) loses the people. Majority of the people seem to be exactly where the coup leaders of January 15, 1966 did not want the people to be: the psychological place where they “would no longer be ashamed to say that they are Nigerian’s”. As I update this paper on the night of April 27, 2016, the people of Uzo-Uwani, in Enugu state are mourning the dawn massacre of scores of sleeping villagers by people alleged to be “Fulani Herdsmen” days earlier (25<sup>th</sup> April). And as I write, the federal (or is it central?) government has not made an official statement. Yet, the same government would release a solidarity message to the people of Belgium, just few hours after a terror attack in that country. The occurrence of the past two days has become not just regular but (painfully) normal in Nigeria, to the extent that it seems the country has become an abattoir of some sort.

Even, Francis Fukuyama, in one of his recent books, *The Origins of Political Order*, uses Denmark as a metaphor for a good state. But our interest is that he mentions Nigeria as one of the countries that requires to be Denmark-like. In his words:

For people in developed countries, “Denmark” is a mystical place that is known to have good political and economic institutions. It is stable, democratic, peaceful, prosperous, inclusive, and has extremely low levels of political corruption. Everyone would like to figure out how to transform Somalia, Haiti, Nigeria, Iraq or Afghanistan into “Denmark”. And the international development community has long lists of presumed demark-like attributes that they are trying to help failed states achieve <sup>48</sup>

Although Fukuyama argues that “Denmark-ing” cannot be achieved in a giffy given how long such institutions took to build and also since there are “cultural

values” which inform and provide the bases for these institutions, the fact that Nigeria is mentioned in the same group that includes Somalia and Afghanistan appears to worry everybody except our visionless and corrupt rulers.

Our interest in the current status quo in Nigeria and why the slogan of “unity” has acquired the capacity of an irrevocable and necessary good, must be sought in the jihadist movement in Islam. In the beginning of this essay, we saw how the demand for association with the “South” is linked with the acceptance of “the religion of the prophet”. The statement “if they want political unity, let them follow our religion” was not a personal opinion. It was a communique issued by a conference of Northern Chiefs in 1942. The implication is that apart from the desire of the North to exploit southern wealth (as Lord Harcourt’s lady of means”), there is a looming and lurking Islamic agenda in the “one Nigeria” reality. But as the years turned to decades and southerners continued to display gross ignorance of this agenda, and with the political power already handed to the North, the possibility that Islam can be pushed down south from the North became more and more a daring adventure. That anyone who “desire a united Nigeria, Should embrace Islam as his “religion” (according the Sultan in 1944) was made when the North thought that the unity is not possible in persuasive methodologies.

However, by the time “democracy” came in 1999, there was a leeway provided and of course, federalism was the hiding place for the year 2000 Sharia-nization by the 12 core Northern states, to the chagrin of the rest of the country. And on AUGUST 27, 2001, Mohammadu Buhari (who today is Nigeria’s President!) said, “I will continue to show openly and inside me the total commitment to the Sharia movement that is sweeping all over Nigeria. Allah willing, we will NOT STOP THE AGITATION FOR THE TOTAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHARIA IN THE COUNTRY”<sup>49</sup> (emphasis mine). It has become practically impossible to keep statistical records of the number of churches that have been destroyed (bombed or burnt) by the *Ja’amatul Alhis sunna Lidda Wati Wal-Jihad* (otherwise known as Boko Haram) and its diversionary group called “Fulani Herdsmen” and can any prophet or political prognosticator peep into the future to say when and where all these would end?

To support the line of argument we have been exploring, Fukuya provides us a historical analysis of the spread of Islam, not just in other places, but equally as it relates to Nigeria. According to him, the Mamluks Sultanate was in power for

300 years (from the end of the Ayyubid Dynasty in 1250 up to 1517) before its defeat by the Ottoman Empire. He states, therefore, that:

Today we take the existence of Islam and a large global community of Muslims, now numbering about a billion and a half people, for granted. But the spread of Islam did not depend simply on the appeal of its underlying religious ideas. It depended also very much on political power. The extent of Muslim belief was determined in the first instance, by Muslim armies waging Jihad or Holy War against non-believers in the *Dar-ul Harb* (land of War) bringing them into the *Dar Al-Islam* (land of Islam). Just as the Muslims themselves eliminated Christianity and Zorostrarism as major religions in the Middle East, so too might Islam have been relegated to the status of a minor sect, had the Christian Crusaders succeeded in dominating the region or had the Monguls swept all the way to North Africa. The border of Muslim communities in the Northern part of Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo and Ghana was determined by the reach of Muslim armies<sup>50</sup>

But what comes out of this analysis is that this Islamic over throw was not just religions or strictly a factor of military prowess. It largely depended on the control of political power. Why would a people posse a near-obsessive desire for unity with another people, who only a few decades ago were referred to as "native foreigners" or "invaders"? Why would "the mistake of 1914" (as Sir Ahmadu Bellow once described the Amalgamation) be now so ignored that Nigeria must, without discussion of terms of co-existence by Nigerians, be "bound in freedom, come will, come? Is it not obvious from Fukuyama's historical analysis that Islam exists and (especially) spreads more for instrumental rather than religions reason?

When one critically reflects on the way Muslims talk in Nigeria, one is at a loss whether such attitudes and impressions are peculiar to Nigerian Muslims or are they part of Islam as a religion. If the 1942 declaration by Northern emirs that the only condition for political unity is for Southerners to embrace "the religion of the prophet", is treated as the position of some ill-informed traditional rulers, how does one explain the position conversed by one of the most celebrated Muslim clerics in Nigeria, Sheikh Abubaker Mahamoud Gumi? In a non-holds-barred and damming manner, Gumi had stated that it would be better for Nigeria to divide on religious grounds (or lines) than for a Muslim to allow a non-Muslim to rule over him. Gumi's position is of interest for us because it has a direct bearing on the unity that concerns us in this paper. When he interviewer

told him that his position is detrimental to unity in Nigeria, he declared emphatically: "Nigerian unity, if I am to do my best, is to try is to convert indent until Christians and non-Muslims, as much as possible, until other religions become minority and they would not affect our society... I do not think Muslims can allow a non-Muslim to be their prime Minister by election. It could be by use of force or by army coup. But by election, it will be difficult for a non-Muslim to be a leader in Nigeria" <sup>51</sup>

Q51. If for the sake of religious belief, Nigeria could divide, if "unity" can be jettisoned politically if it cannot be fostered at the religious sphere, then why should the unity of Nigeria be preserved at all (even human) costs? Is there a sinister belief among Northern Muslims that instead of dividing the country and allowing the southern "invaders" to have political and religious freedom, there is a chance to "convert" them into Islam with the "non-negotiable unity" mantra? In 2011 after Good luck Jonathan won the presidential election of that year?

In an attempt to link the religions, the political and the crises that have bedeviled the Nigerian state since the advent of the Boko Haram sect, John Odey argues that:

Whether we are Christians or Muslims, we cannot deny the fact that religion gets men mad more easily than any other persuasion... the truth about Boko Haram phenomenon is that those who have told us in plain language that they are born to rule, while the rest of us are born to serve them have discovered in the sect a ready tool with which they can destabilize Nigeria rather than allow their servants rule them <sup>52</sup>

The implication of the above is that as bizzare and as irrational as the idea of a non-negotiable unity is, it can at least be explained by the fact that there is, for some people in Nigeria, symmetric relation between religion and politics or political power. For while religion is ridden upon to acquire political power, the latter is further used to expend the former. unfortunately, it appears that, in all these, God is completely left out of the picture. Or is the God involved in these religious conflicts so weak that he requires men to fight to prevent him from being destroyed by those who do not know him? All these religious men and women forgets Thomas Jefferson's liberal view that "it does me no injury for my neighbor to say that there are 20 gods or no gods" <sup>53</sup>

However, whether men are fighting "over" or "for" God, what is clear is that in the Nigerian situation, religions are a critical factor in the consideration of

relationship among the ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the religions at the flagship of these crises are all imported ones: Islam and Christianity.

It becomes imperative at this point for us to ask ourselves whether the kind of unitism or unitarism that we witness in Nigeria today should be part of a political or constitutional arrangement that has been designated as “federal”. Can one comfortably describe Nigeria as a true federal state without having to grapple with so much contradictions, paradoxes and ironies when such definition is juxtaposed with the facts on ground? How can revenue be “allocated “ to states monthly from the “federal” government, in a manner once described as “feeding bottle federalism” by current Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu? What happens to the derivation principle enshrined in sections 136 and 140 of both the independent (1960) and Republican (1963) Constitutions of Nigeria? What, for example, is the word “Sharia” or (more specifically) Sharia law doing in a federal constitution of a country that is said to be a secular state? What happened to the “self-governing” status which the Regions had in the 1950s and the 1960 and 1963 constitutions? Where are the “federating units” of today’s Nigerian federation? How come today’s 36 states in Nigeria have no constitution, no coat of arms of their own like the erstwhile Regions?

These questions must stimulate critical reflections on the forced and enforced unity under which Nigeria exists today. Every student of federalism knows that is it that structural arrangement that enables a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural people to exist as one country or nation-state, with a commitment to a horizontal power-sharing formula. In a federal state a vertical power sharing arrangement that makes the regional or state governments subordinate to the federal or central authority spells doom for such federations, as we see today in Nigeria.

Although at the intellectual or scholarly sphere, Prof. Ben. Nwabueze remains the most-acknowledged reference on both federalism and constitutionalism, there is no doubt that at the political plain, Obafemi Awolowo remains the most consummate student and reflector on federalism. In *Thoughts on Nigerian Constitution*, Awolowo states clearly that”

From our study of the constitutional evolutions of the countries of the world, two things stand out quietly and prominently. First, in any country where there are divergences of language and nationality, particularly of language, a unitary constitution is always a source of bitterness and hostility on the part of linguistic or national minority group. On the other hand, as soon as federal constitution is

introduced, in which each linguistic or national group is recognized and recorded regional autonomy, any bitterness and hostility against the constitutional arrangement as such disappear. If the linguistic or national groups concerned are backward or weak, vice-versa, the majority group or groups, their bitterness or hostility may be dominant or suppressed. But as conscious and for courageous, leadership emerges amongst them, the bitterness and hostility come into the open and remain sustained, with the possible venom and rancor until home rule is achieved. <sup>54</sup>

One does not need to be a prophet or a seer to see that Awolowo's words are re-vibrating across the country today. The "bitterness and hostility" within the Nigerian states of 2016 are like "venoms" threatening to destroy the "weak" foundation on which the Nigerian state rests. Ethnic nationalities (especially within the Niger Delta), which have over the years been suppressed and dominated by the majority have become "enlightened and politically conscious and courageous" and have brought their bitterness and hostility to the open", in search of "home rule", resource control, fiscal federalism and self-determination. Unfortunately, the country still stutters on in a business-as-usual manner, with her rulers imagining that force, threats, intimidation, blackmail, deceit and lies would sustain the country that Achebe says is being held together by an artificial lattice. It has, therefore, been argued that:

Not only is Awolowo's statement absolutely correct, it is even more accurate about today's Nigeria than the Nigeria of the forties. Inter-ethnic intolerance, which has become chronic, confirms that we are a country of many mutually distrustful nations, as is evident from the clashes we have experienced since the return of civil democratic rule in 1999. <sup>55</sup>

The self-governance, autonomy and financial freedom which federating units should normally have under a proper federation do not exist in Nigeria because the original federating units (Regions), which formed the Nigerian federation, have been Balkanized as states, which largely depend on the "hand outs" allocated monthly by the maximum control of the central authority. The so-called "principle of freedom, equality and justice" which form the basis for "consolidating the unity of our people" <sup>56</sup>are mere words that have never seen any manifestation on the socio-political sphere.

Philip Idachaba's revealing discussion of the issue surrounding federalism in Nigeria, from the etymology of the word "federal:", is very interesting. It provides a paradoxical or ironical dimension to its practice in Nigeria. We noted earlier

that one of the reasons why federalism exist only in name in Nigeria is the desire of certain elements in the North to promote an Islamic agenda. However, this promotion is not aimed at propagating the core values and ideals of Islam as a religion of peace. It is rather a political one. But Idachaba's thesis is that federalism is not working in Nigeria because the Nigerian version lacks the original religious meaning<sup>57</sup>.

Idachaba's argument is that the religious root of federalism became regimented in the modern period following the instrumental perspective hoisted upon reality by science. He sought to demonstrate that "one", federalism is severed from its original meaning and major focus, which is the covenanting of wills for proper social order... two, that this unfaithfulness of federalism to its original roots, is as a result of the dearth of the religious orientation in the modern perspective on human affairs..."<sup>58</sup>

Going back to root of the word "federalism", Idachaba says that the word comes from the Latin, "Foedus", which means covenant, compact or contract. He, however, argues that it's most appropriate meaning is "covenant". Covenants, for him, are "grounded in moral commitment" and "provide the basis and the means for placing all parties to the covenant under judgment"<sup>58</sup>

Our interest in Idachaba's essay is to note that the religious dimension that is destroying the federal arrangement in Nigeria should (Ironically) have been its greatest promoter. The further implication that emerges from this is that the moment this moral ground that federalism is the "covenanting of the wills" of ethnic nationalities was destroyed, federalism in Nigeria turned into a yoke, and the basis of unity (as Gowon told us on August 1, 1966), no longer existed.

Once this understanding of federalism as a "covenant" is lost on the people and within the polity, the moral basis for any unity disappears and all that would be left is a rigid, rancorous and regimented existence. The result is that every person and group would be seeking for how and where to catch a breathe of the air of freedom. That is where Nigeria is now. It is this fugitive kind of unity that makes the rulers blot out the facts of history so that "ignorance, fear and (military) terrorism" would reign supreme.

### **A Post-Modern Perspective on Unity**

From our analytic journey so far (a journey made smoother by the incontrovertible foots of history), we can see that there is something essentially

wrong with any unity qualified by the adjective “non-negotiable” consequently, the problem in Nigeria is that her political unity is both historically false and logically invalid. Unity cannot be legislated, it cannot be compelled. Those who want to unite (form an association, a club, a party, a company, a state, etc) necessarily and essentially must have that initial agreement that makes it even possible to begin. As we saw in our last analysis from Idachaba, true federalism must be a covenanting of wills. With the obvious fact that the soul of the Nigerian state is already, as Author Nwankwo puts it, “poised on a precipice... heavy with aguish... with the attendant risk of its snapping up and falling into the abyss”,<sup>59</sup> what then, is to be done?

Post-modernism provide as an attitude towards reality as a whole. Although defining post-modernism is itself anti-post-modern, we would at least attempt to explain it.<sup>60</sup> No doubt, post-modern writings can be weird, confusing, compounding, exasperating, even convoluting, our interest in it here is its rejection of meta-thinking (Meta narrative) and its celebration of plurality or multiplicity... in the view of one of the leading figures in post-modern thinking, post-modernism is “incredulity towards meta narrative”<sup>61</sup>. That is to say, it is the abandonment of the hope or demand for a transcultural, transhistorical, universal and permanent algorithm or conceptual scheme, with which we can legitimize, chose or justify theories about reality. Postmodernists are averse to any totalizing thinking. In the view of Edwin Etiyobe:

Postmodern thinking can be described as a philosophical direction or movement that is critical, both of the foundational assumptions of western thinking and its totalitarian and universalizing tendency.... It can be seen as largely a reaction against the philosophical assumptions, values and intellectual world view of the modern period of Western (specifically European) history, a period of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries right up to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Central to postmodern thinking is its emphasis on the importance and discourse in the way truth and world view are traded and constructed, and rule of ideology, and asserting and maintaining political and economic power and relationships.<sup>62</sup>

Our interest is not, strictly speaking, on postmodernism. Our interest is on what postmodern thinking can bring on board, both in understanding the situation within the Nigerian state and in providing a direction to a possible panacea. The colonization (in 1860) and the amalgamation (in 1914) of Nigeria both occurred within the modern period when the intellectual, political, economic and religious

world views of Western Europe were exalted, packaged and exported as the ultimate and essential ideologies and exported as the ultimate and essential ideologies of the human species.

With colonial and imperialistic intensions, Britain “united” Nigeria politically, without thinking about the people being so put together. Acquiring colonies and making states out of them became universal imperatives, and these colonies (and later states) had to imbibe all that was (is) Western culture -language, religion, political organization, economic system, even dressing and diet. Consequently, “the universalizing tendency of modern thinking is totalitarian, since it effectively imposes conformity on other perspectives and discourses, thereby oppressing, marginalizing or silencing them”.<sup>63</sup>

The Nigerian state, therefore, inherited this modern colonial tendencies and has, over the years, insisted on the compulsory unity of Nigerians. A grandnorn (constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) and a constantly declared cliché “one Nigeria” are used to force (instead of foster) unity. The questions of “one Nigeria” has become so perniciously posited that people are even afraid to discuss anything to the contrary, for fear of being branded an enemy of the state. Today, the leader of the indigenious people of Biafra (IPOB) and Director of Radio Biafra, Namdi Karnu, is facing trial (slammed with all manner of thrumped-up charges) for saying his group does not want to be Nigerians anymore. Yet, we are told it is a democratic state.

Postmodern thinking abhors this type of totalitarian and totalizing conception of reality. In an earlier essay<sup>64</sup>,

I had shown that one of the things that post modern science did, was to reject the idea of a “unity of science”; that is that “science is science”, no matter what its subject matter is. The postmodernists argue, plausibly, that each science should articulate its method in line with its objectives and subject matter, instead of lumping all sciences together in the hope that they would all follow the procedural matrix of the physical sciences and its frequently brandished steps called “scientific method”.

The result of the postmodern conception of reality is that there is the opening of the intellectual space, hegemanically closed by the Western epistemic foundation. Realities long abandoned and ignored by the ignorance of Western epistemology are finding expression in the hermeneutically cleared space of the

comity of cultures. I had discussed this matter as it relates to Africa, in my essay, "Science and the "End" of Epistemology" <sup>65</sup>

Totalizing principles are like yokes inhibiting progress in human affairs. The postmodernists believe that with the "end" of epistemology (that is, the end of a theorizing about knowledge in order to know), the cultural space earlier occupied by the Western mode of knowing, disappear and reappear.

What this means is that the attempt being made by Nigerian's rulers over the years is an attempt at the impossibility as it is a political suicide. Even God does not like overcrowding. That was the reason for the sacrifice of Stephen in the Bible book of Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7. God had told them (earlier in Acts 1:8) to take the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea, then Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. But, they got to Jerusalem and "bound" or "grounded" the gospel there, with thousands of people coming into the gospel movement daily, they began to choke. However, with the death of Stephen and the persecution that followed, they were forced to move (the instruction that was given in Acts 1:8, which was ignored, began to take place from Acts 8:1:" .... And at that time, there arose, a great persecution against the church that was at Jerusalem and many were all scattered abroad throughout the region, in Judea, in Samaria...". These were the exact places they were told to go many years earlier.

Nigeria and her rulers have refused to hear the voice of reason. And all the crises within the country seem to be "persecutions" proceeding her eventual "scattering", unless there is an urgent, no-hold barred conference of her ethnic nationalities. The call for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) has been on for over 2 decades, not the type that cost over 7 billion naira, organized by former President Good luck Jonathan. Unfortunately, the conference considered the question of Nigeria's unity "a no-go area" it does appear that those Chinweizu have referred to as "Caliphate Colonialists" are hell-bent to destroying Nigeria, in the name of a "non-negotiable" unity. The violence and blood-letting that is going on in the country has turned Nigeria into are huge abattoir and our rulers go on as though nothing is happening. When one tries to discuss it or raise alarm, one is reminded that it may be an incitement to "disunity" we would end this section by quoting Emmanuel Uchena Ugwu's piece on the recent Slaughter of Nigerians by their "fellow (Fulani) Nigerians". According to him:

The killings have not moved Buhari [Nigeria's current President] in body or spirit. The killings of Udni Ruwa, Nasarawa state on January 4, 2016, between 12

and 38 people died. The killings of Denisaro, Wunanokoih, Dikajam and Taboungo, all in Adamawa state on January 23, between 30 and 60 died. The killings of Agatu, Benue State on January 10, 45 people died. The repeat killings of Agatu on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7 people died. The killings of Tom-Anyin, Benue State on Feb. 7, 16 people died. The killings of Abi, Enugu State on Feb. 11, 19 people disappeared. The third Slaughter of Agatu on Feb. 24, between 300 and 500 people died. The fourth Slaughter of Agatu on Feb. 28, 9 people died. The killings of Mbaya Tombo on March 13, 2 people died. The 3<sup>rd</sup> slaughter of Mbaya Tombo on March 17, 15 people died. The killings of Ohalielu, Rivers state on March 29, between 7 and 16 people died. The killings of Angai, Dashole Doriand Lesuma, Taraba state on April 10, between 15 and 44 people died. The killings of Moor, Benue state on April 18, 18 people died.<sup>66</sup>

Now, this is a country that wants to force unity and citizens are being slaughtered in a manner characteristic of Somalia. However, Ugwu observes what he calls a “scandalous irony”. The fact that within the four months of the above slaughter, President Mahammadu Buhari has visited 11 countries, without even stopping by to console any one of the victims in any of the places where these are happening. He laments that the president has failed to “as much as publicly acknowledge that Nigeria is facing an existential threat. He has yet to deem the national emergency worthy of his utterance”<sup>67</sup>

In the midst of the unfolding occurrences, and as anger degenerates to late, can anyone prognosticate or prophesy where the next attack and slaughter would occur, and who the victims or villains would be? And would the next killing be repeats or retaliation? Have we now, seen why unity or co-existence *must* be negotiated? Nigerians certainly have a choice to make.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have tried to examine the basis for the often cited mantra that “Nigeria’s unity is non-negotiable”. We have traced the antecedents of that position and shown conclusively that: one, even the British amalgamators of Nigeria know that Nigeria cannot be and was never united; two, that the so-called “Founding Fathers “of Nigeria also knew that Nigeria was not “one and so had to fashion a federations as the *minimum* basis for co-existence; three, that the North of Nigeria that is screaming the “one Nigeria” mantra originally never believed in it, four, that the philosophy behind the “non-negotiable unity” brouhaha is economic and religious.

However, a much more philosophical (logical) issue is the fact that the paper showed convincingly that there cannot be anything like a “unity” that is or can be “non-negotiable”, for it would be a contradiction in terms. The paper also examined the issues against the backdrop of the postmodern attitude to reality. What came out of that consideration is that the current situations in Nigeria is a fallout from the, modern instrumental thinking, where in what something is *used for* is of more significance than *what that thing is*. The implication is that the so-called unity of Nigeria is for the economic benefits of the rulers, since the people are used as cannon fodder to fight their way to “federal power”, with the people living on promises drummed into their ears by a media that plays the tunes dictated by the piper-politicians.

What also emerged from the postmodern perspective is that a unity that must work in Nigeria is one that the people themselves consent to in a free way, without inducement or compulsion. Also, it is obvious that the often chest-thumping that “Nigeria has survived as a nation” usually made by her rulers may even become history if things are allowed to continue, unchecked, uncontrolled and sincerely addressed. Anyone that thinks there is something sacrosanct about Nigeria should ask where Persia, Babylon, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, etc are. Or have the people that belong to these defunct states ceased to be on earth? Did the people in Ukraine, for example, stop being humans because they were not going by the name “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)”?

## **End Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Lagos: February 1-22, 1919. A Lagos newspaper of colonial Nigeria, writing under the headline, “The Retirement of Sir Frederick Lugard”. See, “Document VI” in A.M. Kirk-Green, *The Amalgamation of Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1968)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Omo Omoruyi, *the Tale of June Twelve* (London: Press Alliance Network Ltd. 1999), 300. Lord Harcourt was the then British secretary of states for the colonies to whom port Harcourt, the capital city of Rivers State, Nigeria is named.

<sup>3</sup> The chiefs were responding to a letter written by the West African Students’ Union (WASU) based in Britain requesting that the chief Emirs requesting their support for a constitutional evolution, Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 51.

<sup>4</sup> As in Note 3 (above), the sultan was responding to WASU demand for his support for constitutional reform. Quoted in James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (London: University of California press), 361.

<sup>5</sup> Balewa said this during a session of the Nigerian Legislative council in 1948, Quoted in Coleman, *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>6</sup> Balewa, as parliamentary leader of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) said this during the budget session of the Nigerian Legislative Council in 1948. Quoted in Coleman, *Ibid.*, 361.

<sup>7</sup> Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian freedom*, 48.

<sup>8</sup> In an address to the country on August 1, 1966, which was originally written to pull Northern Nigeria out of the Nigerian union. Quoted in Adewale Ademoyega, *why we struck: the story of the first Nigerian coup* (Ibadan: Evans Brothers, 1981), 122.

<sup>9</sup> Odumegwu Ojukwu, *Biafra: Selected Speeches of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Preamble, section 2 (L).

<sup>11</sup> This call is contained in Nigeria's National pledge"

<sup>12</sup> The idea of being "bound" and at the same time "in freedom" is contained in the first Stanza of the National Anthem of Nigeria. And is this not interesting because Nigerians cannot be "free" since Nigeria has "bound" them into a non-negotiable unity.

<sup>13</sup> this is the last line in the second stanza of Nigerians National Anthem.

<sup>15</sup> see, Kwasi Wiredu,"\*

<sup>16</sup> Marice Blackburn (ed.) *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (Oxford University press, 1996), 14

<sup>17</sup> Blackburn, 183.

<sup>18</sup> Blackburn, 72.

<sup>19</sup> Kirk-Green, *The Amalgamation of Nigeria*, 27-28.

<sup>20</sup> Paper presented at the Conference organized by the Faculty of Management and Social Science (FMSS), Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria, August 10-14, 2012

<sup>21</sup> Abdulahi Smith "The Early States of the Central Sudan" in J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowther (eds.) *History of West Africa*, vol. 1 (London: Longman publishers, 1971), 37.

<sup>22</sup> Chinua Achebe, *there was A Country: A personal History of Biafra* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 2

<sup>23</sup> Achebe, *there was a Country*, 1

<sup>24</sup> Olusegun Oledipo, *Beyond Survival: Essays on the Nigerian Condition* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1999), 33-34.

<sup>25</sup> Chinweizu, *Caliphete Colonialism: the Taproot of the Trouble with Nigeria* (Lagos: clear coast communications, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> when the crises that precipitated the breakup of the Soviet Union (the then largest country in the world) began, Fukuyama, a then policy analyst in the US state department, wrote a very controversial article: see, Francis Fukuyama, "the end of History?" *National interest*, vol. 18 (summer, 1989), which he later developed into a book titled, *the End of History and Last Man* (New York: Random House, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Francis Fukuyama *State Building: Governance and World Order in the Twenty-First century* (London: Profile Books, 2004), ix.

<sup>28</sup> Fukuyama, *state Building*, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Fukuyama, *State Building*, 134.

<sup>30</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *the Origins of Political Order: From Pre-Human Times to the French Revolution* (London: profile Books Limited, 2012), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Authur A. Nwankwo, "the Nigerian Experiment: Is It Working?" in C.S. Mermoh, uche Jack Osimiri and A.I. Umezulike (eds.). *Law, democracy and its dividends* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 2004), 447-465.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 463.

<sup>33</sup> In, *international Journal of history and cultural Studies* (IJHCS), vol. 1, issued (2014), 53-64, [www.arcjournals.org](http://www.arcjournals.org). Accessed 20/2/2016.

<sup>34</sup> Goddy, Onyefuru 'To Save Nigeria: The Revolutionary Coup and the Civil War' (Enugu: Rabboni, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> J. Chidozie Chukwuokolo posited this view in a Radio programme on Solid 100.9 FM, Enugu titled "people's court," April 8, 2016, sponsored by movement of voice for Democracy (movers Nigeria), 9-10.30 am.

<sup>36</sup> C.K. Nzeogwu in a speech read at Kaduna on the morning of January 15th 1966 which announced the military overthrow of Nigeria's First Republic; Quoted in Ojukwu, *Biafra: Selected Speeches...*114.

<sup>37</sup> Achebe, *There was a country*, 82

<sup>38</sup> Onyefuru, *to save Nigeria*, 23.

<sup>39</sup> Ojukwu, *Biafra: selected speeches...* 5.

<sup>40</sup> Onyefuru, *to save Nigeria*, 124-5.

<sup>41</sup> Chinweizu, *caliphate colonialism*, i5-6.

<sup>42</sup> during the launching of *the power of knowledge* written by Alhaji Isa Kaita, at Durbar Hotel, Kaduna, made the following statement in Arabic, on December 22, 1992: "Everyone has a gift from God. Northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities; the Yoruba man knows how to earn a living has diplomatic qualities; the Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and technological innovation. "If there are no followers, a king will not exist. If there are no students, a teacher will not be required, etc" (Quoted in, J.A.A. Ayoad, *Nigeria and the Squandering of Hope*) (Ibadan: University of Ibadan press, 1997), 14.

<sup>43</sup> Reported in *the Guardian* newspaper, May 28, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of English*

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Olufemi Badru, "the problem of Ethnic conflict and the Question of National integration in Nigeria: considering the Moral Resource of Trust in the Group mind of Anyiam Osigwe's Political Thought", in Kolawole A. Olu-Owolabi and Adebola B. Ekanola (eds.) *A Holistic Approach to Human Existence and Development* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2013), 90.

<sup>46</sup> Bruce Gilley, "Against the concept of Ethnic conflict", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 25, no 6 (2004), 1155-1166.

<sup>47</sup> Onyeso

<sup>48</sup> Fukuyama, *the Origins of Political Order*, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted *the Guardian*, February 12, 2015, 50.

<sup>50</sup> Fukuyama, *the origin of political order*, 202.

<sup>51</sup> Gumi's view were expressed in an interview in *Quality Magazine*, October, 1987, 34-39.

<sup>52</sup> John Odey, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Path to *Disintegration*", a Simon D. Anyanwu and Isidore U. Nwanaju (eds.) *Boko Haram and Terrorism: Religious conflicts and Dialogue initiatives in Nigeria* (Enugu: Snaap press, 2012), 56.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted by Richard Rorty, "the Priority of Democracy to philosophy", in Richard Rorty's, *Objectivity, Relativity and Truth* (Cambridge: Clip, 1990), 175.

<sup>54</sup> Obafemi Awolowo, *thoughts of Nigerian Constitution*

<sup>55</sup> the level of ethnic resentment and its attendant violent since 1999 has become difficult to calculate forestall or even avoid. It is so bad that some of the violent groups even possess missiles.

<sup>56</sup> See "preamble" to *the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999* (2011, as Amedended).

<sup>57</sup> Philip Ada Idachaba, "Modern Federalism and its Fracture from the Covenanting of Wills: Towards a Postmodern Reconstruction", in Kolawole A. Olu-Owolabi and Adebola B. Ekanola (eds.) *A Holistic Approach to Human Existence and Development* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2013), 313-337.

<sup>58</sup> Idachaba, 315.

<sup>59</sup> Nwankwo, "the Nigerian Experiment: is it Working?", 447.

<sup>60</sup> Postmodernists abhor definitions because they believe that definitions end up exposing the idiosyncrasies of the definer instead of exposing what is being defined.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Francis Lyotard, "The postmodern Condition" Bayies, Kenneth *et al* (eds.) *after philosophy: End or Transformation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 244.

<sup>62</sup> Edwin Etiobe, "postmodern Thinking and African Philosophy", in *Filosofia Theoretica*

<sup>63</sup> Etiobe, 68.

<sup>64</sup> Joseph N. Agbo, "the Postmodern Scientific Thoughts of Thomas kuhn and Paul Feyrabend: Implications for Africa", in *Filosofia Theortica*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2014), 9-37.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph N. Agbo, "Science and the 'End' of Epistemology", in M.F. Asiegbu and J.C. Chukwuokolo (eds.) *truth, knowledge and Society* (Abakaliki: Pacts GM Press, 2012), 138-156.

<sup>66</sup> Emmanuel Uchenna Ugwu, "Enugu Massacre: Buhari, the comedian in Chief" in, *naij.com* accessed may 4, 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Ugwu, "Enugu Massacre"