THE 21ST CENTURY AGENDA FOR PEACE IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-LINGUAL NATION LIKE NIGERIA. (THE RUGA IMPLICATION)

PETER C. EKECHUKWU
Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education
University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State
Tel: 08063217819
Email: peter_chizor@yahoo.com

Abstract
There is no gain saying that Nigeria is a pluralistic heterogeneous Nation, made up of over 250 ethnic groups, three major religious group, many languages with unrelated cultural practices. Based on these core differences, the need for peaceful co-existence cannot be underemphasized. This paper examined the 21st century agenda for peace in a multi-religious and multi-language nation. It highlighted the concept of conflict and its possible sources as well as concept of peace. The paper based its discussions on the democratic peace theory. In the paper, a brief history of Nigeria is highlighted considering the fourth republic. A brief historical background to the ethnic and cultural conflict in Nigeria was also expounded most recent been the Agatu killing of the Fulani Herdsmen. Nigeria is expounded as a multi-ethnic and religious nation with over 250 ethnic nationality. Apart from religious and cultural crisis, other infrastructural crisis like the agitation in the Niger Delta as well as the Fulani-Herdsmen is also bedeviling the nation. Currently, another anti-peace policy of the Federal Government is the RUGA programme. Over the years, many peace policy including Amnesty programme and the national Confab have been considered. In the mist of these, it is imperative that an Agenda for Peace should be Set. Paramount among them is the reconsideration of the 2014 Confab report.

Introduction
According to Campbell (2015), on January 1, 1914, Lord Frederick Lugard, the governor of both the Northern Nigeria Protectorate and the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, signed a document consolidating the two, thereby creating the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. Forty-six years later in 1960, Nigeria became an independent state in the mist of diverse socio-cultural, ethnic and religious diversities. Due to this, Edewor, Aluko and Folarin (2014) wrote;

> Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse society that has witnessed conflicts arising from this ethnic and cultural diversity. such conceptual issues as ethnicity, cultural diversity, federalism and national serves as a background to the ethnic and cultural conflicts in Nigeria. It is argued that national integration in the Nigerian context has been an attempt to forge "unity in diversity", seeking to wish away socio-cultural differences and imposing uniformity in spite of complex cultural diversity. This has created more conflict and posed obstacles to unity, peaceful co-existence, progress and stable development. Furthermore, national integration and can be realized only with the

development and entrenchment of a supportive public culture; understanding, respecting and tolerating differences occasioned by socio-cultural diversity; as well as the development of new institutions and mechanisms that address poverty, revenue allocation and other national issues peacefully….(pg 1)

The above statement indicates the seeming unending multi-ethnic issues posed by the different cultural, political and religious variations. As pointed out earlier, the nation Nigeria came into existence the undue matrimony of the northern and southern protectorates. Hence, societies with varied socio-cultural, religious, political and language differences were merged together. Inspite of these differences, our political and democratic heroes like Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Tafawa Belewa etc. confronted the British colonialist, fought for and obtained independence for the nation in 1960. Having this at hand which was to make room for peaceful co-existence, the day was now set for ethnic and tribal tensions.

It is also observed that rather than this amalgamation being a source of strength, the various religions, philosophies, cultures and languages that characterized our nation turned out to be the basis of conflict, tension and war. Common among these issues are the issue of the Niger-delta militant, the book-haram sect and the most recent among them being the Fulani herdsmen. It is the opinion of the author to state that since the attainment of independence, the nation has struggled to stay in peace. Most times, we hear or see some section of the country opting for secession like the proposed Republic of Biafra, Odua Republic, the Niger-Delta Republic etc.. among these clamour for

secession, one begins to ponder if all these unwanted killings, tensions and restiveness are caused by religion, tribal and cultural differences, or it is merely an outcome of a rigid and inflexible political process. Till date, it is mystical to the author the survival of the nation despite these huge differences. Next to ponder is; what could be done to inspire a peaceful coexistence of more than 250 ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological and language groups that make up the nation Nigeria? It therefore warrant the author to expound his own ideology on what should be done to foster peace, eschew conflict and expose the root causes of tension and conflict among almost 200 million inhabitant. The current review and its perceived recommendations if implemented may propel the nation just like the independent states of America to be even stronger in their territories. This obviously formed the basis of the paper.

Concept of Conflict

Conflict according to Lioe, (2010) is a natural disagreement arising between two or more people. It exists when they have incompatible goals and one or more believe that the behaviour of the other prevents them from their own goal achievement. It is a process in which one party (person or group) perceives that it's interests are being opposed or negatively affected by the other party. Conflict is very common where there are diverse opinion and sect.

In the multi-ethnic, cultural and muti-religious nation like Nigeria, the tendency of conflict arising from over the 250 ethnic nationalities are common and in such, only a free, democratic and transparent leadership can thrive.

The causes of conflict are enormous. According to Ekechukwu (2018), conflict are caused by;
1. Internal tensions between self-aggrandizement and spiritual

transcendence; this involves the struggle between the spirit of man seeking to do good and the body which seek after pleasure even at the detriment of peace.

2. Religious Intolerance; this involves lack of tolerating other religion. The Muslim seeking to dominate Nigeria and killing Christians and vice-versa.

3. Language Barrier; this is the differences emanating from the various languages due to the multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria. Just like in the Biblical days when the Tower of Babel was proposed to be built to heaven, the only unifying force there was language. Hence, lack of a single language is a source of conflict and division.

4. The forced marriage between religion and politics: though these two concept must interplay in the course of governance, the persistent and purposeful politicizing religion and vice-versa is a source of conflict.

5. Leadership failure.

6. Spreading fake news and making unguarded statement capable of disrupting the unity of the tribes. Currently, Nigeria is facing off with Ghana over a purported unguarded statement made by a professor. This has strained the diplomatic ties between these two countries.

Concept of Peace

According to Smihula (2013), Peace is a concept of societal friendship and harmony in the absence of hostility and violence. In a social sense, peace is commonly used to mean a lack of conflict (such as war) and freedom from fear of violence between individuals or heterogeneous (relatively foreign or distinct) groups. Throughout history leaders have used peacemaking and diplomacy to establish a certain type of behavioral restraint that has resulted in the establishment of regional peace or economic growth through various forms of agreements or peace treaties. Such behavioral restraint has often resulted in the reduction of conflicts, greater economic interactivity, and consequently substantial prosperity. The avoidance of war or violent hostility can be the result of thoughtful active listening and communication that enables greater genuine mutual understanding and therefore compromise.

Borrowing from the words of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, "Peace, in the sense of the absence of war is of little value…peace can only last where human rights are respected, where people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free. From his point, we can say that peace means respect for human rights, well-being of people and freedom of individuals and nations. The current study aims at dissecting these two major concepts in the light of the Nigerian situation and possibly suggest ways to manage the crisis emanating as a result of these differences.

Theoretical base

The Social Identity theory: this theory was developed by Henri Tajfel (1979). It is based on the hypothesis that aggression is not innate or instinctual but actually learned through the process of socialization. To Henri stereotyping and prejudice keeps individuals worth in the group and this willful act of stereotypes and prejudice are the main source of contention among conflicting groups. Interaction in society helps to focus and trigger stored aggression onto enemies. This is an important concept, pailicularly when the conflict is ethno-national or sectarian in nature. Social learning theorist has tried to understand the relationship of the individuals in their environment and how this relates to group aggression. This

theory is based on normal psychological processes that operate under all circumstances not just under conditions of inter-group conflict. According to Tajfel, we create our social identities in order to simplify our excellent relations. Further there is a human need for positive self-esteem and self-worth, which we transfer to our groups. We also order our environment by social comparisons between groups. Social identity theory underlines the fact that individuals are different in groups and it is this difference that produces recognizable forms of group action. In other words, what social identity theory has done is to outline a process which places the individual in the group and at the same time places the group in the individual. By relating this to the present study, most tribes or sect in the Nigeria may not have been born with violence, but they develop this tendency as they interact and learn. When the conflicting tribes like the Niger Delta militants react, this theory explains that their reaction of restiveness is due to the unfair interaction and neglect they observed in the society. This also applies to every other restive group. Also, the need for positive self-esteem, worth and recognition by this groups and the direct opposite creates tension and crisis between the groups.

Brief History of the Nation Nigeria
The Federation of Nigeria was granted full independence on 1 October 1960 under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary government and a substantial measure of self-government for the country's three regions.

The first post-independence national government was formed by a conservative alliance of the NCNC and the NPC. Upon independence, it was widely expected that Ahmadu Bello the Sardauna of Sokoto, the undisputed strong man in Nigeria who controlled the North, would become Prime Minister of the new Federation Government (Meredith, 2005). However, Bello chose to remain as premier of the North and as party boss of the NPC, selected Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a Hausa, to become Nigeria's first Prime Minister. Shortly after this, the nation was plunge into internal crisis. The Central Intelligence Agency commented in October 1966 in a CIA Intelligence Memorandum that.

> "Africa's most populous country (population estimated at 48 million) is in the throes of a highly complex internal crisis rooted in its artificial origin as a British dependency containing over 250 diverse and often antagonistic tribal groups. The present crisis started" with Nigerian independence in 1960, but the federated parliament hid "serious internal strains. It has been in an acute stage since last January when a military coup d'état destroyed the constitutional regime bequeathed by the British and upset the underlying tribal and regional power relationships. At stake now are the most fundamental questions which can be raised about a country, beginning with whether it will survive as a single viable entity.

The situation is uncertain, with Nigeria, is sliding downhill faster and faster, with less and less chance unity and stability. Unless present army leaders and contending tribal elements soon reach agreement on a new basis for the association and take some effective measures to halt a seriously deteriorating security situation, there will be increasing internal turmoil, possibly including civil war.

On 29 May 1967, Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, the military governor of the Eastern region who emerged as the leader of increasing Igbo secessionist sentiment, declared the independence of the eastern region as the Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967. According to Osaghae and Suberu (2005) the ensuing Nigerian Civil War resulted in an estimated 3.5 million deaths (mostly from starving children) before the war ended with Gowon's famous "No victor, no vanquished" speech in 1970.

The Fourth Republic

*According to Taylor (2006), t*he emergence of democracy in Nigeria on May 1999 ended 16 years of consecutive military rule. Olusegun Obasanjo inherited a country suffering economic stagnation and the deterioration of most democratic institutions. Obasanjo, a former general, was admired for his stand against the Abacha dictatorship, his record of returning the federal government to civilian rule in 1979, and his claim to represent all Nigerians regardless of religion.

The new President took over a country that faced many problems, including a dysfunctional bureaucracy, collapsed infrastructure, and a military that wanted a reward for returning quietly to the barracks. The President moved quickly and retired hundreds of military officers holding political positions, established a blue-ribbon panel to investigate human rights violations, released scores of persons held without charge, and rescinded numerous questionable licenses and contracts left by the previous regimes. The government also moved to recover millions of dollars in funds secreted to overseas accounts.

Communal violence has plagued the Obasanjo government since its inception. In May 1999 violence erupted in Kaduna State over the succession of an Emir resulting in more than 100 deaths. In November 1999, the army destroyed the town of Odi, Bayelsa State and killed scores of civilians in retaliation for the murder of 12 policemen by a local gang. In Kaduna in February–May 2000 over 1,000 people died in rioting over the introduction of criminal Shar'ia in the State. Hundreds of ethnic Hausa were killed in reprisal attacks in south-eastern Nigeria. In September 2001, over 2,000 people were killed in inter-religious rioting in Jos. In October 2001, hundreds were killed and thousands displaced in communal violence that spread across the states of Benue, Taraba, and Nasarawa. On 1 October 2001 Obasanjo announced the formation of a National Security Commission to address the issue of communal violence. Obasanjo was reelected in 2003.

Additionally, the Obasanjo administration set to defuse longstanding ethnic and religious tensions if it hopes to build a foundation for economic growth and political stability. Chief among them at that time was the conflict in the Niger Delta over the environmental destruction caused by oil drilling and the ongoing poverty in the oil-rich region.

In the 2007 general election, Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, both of the People's Democratic Party, were elected President and Vice President, respectively. The election was marred by electoral fraud, and denounced by other candidates and international observers. All these were interpreted by international observers to go beyond mere electoral violence to a firm foundation in religious and tribal violence.

Historical Background to Ethnic and Cultural Conflicts in Nigeria

According to Edewor, Aluko and Folarin (2014), ethnic and cultural conflicts in Nigeria are rooted in the 1914 merger of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the colonial administration of Lord

Frederick Lugard. The amalgamation brought about the involuntary unification of culturally and historically diverse ethnic groups, some of which had been rivals and overlapping imperialists in the pre-colonial times (Ajayi and Alagoa, 1980). For instance, Benin, at the height of its power from the 15th century, had established imperial control over some states in the fringes of present-day Northern Nigeria, including Igala and Nupe-speaking areas, which, by virtue of their vassalage were compelled to pay tolls and tributes as vassals to the Benin monarch. Benin had also extended control to the South and enjoyed suzerainty over several Yoruba states, including Eko (now Lagos), Ondo, Ekiti. This overbearing influence of Benin over the Yoruba states had pitted Benin against the declining Oyo Empire before British colonization (Ajayi and Akintoye, 1980). Similarly, Oyo Empire, prior to its decline and fall, had wielded considerable amount of influence in the entire Western part of Nigeria and had also upturned the Benin hegemony to gain control of significant Benin provinces and former vassal states. Oyo's influence also resonated in Ilorin, Ebiraland, Igalaland and Nupeland (Ikime, 1985). Thus, the relationship between the Yoruba and Edo-speaking people before colonialism had been that of the proverbial cat and mouse, which had led to cold war, mutual distrust and mounting tension. In the North, the fourteen Hausa states (Hausa Bekwai and Hausa Banza) were embroiled in a prolonged and chaotic relationship of overlapping imperialism. Even the seven legitimate states (Bekwai) had no love lost between them, let alone cultural or political synergy between the Bekwai and the illegitimate states (Banza). Kano rose to power at the expense of Gobir's decline, while Kororofa and Kebbi besieged Kano and Rano to rise to power and fame and it is on record that it was during the imperial reign of Kebbi under Kotal Kanta that the Hausa states reached their height of disunity (Balogun, 1980). It however took the intervention several decades later of the Islamic jihadists led by Othman dan Fodio to forcefully unify the Hausa-speaking states under the Islamic religion (Balogun, 1980).

It is interesting to note that in spite of the plethora of ethnic crisis from 1966 to date, the basic underlying factor in election, allocation of resources, party formation and political appointment is ethnic consideration. The concepts and propositions such as geopolitical zones, zoning and rotational presidency seem to be more modest ways of perpetrating ethnic politics. An uglier dimension of ethnic crisis is intra-ethnic and intra-regional disagreements which have led to fratricidal wars and conflicts such as the Tiv-Jukun, Tiv-Hausa, Andoni-Ogoni, Umeleri-Aguleri, Ife-Modakeke, and Birom-Fulani conflicts (Folarin, 2011). One basic factor that is comprehensible about these developments is that ethnic conflict has gained momentum because the polity from the top-down is structured along ethnic lines and conditioned by a primitive tribal and primordial culture.

The Multi-ethnicity of the Nigerian state
Ukpo in Rovkov (1990) noted that the ethnicity of Nigeria is so varied that there is no definition of a Nigerian beyond that of someone who lives within the borders of the country. the concept of ethnicity requires definition. Ukpo noted earlier that this is a "group of people having a common language and cultural values". In Nigeria, the ethnic groups are occasionally fusions created by intermarriage, intermingling and/or assimilation. In such fusions, the groups of which they are composed maintain a limited individual identity. In 1960, Hodgkin (1960) counted that there are over three hundred ethnic groups majorly ethnic minorities, those which do not comprise a majority in the

region in which they live. These groups usually do not have a political voice, nor do they have access to resources or the technology needed to develop and modernize economically. They therefore often consider themselves discriminated against, neglected, or oppressed. There are only three ethnic groups which have attained "ethnic majority" status in their respective regions: the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Ibo in the southeast, and the Yorubas in the southwest.

In the present study, the core may not actually be on those majority groups which are counted to include the Igbos, the house-Fulanis or the Yorubas. The author strongly believes that the majority of the crisis rocking the country stem from other minority groups wrapped up in these three major groups but whose influence are felt in their numerous agitations and restiveness. For instance, it is seen that The Ibo established a society that was fascinating in its decentralization. Their largest societal unit was the village, where each extended family managed its own affairs without being dictated to by any higher authority. Where chiefs existed they held very restricted political power, and only local jurisdiction. The villages were democratic in nature, as the government of the community was the concern of all who lived in it. Hence, this supreme order of government to the opinion of the author may make it extremely difficult for some ethnic group (especially the Igbos) to accept the Nigerian state as a single entity devoid of sentiments.

The Igbos, just like any other major or minor ethnic nationalities may feel cheated and sidelines especially remembering the outcome of the war in 1963 where many Igbos lost their lives in the north.

Ukpo in Rovkov (1990) stated that these three groups comprise only fifty-seven percent of the population of Nigeria. The remainder of the people are members of the ethnic minority groups, which include such peoples as the Kanuri, the Nupe, and the Tiv in the north, the Efik /Ibibio, the Ejaw, and the Ekoi in the east, and the Edo and Urhobo/Isoko to the west, along with hundreds of other groups that differ widely in language, culture and even physique. The specific groups mentioned above are distinct in that they were found, in the 1953 census, to have over one hundred thousand members. As the population of Nigeria has doubled to over seventy-eight million people in 1982 from approximately thirty-one million in 1953, it is safe to assume that these groups are now much larger.

Adeniji and Ofiwe (2012) stated that ethnicity has been considered to be the cause of the 1967-1970 Civil War in Nigeria, elections which have been rigged and those which have failed can be blamed on ethnicity, the manipulation of census figures can only be understood from the ethnic dimension. This point made by Adeniji and Ofiwe buttress the fact that a lot of injustice and oppression are ongoing under the guise of tribe. This act could be solely responsible for the rise of disharmony and breach of peace in Nigeria. The entry of the military after the military coup of 15 Jan. 1966 which brought Major General Adeniji and Ofiwe also suggested that The second republic was not free from ethnicity, though military doused ethnic tensions, but it failed to suppress ethnic consciousness among the populace. Ake opines that the military failed to stem the tide of ethnic consciousness partly because of its blockage to democracy.

Contrarily due to the coercive nature of military rule and its arbitrary power people were generally alienated from the state and cleave to traditional solidarities and this was also transferred into the second republic. Another major event which portrayed ethnicity in Nigeria was the annulment of the 1993 general

elections by General Babangida which was widely believed to have been won by Chief Abiola. This annulment was widely interpreted as a calculated attempt to sideline the Southerners from the corridor of power in Nigeria by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group. This was greeted by a widespread rage and civil unrest in the Southeast and led to the transfer of power to the interim government of Chief Ernest Shonekan a Yoruba

The Multi-Religious nature of the Nigerian state.

Beautifully articulated are the words of Sampson (2014) thus**;**

> "Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has struggled unsuccessfully to clearly articulate the relationship between religion and the state. Whereas the British colonialists seemingly bequeathed to the new nation-state a secular regime at independence, the internal contradictions, which, paradoxically were propagated by the colonial authority, incubated to pose a challenge to the new state soon thereafter. On the one hand, there was the Muslim north, groomed under the English indirect rule, which accommodated the sharia legal order; on the other hand, there was the Christian/Animist south, mentored under the British-secular regime. Thus the post-independence secular state, which seemed acceptable to the Christian/animist south, was abhorred by the Muslim north. This paradox has remained the Achilles' heel of Nigeria's corporate existence, as northern Islamists have consistently sought the establishment of an Islamic state to replace the extant secular regime". (pg. 1.)

Yesufu (2016) further stated that the Nigerian Constitution pre-supposes that an individual has freedom to practise religion of his or her choice without government interference. This is where secularism comes into play. Secularism is a legal position in the supreme law of Nigeria, stating that religious belief should not influence any public and/ or governmental decisions. In other words, secularism is a documented position in a Constitution relating to political belief in the separation of religion and state. While people are allowed to practise whatever they believe in as their religion, the government must not allow that to influence public policy. Religion is the service and worship of God or gods. The word 'religion', which was first used in the 13th century, is Latin in its origin. From a sociologist perspective, the society creates religion as an instrument in moulding, controlling and directing societal thinking and behaviour (Durkheim 1915). Durkheim's theory of religion further sees God as a personification of the society, where all the laws and commandments of God are demanded from all members of the society for societal self-preservation. By this concept, a country ought to adopt a state religion to be in a position to demand good religious conduct from all members of her society.

Çancı and Odukoya (2016) stated that majority of the scientific academic sources accept that the half of the population of Nigeria are Christian, the other half Muslim. However, there is uncertainty about the exact percentages, hence various sources give different figures. In 2008. Similarly, Afrobarometer found 56% Christian, 43% Muslim and 1% other, also in 2008. And finally, Pew Forum declared 46% for Christians, 52% for Muslims and 1% for others in 2009.

Whatever the exact percentages are, it is clear that Nigeria is a country with very large Christian and Muslim populations. This situation makes this country a potential fault line between the two different identities and even civilisations. In this sense, Nigeria, with the largest Christian plus Muslim population in the world, can be defined as a 'cleft country' and then a 'test case' of Clash of Civilisations (Olojo 2014). Nigeria has three major religious identities: Christian, Islam and traditional religions (Omorogbe and Omohan (2005). Traditional religions are the most politically inactive of the three groups, 'numbering several hundreds of ethnic groups and sub-groups, villages, clans and kin groups; and, involving the worship of different gods and goddesses' (Osaghae and Suberu 2005).

On the other hand, Christian and Muslim identities have continued to be the backbone of religious disparity and conflict (Lewis and Bratton 2000). it is worth noting that, within the wide Christian there is a clear disparity among the orthodox and the Pentecostal sect. on the part of the Muslim categories, a number of sub-cleavages that include Ahmadiyya 12%, Sanusiyya 5%, Tijanniyya 3%, and Quadriyya 8% which have in turn been in conflicts. And as among the Christians, the Muslims also have umbrella bodies which aim at propagating different understandings of Islam. Notable among these organisations is the Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) which was established by Sardauna of Sokoto in 1961. Following events in Iran during the Islamic revolution of 1979, radical fundamentalist activities increased among Muslim youths. These conditions resulted in the formation of fundamentalist Muslim factions such as the Maitatsine, the Isala movement, the Shiites, the Talibans and most recently the Boko Haram (Fayemi 2011) which demanded the establishment of a purist Islam based on Sharia law, the abolition of unorthodox innovations, and the creation of an Islamic theocracy (Osaghae and Suberu 2005:11). These relatively new sentiments that depend on a unique and radical interpretation of Islam provoke conflicts with the traditional and/or more moderate understandings.

Due to their tendency to spread into other areas after an early stage in one area, ethno-religious conflicts have gained notoriety as the most violent crises in Nigeria. Most of these conflicts occur in the middle-belt and along the culturally borderline states of the predominantly Muslim North, and also take place between Hausa-Fulani groups and non-Muslim ethnic groups in the South (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). In conflicts of this nature occurring along the convergence of ethnic and religious lines, it is often very difficult to tell the differences between religious and ethnic crises because the dividing line between them is slimmer than thin. Examples of such ethno-religious conflicts are the Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, the Kaduna Sharia riots of 2000 and the Jos riots of 2001 (Osaghae and Suberu 2005). Several hundred lives were lost during the Kaduna crisis of 2000 and the Jos insurrection of 2001. The crises caused violent ripple effects that spread beyond Kaduna and Jos (Enukora 2005).

Other recent ethno-religious conflicts include the July 1999 conflict among the Oro cultists in Sagamu in Ogun state who claimed that the Hausa women had come outside when the cultists were outside with their gnome. The result were arguments that finally turned into a full-scale crisis. Many Yoruba and Hausa people were killed before a dusk to dawn curfew was imposed on the Sagamu town. Even as the infamy was being put under check in Sagamu, reprisal attacks continued in Kano, in Hausa city, leading

to deaths and destruction of property worth billions of Naira (Kura 2010).

Worse still, in September 2001, ethnic friction between the Tivs and the Iunkuns in the Plateau state reached fever pitch following what came to be referred to as 'mistaken identity'. 'What this means is that some Tivs took some nineteen soldiers to be Iunkuns in fake army uniform. The Tiv youths captured them and slaughtered them one by one' (Kura 2010). And then the Nigerian army embarked on devastating reprisal attacks in Saki-Biam. According to some controversial numbers at least a hundred people died in the army attacks (Human Rights Watch 2001). Violence spread to Jos plateau especially after a Christian was appointed as a Local Council Chairman. By the time the menace was brought to a standstill, over 160 lives had been lost (Kura 2010).

Between 1999 and 2013, numerous conflicts have been witnessed in Nigeria. The most important among them is the Boko Haram crisis which is on-going. This group has started a bloody campaign to impose a *sui-generis* Islamic regime based on Sharia in the Muslim North of the country. Actually, it is hard to argue that Boko Haram is a religious or ethnic conflict. In the former case, it targets more Muslims than Christians. In the latter, it is mostly an ethnic Northern conflict. For this reason, though Boko Haram uses a religious discourse, it may be more appropriate to call it simply a terrorist organisation.

The Boko-Haram can be examined in various ways. Firstly, it refers to a long history characteristic of Northern Nigeria and the continued radical Islamic movements. Secondly, the group has its foundations in the socio-economic marginalisation of the country's northern population. Thirdly, Boko Haram is understood as seeking revenge especially in response to unacceptable behaviour of the law enforcers. The fourth understanding is based on the perception that Boko Haram is utilised by the elites from the North to express their grievances over lack of interest demonstrated by the central government. Finally, the group can be understood as developing as an offshoot of the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and probably Al-Shabaab (Warner 2012).

However, for whatever reason this may be, it is the opinion of the author that the genuine reason for the activities of the book-haram sect is seeking religious superiority and registration of authority. This has warranted constant devilish attack not just on infrastructures of government but the sanctity of innocent lives. On the other hand, the northern leadership whose statistics have shown clear greater rulership in the history of the nation may be held responsible for total negligence of the development of the northern region. A fact that remains true to the author.

It is important to note that apart from the group targeting national events, markets and churches, they are sometimes engaged in sporadic bombings in major towns in Northern Nigeria including Kaduna, Saria, Jos, Kano, Maiduguri, and in Damaturi. During such instances, the fighters kill indiscriminately – Muslims and Christians alike. Despite everything, the group leaders have often stated that they are still fighting for justice and the Islamisation of Nigeria (Roach 2012). The group has declared its allegiance to the Islamic State (IS), as has been done by a series of terrorist groups from various parts of the world. In this context, Boko Haram can be seen as yet another reflection of the religious looking international terror campaigns now sweeping the globe scene.

Since the return of civilian rule in 1999 following a protracted period of military rule, Nigeria has continued to experience recurring ethno-religious

conflicts. Although some of these struggles are low-intensity contestations and rancorous wars of words, other have degenerated into bloody sectarian fights. Thousands of Nigerians have been left dead, wounded and homeless over the years due to constant religious strife pitting people of different religions against each other (Okpanachi 2010).

The main forms of inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria are between the Muslims and the Christians. The conflicts are sometimes so intense that they have turned into wars in different parts of the country, and they range from the Kano revolt (1980), Bulunktu Bisarre (1982), Kastina crises (1999), Samfara conflict, Kaduna revolt, Bauchi crises and Sokoto (1999). More recent examples are the Jos crises and the current conflict by Boko Haram against Christians and moderate Muslims. These are only a few examples of inter-religious conflicts in Nigeria, since not a year passes without three to four incidences of inter-religious conflicts.

Inter-religious conflicts are brought about by a number of factors. One of these causes is the clashing interests of those in authority. The ruling class has applied a number of processes to express their dissatisfaction with exclusion from important decision-making processes of the country. The methods employed include religious violence and military coups d'état. A majority of the religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria are reported to be due to the large number of rich Southerners who reside there. Many Northern elites are hurt by the business inventiveness of the Southerners and employ religious calls to incite people to destroy property belonging to non-natives. The results are wars fought under the pretence of being religious (Falola 1998).

Social and infrastructural crisis
a. The Niger-Delta Militancy
According to Watts and Ibaba (2011), the Niger Delta region is widely known for its reputation as one of the largest wetlands in the world and also the oils base of Nigeria. Even though the region houses the oil reservoir that generates a huge sum of Nigerian revenue; developmental indicators such as infrastructural development and social amenities are not evident (Olusola, 2013).

Adeosun, Ismail and Zengeni (2016) stated that several administrations have turned blind eyes or played minimum roles in developing the region; so also the oil majors have neglected corporate social responsibilities expected of them in ensuring a future for the residents and sustainability of the region (Adeosun, Ismail and Zengeni (2016). This can be an absolute basis for the residents; especially the youth's decision to make the region inhabitable and also the country ungovernable for subsequent administrations.

In the words of Idowu (2012), the continued inadvertency of the government and expropriation of the Niger Delta contributes to the resurgence of militancy, which has led to a free fall of the oil production and revenue generated within the region; it has also threatened the national security of Nigeria at large.

Nwogwugwu and Alao (2012) pointed out that agitations by some ex-militants, new militant groups and concerned residents in recent times have only served as pointer to the fact that there is a dire need for the demands of the people be met than settlement of the militant groups for temporary peace (Idowu, 2012). In addition to this, they added that there are evidences in existing literatures that connects the violence in Niger Delta to the different unattended age long challenges faced by the residents of the region, and the negligence of the

government and oil majors in both psychosocial and environmental development.

Based on these realistic claim, it is the position of the author that lack of genuine attention to the plight of the inhabitant of the region could be the reason for the renewed attacks and unpatroitism in form of pipeline vandalismin the region.

In 2018, the vice president of Nigeria, prof, yemi osibanjo visited the ogoni land. This was greeted with a sigh of relief as promises were made towards the immediate cleanup of the ogoni land due to years of oil exploration and spillage. Unfortunately, the situation remain same up till now. All these may be the reason for crisis in the area.

b. The Emergence of the New Nightmare "The Fulani-Herdsmen Clash"

The Global Terrorism Index (2018**) was quoted as saying "**Nearly 1,700 violent deaths have been attributed to Fulani herdsmen in attacks carried out between January and September 2018. They also noted that **"Fulani herders have killed six times more people than those killed by Boko Haram in 2018".**

The struggle for economic resources like land and water between farmers and nomadic cattle herders, usually of the Fulani extraction but not exclusively, has led to a lot of bloodshed in the country in 2018. Countless attacks have been attributed to herders after an escalation of simmering tension with local farming communities, tension that was worsened by the implementation of anti-open grazing laws in Benue and Taraba, two of the worst-hit states.

Even though the report noted that Fulani extremists were less active in 2017, with deaths dropping by 60% to 321, and attacks dropping by 51% to 72, the group has been on rampage in 2018. The report

read, "While deaths committed by Fulani extremists decreased following the peak of 1,169 deaths in 2014, violence from the group in 2018 is expected to surpass that peak. Nearly 1,700 violent deaths have been attributed to the Fulani Ethnic Militia from January to September 2018. An estimated 89% of those killed were civilians."

Amah et al. (2016) reveal that the herdsmen in Enugu State in April 2016 attacked Ukpabi Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area on 25 April 2016, killing over 40 people. Survivors fled to neighbouring communities. Two days after the Ukpabi Nimbo attack, there was another attack by the Fulani herdsmen in Umuchigbo community in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. It is clear that the deadly escapades of arms-bearing herdsmen are becoming increasingly unsettling. They have left their footprints in virtually every part of the country. In their last outings, they have been very unsparing of the communities (Ede 2016)

The Igbo Youth Movement, IYM, has lamented that Fulani herdsmen have killed 710 other Nigerians, excluding the 48 Agatu people in Benue State in the last 10 months, without the federal government addressing the issue. The statement signed by the founder of the IYM and leader of the South-East Democratic Coalition, Evangelist Elliot Uko, entitled, 'Ten Months of Carnage', read: 'Between June 2015 and April 2016, Fulani herdsmen have killed over 710 Nigerians (excluding [the] Agatu incident) in 48 recorded incidents, the highest in recent years' (Emeka & Clifford 2016)

There are a lot of factors that are responsible for the conflicts between the Fulani and the farmers. They include;

a. Unauthorised encroachment into farmlands. This have led to serious conflicts between the farmers and

herdsmen in recent times, because of the damage they cause to crops and fallow lands left to replenish the nutrients after long years of use.

b. According to Odo Damian as reported by Ndubuisi (2018), the Fulani herdsmen use other people to buy land for them in their own name while they lie to the natives that they are people buying the land for one business or the other. However, the owners of the land discover later that they have been tricked by the herdsmen when they see the land being used by herdsmen for cattle business, contrary to their will; this leads to conflicts.

c. Thirdly, climate change is one of the major causes of conflicts between farmers and herdsmen. This is so because when there is unfavourable weather the herdsmen will be compelled to leave their original habitation to another area for greener pastures.

Peace Policies and programmes as a Panacea

Tijjani (2015) stated that peace is not a concept that only needs to be understood or perceived from its lateral or dictionary definition because its meaning is self-definitive as it transcends sociological, political, moral and spiritual phenomenon. As believers in religion and therefore very faithful to our religious beliefs, we are obliged to see peace and its essentiality from the historical efforts and concerns of the devout leaders of humanity in praying for it and preaching it to subsequent generations of human beings up to our today's world which is even more callous than the first generation.

Based on this, it therefore means that every citizen of Nigeria has it as a mandate to work assiduously towards the peace and unity of the country. Chief among these agents of peace are the leaders and political heads. Right from independence till the beginning of crisis in Nigeria, many reforms geared towards the sustenance of peace in the nation have been instituted. Many rightful thinking leaders have also developed ways of addressing the existing crisis or at most ensure that policies made are such that will not encourage further crises in the country. Lets briefly consider few of such policies and programmes aimed at sustaining peace and managing crisis in the nation.

1. The Amnesty Programme

According to Tobor and Odubo (2017), the introduction of the amnesty program by the Nigerian government in 2009 was aimed at placating the militants and resolving some of the issues in the region. The amnesty was contingent upon the ex-militants dropping their weapons and embracing peace. Amnesty can be viewed as formally granting pardon to offenders or those involved in illegal acts in a political environment to promote peace or reconciliation. This means granting amnesty purges all records of accusation, trial, conviction, imprisonment, and grants the culprits the opportunity of starting from a clean slate (Oluduro and Oluduro, 2012)

The Amnesty program included a transformational training that involves education, training, and vocational skill acquisition to help reintegrate the ex-militants. Participants of the program are currently being trained locally and internationally. Some have already completed the training program. The amnesty programme which unarguably is credited to the late president Musa Yar'Adua as well as his vice Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan has certainly created impact by contributing to peace in the restive region of the Niger Delta.

2. The Defunct National Confab Programme.

In 2014, the Goodluck Ebele administration call for the national conference which had in attendance stakeholders from all over the nation. Within a period of one months of rigourous considerations and arguments, the result of the conference was released and part of the recommendations were thus;

1. Scrapping the current system of 774 local authorities - this is intended to save money and reduce corruption. States would be able to set up their own local systems

2. Creation of 18 new states - equally spread around the country. Also suggested that states wishing to merge can do so if certain conditions met

3. Revenue allocation - proposes reducing share of national income going to the federal government and increasing share for the states

4. Modified presidential system of government that combines the presidential and parliamentary systems of government. The president should pick the vice-president from the legislature

5. Power should be shared and rotated at all levels of government. Presidency should rotate between north and south and among the six geo-political zones of the country. Likewise, the governorship post should rotate among the three senatorial zones in each state.

However, after the whole exercise, it was quite unfortunate that the successive government saw no reason to implement these recommendations. This has continued to stain a mark on the clean quest for peace in the nation. Specifically, President Muhammadu Buhari ruled out the implementation of the report on a televised broadcast of Channels Television's programme during the nation's 57th Independence anniversary celebrations.

When asked why the Federal Government would not consider the report, the media aid of the president noted, "It was not an inclusive conference. You very well recall that the leaders of our own party whether ACN and all of that and the governors were missing from that conference". These declaration had raised controversies on some part of the nation. The former President, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP and a delegate to the conference, Ledum Mitee noted that to throw away the entire report because of the excuse that the composition was not all inclusive was not healthy for the country. He said: "It is more important to look at the content of what came out of the conference and not the number. To throw away everything because of that flimsy excuse is not healthy." It's unfortunate, says Salami Former National Chairman of Labour Party and delegate to the 2014 National Conference, Alhaji Abdulkadir Salami on his part, described as unfortunate, the rejection of the report. "It is unfortunate for them to say they will not implement the report of the 2014 National Conference because of it not being all inclusive in participation. 'Let him set up another one that he thinks is all inclusive."

All these highlight policies that serve as a breach of peace in such a daisy nation of ours. The position of the author is in line with others that until the federal government genuinely reconsider some of the reports of that conference, then the sustenance of peace may be far form reality.

The Looming Danger Against Peace in "RUGA" Programme

The federal government under the watch of President Muhammadu Buhari has introduce the RUGA programme. It is

falsely believed such programme will bring about a drastic reduction in conflicts between herders and farmers. RUGA which is an acronym for 'Rural Grazing Area'. However, this programme has been greeted with considerable outrage from Nigerians. Currently, the Buhari Administration has commenced construction of Cattle Colonies, rebranded "RUGA" in 12 States of Nigeria. The project has started in Kotongora, Niger State on a 31,000-hectare piece of land. The project will be however be replicated in all the 36 states with six (6) of such colonies to be constructed in each State.

1. RUGA settlement is for Fulani Herdsmen, their families and cattle/livestock. It will contain ranches, grass or feed farms, abattoirs, dairy, meat and skin/leather processing plants, housing, religious houses, schools, roads, power and water supplies and the complete range of infrastructure required to support and sustain an ultra-modern local government area. Taking a cue from the first RUGA in Kotongora in Niger State, the land size or landmass of each RUGA is at least 31,000 hectares of land which may be up to half of some Local Government Area in Nigeria.

2. Buhari's RUGA aka Fulani Herdsmen Cattle Colony is an exclusive settlement for Fulani Herders and their families.

3. Buhari's RUGA program will establish six (6) such exclusive Fulani settlements in each of the thirty-six (36) States in Nigeria. In the result, at completion of the program there will be two hundred and sixteen (216) new exclusive Fulani Local Government Areas in Nigeria.

4. It is fact that some of this herdsmen are engaged in massacres and pillage in Nigeria. In other words, some of the Fulani herders maybe alien or non-Nigerians.

Consequence of the 'RUGA' Programme on Peaceful Coexistence of Nigeria.

The first and immediate question arising from the program is why, by what justification, and on the basis of which law of Nigeria would the federal government undertake such massive immigration and resettlement especially of some foreigners (West and Central African Fulanis) in Nigeria and on indigenous Nigerian lands. Why would the federal government pursue such a most expensive massive immigration program to import and resettle more than 59 million foreigners on Nigerian lands at a time Nigeria is already over-populated and searching for effective means of population control?

One begins to wonder that while the World's most powerful country, USA is building a wall on its Mexican border to stop a flow of only a few hundred thousand refugees, the federal government does the opposite by throwing Nigerian Northern borders open and using Nigerian tax payers funds to invite and fund more than 59 million foreign Fulani for resettlement on indigenous lands at a time Nigerians are in hunger, penury and hunger. This to the author is an anti-peace policy that the federal government should reconsider.

It is obvious that some of these herders are refugees. They are in Nigeria in contravention of Nigerian Immigration Laws. Hence, one wonder why the federal government will forcefully legitimise and resettle illegal immigrants on indigenous lands of Nigerians. Furthermore, it is also no news that some of these Fulani herders carry illegal weapons like cutlass, AK47 and other military grade weapons freely and openly across the borders of Nigeria and all over the States of

Nigeria. Therefore, it is the opinion of the author that the federal government is rewarding terrorists and criminals with resettlement on Nigerian indigenous lands and most still, proposing to resettle them on the lands of other indigenous nations of Nigeria. This only amount to oppression using federal might which is an anti-peace policy.

The nationality question
By implication indigenous Nigerian Nations are compelled by Federal Presidential power to have the Fulani who are alien to their lands to inherit and permanently retain part of their indigenous land as Fulani homeland. With it comes the need for District heads.
The district heads definitely needs to seat in the state Houses atleast to purposely and quietly represent their needs.

This must be what former President Obasanjo foresaw and accurately described as Fulanisation and Islamisation of Nigeria. All these does not further peace in a multi-cultural and ethnic nation like ours and it is pertinent that the Buhari-led federal government must revert such policy.

The question is, can the federal government also set up a RUGA for the other tribes in the northern region and give them such legal ownership right in other peoples land so that Nigeria can be fully represented?

Every indigenous Nigerian has a duty to resist this anti-peace programme. Every unit or geo-political zone in the country should be allow to determine who comes in and in what motive. Just as the federal government rightly throw away the Confab report considering total control or resources of a given state, they should also distant itself from such a forced policy if the nation is to reach the needed peace we desire.

Agenda for peace amidst our diversity
Having gone this far, let me conclude by quickly looking at the avenues by which we can secure peace amidst our difference.

Conclusion/ Recommendations
At this crucial time in the history of Nigeria, the indispensability of peace is non-negotiable. This means that our leaders have the enormous responsibility of ensuring that every policy, programmes and actions are geared towards national unity, peace and progress. Nigeria as a nation is highly religious, multi-ethnic and tribal in nature. Since independence, crisis rocking the nation have been that which have ties to ethnic sentiment or religious cleavage. Since the return to democratic rule, Nigeria also is yet to fully apply democratic procedures in handling the affairs of the nation especially from leaders who have military backgrounds. Currently, there are a lot of problem facing the nation ranging from the Niger delta militancy, the boko haram sect, the Fulani-herders clash and other communal conflicts. In all these, there is urgent need for a peace agenda which will be deliberated and implemented for the common good of the nation. Based on these, the following recommendations are made by the author;

1. **Full implementation of the Confab Report especially point 2, 3 and 5 highlighted earlier.**
2. **Neutrality of government to religion:** At all levels of government, there should be a neutral stance to matters of religions. This means that no government official should take partisan position to any particular religion to the detriment of another. According to Ekwunife (19920…. Neutrality demands that the present and future political leaders of Nigeria should guard against partisanship to any religious group in matters

regarding proper governance of the nation. The open-minded, self – effacing and large-hearted leader in religious matters, a leader who would recognize in practice the value of religious pluralism in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria; a leader who will always encourage and promote the positive elements in all religion and discourage negative ones. Such positive elements include love, justice, peace and good neighbourliness.

3. **Promoting inter-religious dialogue:** Dialogue" according to Obiora, (2007) is all about finding common ground in the search for truth without necessarily compromising ones own position". Inter-religious dialogue is therefore an area of dialogue that involves two or more different religious whereby "they come together to converse with the aim of enriching, deepening and broadening their religious lives through a reciprocal understanding of one another's convictions and witness". With this mutual understanding, dialogue reduces the urge for the use of violence, conflict and intolerance which has characterized the two major religious, Islam and Christianity in Nigeria.

4. **Restructuring the country-true federalism:** There has been today, a huge clamour for the restructuring of the country's geo-politics. There is where the power concentration at the centre will be reduced and shared to the individual states, especially, the control of the natural resources and states own police. So the 2014 confab of Jonathan shall be reviewed.

5. **Conscious application of the federal character principle:** The appointment of government officials must recognize and appreciate the

various ethnic groups that make up this nation. Even in infrastructural development. It is on record that the present Buhuari administration has been very nepotic and tribalistic in the appointment of federal officials. This sort of marginalization makes no room for peace.

6. **Creating a socio-economic balance:** Often the imbalance in the economic futures of people can easily trigger an unrest. The gap between the rich and poor should be considerably closed. Government should create both skilled and unskilled jobs so that a huge majority of the populace are engaged. They should cut inflation and reduce the cost of the basic necessities of life. Thus, the average person will be fulfilled.

7. **Fostering inter-state migration and citizenship:** As a Nigerian, each of us should free to live and work in any state of our choice without fear or molestation. The various states should not in practice been seen as belonging to any particular ethnic group to the extent that an ethnic group will as the another to vacate their state. An example is the order of the Arewa Youths to Igbos in 2017 to leave their states. We are all Nigerians, no matter the state we come from or live in. government should enact laws that will make somebody a citizen of a state he/she has lived up to five years and can run for the governorship election in that state just as it is done in U.S.A. This helps to inculcate the value of oneness.

8. **Re-awakening communitarian consciousness:** African is well known for her togetherness and hospitality. The government should encourage inter-cultural festivals and re-introduce history in our secondary school education. This broadens the knowledge of our diversity. On the

part of the religious leaders there should be constant exchange of visits and interaction with their various adherents. The recent visit of the Pope Francis to United Arab Emirate where he was cordially and massively welcomed by Muslims in that country is a model.

9. **Sporting Activities:** Sports have always remained a unifying factor. It brings people of diverse cultures and languages together. Sports does not know and speak any religion. This is why Government should invest on sports not only because of its financial gain or creation of employment but to foster healthy relationship of the various ethnic groups.

10. **Quick and equitable delivery of justice:** The justice system in Nigeria should live up to its principles. The judiciary should not be seen as been partial in delivery judgement because it is the last hope of the common man. The Presidency should not use the EFCC, DSS, Police and Army to intimidate, harass and cow their political opponents. Such actions engender trust and peace.

11. **Promotion of developmental interest:** For any development country to achieve rapid development both in leadership and infrastructure, the interest of the nation must be a priority. It has been well observed that most politicians in Nigeria vigorously pursue their selfish interests. That is why the cases of embezzlement of public funds are on the increase. Most at times, these atrocities and crimes are committed under the coverage of religion and party immunity. As a result, justice is perverted and the nation keeps retrogressing.

12. **Amnesty Programmes:** During the time of Niger-Delta Militancy, Nigerian Government headed by President Yaradua granted amnesty to them as a measure to restore peace. That was not weakness on the side of the government. If such was not done, the level of vandalization of public property would have been on the increase. The introduction of Amnesty programme as an official statement that allows people who committed crimes against the state to go free still remain a strong tool to usher peace in the nation. There are still cases in Nigeria that require Amnesty for peace to reign.

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