

ABOUT THE PAMPHLET

This pamphlet is the contribution of Alhaji Ahmadu Kurfi to the Presidential Advisory Committee on the Proposed National Conference / Dialogue. The author traced the historical antecedents of Nigeria and particularly highlighted the evolution of its political structures and constitutional development. He asserted that at our independence, the Founding Fathers of the nation namely, Sir Ahmadu Bello, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, Alh. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa and Chief Obafemi Awolowo all agreed that Nigeria should adopt and operate a federal system of government.

Even with the change from a parliamentary Westminster system to a Presidential system, the nation still found the federal structure more suitable to the Nigerian situation. Notwithstanding the attempts by the military to tinker with the federal system, it still continued to be the most preferable arrangement which recognises our unity in diversity and provides a basis for political stability and economic development.

As such the author recommended the continued operation of a federal structure in the Nigerian polity. It is in view of the importance of this document that the Network for Justice requested for the permission of Alhaji Ahmadu Kurfi to publish it for wide circulation. Alhaji Ahmadu Kurfi gave his express permission for the publication and dissemination of the pamphlet by the Network for Justice, Kaduna, Nigeria.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Alhaji Ahmadu Kurfi started his public service career with the Katsina Native Authority as a classroom teacher in 1951. He joined the administrative service of the then Northern Nigerian Government in 1958 as an Assistant District Officer after he graduated in Economics from University of Hull, England. He served in various parts of the then Niger Province and was later transferred to the Federal Civil service as an Assistant Secretary in 1960, rising to the rank of deputy permanent secretary in the Ministry of Defence (1960-1966).

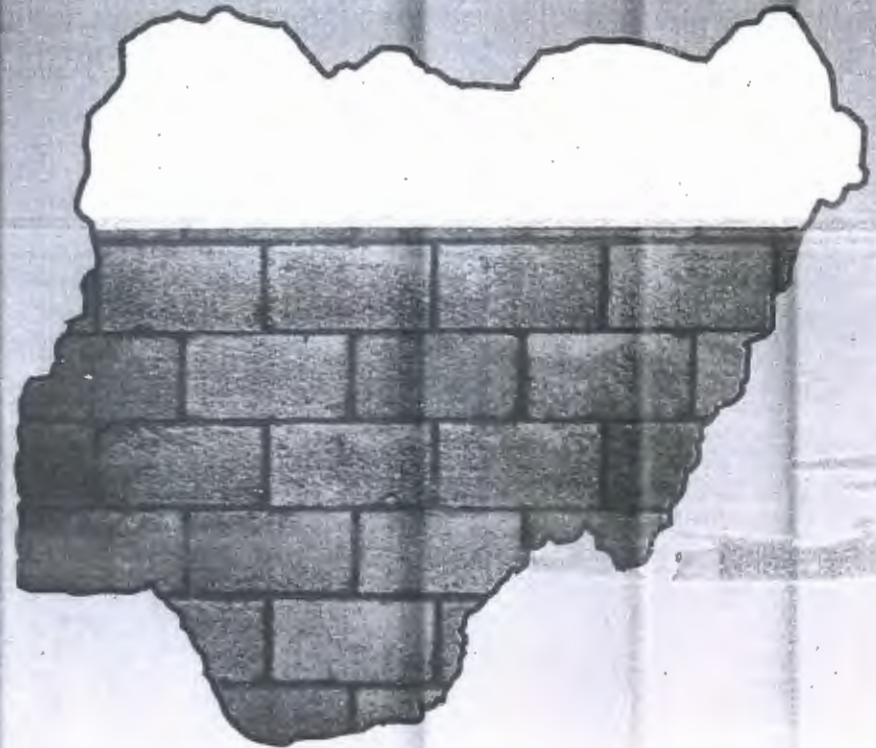
Alhaji Kurfi served as an electoral officer in Kontagora Central Federal Constituency in the 1959 federal elections.

Alhaji Kurfi is a prolific reader and writer who has published seven books between 1983 and 2013, four of them on elections, this inclusive. He returned to his roots in 1992 to become a traditional ruler, Maradin Katsina, District Head of Kurfi, in Katsina State where he is still serving.

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WHITHER NIGERIA: UNITARISM, FEDERALISM, CONFEDERALISM OR SEPARATISM?



Ahmadu Kurfi

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**WHITHER NIGERIA:
UNITARISM, FEDERALISM,
CONFEDERALISM OR SEPARATISM?**

By

**ALHAJI AHMADU KURFI
(MARADIN KATSINA)**

**OCCASIONAL PAPERS SERIES NO. 001
OF THE NETWORK FOR JUSTICE,
KADUNA - NIGERIA**

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WHITHER NIGERIA: UNITARIASM, FEDERALISM, CONFEDERALISM OR SEPARATISM?

Historical Background of Nigeria.

Nigeria's current population of between 140 and 150 million is multi-ethnic. Among the principal ethnic groups are the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani, Edo, Efik, Ijaw, Nupe, Kanuri, Igala, Urhobo, etc. There are over 300 other linguistic groups. Following the major West African population movements of the first millennium of the Christian era, the ethnographic pattern of Nigeria started to stabilize with the rise of the medieval empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Kanem - Borno. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries saw the rise of the Hausa city states of Katsina, Kano, Gobir, etc. in the North as well as the appearance of Nupe and Kwararrafa kingdoms in the central parts of Nigeria.

In the South - Western part, the associated kingdoms of Oyo and Benin were also well established by the Fifteenth Century, developing from common origins in Ife, the sacred capital of the Yoruba people. A bit obscure is the early history of the Igbo people in the Eastern part of the forest belt, whose purely village society was based on a system of communal land holding. Somehow,

a complex social and political pattern had developed among the people of what is now Nigeria by the time the earliest European expeditions reached the coast in search of gold. Slaves were initially West Africa's principal export commodity, and the trade was to continue for over 400 years, with British ships handling most of the traffic by the early Eighteenth Century. A consequence of the slave trade was the creation of Deltaic states: a number of large ports which became dependent on the European slave traders for their economic survival.

In the hinterland, civil war ravaged the Yoruba states, culminating in the disintegration of the Oyo Empire. In the North, a Jihad (Muslim holy war) was launched under the leadership of the Sheikh Usman Danfodiyo. Meanwhile, European influences were gaining foothold in the Southern parts as the value of "legitimate" trade increased.

In 1861, Britain annexed Lagos, declaring it a colony. After the Nigerian area was declared a British "sphere of influence" at the Berlin conference in 1885, Britain established protectorates in various regions of this area.

The 1914 Amalgamation of Nigeria.

The political entity known as Nigeria came into existence in 1914 with the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates as well as the Colony of Lagos. With the amalgamation of the administrations of Northern and Southern protectorates on January 1, 1914, the colony and protectorate of Nigeria came under a unitary administration presided over by Lord Fredrick Lugard as Governor General. The aims of the amalgamation were to extend to the South the Native Authority system established by Lugard as High Commissioner in the North from 1900 to 1906 and to provide technical services on an all Nigeria basis.

Lieutenant Governors were appointed for Southern and Northern Nigeria and these two entities remained largely separate units. A wholly advisory Nigerian council was created to cover all Nigeria but this arrangement was not considered a success. In 1922, it was replaced by a legislative council for the Colony and Southern part of the Protectorate.

The legislative powers of the new council were restricted to the Colony and Southern Nigeria (the Governor legislating directly for the North), but

uch of its legislation (e.g. relating to customs
ity) affected the North.

Constitutional Developments Under Colonial Rule.

The constitutional arrangements initiated in 1922
remained substantially unchanged until 1946
when it was replaced by Governor Sir Arthur
Richard's constitution. A legislative council whose
competence and membership covered the whole of
Nigeria was established, twenty - eight of its
members were to be unofficial, four of whom
could continue to be directly elected by the ratio
of Lagos, 3 and Calabar, 1. Twenty were to be
elected by the Regional council in each of the
three Regions which have resulted from the
division of Southern Nigeria into Eastern and
Western provinces. Governor Richard argued that
central legislature was not enough.

Nigeria falls naturally into three Regions: the
North, the West and the East and the people of
those regions differ widely in language, customs,
outlook, and systems of government. In all regional
houses of Assembly, there were unofficial and
(African) majorities, but they consisted of
members selected by the Native Authorities. The
Regional Councils had no legislative powers but
only limited financial ones.

Executive power remained in the hands of British
officials at the centre as well as in the Regions.

One of the principal complaints against the
Richard's Constitution was that it was not the
outcome of consultations with the Nigerian
opinion leaders. Special arrangements for
ascertaining the views of all sections of the
population were, therefore, accordingly proposed
and these took place in 1949 and 1950.

The new constitution, Macpherson constitution
(named after Governor Sir John MacPherson)
enacted in 1951, established legislatures in each of
the three regions which were empowered to
legislate on specified subjects such as agriculture,
social service, local government, etc.

Members of the Central Legislature were elected
from (their own members by the regional
legislature (68 from the north and 34 by each of
the Southern regions). At the Centre, each Region
was represented by an equal number of three
ministers and one for Southern Cameroon.

The Southern political parties continued to press
for more effective power for African ministers and
supported, in opposition to the Northern stance,
the call for grant of self government in 1956. This
resulted in a constitutional conference at London

in June 1953 which eventually led to a new constitutional settlement that came into force from November 1, 1954. The regions now assumed the aspect of states within a federation.

The Motion and Counter-Motion for Self-Government.

The road leading to this constitutional settlement had been rough and bumpy. During the legislative council meeting in Lagos, a member of the Action Group Party from the Western Region moved a motion in 1953 to the effect that, Nigeria, be granted self government in 1956 which, northern members did not support but suggested that "as soon as practicable" be substituted for "1956" pending consultation with their constituencies in the North. "This stance invited boos, jeers and all sorts of abuses showered on northern members in Lagos and at railway stations from there to Kaduna in the North wherever there was a concentration of southern communities, principally Yoruba and Igbo".

In supporting the counter motion moved by a northern member, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto said, "I use to associate myself with the last speaker. The mistake of 1914 has come to light and I would like to go no further. I was referring to the amalgamation that took place

in that year between the old independent governments of Northern and Southern Nigeria." In his autobiography, entitled MY LIFE, Sardauna of Sokoto had this to say about the episode during the debate on self - government in 1956 motion moved by Anthony Enahoro.

"We were all not only angry at our treatment, but indignant that people who were so full of fine phrases about the unity of Nigeria should have set their people against the chosen representatives of another Region while passing through their territory and even in our own. What kind of trouble had we let ourselves in for associating with such people?"

"Lord Lugard and his amalgamation were far from popular amongst us at that time. There were agitations in favour of secession (emphasis ours); we should set up on our own; we should cease to have anything more to do with the Southern people; we should take our own way".

The Eight Points Motion of the North

However, after extensive consultations with stakeholders throughout the Northern Provinces, the Northern Regional House of Assembly and the House of Chiefs agreed to soften their stance and passed the following motion:

"Be it resolved that this House prays His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor to set up machinery for the consideration of popular opinion upon measures to amend the arrangement for Nigeria on the following principles.

1. Each region shall have complete legislative and executive autonomy with respect to all matters except the following:
 - a. Defence
 - b. External Affairs
 - c. Customs
 - d. West African Research Institutions
2. There shall be no central legislative body and no central executive or policy - making body for the whole of Nigeria.
3. There shall be a central agency for all regions, which should be responsible for the matters mentioned in paragraph (1) (a) to (d) and any other matters delegated to it by a region.
4. The Central Agency shall be at a neutral place, preferably Lagos.
5. The composition, powers and responsibility of the Central Agency shall be defined by Order - in - Council establishing the new constitutional arrangements. The agency shall be a non - political body.
6. The services of the railway, air services, ports, electricity and coal mining shall be organized on an inter - regional basis and

shall be administered by public corporations. Such public corporations shall be independent bodies governed solely by the statutes under which they are created. The boards of such corporations shall be composed of experts with a minority representation of the regional governments.

7. All revenues shall be levied and collected by the regional government, except customs revenue. Customs duties shall be collected at the port of discharge by the Central Agency and paid to each region. The administration of the customs shall be organized to ensure that goods consigned to each region are separately cleared and charge to duty.
8. Each region shall have a separate public service

"Be it future resolved that should general support be accorded to these proposals they be forthwith communicated to the government of the United Kingdom requesting that, Her majesty, be advised to amend the constitutional instruments accordingly".

This, as you will see, was our compromise on the suggestion of secession from Nigeria, as it was then. The Central Agency was to be an executive committee, appointed by the Governments of the Regions and would be non - party. These

governments would be quite independent of each other and would have no common services beyond those in (I).

It was a novel idea developed in general party discussions, and it might have worked. Obviously, they were not lacking difficulties, but they could have been cleared up and naturally, there was more to examine than appears in the text.

The motion on the Central Agency came to be known in Northern history as the "Eight points motion".

The Commitment of the Founding Fathers to Federalism

The Sardauna of Sokoto, Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who were leading figures of their respective political parties, NPC, NCNC and AG and who also headed Regional Governments and Federal Government in the case of Balewa were the Founding Fathers of the Nigerian state. All subscribed to the idea of federalism in various degrees as a form of government best suited for Nigeria. Awolowo was the foremost exponent of this idea, about which he expounded in a book he wrote in 1945 as a student in the United Kingdom which was published in

1947. The book titled, "*Path to Nigerian Freedom*" stated *inter alia*,

"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 "Nigerian" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Niger area from those who do not".

Again, in his autobiography, titled *Awo*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1960, Awolowo stated:

"In 1951, when the controversy on the form of Nigeria's constitution began, I had already been for more than eighteen years a convinced federalist".

In the same autobiography, Chief Awolowo published an extract from a series of articles entitled "*Political Blue Print of Nigeria*" written by Dr. Azikwe in 1943. In the series, "he (Dr. Azikwe), advocated, without saying so in so many words, a quasi federal constitution for Nigeria, and the division of the country into eight protectorates." In September, 1957, the newly appointed Prime Minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, delivered a

speech in parliament, during which he stated *inter alia*,

“It was in 1952 that Nigerians were appointed ministers and so for the first time in its history, Nigerian politicians became directly associated with the formulation of the government policy.

Then in 1954, as a result of the constitutional discussion of 1953, Nigerian ministers were charged with both collective and individual responsibilities over departments and other government bodies. But to me, the most important result of the constitutional changes in 1954 was the introduction of a federal form of government for Nigeria, a system which I had advocated as far back as 1948 in the old legislative council. I am pleased to see that we have now all agreed that the federal system is, under present conditions, the only sure basis on which Nigeria can remain united. We must recognize our diversity and the peculiar conditions under which the different communities live in the country. To us in Nigeria, therefore, unity in diversity is a source

of great strength, and we must do all in our power to see that this federal system of government is strengthened and maintained”.

The 1954 Federal Constitution which was fashioned after series of consultations and conferences formed the basis of the constitutional settlement agreed upon by the Nigerian leaders and people.

The Independence and Republican Constitutions

Constitutional conferences were later held in London in 1957 and 1958 between Nigerian leaders and the representatives of the British imperial government headed by the Secretary of States for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttleton (Lord Chandos). The resulting document became the Independence Constitution of 1960 which was later amended to become the Republican Constitution when Nigeria became a republic in 1963. The Federal Constitution was a Parliamentary Westminster - type with Head of State and Head of Government at federal level (Prime Minister, President) as well as Governors and Premiers at regional levels - North, West and Eastern regions, the constituent federating units. Nigeria continued to operate the 1963 Constitution

until January 15, 1966 when the military seized power from the civilians after executing a bloody military coup during which political and military leaders of the North were assassinated by soldiers.

The concept and practice of federal Westminster system of government in Nigeria was accepted by a majority of Nigerians who regarded it as one of the "agreed ingredients" and/or "cardinal principles" of the "constitutional settlement" or "social contract" binding on all Nigerians. However, despite acceptability of constitutional settlement, Nigerian leaders continued to question its applicability to the Nigerian state whenever some ethnic or regional groups perceived that it was being dominated by other groups.

In 1953, the Northern leadership felt frightened by Southerners if independence were to be granted prematurely, as they thought, in 1956. The North opted for a confederal constitutional settlement in its famous "eight points" memorandum to the British government. However, a compromise was agreed by all Nigerian leaders at the London constitutional conference of 1954, 1957 and 1958, which produced the 1960 Independence Constitution.

The Military Intervention and Civil War

Again, when the military seized power in January 1966 and attempted to impose a unitary system of government by abolishing the then four existing regions, the North reacted violently against the Unification Decree promulgated by General Aguiyi Ironsi's regime on May 24, 1966. Disturbances erupted all over the North, during which several hundreds of people, mostly Igbos (Ironsi's tribe) were killed. The government was toppled on July 29, 1966 and replaced by another military government headed by then Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, a Northern military officer.

The original intention of the July 29, 1966 counter coup leaders was to seize the reign of government and then announce the secession of the Northern Region from the rest of the country.

This was in line with the general mood of the people of the North, whose clarion call during the May 29 disturbance in the North which claimed many Igbo lives was *Araba or Aware* (Hausa word for "secede"). In fact, the coup leaders instructed Northern elements in Lagos to leave the metropolis for the North giving a deadline within which to comply.

The original draft speech of the new Head of State declaring secession was modified by civilians who

were holding discussions with the coup leaders. The revised version was broadcast to the nation by the new Supreme Commander, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon on August 1, 1966. A portion of the speech implied that the intentions to secede or to resort to confederal arrangement were not abandoned altogether.

Although recent political and social experience had tended to create the impression that "the base of unity is not there" Gowon was prepared to make a courageous effort to stop the country from drifting into utter destruction.

The July 1966 military coup was followed by further disturbances in both the North and the Eastern parts of the Country. The military governor of the Eastern region, Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, refused to recognize Lt. Col. Gowon as Head of State in succession to Ironsi who was assassinated. Secession of the East resulted into the declaration of Biafra, followed by the Civil War and loss of thousands of lives on both sides. Then came finally the reintegration, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction of war ravaged areas.

Nigeria had been once again united and poised to play an important role in the comity of nations in the years to come. However, the end of the civil

war and the euphoria that accompanied it did not mean that the country was out of the woods.

The Nigerian federal system of government was restored by Gowon and the 'regions once again assumed' autonomous status. However, because of the unified command structure of the military, in practice the country was being run as a unitary state. Further, due to exigencies of the threatened secession of the Eastern Region from the rest of the country in 1967, the country was broken into twelve states: an action that strengthened the Federal Government and weakened the states. In fact from January 15, 1966 to October 1978 and from December 31, 1983 to May 29, 1999 when the military was governing the country, Nigeria was only a federal state in name but was actually being run as a unitary state. During this period, there was hue and cry of domination (real or perceived) and / or marginalization of one ethnic group by another. As the military rulers happened to be Northerners, it was generally the Southerners - Yoruba and Igbos in particular that pointed accusing fingers at the military rulers. There have been persistent calls for revising the Nigerian constitution to reflect true federalism, administrative, fiscal, etc. and resource control. Thus from the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates to form the Nigerian

State to independence in 1960, the country operated the following constitutions:

1922 Legislative council for colony and Southern Nigeria.

1946 Richards Constitution

1951 McPherson's quasi - federal constitution

1954 Lyttleton (colonial secretary) full fledged constitution

1960 Independence constitution

1963 Republican constitution

The Federal Structure under the Military

May 1966 short - lived unitary constitution introduced by General Ironsi's regime was replaced in July 1966 by Lt. Col. Gowon's regime with a federal constitution.

When the military came to power in 1966, certain provisions of the Federal Republican Constitution were suspended or abrogated such as those relating to establishment and operation of state and federal legislatures, the offices of Prime Minister and Regional Premiers, President of the Republic and Regional Governors, as well as other sections that were considered inimical to unfettered military governance. The suspended abrogated sections of the constitution were replaced by terminologies which were consistent with military rules such as head of federal military

government and supreme commander/commander-in-chief of the armed forces, military governors/administrators, Chief-of-Staff, Supreme Headquarters, etc. The Supreme Military Council (SMC), the highest ruling body in the country, functioned as both a legislature and executive council for the whole country, through military governors who were also members of the SMC. The governors were permitted to promulgate edicts for their respective states. This state of affairs continued from January 1966 to July 1975 when Gowon's government was toppled. The new military rulers headed by General Murtala Mohammed with General Obasanjo (former President) as his deputy decided to introduce a new constitution before handing over power to civilians. A draft constitution based on the American presidential model (as opposed to the parliamentary Westminster type earlier operated in the country) was deliberated upon by a Constituent Assembly comprising elected and appointed members. The outcome of their deliberation was the 1979 executive presidential constitution that was operated at federal and state levels, the number of the constituent units of the federation was increased from 12 to 19 states. The elected civilian government operated this constitution from 1979 to December 1983 when the military struck once again, under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari. This

government lasted for only 20 months before it was ousted by another set of military officers headed by General Ibrahim Babangida, the erstwhile Chief of Army Staff. The new military president convened a constitutional conference / constituent assembly which reviewed the 1979 constitution and produced the 1989 constitution which was discarded by General Sani Abacha who succeeded Babangida's appointed civilian head of an interim National government in November 1993. By this time, the number of states was increased from 19 to 21 and then to 30 states. Abacha also convened a constitutional conference which produced the 1995 draft constitution. The provisions of this constitution reflected the yearnings of the political elite for a more decentralized federal administration. It substantially increased the powers of states, at the expense of the all powerful Federal Government. However, before this draft constitution could be put into effect, General Abacha died in June, 1998.

The 1999 Constitution

The new Military Head of State, General Abdulsalamai Abubakar, who was in a hurry to hand over power to civilians constituted a committee of experts headed by a Supreme Court Judge to produce a new constitution, using the 1979, 1989, 1995 draft and other extant relevant

documents as bases. The outcome of this exercise was the current 1999 constitution which reproduced substantially the over centralizing provisions of the 1979 constitution. The constitution came into effect on May 29, 1999.

The new constitution like its predecessors was also heavily criticized by the Nigerian political elite some of whom demanded the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference to allow Nigerians to decide for themselves whether or not they would like to continue as a single nation state and if so, in what manner. At first, President Chief Obasanjo (who oversaw the production of the 1979 constitution) refused to accept this request, fearing that such conference might end up in the disintegration of the country.

The Obasanjo National Political Reform Conference

However, Chief Obasanjo was persuaded to commence a National Political Reform Conference during which members nominated by state and federal governments, civil society organizations, communities deliberated on the topic of political and other reforms. The conference set up committees which produced reports on various aspects of the issues before them. The plenary session of the conference agreed on most issues

deliberated by the committees, but the few disagreements were reflected in the final report as minority reports. These include rotational presidency, resource control or allocation of funds on mainly derivative principles, tenure of office of chief executives, etc. These and other issues over which some sections of the country could not get approval from the conference have now formed part of the agenda of southern leaders forum which threatened to boycott the 2007 general election, Seize control of their resources (mainly oil) and to opt for a confederal constitutional settlement as a prelude to the disintegration of Nigeria. Such a posture and threat is not new as at various times during our history, regions or ethnic groups had issued threats to secede from the federation. It was only Biafra that attempted to secede with disastrous consequences. Sadly, the Niger Delta area or South South regions, whose people were rescued from the jaws of death to which the actualization of Biafra would have delivered them are now clamouring to follow this dangerous road to calamity for the sake of resource control.

The Position of Agriculture in the Nigerian Economy

All the Regions of Nigeria have valuable resources peculiar to their respective areas. At one time

cocoa, groundnuts, cotton, root crops, grains reigned supreme in the context of Nigerian economy as oil does now.

The agricultural produce will always be there whilst oil is a wasting asset. Even today, Nigeria's production of the crops compare favourably in the world economy. According to The Economist Diary 2013, production of these crops in 2010 was as follows:

Nigeria's Production and Position in the World Economy (in 000 tonnes - 2010)

Sorghum:

World- 55,647

Nigeria- 4,784 - 4th position

Sweet potatoes:

World - 106, 580

Nigeria 2,704 - 3rd position

Cocoa:

World - 4231

Nigeria- 428 - 4th position

Cassava:

World - 228,549

Nigeria- 37, 504 - 1st position

Groundnuts:

World- 35,400

Nigeria -1,550 - 4th position**Millet:**

World- 29,172

Nigeria- 4,125 - 2nd position

The foregoing production figures can be improved appreciably if more funds are allocated to the agricultural sector by the federal, state and local governments. On the other hand, Nigerian oil wells may dry up within 20 - 50 years.

Oil as a Wasting and Declining Asset

There have been some developments in the global economy which threaten the supremacy of oil in Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. The U.S.A which buys about 40 percent of Nigerian oil production is using modern technology to extract crude oil from shale which is abundant in its territory. Its demand of Nigerian oil has reduced drastically making it difficult to sell oil in the world market. Several countries in Africa, notably Ghana, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Niger, Chad and others are now oil producers, while other African countries e.g. Angola have increased their oil production significantly. Further inland basins in Nigeria such as Bida, Sokoto, Anambra, Kogi have discovered oil in commercial quantities. All these add up to oil

glut and reduction in its price: Nigeria will have to diversify its economy for the country to survive. It will have to depend more on agricultural and solid minerals production as well as other sectors such as tourism.

Resource control and revenue allocation based on derivation principles will have to take back seat in Nigeria's fiscal federalism.

National Population Census

An abattoir to the continuance of the Nigerian project is the persistent controversy over the national population census. At the national level was the belief by some Southern politicians/critics that the combined population of the South must exceed that of the North though no sound reason was ever advanced for such an assertion, which was contrary to the census figures recorded in 1911, 1921, 1931, 1952/3, 1963 and the 1973 cancelled census figures which confirmed this trend and enhanced the position of the North by giving it almost 60 percent of the population proportion of the country. Details are given in Table

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN THOUSANDS (000S)

Year	North	% of Total	East	% of Total	West incl Midwest	% of Total	Lagos	% of Total	Nigeria	% of Total
1911	8,120	50.6	4,500	28.0	3,360	20.9	74	0.5	16,054	100
1921	10,560	56.4	5,111	27.3	2,950	15.8	100	0.5	18,720	100
1931	11,440	57.0	4,550	22.7	3,940	19.6	126	0.7	20,056	100
1952/3	29,834	55.4	7,215	23.7	6,085	20.1	267	0.8	30,402	100
1963	29,809	53.4	12,394	22.3	12,394	23.1	665	1.2	55,620	100

The population censuses conducted in 1991 and 2006 further attest to the supremacy of the North over the South regarding the relative extent of their population as indicated in Table 2 below:

Table 2 - Results of 2006 Population Census

POPULATION BY STATE AND SEX

S/NO	STATE	BOTH SEXES	MALE	FEMALE
1.	Abia	2,845,380	1,430,298	1,415,082
2.	Adamawa	3,178,950	1,607,270	1,571,680
3.	Akwa Ibom	3,902,051	1,983,202	1,918,849
4.	Anambra	4,177,828	2,117,984	2,059,844
5.	Bauchi	4,653,066	2,369,266	2,283,800
6.	Bayelsa	1,704,515	874,083	830,432
7.	Benue	4,253,641	2,144,043	2,109,598
8.	Borno	4,171,104	2,163,358	2,007,746
9.	Cross River	2,892,988	1,471,967	1,421,021
10.	Delta	4,112,445	2,069,309	2,042,136
11.	Ebonyi	2,176,947	1,064,156	1,112,791
12.	Edo	3,233,366	1,633,946	1,599,420
13.	Ekiti	2,398,957	1,215,487	1,183,470
14.	Enugu	3,267,837	1,596,042	1,671,795
15.	Gombe	2,365,040	1,244,228	1,120,812
16.	Imo	3,927,563	1,976,471	1,951,092
17.	Jigawa	4,361,002	2,198,076	2,162,926
18.	Kaduna	6,113,503	3,090,438	3,023,065
19.	Kano	9,401,288	4,947,952	4,453,336
20.	Katsina	5,801,584	2,948,279	2,853,305
21.	Kebbi	3,256,541	1,631,629	1,624,912
22.	Kogi	3,365,353	1,672,903	1,641,140
23.	Lagos	9,113,603	4,719,125	4,394,480
24.	Kwara	2,365,353	1,193,783	1,171,570
25.	Nasarawa	1,869,377	943,801	925,576
26.	Niger	3,751,140	2,004,350	1,950,422
27.	Ogun	3,416,959	1,864,907	1,886,233
28.	Ondo	3,460,877	1,745,057	1,715,820
29.	Osun	3,206,531	1,724,149	1,682,810
30.	Oyo	3,580,894	2,802,432	1,778,462
31.	Plateau	3,206,531	1,598,998	1,607,533
32.	Rivers	5,198,716	2,673,026	2,525,690
33.	Sokoto	3,702,676	1,863,713	1,838,963
34.	Taraba	2,294,800	1,171,931	1,122,869
35.	Yobe	2,321,339	1,205,034	1,116,305
36.	Zamfara	3,278,873	1,641,623	1,637,067
37.	Fct	1,106,239	733,172	673,067
	Nigeria	140,431,790	71,345,488	69,086,302

The next population census is due to be conducted in 2016 but the current Chairman of the National Population Commission (NPC), Mr. Festus Odimegwu, has generated an unhealthy controversy.

According to the immediate past Chairman of NPC (Chief S. D. Makama) the first thing the (current) Chairman did when he addressed staff of the Commission was to discredit the 2006 census He (current Chairman) said all previous censuses in Nigeria, a section of the country had been cheating other sections, and that the (past Chairman) failed to correct that, and he (current Chairman) had come to correct that: The inference is that he is going to change the current demographic set up of the country. It appears he already has that mind set, forgetting that the census we conduct in Nigeria is de facto. That means you enumerate only those people you see.

According to Chief S.D Makama, past Chairman of NPC, "the 2006 population census was a very credible one that was nationally and internationally acclaimed. All the constitutional processes of conducting a census were complied with. According to the 1999 constitution and the NPC Act, the commission is expected to present the census to the President who will subsequently present it to the Council of States, made up of the

President, former Presidents; former Chief Justices and all state governors. Where they recommend that he accepts the census, he would do so. If not, he would reject it, and then the chairman and commissioners of the NPC will automatically resign on the day."

For the 2006 census, the President presented the result to the National Council of States and they recommended that he accepted it. He also followed an additional constitutional process which stipulates that he should lay copies of the census results with the two chambers of the National Assembly. This, President Obasanjo did.

The controversy generated by the above quoted statement made by the current chairman of NPC, Mr. Festus Odimegwu, is reminiscent of the 1962/63 census controversy which led to a series of crisis culminating in the first military intervention in the governance of the country in January, 1966. This led to other crises including counter coup, civil disturbances, civil war 1967-70 and almost the disintegration of Nigeria. It is hoped that the 2016 population controversy will not engender repeat performances of 1966 to 1970 scenario. It was the 1962/3 census controversy, which emanated from the Eastern Region, and subsequent 1964 federal election which set the

chain of reactions, that ultimately took the form of and led to the January 1966 military coup d' etat.

The Neglected Diaspora in West, Central and North Africa

According to the past Chairman of the NPC the current Chairman of NPC is contemplating the inclusion of ethnicity and religion in the census questionnaire as well as counting Nigerians in Diaspora. Ethnicity and Religion have been excluded during previous population census because of the potential crisis that they could generate. Counting Nigerians in Diaspora could pose great logistical and practical problems. It seems that when some people talk about Nigerians in the Diaspora, they are only thinking about Nigerians in Europe and the Americas forgetting that there are many Yoruba in Benin, Ghana, Togo, Brazil and Cuba. There are many Nigerians particularly Hausa Fulani, Kanuri, etc. who are found in many other countries in West Africa outside Nigeria. You find them in large numbers in Niger Republic, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Cameroon and Central African Republic. In North Africa, there are many Hausa Fulani people resident in Sudan. In the Middle East you find them in Saudi Arabia. Is the NPC doing its survey of Nigerians in Diaspora in these places?

Conclusion

Nigerian leaders past and present accept that the federal system of government is best suited for the country. The point at issue is what type of federation - "centralized," "loose," "true" which do we actually want? Sectional, regional, religious and other divisive leaders tend, at one time or another, to agitate for the adoption of a type of federation that they consider would serve their interests as ethnic or sectional champions. They deceive their people by accusing other sections of perpetrating "crimes" of domination, marginalization, oppression, repression, etc against them. Such issues are emotive, sentimental and irrational and are likely to drag the country into disaster.

The choice before the country is - should we opt for unitarism, federalism, confederalism or separatism as the system of government best suited for the majority of the people? Federation with strong or weak central government viz - a - viz federating units (states) seems to be the best choice as the history of the country's constitutional developments from 1914 to date amply testifies. In the matter of constitutional arrangements requiring settlement between diverse peoples, there should be no compulsion. Any section, region or ethnic group that wishes to opt out should be

allowed to do so, provided that its action does not adversely affect areas contiguous to it.

As stated in the conclusion of the write up, federation with strong or weak central government viz - a - viz the federating units (states) seem to be the best choice as the history of the country's constitutional developments from 1914 to date amply testifies. However, this admirable stance is now being watered down by the current political elites through the introduction of nebulous concepts such as "rotational presidency" in which geo - political zones are expected to be treated equally irrespective of their size, population or landmass is a negation of the democratic principles which requires that a majority of the electorate must have its way whilst even a minority of the electorate must have a say in governance. "Resource control" is another rebellious concept which emphasizes allocation of revenue on the basis of natural resources, especially oil, derived from particular areas that are opposed to our constitutional provisions.

Sections of the political elites are bent on entrenching these negative concepts into the next constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria! The sponsors of such proposals are only serving their selfish interests towards securing Presidential, Gubernatorial or other top public offices in order

to loot the treasury. Even the current arrangement which forces political parties to choose their respective presidential candidates alternately from the North or the South is undemocratic. If Barack Obama, an African - American can win the Presidency of the U.S.A, a predominantly 'white' establishment country, there is no conceivable reason to prevent any Nigerian, irrespective of origin, region, religion or ethnic group from winning the presidency of Nigeria. The negative concepts of geopolitical zones being currently used, despite being illegal and unconstitutional, for allocation of posts among various sections of the country should be jettisoned in favour of constitutionally recognized federating units or states. The National and State Assemblies, as well as the generality of Nigerians, should reject any attempt by power - seeking political elites to incorporate the aforesaid negative concepts into Nigeria's next constitution. With good leadership which places high premium on Justice, fairness, equity, inclusiveness and rule of law, every Nigerian has a chance to aspire to occupy any post provided that we work to promote constitutional and functional democracy.

In any case, there are better ways of managing problems of marginalisation, real or perceived without resort to rotational presidency or allocation of posts on the basis of illegal and

unconstitutional so-called geopolitical zones. Countries that faced serious problems of marginalization, exclusiveness such as Ivory Coast, Kenya, Zimbabwe which nearly led to the disintegration of the polity, have adopted the French mixed system embodying the American presidential and British Westminster parliamentary systems. Provisions are made in the constitutions of such countries for the posts of President and Prime Minister at national level, each assigned constitutionally defined powers or functions. Nigeria could adopt this arrangement at national and also state levels, making provision for the posts of President and Prime Minister at national level, each assigned constitutionally defined powers or functions. Nigeria could adopt this arrangement at national and also state levels, making provision for the posts of Governor and Premier or Chief Minister each with constitutionally defined powers and functions.

This arrangement provides opportunity for various groups in the polity to exercise real power in the governance of the country, unlike the present dispensation whereby the Vice President / Deputy Governor has little or no power and acts as a "Spare tyre" for the boss and can hardly dish out patronage for the people he represents in government.

Introduction of proportional representation in the constitution of government at Federal, State and local levels and in the legislature will go a long way to reduce post election tensions. This has been recommended to the Presidency by the Electoral Reform Committee as one of its Terms of Reference in the electoral reform agenda of the present administration.

With regards to advocates of "resource control" they should take note of the very volatile nature of the international oil market with the price of a barrel of oil plunging from 147 US dollars in July 2008 to as low as 35 dollars a few years later. It may be lower within the next few years as a result of the recession or depression of the world economy causing reduction in the demand of goods and services, especially motor vehicles, industrial raw materials, etc. As pointed out in this write-up, oil is a wasting asset while agricultural produce will always be there.

The emphasis being placed on agricultural production and food security by the current administration will improve Nigeria's position viz-a-viz the rest of the world in the production of these and other vital raw materials and food. Some may replace oil as source of renewable energy. Agricultural producing regions of Nigeria must not emulate oil producing areas in their futile attempts

to control resources derived from their lands. Nigerian regions should continue to complement one another in the overall interest of the national economy and Nigerian peoples. Self serving ethnic champions, jingoist, zonal zealots must not be allowed to destroy the Nigerian projects which, despite ups and downs, has been sustained by patriotic citizens since the independence of Nigeria in 1960.

This write up serves as my open memorandum to the National Conference, which President Goodluck Jonathan announced in his 1st October, 2013 Independence Anniversary speech, that he is convening for Nigerians to dialogue on National issues. The conference should conclude deliberations and submit its report to the National Assembly before 1st January, 2014, the country's centenary. It is hoped that the conference recommendations would raise hope for Nigerians to celebrate its bicentenary in 3014.

**ALHAJI AHMADU KURFI, OFR
(MARADIN KATSINA)**

1st October, 2013