

**State Building and Constitutional Politics in a Multi-Ethnic Society:  
The Nigerian Experience**

Submitted by Ali Simon Bagaji Yusufu to the University of Exeter  
as a thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Ethno-Political Studies  
in July 2012.

This thesis is available for library use on the understanding that it is copyright  
material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without  
proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified  
and that no material has been previously submitted for the award of a  
degree by this or any other University.

**X**

---

ASBYUSUFU

## **Abstract**

In response to competing group claims and the challenge to achieve pre-set triple national goals - recognising and accommodating ethnic diversity, achieving national unity and political stability, successive Nigerian governments from the colonial era to the present, have at various periods negotiated, constitutionalised and/or decreed state building strategies. This thesis offers detailed discussion and evaluation of some of these competing group claims and strategies using principles derived from the theoretical arguments of Michal Walzer, Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, and prescriptions based on the empirical arguments of Crawford Young, Eric Nordlinger, Donald Horowitz and Donald Rothchild. The thesis argues that some of the strategies adopted in response to the competing group claims were defensible in the very circumstances in which they were introduced, but were either not deep enough to offer an adequate political inclusion, or lacked the appropriate instruments that would have minimised recurrence of ethno-political conflicts and institutional instabilities. There were some strategies that either generated tension among groups, or were purely driven by strategic considerations for national unity, but were defensible. There were other strategies that were pragmatic at the very period they were adopted, but not defensible. The core theoretical finding of the thesis is that, the normative and empirical prescriptions validate the country's various strategies for coping with diversity. However, application of some elements of the prescriptions in the Nigerian multicultural society has the potential to generate tensions leading to ethno-political conflicts and institutional instabilities. The important empirical finding of the thesis is regarding the role the inherent tensions between the triple national goals and the state building strategies play in the generation and recurrence of ethno-political conflict and institutional instabilities. The thesis argues that the underlying factors responsible for the prevalence of ethno-political conflict and institutional instabilities in the country include among others, the ascension of the military to power and its costly dominance of the political scene for about thirty five years, the immediate post-civil war period which coincided with the era of petroleum boom that created a deepening crisis of corruption, the perpetuation of large scale electoral and financial corruption, and manipulation of ethnic loyalties. Given the above underlying factors, this work observes that state building and Constitutional politics in Nigeria's multi-ethnic society is a difficult task, especially taking into account the ethno-political conflicts and institutional instabilities associated with the Armed Forces over the years. On the basis of a detailed and interdisciplinary analysis, the thesis recommends constitutional and institutional safeguards for mitigating ethno-political conflicts and institutional instabilities in the course of future political development of Nigeria.

## **Table of Contents**

Title Page/Declaration	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgement	3
Table of Contents	5
List of Acronyms	8
List of Tables, Figures and Maps	11

### **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem	12
1.2 Theoretical and Empirical Framework of Analysis	15
1.3 Significance of the Study	19
1.4 Definition and Conceptual Clarification	21
1.5 Methodology	24
1.6 Synopsis of Chapters	26

### **CHAPTER TWO NORMATIVE AND EMPIRICAL APPROACHES TO ETHNIC RECOGNITION AND ACCOMMODATION**

2.1 Introduction	29
2.2 Theoretical Arguments	31
2.3 Empirical Arguments	41
2.4 Relevant Issues	48
2.5 Summary	54

### **CHAPTER THREE COPING WITH DIVERSITY: THE POLITICAL SYSTEM APPROACH**

3.1 Introduction	56
3.2 Group Claims During the Pre-Independence Constitutional Conferences	56
3.2.1 The Type of Political System	58

3.2.2 Minorities Claims to Separation	61
3.3 Evaluating the Claims and Agreements	66
3.3.1 The Political System and Diversity	67
3.3.2 Minorities' Claims for Recognition in Separate States	78 3.4
Summary	86

**CHAPTER FOUR  
THE QUOTA SYSTEM AND SEPARATION OF MINORITIES  
APPROACH**

4.1 Introduction	89
4.2 The Quota System Approach	89
4.3 The 1963 and 1967 Separation of Minorities Approach	92
4.4 Evaluation	94
4.4.1 The Quota System	95
4.4.2 The 1963 and 1967 Separation of Minorities	100
4.5 Summary	104

**CHAPTER FIVE  
THE FEDERAL CHARACTER (PRINCIPLE) APPROACH**

5.1 Introduction	107
5.2 The Background	107
5.3 The 1975 Panel on State Creation	109
5.4 The Federal Character Policy	111
5.5 Evaluation	114
5.5.1 The Demand for more States	114
5.5.2 The Federal Character Policy	117
5.6 Desirable and Feasible Alternative Strategies	121
5.7 Summary	128

**CHAPTER SIX  
THE REVISED FEDERAL CHARACTER (PRINCIPLE) APPROACH**

6.1 Introduction	130
6.2 The Political Bureau and Federal Character	131
6.3 The 1994/5 Constitutional Conference and Power Sharing	135

6.4 Evaluation	139
6.4.1 Recognition in Separate Units and the Problem of Slippery Slope	139
6.4.2 Federal Character and the Problem of National Citizenship	143
6.4.3 The 1995 Constitutional Agreements on Political Structure and Rotational Presidency	145
6.5 Summary	153

## **CHAPTER SEVEN THE REVENUE ALLOCATION APPROACH**

7.1 Introduction	157
7.2 Background to the Nigerian Revenue Allocation System	158
7.3 Trends and Developments in the Revenue Allocation System	160
7.4 Relevant and Potential Issues in the Revenue Allocation System	180
7.5 Evaluation and Framework for Revenue Allocation	184
7.6 Summary	186

## **CHAPTER EIGHT STATE OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL (NATIONALISATION) OF OIL APPROACH**

8.1 Introduction	190
8.2 The Oil Industry: From Foreign Concession to State Ownership	192
8.3 The Essence of the Oil Resource Conflict	200
8.4 Evaluation: Ownership and Control of Oil Resources	207
8.5 Summary	216

## **CHAPTER NINE CONCLUSION**

9.1 Summary	219
9.2 Findings	232
9.3 Recommendations and Conclusion	237

## **APPENDICES**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**