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Seeking Recognition in a Federal Structure:
Assessment of Minority Ethnic Struggle in Nigeria

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Abstract:
Ethnic militancy in Nigeria has been high in the recent time on the agenda of seeking recognition and for resource control. This is perhaps best exemplified by the activities of ethnic militant in the last eighteen years of the nation's return to democratic regime. This is a period during which the democratic regimes have not met the region's expected expectations in a democratic government as it had been advocated to providing institutions that will provide a pathway for development in the regions. The quest for justice and the end to marginalization of the regions by the multinational oil corporations and Nigerian government have led to the region's struggle for recognition within the Nigerian state. Hence, the indigents cry for lack of development and marginalization even though the Nigerian wealth is from the region has justified their calms. It is a fact that federalism remains the best system for a multi ethnic country to ensure meaningful development of the federating units through a participatory approach. Federalism therefore serves as a veritable avenue through which the purpose of the marriage of the federating units can be achieved with less conflict if its principles are abide with accordingly. This study therefore examines critically the determinant of Nigeria federalism, consequences inherent in the struggle of the marginalized region in Nigeria federalism and provides articulate, promising and holistic solutions to the identified challenges. Therefore, it is imperative for Nigeria to embrace democratic federalism to witness sustainable development that will alleviate poverty among the federating unit.

Keywords: Nigeria, federalism, ethnic militancy, marginalization, democracy and multinational oil.

1. Introduction
The composition of Nigerian federalism was a deliberate imposition on all the autonomous units in the territory now known as Nigeria. It was a game plan to maintain a colonial control of the country after lowering of the Union Jack. This process was to allow the British to continue to meddle and fiddle with the internal affairs of their former colony to their own economic, political and social advantage after they would have granted her a ceremonial independence. This act was a negation to the political willingness of the various units that were brought together under the same government because their sovereignty was coerced into a forced union under an imposed government.

The main feature of the recent Nigerian politics is the agitation for resource control by ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups within the system. The minority group conflict constitutes the core of ethnic disunity and violence nationwide. Therefore, the political landscape of the post-independent Nigerian state has been dominated by a number of conflicts between various ethnic groups as a result of marginalization and resource control.

Obviously, most of the minority ethnic struggle in Nigeria federal structure today will need to come to terms with the dilemmas of ethnic-based conflicts and tensions because of the minority agitation for recognition.

This study is primarily designed to analyze those factors that makes federalism compelling in Nigeria, the gap between federalism and its practice in Nigeria, the theoretical explanation of minority ethnic agitation; investigate the trends and consequences of their agitation on Nigerian state; investigate the major causes of ethnic minority problems in the Nigerian federation and to suggest strategies by which ethnic minority groups can overcome their position as subordinate within the Nigerian federal system.

This study is basically on the ethnic minority in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria with focus on the reasons for their demand for recognition and the implications of such on the Nigerian state.

2. Conceptual Framework
The resource competition in Niger Delta has resulted to the mobilization, organization and collective action of the people in the region in pursuance of their valued and God given resources. Therefore, relative deprivation will be the preferred framework of analysis for this study. The concept of relative deprivation can be date back to ancient Greece when Aristotle articulated the idea that revolution is driven by a relative sense or feeling of inequality, rather than an absolute measure (Richardson, 2011). In the opinion of Gurr, relative deprivation is the term used to denote the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and that disposes men to violence. He further observes that the primary source of human motivation for violence appears

to be frustration and aggression (Gurr, 1970). The precondition of relative deprivation according to Runciman (1966) is that, 'where person A feels deprived of object X': person A does not have X, person A want to have X, person A knows of other people who have X, and person A believes obtaining X is realistic. It is a situation when an individual or groups of people experiences being deprived of something which should be entitled to them naturally. It is the consciousness of negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and real actualities.

This framework is also applicable to the Niger Delta region who finds their welfare to be deprived and this subsequently subjected them to be inferior to other regions in the country when compared with them. However, it appears that the primary source for Niger Delta capacity for violent conflict is the frustration as a result of deprivation from their expected benefit from the resources in their region. This work opines that, the violent conflict in Niger Delta is a product of deprivation, frustration and government neglect of the region in its developmental programmes since the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in the region in the 1950s. Therefore, the cause of mending Niger Delta crises is of deprivation, which directly leads to frustration when there seems to be no hope for restoration of their plea. This subsequently leads to violent conflict when all means exploited for recognition and self-determination failed. This is demonstrated in the behavior, attitudes and collective actions the majority of people from the region. This has divided the Nigeria population into two classes: the deprived and non-deprived, the former agitating for recognition while the later superintending over the former's agitation and the resources of the country.

3. Origin of Ethnicity in Nigeria

The origin of ethnicity in Nigeria can be traced to the evolution of different entities that later became the Nigerian state. The pre-colonial social formation in Nigeria were in Empires and kingdoms, these include the Benin Kingdom, Oyo Kingdom, the Kanem-Borno Empire. Last, (1985: 175) puts this in perspective by submitting that "in the historical traditions, various groups are recorded as founding district, un-walled towns within the same area but without necessary memories of one dominating the other militarily." This implies that there was peaceful communal living and there were no ethnic consciousness in the socio-economic and political arrangement of various empires and kingdoms before the colonial occupation of the geographical area known as Nigeria. In the pre-colonial era, one single kingdom or empire could consist of people of different culture, language and origin, with mutual agreement and peaceful co-existence. For instance, we have Binin Kingdom that consists of Ijaw, Itshekiri, Isoko, Ishan, Urhobo, etc. and they peacefully co-habited before the colonial occupation in the country.

Before the colonialists, there had been interactions between different ethnic groups within and between various kingdoms and empires. They had interacted in areas like trade and wars (Idahosa and Elizuelen, 1996: 90). Trade interaction involved each ethnic group exchanging their particular products within the same kingdom or empire which was autonomous (Last, *Op. cit*). On the other hand, war interaction involved conflict between and within empires or kingdoms, which was neither based on ethnic nor racial differences. Therefore, the driving force behind ethnic formation, reign and disintegration of kingdoms and empires were the desires to protect the interest of their kingdoms and empires; expand territories through conquering of other kingdoms or empires as the case may be and subject the conquered to the authority and control of the existing dominant political institution.

However, after peaceful resolution of wars among groups within and between empires or kingdoms, cordial relationship in terms of trade, sports and marriages among the ethnic groups resumes.

Based on various arguments of scholars on the origin of ethnicity in Nigeria, it is important to note that the formalization and consciousness of ethnicity begins with the occupation of the various autonomous empires and kingdoms by the colonialists. The process involved the establishment of a common political authority over people of different culture Nigeria by the British, colonial administration after merging people with little or no common cultural and social bonds. Despite the amalgamation and the introduction of indirect rule system in the country in 1914, Nigeria was not ruled as a single nation. This act made it clear to Nigerians that they are different people brought together by the colonial masters for easy administration and for the and economic advantage of the colonial master.

Contrary to the absence of common historical origin before the colonial conquest, there emerged socio-cultural, socio-economic and political consciousness among different ethnic groups, this development mark the beginning of ethnic suspicion among the ethnic groups in the country.

Before the colonial occupation of the country the Igbos were organized into separate and autonomous political societies conterminous with the village. But after colonization there was contact characterized by a cooperative symbiotic relationship among various Igbo-speaking people (Nnoli, 1978: 36). In the pre-colonial era, there was no common consciousness and identity between Olu, Igbo and Edo that traced descent from the younger son of Ogiso. In another development, the Northern region that comprise, Hausa/Fulani traced their myth to Bayajidda (*Ibid*).

In view of the above assertion of Nnoli on the origin of ethnicity, it becomes obvious that, ethnic consciousness cannot exist without contact among the various individuals from different communal groups in any nation. According to Skinner (1966: 78):

➢ the social and economic setting of the colonial project instigated and generated ethnic consciousness and identify contestations, because it provided extensive and a wide range of contact points for individuals and groups from different pre-colonial culture, social formations and diverse linguistic groups. The struggle for survival in a harsh and hostile colonial capitalist economy and society placed the various groups in constant conflict and led to the creation of social boundaries and other forms of identity differentiation between and within groups.

Ethnicity is a phenomenon that is present within the various autonomous empires and kingdoms but does not determine or have impact on their relationship (both in trades, wars and other interactions). Ethnicity was discovered by the colonialists to be a good instrument

in accomplishing and actualize their mission of occupation in Nigeria. For example, despite the 1914 amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates, the country was still administrated separately because of the differences among the ethnic groups. The amalgamation should ordinarily unify Nigerians as people of the same destiny; take advantage of the multiethnic composition of the people for her development. But the country was still administered separately after the amalgamation. In other to arrest the problem created by the amalgamation, 'state creation became one of the dominant issues of national debate' (Omotoso, 2003: 45). This arrangement was meant to put people of the same identity and destiny under the same authority for self-determinant. However, Adejuyigbe (1979: 190) observes that, the essence of demanding for new regions by minority groups was to ensure that larger ethnic nations do not dominate the smaller ones so that the smaller ones can be free to manage their own affairs.   One can therefore submit that, the amalgamation was only in theory and not in practice, because it failed to bring about unity and oneness between the two protectorates that contains different groups with different identities, rather it only creates suspicion and unhealthy competition among the various ethnic groups.

4. Ethnic Distribution in Nigeria

Nigeria is a pluralistic society in all ramifications. The country is defined by cultural-institutional diversities of ethnic groups of various populations, and with people practicing three main religions – Christianity, mainly in the South and Middle Belt; Islam, mainly in the North, and traditional religion in every part of the country (Otite, 1999: 18).

There have been various arguments about the extent of Nigeria's ethnic pluralism, therefore researching ethnic distribution in Nigeria, will be of advantage to study it from the major to the minor (sub-ethnic group). In this study, all the ethnic groups that constitute Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba population that make up the Nigerian state irrespective of their size are referred to as sub-ethnic groups. In view of this, the major ethnic groups in Nigeria after the consciousness of ethnicity were the Hausa/Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba. But as the colonialists continued with their occupation, factors like power and resource allocation made people to further look inward for alliance with individuals of the same or similar language in presentation and agitation for needs.

Members of the three major ethnic groups often equate the complex ethnic character of Nigeria with their groups. Thus, to a Yoruba man who has never traveled out of Yoruba land, a non-Yoruba is either a Hausa or Igbo. The same is true of the perception of an average Igbo man or Hausa about other ethnic groups other than theirs. But, contrary to this narrow perception of Nigeria ethnic groups, it is however widely acknowledged by scholars of ethnicity that Nigeria is made up of tens of hundreds of ethnic groups whose exact number is largely disputed.

A sub-ethnic identity exists where all or some members of a group feel that they belong to a larger ethnic identity, and where there are perceived cultural, linguistic or other communal characteristics, which they believe are unequally possessed by them and not shared by all members of the larger ethnic identity (Ibeanu and Onu, 2001: 13). Example of this is the Ekitis, Ijebus, Ondos, Owosetc among the Yoruba ethnic group. The endemic violence in the country is due to politicization of ethnicity, which has resulted into chains of political violence, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict violent that has engulfed the country since her independence. This is as a consequence of cultural differences and beliefs among over 400 ethnic groups in the country.

In spite of the politicization of ethnicity by the colonial masters and its continuation by the political elites, the actual number of the ethnic groups in Nigeria remains hypothetical. However, Osaghaeetal (2001: 5) observed that, the number of ethnic groups in the country remains speculative and therefore argues that:

> ➢ The number of configuration of ethnic groups in Nigeria remains speculative and contested despite the fact that, the country serves as a popular point of reference for analyses of ethnicity in Africa. Estimates have ranged from 71 to 248, to 374, to 400 to over 600 and yet we do not appear to be anywhere close to resolving the number of puzzle.

There is no fixed number of ethnic groups in Nigeria because many members of an ethnic group may be found in territories different from their acclaimed territory. For example, the Fulbe cattle herder's tribe or ethnic group are among many ethnic groups in the northern and middle belt states, where they exist as migrant or moving socio-economic enclaves without claims to local territoriality; the Ekitis in Kwara State and the Akokos in Edo State, to mention a few of the ethnic groups that leaves among other ethnic groups in a territory different from theirs. Ethnic endives may, however, be more permanent, such as Hausa in many of the northern states, Igbo in the eastern states and Yoruba in the western states (Otite, 1999: 59).

On the other hand, an ethnic group may be separated from members of its language/family group and be classified administratively with other ethnic groups, for example, "the Epie people who are a small Edoid group made to be politically Ijaw" in the Yenagoa Division of Bayelsa State, far from the rest of Edo speaking people in Edo State. Also, in Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States, Efik is widely spoken, and where general practices of secret societies, dance forms, music and drumming present a superficial image of homogeneity in Obubra, Ogoja, Obudu and the riverine areas (*Ibid*).

Thus, ethnic pluralism is both implicit and explicit in Nigeria, the highest degree of diversity being manifested during free competition over the control of local and national resources at moments of relative peace, shows the incompatibility of the ethnic groups in the country. Under such situation, language is often used to map out groups into separate units, and the interrelationships that exist between languages become expression of ethnic pluralism. The argument of Jessel, (1978: 85) strongly support this when submits that:

> ➢ Other than communication, the major function of language is to reflect the social and behaviour conditions of its group, its life and experience, its manner of thinking and its world view, both of the group as a whole and, its intrinsic institution.

However, the Nigerian ethnic groups both main and minor are therefore estimated to 400 this study as a result of our findings and to serve as operational figure for the study. When there is no fixed number of ethnic groups in the country

5. Conceptual Exploration

To guide against misconception and enhance the understanding and appreciation of this study, it is necessary to conceptualize some terms to provide a clear framework for analysis. Hence, we proceed to conceptualize federalism, ethnic struggle, democracy, ethnicity and ethnic minority.

- **Federalism**: The idea of federalism originates with the concept of inter-governmental relations date back to the Greek civilizations, but the discussion of contemporary federalism starts with Wheare when he submits that federal government is a constitutional arrangement which divides law making powers and functions between two levels of government (Wheare, 1964: 33)

In another view, Livingston (1956: 1) argued that, the essential nature of federalism is to be sought for not in the shading of legal and constitutional terminology, but in the forces-economic, social, cultural, political – that have made the outward forms of federalism necessary…   Hence, federalism is a system of government adopted in a society with plurality of ethnic groups that have different historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, but each ethnic group occupies a marked and distinct geographical location from the others.

The Nigerian federalism is a system of government in which all the various autonomous units in the present geographical territory were brought together by the British government and therefore put in place a constitutional arrangement which divides law-making functions between two levels of government at inception. However, federalism advocates division of government powers among the federating units to give a sense of belonging and to equally check the powers of the organs and institutions of government.

- **Ethnicity**: At this junction, it is of importance to note that ethnicity is the most basic, socio-cultural, political identity and myths of common origin.
  According to Osaghae (1986) in Osaghae and Suberu (2005: 9):

> Historically, ethnic identities in Nigeria have been summarized into two broad categories of majority and minority groups.

Nnoli (1978: 6) sees ethnicity as a class phenomenon, which emerged from the desire of the colonizers to exploit their act; it is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups (ibid). It can be describe as the primary focus of groups and loyalties of individual members of such group in their various forms of interaction. Also, if we put environmental factors into consideration, ethnicity can be view as a social phenomenon that is associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by the communal nature of their boundaries and interactions.

- **Democracy**: The orthodox and original version of the concept of democracy is no longer feasible in any part of the world. The orthodox version of democracy was classical while the modern form of democracy is representative as a result of the population of the population of each society that makes direct participation of all adult impracticable. Hence, democracy is a system of government which should be based on the following four basic principles- majority rule, minority rights, political equality and regular elections and the rule of law. In other words, democracy allows the opinion of minority to be held; but the decisions of the majority to be superlative; it allows for periodic election to elect representatives to all available political offices and finally guarantee the right of every citizen as stipulated in the constitution irrespective of their differences (ethnic, political, religion or economic).
- **Ethnic Minority**: This is a sub-group within a larger group that is numerically small to the rest of the population of a state with culture that is different or similar to the larger group in a non-dominant position. It is interesting to note here that, each of the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria have minor/small ethnic groups. Each of the ethnic groups always strive for recognition as a unit without being an appendage of a large group.
- **Ethnic Struggle**: It is basically an agitation which might be between or among other ethnic groups or in the other hand between the affected ethnic group and either the government or the multinational corporations. Ethnic struggle is majorly on self- determination either politically or economically.

6. Determinants of Nigerian Federalism

The determinants of Nigerian federalism can be view from two perspectives and this include internal and external.

The internal factors for federalism in Nigeria are the major issues that are still sustaining the coherence of the country till date. The first is the submission by Omotoso (2010: 12), when he observes that, common historical experience and cultural factors are important factors, in that when a group that have socio-cultural similarities such as social values, political system, culture, attitude, etc. are in the same geographical environment, it becomes easy for them to understand and accommodate themselves, live together in a union peacefully. The historical experience here bothers on the experience shared together such as pre-colonial communal leaving, colonialism, oppression, marginalization, etc. the units may as a result of all these factors decide to form a union.

The second is the leadership factor. The leadership of each of the units within the whole is crucial to the success of federalism in anywhere in the world and Nigeria inclusive. The reason being that, it is the quality and willingness of the leaders that combines all other factors into a coherent whole that gives direction to a conducive union of all the units that eventually form a whole. Hence, without the agreement of the leaders of the various units the colonial amalgamation of autonomous units would not have been visible.

The external factor is what Osuntokun (1997: 1) describes as "the British deliberately imposed the federal system on Nigeria in order to maintain a neo-colonial control of the country". As at the time British government was lowering the Union Jack, there were four regions within the Federation of Nigeria – the North, West, East and Mid-West. According to Ijalaye (1979: 141), the Northern region alone was greater than the other three regions in both population and size than the rest of the other three regions put together. This is corroborated by Mill's J.S. submission as quoted by (*Ibid*)

> …there should not be any one state so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined.

Therefore, the colonial imposition of federalism on Nigeria state is not only for neo-colonial control but for administrative convenience and economic advantage for their home industry in Britain. The available resources (man and materials) were important and useful to the colonial masters, hence the need to introduce and enforced unitary federalism on the country. The colonial masters were of the opinion that this allows to continue to have influence on their colony and subsequently continue to benefit.

7. Challenges of Ethnic Minority

The factors that led to minority problems are as diverse as the number of the minorities itself. Hence, in this study we are going to capture and discuss the challenges below.

All the various ethnic units in Nigeria have their different socio-cultural practices that are peculiar to them. Socio-cultural practices of the minor ethnic groups within the major ethnic groups are in most cases similar. Modernization as contemporary phenomenon has made some ethnic culture to be seen as primitive. This in turn is fast eroding the cultural values and belief of the minor ethnic groups. On the other hand, any cultural practice such as language, food, festival, dressing, etc. that is not western stands to be condemned because of the impacts of the western education and civilization.

Economy is a great challenge to the minority groups in the Niger Delta where oil which is the main national resource is extracted. It was in the Ijaw town of Oloibiri, a minority ethnic group in River state that oil was first discovered in commercial quantities in the second half of the 1950s. Unfortunately, the host ethnic communities have been at the receiving end of unequal distribution of the oil wealth in the country. Also of the same opinion is Quaker-Dokubo (2015), when he submits that, the Niger-Delta ethnic minority communities have been at the receiving end of the country's inequitable distributive politics and revenue sharing and have been in the forefront of the political agitation for the promotion and protection of the economic and ecological rights of the oil producing areas.

This has led to the demands for more equitable and privileged treatment by oil-producing minorities of the Niger Delta, as well as struggles by them and other minorities to redress the imbalances in the federation.

Since politics is a game of number and Niger Delta minority groups are numerically disadvantaged, it become difficult for them to stand for either national or state elections and win such and therefore use such opportunity to redress the perceived imbalance. As a result of this, before Jonathan's administration one will hardly find anybody from Niger Delta in an important political office, in addition to this is that the oil producing companies prefer to employ people that are not native of the community where they are operating. This practice is nothing but marginalization and deprivation from the region's share of their God's given natural resources. Also of the same view that the oil producing region is marginalized is Saro-Wiwa's when he argues that:

> having provided the nation with an estimated \$30,000 million in oil revenues, their people had no pipe borne water or electricity, and lacked education, health and other social facilities: it is intolerable that one of the richest areas of Nigeria should wallow in abject poverty and destitution (Saro-Wiwa, 1992: 97).

8. Trends and Consequences of Agitations in Niger Delta

The protracted Niger Delta conflict arises as a result of contradictions and incompatibilities in the structure, institutions and functions of government and the needs of the people of the region compare to the revenue government generation from the region for the sustenance of the national economy. Hence, the factors responsible for the eruption of conflict in the region remain unaddressed.

There were perceived marginalization by the Niger Delta people because of ecological damage done to the region by the multinational corporations and government as a result of exploration of oil in their land. This led to civil agitation for special development of the region shortly after the discovery of crude oil between 1950 and 1965. This agitation became violent with military insurgent by AdakaBoro and his Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) between 23rd of February to 6th of March 1966, when they demanded for autonomy of the region from government as their goal of engagement. Essentially, this violent and secessionist trend was the first militant phenomenon in the Niger Delta region, but was suppressed by the engagement of the effort of the federal military, and the militant's members were arrested and tried for treason. After the end of Nigeria's civil war between 1970 and 1982, the various host communities began to engage and demand for compensation such as basic social amenities and infrastructure, and payment of compensation for damages done to land, water and property.

There were conflicts between host communities and the multinational oil corporations over the non- execution of meaningful development projects and non-payment of adequate compensation for damages to land, water and property. This was practically expressed by litigation, protests and obstructions between 1983 and 1990. This development therefore gave rise to the emergence of civil, community, ethnic and regional groups to embark on demonstrations and obstructions of oil production facilities, demanding adequate compensation for damages and development attention till 1996. By 1997 most of the groups have changed to militants or having a militant group affiliated to it, hence, engaging in terrorist and militant actions against multinational oil corporations. The violent confrontational technique resulted into low intensity war between militants and the military till 2009 to demand for resource ownership and control (Ibaba and Ikelegbe, 2010: 224).

As a consequence of the above, the region has been militarized; air, land and water polluted, and the little available infrastructure destroyed following extensive military deployments and operations that have turned the entire region into a large garrisoned command and war zone. Also, the insensitivity of the government to contain the crises in the region gave birth to pirates who are criminal and deviants of the militants that masquerade as militias. Their operation have been confrontational, destructive and criminal to the level of their non- willingness to dialogue with government or its representatives.

9. Implication for Development
Owing to the Federal nature of Nigerian state, the unhealthy struggles have degenerated to protracted crises that have affected other areas and sectors of the country.

The persistence occurrence and unabated violent struggles between ethnic groups and government on one hand and among ethnic groups on the other hand shortly after the discovery of oil in Niger Delta region is a pointer to the indication that the people in the region have never had a fear deal of the oil extracted from their community. Democracy is seen as the best form of government among the so far practiced system of the government because of its many attributes; particularly the protection of the rights of the majority and minority alike but despite this, since 1999, Nigeria has witnessed the proliferation of inter-ethnic violence on a larger scale than it has ever been experienced in the country. In a similar manner, Nigeria has been termed a "fault-line" state characterized by wars between clans, tribes, ethnic groups, religious, communities and nation rooted in individual struggle (**This day**, September 16, 2001: 30). Therefore, ethnic violence is a threat to peace, economic development and unity as a result of age long ethnic wars, due to struggles over land disputes, intolerance in resource distribution and other issues among the various ethnic groups inhabiting the country as a whole.

Economically, there was a reduction in the exploration of Nigeria crude oil due to low production in the crisis area, which in turn reduced the revenue generation from crude oil (*Ibid*). This observation was what informed the introduction and establishment of amnesty programme in 2007 by the federal government to pacify the people of the region. Also, Nigeria has not been always attractive to international investors because of the unpredictable dimensions of minority struggle for resource control. The struggles which are mostly violent do extend the frontiers of conflict beyond the affected crisis areas, and engender social discontentment as a result of economic crisis caused by capital flight and failure of foreign investors to further invest in the domestic economy in fulfillment of their social responsibility to the host community. This development has created a permanent psychological distrust and suspicion among the hitherto happily co-inhabited neighbours before the colonial occupation of the country. This reveals the inherent weakness in the ability of ethnically diverse communities in Nigerian state to adopt and sustain the principles of federalism.

The facts remains that there is a correlation between democratic stability; peace and political development, then violent ethnic struggles cannot allow for institutionalization and sustainability of democracy. Therefore, Nigeria can only witness sustainable development when there is peaceful co-existence among the federating units, respect for rule of law and practice of true federalism. The true federalism is such that will not regard any of the federating units as subordinate, rather as co-equal.

10. Way Forward
Niger Delta conflicts are such that have affected all aspect of Nigeria to the level of threating the nation's cooperate existence; hence any resolution deserves special attention and popular participation of Niger Delta people in matters that affects them for lasting and enduring solution. Therefore, the following are suggested solutions to the unending Niger Delta crises:

One is by re-defining the principle of federal character or quota system which has reinforced in no small measure ethnic differences in Nigeria. According to Ekeh and Osaghae (1989: 124) "it is a distributive principle which is aimed at preventing the domination of government and its resources by one group or a few groups, thereby guaranteeing every group access to power and resources". If federalism can be implemented to the letter, it can ameliorate ethnic marginalization/rivalry because the importance of federalism cannot be over-estimated in any multi ethnic society like Nigeria.

Two is that there must be equitable distribution of resources among the communities in Niger Delta. In addition to this, the government and multinational corporations should give reasonably back to the communities in term of human development, infrastructural development and regulation of oil and gas activities in such that will make the oil producing environment more friendly and habitable for their host communities.

Three is the submission of Ojakorotu (2011: 125) when he observes that there is need for the key actors at various levels of exploration to understand the root causes and mechanisms which have engendered the conflict in the first place, as vital to developing a workable solution. This implies that there is need for historical investigation of the origin and trends of the region's crises to be able to proffer a workable, lasting and enduring solution to the problem in the region.

Four, the leadership at all levels should show sincerity of purpose by honestly displaying the willingness and love by shifting ground to bring peace and development to the region and by extension to the nation. This can be done by government engaging the region in a serious dialogue that is devoid of politics which will be documented for workable and lasting solution dialogue. Any agreement reached in such dialogue should be implemented to letter for peace, progress and suitable development of the region and country at large.

Five is conflict transformation of the region. It is a process of engaging and transforming the relationships, interests, discourse and, if necessary, the very fabric of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict. This implies that complimentary roles are to be played by all that are involved in one way or the other in achieving peace through transformative processes. This process perceives that, conflict is a natural expression of non-violent struggle for social justice (Omoyefa, 2010: 78).

11. Conclusion

It is obvious from the above exploration that natural resource plays a paramount role in the political, socio-economic development and stability of any country in possession of such. Natural resources in a country are natural endowments which are expected to be used for suitable development.

The present attempts at democracy as a form of sustainable socio-cultural and economic formation in Nigeria, can be attained if fears of marginalization are erased. It is in this vain, that united means and ways of achieving national unity should be examined and embraced to have a united country. Contrary series of attempts at ethnic unity may not yield a productive result for national development.

In conclusion, another approach is the adoption of true federalism and political culture that will make adequate provision for all the interests and groups within the country. Therefore, Nigeria should learn from the experience of multi-ethnic developed nations like America and Canada that uses their ethnic diversity as strength to its advantage for their national development.

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