

## AN EXPLICATION OF RESTRUCTURING CONCEPT IN NIGERIA: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

This article interrogates the growing agitations for restructuring in Nigeria focusing on the implication of the contentious issue on whether the country's status is that of a "nation" or 'nations within a nation. Scholars have attached the manifestation of this question to claim and counter claim the issue of marginalization, alienation, inequity in the distribution of and management of the nation resources, political dominance by a particular section of the country as the basis for restructuring agitation. The resultant effects of the agitation are the problems of instability, insecurity and the series of violent conflicts confronting the country. Against this background the paper which employs mainly doctrinal method, posits to investigate the status of Nigeria as a nation state and propriety of the agitation for restructuring of the county. The author's finding revealed that there is need for restructuring and concluded that the present National Assembly can take a positive step in this direction so that Nigeria can be called a nation-state and live together harmoniously.

**Keywords:** restructuring, federalism, unity in diversity, political, nation-state; development

### 1. INTRODUCTION

To ponder on challenges confronting Nigeria it is beyond contestation that nothing seems to be working in Nigeria; the government is so weak and has shown little of political will or increasing lack of courage of the compromised political elites to address the mirage of problems confronting the country. Citizens seem to have lost confidence in the government and its commitment to their plight socially, politically and economically. The situation is even compounded with government's deliberate display of disrespect for rule of law and protection of individual's fundamental human rights.

Even, the institution of last resort that is; the judiciary, where the hopeful and hopeless look unto for justice is also loosing it pre-eminence position in the sight of citizens. Hence, people have more than ever, shown skepticism about the fairness, equity and justice in judicial

pronouncements, especially, the Supreme Court. In event, no matter how legalistically justifiable is judicial decision, loser in most disputes will always allege injustice. This also is irrespective of the fact that Supreme Court decision is final and appeal lies against its decision only to God.

Similarly, insecurity permeates every parts of the country, to the extent that Nigerians have lost confident in the security agencies' capacity to protect lives and properties. In this paper's view, irrespective of whether or not Western Nigeria creation of *AMATEKUN* is constitutional, the justification for its establishment can be linked with the inability of security agencies' and capacity (human, technical or availability of modern weapon) to offer needed protection against series of insecurity challenges confronting the country. The question is, how can it be justified the unabated incidences of kidnapping, banditry, pastoralists and farmers' clashes, Boko Haram continuous killing, armed robbery, corruption in grand style, militancy, pipeline vandalism, cattle rustling with the huge amount of money government is spending, has spent and will be spending on security.<sup>1</sup>

The restructuring agitation calls into question the truism of describing Nigeria as a nation state founded upon common goals and aspirations to live together as a country, or whether it is just a mere geographical expression, or nations within a nation only united in her diversity or a community of people that merely came into being by accident or act of God when it was amalgamated by Lord Lugard 1914.<sup>2</sup> The restructuring agitations, brings into fore the definitive definition of Nigeria as being a Nation-State. It should be noted that the concept of nation state concerns not only system of government but the degree of government irrespective of the language, ethics, cultural and religious affiliation of the people.<sup>3</sup>

Nigeria as presently constituted is a country without any adaptable, coherent political institutions, effective bureaucracies, well-organized political parties, lack of high degree of citizens' popular participation in public affairs, insecurity resulting in unwarranted killings,

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<sup>1</sup> 250 girls were abducted by Boko Haram since 2011 some are still in captive be dead or alive, government could not save the life the kidnapped young girl Naron and chairman CAN until they were beheaded by Boko Haram. See generally; G. O. Olusanya, "Constitutional Development 1861 – 1960," in O. Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History* Ibadan: Published for the Historical Society of Nigeria (Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc 1999), pp.518-544. C. Ikeji, "Politics of Revenue Allocation in Nigeria: A Reconsideration of Some Contending Issues", (2011) 1, *Sacha Journal of Policy and Strategic Studies*. pp. Pg. 121-136.

<sup>2</sup> Odike, "Nigeria's Federalism: Myth or Reality" p. 84; E. A. Odike, "Nigeria's Federalism: Myth or Reality" (2005), *Abakiliki Bar Journal*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>3</sup> E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), ISBN 0-8014-1662-0

extensive activity by the government in the socio-economy development, and reasonably effective procedures for regulating succession and controlling political conflict. As rightly posited by Professor Babs Onabanjo,

Nigeria needs restructuring to avoid total collapse as a united indivisible nation. Nigeria is controlled and influenced by the rich and powerful. They are the cabals who disguise as warlords, godfathers made up of various tribes with common selfish interest and morbid taste for absolute power and control. These cabals will go extra-step and to any length to take control of the seat of power for their selfish interest nothing more and nothing less.<sup>4</sup>

Putting the above discourse into consideration there is no doubt that the country needs to be restructure but how, what, where and which area remain debatable. It is here argued that the National Assembly which constitutes representatives from all the states, tribes, religion, ethnicity and languages that make up Nigeria is best placed to initiate, prosecute and execute the project of restructuring in the best way that would forester the country's unity. There have been templates on ground from series of white papers on National Conferences convened by previous governments, all it needs do is to examine the templates subject them to public debate/scrutiny and come out with well-articulated results for restructuring the country.

## **2. CONCEPT OF NATION-STATEHOOD**

The question most often asked is whether Nigeria is a nation state. It is however, generally agreed that a nation-state comprises of people – people who may or may not occupy a contiguous territory but who nevertheless feel that they belong together.<sup>5</sup> Thus, when people who have developed this kind of feeling of belonging together, inhabit a particular territory (like Nigeria) and owe allegiance to a government of their own making, a government that speaks for them in national and international affairs, it is referred to as a 'nation-state.'<sup>6</sup> What

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<sup>4</sup> Malesevic, Sinisa (2006). *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); see also Professor Babs Onabanjo; "Nigeria Restructure or Ruin", *The Nation* January 9, 2020, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> I. Ali Khan, 'the Extinction of Nation-State – A World without Borders Reports in *International Law*' (1996) 22 and M. A., Sinisa, *identity, Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism*(New York: Palgrave, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> O. E. Uma, 'Federalism and Nation-State: The Nigerian Experience 1954-1964' (1977) 23-24.

is clearly optimistic about the conceptions is, national identities remain a highly complex issue and raises significant questions of what may actually constitute a nation in practical term rather than theory. However, at the most basic level, the concept of 'Nation State' can be defined as:

...a collective or large group of individuals that is bound together, and therefore unified by some commonalities such as, language, ethnicity, religion, habits; behaviours and or customs.

The concept has also been addressed by different scholars based on their perceptions. For example, Smith<sup>7</sup> argues that a nation state is built upon myth and memory because these elements forge a collective purpose, hence inducing a sense of belonging that all too often inspires the 'nation' to defend its identity. Stalin,<sup>8</sup> asked what a nation was in his text *Marxism and the National Question*, noting that nationhood goes beyond tribal and racial origins, instead advocating that a nation must be a "...historically constituted community of people", thus situating the idea firmly in historical, political and social discourse that extends into the past. However, the term itself is not a modern one, but, can be traced back to the 14th century where it referred to a series of concepts that extend from the idea of descendants, countries, language and birth.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding, God Himself had divided humanity into distinctive groups and scattered them on the face of the earth, each of such groups seen as germ of a nation of one people. For instance, Allah (SWT) says:

O mankind! We have created you from a single soul (pair) of a male and a female and made you into Nations and tribes that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most righteous you in the sight of Allah is that (believer) who is best in religion and best in good deeds. Verily Allah is All-knowing, All-aware.<sup>10</sup>

The structural ideal behind the concept of nation-state has always been complex but has evolved along the understandings and attitudes towards what constitutes a nation. Despite that,

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, A., 'The Ethnic Origins of Nations' (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)

<sup>8</sup> Stalin, J., 'Marxism and the National Question', (1913),

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03a.htm#s> accessed on 10 December, 2019

<sup>9</sup> Harper, D., (2001). Nation; Online Etymological Dictionary' viewed 01 October 2017, from <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=nation>, accessed on 15 December, 2019

<sup>10</sup> Quran Yusuf Ali Translation Surat Khijrat 49 verse 13

the notion of unification has remained constant when construing the concept of nation state. An example is Egypt, which is essentially identified as the first nation from a direct result of the shared ethnic background, cultural consensus and unification on which it was built.<sup>11</sup> The origin and early history of Nigeria nation-state is not in dispute, but the nation existed first before the nationalist movements arose for sovereignty and the Nigeria nation-state was created first by amalgamation 1914 and eventual independence in 1960.<sup>12</sup> There have been several accounts evidencing the contentious issue of the Nigeria Nation-State even before independence in 1960. The first manifestation of such agitation was made in 1950 when the review of Richards Constitution came up, following the controversial argument in respect of representative quota for the North, West and Eastern provinces in the central legislature.<sup>13</sup> Arguing for the North during constitutional conference in Ibadan, the Emir of Zaria and Katsina cautioned that, "Unless the Northern Region was allocated 50 percent of seats in the central legislature, it would ask for separation from the rest of Nigeria on arrangement existing before 1914 amalgamation."<sup>14</sup> Equally, the controversy again manifested when Western Region contested in 1953/1954 the possession of Lagos.<sup>15</sup>

The then premier of Western Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was also reported to have sent a message to the Secretary of State for the colonies requesting among other things the right of Western Region "to decide whether or not they will remain in the proposed federation."<sup>16</sup> In the same paradigm, the Middle Belt also complained of Hausa-Fulani domination and demanded for their separate state within the country.<sup>17</sup> A member of the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) for the Northern Regional House by name Shaahu was reported to have said: "the only course we can take now since we are not wanted in the North is to pull out of the North and the Federation as a whole". Similarly, the Eastern Region also demanded for

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<sup>11</sup> A. Gat, 'Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism, (Cambridge University Press, 2013)

<sup>12</sup> E. J., Hobsbawm, *Nation and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth or Reality*, (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition; Cambridge University Press, 1992)

<sup>13</sup> J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958) and A. O. Samuel, *Regional, Security, Ethnic Militias and Peace*, *The Nation* 22 January, 2020, p. 19

<sup>14</sup> T. N. Tamuno, "Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914", (1970), 8(4), *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 8(4), 563-584; and O. Awofeso, "Secessionist Movements and the National Question in Nigeria: A Revisit to the Quest for Political Restructuring", (2017), 2(7), *Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research* 2(7), 35-55

<sup>15</sup> M. A. Ikenna, N. A. Stephen and C. I. Emeka, *The Nigerian State and the Resurgence of Separatist Agitations: the Case of Biafra*, (2019), 1(1), *Journal of Conflict Transformation and Nation Building*, pp 98 - 101

<sup>16</sup> O. Awolowo, *O. Path to Nigerian freedom*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1947)

<sup>17</sup> Ikenna, Stephen and Emeka, *The Nigerian State and the Resurgence of Separatist Agitations: the Case of Biafra*,

separation as a result of the 1963 controversial census, the 1964 federal election and 1965 Western Region elections respectively.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Isaac Boro in 1966, declaration of the Delta People Republic was also an agitation to secede from the Eastern Region.<sup>19</sup> There was also a statement of caution lashed out by Michiael Okpara the Premier of Eastern Region in 1964, that his region would secede because of the circumstances surrounding the general elections of that year, though the threat was not backed with action.<sup>20</sup>

The pessimistic disagreement from the situation did not only promote disintegration and suspicion among Nigerians, but explains the indignant disposition to the Nigeria Nation-State status. In consequence of which is the pro-autonomy agitations for restructuring and or devolution of powers that have been a regular characteristic of the Nigeria politics and remain a genuine mechanism for the viewing disgruntlement with the Nigerian Nation-State.<sup>21</sup> No matter what the government disposition to the agitations is, the bare reality is that Nigeria is facing serious challenges in relation to her unity, as exemplified by the expression of dissatisfaction with present arrangement being reverberate from different sections of the country.

### **3. IS NIGERIA A MERE GEOGRAPHICAL EXPRESSION?**

Nigeria is the third most ethnically and linguistically diverse country in the world, after New Guinea and Indonesia.<sup>22</sup> Indonesia has an estimated population of 245.6 million according to preliminary census figures released in July 2011 and has about 350 recognized ethno-linguistic groups, 180 located in Papua; 13 languages have more than 1 million speakers. Javanese 41 percent of population, Sudanese 15 percent, coastal Malays 3.4 percent, Madurese 3.3 percent, and others 37.3 percent.<sup>23</sup> Like Indonesia, Nigeria has over 521 languages and 371 ethnic groups and it is a well-established fact that there are three dominant ethnic groups of the Hausa,

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<sup>18</sup> T. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethno-political Conflicts*, (Washington: Institute for Peace, 1993)

<sup>19</sup> Tamuno, "Separatist Agitations in Nigeria since 1914",

<sup>20</sup> Ikenna, Stephen and Emeka, *The Nigerian State and the Resurgence of Separatist Agitations: the Case of Biafra*,"

<sup>21</sup> Ikenna, Stephen and Emeka, *The Nigerian State and the Resurgence of Separatist Agitations: the Case of Biafra*," p. 96

<sup>22</sup> B. A. T. Balewa, *Governing Nigeria – History, Problems and Prospects*, (Malthouse Press Ltd., 1994)

<sup>23</sup> H. F. William, and L. W. Robert, (eds) 'Indonesia a Country Study' (Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 2011)

(North)<sup>24</sup>, Yoruba (West)<sup>25</sup> and the Ibo (East).<sup>26</sup> The ethnic groups constitute 70%, of the country population, in following percentage; Hausa 29%, Yoruba 21%, Ibo 20%. The dominant ethnic groups consistently exhibited powerful influence on the Nigerian democracy, rule of law and structure of government.<sup>27</sup> The ethnic groups, largely accounted for the administrative divisions of the country as North, West and East, dated back to 1939 and ever since then, Nigerian democracy, principle of rule of law and judicial system have tried to find solutions that can effectively balance the competing interests of these three ‘regions’.<sup>28</sup> This ethno-linguistic/cultural and religious diversity has very significant implications in almost every areas of the country polity and in particular the people’s agitation for devolution of powers or restructuring.

In the light of the above, it may be right to describe Nigeria as “Imagined Nation” or “Nations within a Nation”. That was the factual arrangement of Nigeria before the coming and colonization of the country by the British and eventual amalgamation in 1914 by Lord Fredrick Lugard. The colonial view was that Nigeria could hardly ever become, a “nation”. Nevertheless, the different classical traditions of democracy and administration of justice in the country was effectively taken advantage of by Sir Frederick (later Lord) Lugard, to introduce Indirect Rule, stamped it upon a widely diverse community in kind, size, language, ethnic, religion and culture.<sup>29</sup> Because the system was the only immediate available means through, which the different groups of peoples were saved from pre-colonial dictatorial systems of government.<sup>30</sup> Despite the colonial effort at unifying the country, Nigeria did not possess any sort of unity, ethnically, religiously, geographically and linguistically in real sense, yet Nigeria was created automatically without thought, on the attitude and behavior of Nigerians in response to the arrangement.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hausa are located in the states of Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Nasarawa, Sokoto, Bauchi, Kebbi, Damaturu, Dutse, Gombe, Jigawa, Taraba, Plateau, Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, part of Kwara and the Federal Capital Territory etc,

<sup>25</sup> Yoruba are located in the South West and other parts of West African Countries including Benin Republic, Ghana, Togo and even the Caribbean, in Nigeria they are in Kwara, Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Kogi etc

<sup>26</sup> Ibo are located in South East Enugu, Onitsha, Owerri, Asaba, Awka, Abakaliki, Abia, Imo, Orlu etc

<sup>27</sup> O. J. Shola, , ‘Nigeria Parties and Political Ideology’ (2009) 1(3) *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in Social Sciences*, pp. 612 – 634.

<sup>28</sup> Bryan Sharwood Smith, ‘But Always as a Friend -- Northern Nigeria and the Cameroons, 1921-1957’ (U. S. A., 1969) III.

<sup>29</sup> O. Awolowo, ‘Path to Nigerian Freedom’ (London, Oxford University Press, 1974) 117

<sup>30</sup> Johnson Samuel Peter, ‘The History of Yorubas’ (Reprint, Lowe and Brydone Printer Ltd, Britain, 1976)

<sup>31</sup> T., Babawale, ‘Re-inventing Federalism in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives, (Ibadan Spectrum Books, 1998)

Aside from the above there is also the perceived idea of fundamental unity of Nigeria caused by the commonality of the major languages of Yoruba, Ibo and Hausa traditions at the expense of several other ethnic minorities, this also been a dangerous divisible political implications and effects. The vast submerged groups and the citizens of Nigeria including the over 521 languages and 371 ethnic groups had only a peripheral contact. Few years after the Nigeria Independent 1960 and the collapse of the first republic, the nation-state question was extremely complicated and threatened.<sup>32</sup> This cannot be divorced from what accounted for the 1967 war led by Ikemba Odumugwu Ojukwu, who took mutually indistinguishable positions regarding the Nigeria project and fought for the creation of Biafra Country.<sup>33</sup> Regrettably, the votaries of Nigeria unity like General Yakubu Gowon, the then Head of State tried desperately to keep the country united.<sup>34</sup>

In the Nigerian society, however, revolution and order have well become allies. Cliques, blocs, and mass movements struggle directly with each other, each with its own weapons. Violence has been democratized, politics demoralized, society at odds with itself. For instance the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria have given rise to three ethnic associational blocs especially between 1999 and 2000. The ethnic socio-political blocs are the *Afenifere* Group for the Yoruba of South-Western Nigeria, the *Arewa* Group for the Hausa/Fulani stock of the Northern Nigeria and the *Ohaneze Ndigbo* of South- Eastern Nigeria. These groups compete for supremacy in the country.<sup>35</sup> The Ijaw National Congress is another minority but prominent socio-cultural organisation fast becoming a political umbrella for its ethnic members. The Ijaw, together with a number of other minority tribes like Urhobo and Ogoni in the oil-rich Niger Delta states have substantially succeeded in agitating, through the threats and actual utility of insurgent activities, for a re-introduction of federal revenue sharing by *derivation principle* to secure more funding for their home states.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Note that the Nigeria visionary development of federalism specifically from 1954 to 1965 unfortunately ended with the murder of the Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, The Premier of Northern Nigeria Sir Ahmadu Bello and Premier of the West Samuel Logoke Akintola on the January 15, 1966. See Bell, J., 'Approaches to the Study of Federalism' (1966) *Political Studies Journal*, 14, 15-33

<sup>33</sup> J. O. A., Odeyemi, "Political History of Nigeria and the Crisis of Ethnicity in Nation-Building", (2014) 3(1), *International Journal of Developing Societies*, p. 22

<sup>34</sup> Odeyemi, "Political History of Nigeria and the Crisis of Ethnicity in Nation-Building"

<sup>35</sup> M. Ako, "Nigerian Federalism and the Issue of Restructuring: An Introspective Watch" (2011) 2, *Journal of Management and Administrative Sciences*; see also K. Amuwo, et al (eds.), *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 2017)

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid* at 19 -20.

The truism of the above descriptions of Nigeria as geographic entity could equally be fathomed from the foremost nationalists' expressions about the 1914 amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates.<sup>37</sup> For instance: Chief Obafemi Awolowo posited that "*Nigeria is merely a geographical expression that lumped together an arbitrary collection of disparate groups following colonial rule,*" and "*...that the amalgamation will ever remain the most painful injury British government inflicted on Southern Nigeria*".<sup>38</sup> While Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa declared; "*We (Nigeria) are different in too many ways. .... 'the people are different in every way, including religion, custom, language and aspirations....,*" In his own perspective which is to an extent supports the view of Awolowo and Balewa; Sir Ahmadu Bello described the amalgamation as '*the mistake of 1914*'.<sup>39</sup> Evaluating these descriptions, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe view seems to be an expression of a hopeful united nation when he posited that; "*Nigeria is now a political reality, let us bury our differences and build it together.*"<sup>40</sup>

Nonetheless, the attempts by the Nigeria Constitutions to legalize its unity in diversity since 1960 after independence did not even succeed in addressing the differences and complexities of the country. It is herein posited that the Nigerian nation-state project will remain a mirage unless it is anchored on considerable tolerance of diversity; equal opportunity and willingness to take political action founded on dialogue even when power to act unilaterally exist. One cannot but agree with Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarkin Sokoto expression of grave doubts concerning Nigerian unity when he said, in a 1953 contribution to the timetable for self-government that;

It is true that the politicians always delight in talking loosely about the unity of Nigeria. Sixty years ago, there was no country called 'Nigeria'. What is now Nigeria, consisted of a number of large and small communities all of which were different in outlook and beliefs? In 1914, the North and the South were amalgamated although the administrations of the two sections were strictly different. Since then, no serious attempt has been

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<sup>37</sup> Ugochukwu-Uko, "Real Reasons Igbos Cry of Marginalization under Buhari," Sunday Sun, 25 September 2016, p.35. see also B. A. Ahmed, I. Norafidah, I. and T. Z. Knocks, "Resource Control and Political Restructuring in Nigeria: A View from the South-South", (2017), 5(8), Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies

<sup>38</sup> Awolowo (note 25), p. 77

<sup>39</sup>O. Onwudiwe, 'North and the rest of us', This Day, Vol. 16, No. 5861, 11 May 2011, 18

<sup>40</sup> Onwudiwe, 'North and the rest of us'

made by the British or by the people themselves to come together and each Section has looked upon the other with suspicion and misgivings.<sup>41</sup>

In summary the establishment/amalgamation of Nigeria with the paraphernalia of the colonial situation created a problematic situation for the existing political cultures whose adherents were after independence required to become citizens of Nigeria, united in diversity. The problem has led to the struggle on how the country would move from the stage of being amalgamated to that of real integration. Despite the fact that languages, ethic, religion and culture offer diverse views of the world, they also offer a variety of wagers about which things matter and how our community interacts with each other.<sup>42</sup> Debatably, the diversity has the propensity of uniting a nation and may also divide people in a nation. Though differences can be celebrated for this is what it means to be modern and civilized, but they are still differences, thus explain the rationale behind Nigeria being refers to as “*a country united in diversity*”. Incidentally however, the differences embedded in the Nigeria languages, ethics, religious and cultures that distinguish the citizens have a long history of the country sparking bloodshed.

#### **4. CONCEPT OF RESTRUCTURING IN NIGERIA**

Restructuring has become the latest murmur word in the political landscape with political and non political actors pushing forward their ideas of the word that was not too long ago, an anathema to many state actors. But what exactly is the idea behind restructuring? Given the view of some that Nigeria is presently a federation, it is not surprising that different political actors would give different perspectives to the concept of restructuring.<sup>43</sup> According to Obiora,<sup>44</sup> to restructure is to change an existing status quo in order to make it more functional. From his assertion, restructuring is a purpose-driven activity that hinges on replacement of an existing nature of a system with a new one that will be suitable to achieve the purpose of the system. Deducing from this postulation, it may be rightly asserted that restructuring seems to depict a significant alteration, re-organization, reformation/re-arrangement of an existing

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<sup>41</sup> I. J. Elaigwu, ‘Nation-Building and Political Development in Nigeria: The Challenge of Unity in a Heterogeneous Society’, (1985) 1, Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria since Independence Political Development, Zaria, Nigeria.

<sup>42</sup> Odiike, “Nigeria’s Federalism: Myth or Reality”

<sup>43</sup> E. I. Victor, I. B. Ebong., and Tonye Inimo-Etele, “Restructuring Nigerian Federalism: A Prognosis for Nation-Building and Socio-Political Stability”, (2019), 5(1), Journal of Political Science Leadership Research, pp. 1 – 17

<sup>44</sup> Obiora Okonkwo (2018), The Value of Diversity: Restructuring to save Nigeria. (Inaugural Lecture presented at University of Nigeria, Nsukka 2018)

structure of government, in more equitable manner that provides for all inclusive participation in governance for socio-economic development. It is not in doubt that resource control has consistently being one of the major challenges which successive governments in Nigeria have tried to address. Besides the current waives of agitation for restructuring the Niger-Delta region has for a very long period been in the fore front of agitation for the return to previous arrangement of the country, giving the federating units that constituted Nigeria the control of their economic and the financial activities of their regions.<sup>45</sup> Significantly, the reason for the recurrent call for restructuring is captured in observation of Mill thus;

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 the combined. If there be such a one and only one, it will insist on being master of joint deliberations, if there be two, they will be irresistible when they agree.<sup>46</sup>

The structure of the Nigeria government according to law before and after independence was that the federating units, the regions of the Western; Mid-Western; Eastern and Northern Nigeria control the economic activities and finance, of their regions. This arrangement allows the keeping 50 per cent of all the resources to the Federation Account, out of which 30 percent was share among the regions, leaving 20 per cent to the Federal Government.<sup>47</sup> Incidentally that was the status of Nigeria as enshrined in the 1960 and 1966 constitutions. However, this lofty arrangement was changed in 1969 by the General Yakubu Gowon military administration when the crude oil from the Niger-Delta became the mainstay of the economy and in order to get more funds to prosecute the 1967 Biafran civil war led by Odumegwu Ojukwu.<sup>48</sup> Though, the word restructuring has acquired widespread usage in the Nigeria's academic, political analysts and experts discussion since President Muhammadu Buhari assume office in 2015, it is not the first time the word restructuring surface in the Nigeria history. Evidently, former military head of state, General Yakubu Gowon had used the word in what is called the three "Re s"; that is, "Re-conciliation;" "Reconstruction;" and "Re-habilitation;". It was used after the Nigeria civil war between 1967 and 1970. Unfortunately the effort made by his government

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<sup>45</sup> See generally, A. Agbaje, 'The Ideology of Power Sharing; An Analysis of Content, Context and Intent', Anniwo Kunle (ed), *Federalism and Political Restructuring in Nigeria*, (Ibadan Spectrum Book, 1998); p. 56.

<sup>46</sup> J. S. Mill., *Considerations of Representative Government*; B. Hans. (ed.), *Utilitarianism Liberty, and Representative Government*; (London: Dent, 1951)

<sup>47</sup> Uma "Federalism and Nation-State: The Nigerian Experience 1954-1964", p. 24

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

to ameliorate the devastating effect of the war, failed in restoring peace, stability and realignment of the country.<sup>49</sup>

What the resurfaced agitation underscores is that people are simply asking for a return to the post-independence practice after more than five decades.<sup>50</sup> For instance the West produced Cocoa, the North groundnut and cotton and the East rubber and palm oil. Each region provided incentives to farmers to boost the production of cash crops in their domain. The regional governments set up Marketing Boards that buy from farmers and export them for foreign exchange.<sup>51</sup> What they did was to keep 50 per cent on the Federal Government to be shared among regions and the central government. With this structure, regional governments had sufficient funds to develop their regions without relying on federal allocation to pay salaries and execute projects.

Sadly, from 1969 when the status quo was changed, states or regions have no control of their resources. In fact the land use Decree of 1976 allocates the land and its resources to the federal government in addition, all mineral resources that are six feet deep or beyond belongs to the federal government. These laws were made so as to strip the Nigerian people off of asking for their inalienable rights to the resources from their areas.<sup>52</sup> The central government controls every major activities of the nation, thereby making Nigerian federation federalism only by name as the branches (states) have little or no power or influences in major economic/social issues such as mineral resources, revenue allocation/distribution and off course the armed forces.

Federal system of governance which was adopted in Nigeria before and after the 1960 independence emerged as a compromise to ensure the country succeeded in its struggle for independence from British.<sup>53</sup> It has however been argued that it was a clever manipulation by

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<sup>49</sup> G. O. Olusanya, "Constitutional Development 1861 – 1960," in O. Ikime, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History* Ibadan: Published for the Historical Society of Nigeria (Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Plc 1999), pp.518-544 and O. Nnoli, *Ethnicity, Federal Character and Development in Nigeria*, (England: Aldershot Brook Field Publications, 1999)

<sup>50</sup> B. A. Ahmed, I. Norafidah, I. and T. Z. Knocks, "Resource Control and Political Restructuring in Nigeria: A View from the South-South", (2017), 5(8), *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* and also D. Arowolo, "Nigeria's Federalism and The Agitation for Resource Control in The Niger Delta Region" (2011), *IDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, pp. 83-88

<sup>51</sup> Ahmed, Norafidah, and Knocks, "Resource Control and Political Restructuring in Nigeria: A View from the South-South"

<sup>52</sup> M. Dickson and S. A. Asua, "The Politics of Resource Control in Nigeria: Agitation and Innovation", (2016), 7(2), *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, pp. 1-13.

<sup>53</sup>

the British to appease the reactionary Northern part of the country. The ensuing effect of the arrangement is the elevation of ethnicity to the level of religion and as such the country remained a state rather than a nation. The facts largely explain the series of different propositions of the concept of restructuring. A cursory reflection on the arguments of those calling for restructuring, but actually hiding their real intent, are yet to clarify what this restructuring means.

In addressing restructuring, the most obvious thing is that the country system of government needs to be re-examined. Though, ethnic, religious and language distinctions and common objectives may assist in explaining the identity of Nigeria in pursuit of restructuring. They cannot adequately address dissimilarities in our political saliency and intensity of the diverse issues between Nigeria as a nation particularly in this period. The most major reason is that the political evolution of Nigeria was characterized by increasing ethnic class conflict, recurring rioting and mob violence, and frequent military coups d'etat etc, the country experienced. Nigerians have suffer real marginalization, shortages of food, literacy, education, wealth, income, health, and productivity, most which must be recognized and efforts made to do something about them.<sup>54</sup> Beyond and behind these shortages, however, there is a greater shortage: a shortage of political community and of effective, authoritative, legitimate government which confirms the necessity for restructuring of the country.

## **5. WHAT WE ARE RESTRUCTURING**

Restructuring will certainly not provide all the answers to our developmental challenges; however it is capable of repositioning our mindset as we generate new ideas and initiatives that would make Nigeria's existence all inclusive and worthwhile. This must translate to the Nigerians citizens agreeing to stay together as a nation state irrespective of its diversity. Note that the gains and pains of the Nigerian civil war 1967 to 1971 has shown clearly that cessation or break up to enable agitators to secede from its sovereignty and territorial integrity as it being clamour should not be the object of restructuring, but what is seriously needed to be restructured are:

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<sup>54</sup> Ugochukwu-Uko, "Real Reasons Igbos Cry of Marginalization under Buhari,"

1. Reforming the governmental structures in a manner that ensures equality in the country's political, religion, culture, ethnic, and languages diversity.
2. Synergize policies that will achieve peace, prosperity and progress for all citizens united by common interests, common aspirations and a common destiny.
3. Reduce the powers of the central government as may be thought necessary, and reverse the specific matters back to states' and Local Government's control.

In the light of above and notwithstanding any propositions, adequate measure should be taken against corrupt individuals presently holding the country into ransom otherwise, restructuring in this perspective may not bring an improvement to Nigerian desire for good and all inclusive government.

4. Intensify effort on anti-corruption crusade. The reason for agitations in this country is because certain people feel they are marginalized, indeed the whole country is marginalized because of bad governance and corruption. Without mystification of reality the issue of marginalization can be fathomed from the level of poverty, unemployment, decadence in infrastructures like road, inadequate and accessible healthcare services, inequality in education, lack of iniquity in participation in governance, poor state of economy.

Admittedly, the existence of robust laws and agencies fighting corruption establish the fact the government is committed to fighting corruption, even though, the progress made so far is not that impressive, corruption seems to be an insurmountable phenomenon.

5. Restructuring fundamental focus requires a new start under a new constitution approved by the people at a Referendum.
6. There is need for attitudinal change to governance; this should be well ingrained in the psyche and practice of government officials and the governed in Nigerian.

In summary, it is imperative that Nigerians embrace change particularly, the restructuring of Nigeria as rightly observed, it is *'better to try to deal with the condition that engendered*

*nationalism than to breach at its victims and beg them to refrain from feeling what, in their circumstances, it is only too natural to feel”<sup>55</sup>*

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The paper considered the Nigeria as a nation state and Nigeria as geographic entity looking at ethnicity and ethno-political crises in Nigeria. It argued that the structure and dynamics of Nigerian should provide an appropriate framework for understanding the politics of restructuring in the country. This is because the cumulatively divisive impact of ethnicity in Nigeria over the decades, has constantly rendered nation-building experiment in the Nigeria Federalism most difficult. The position of the paper is that issue of restructuring should not only be a legal cum constitutional matter; it must go beyond it as important as legality and constitution may be.

The Nigeria’s unity as a country should not rests upon public opinion, but mutual respect, equality and fairness. The country’s unity in diversity should never be cemented by the blood of its citizens shed in civil war as experienced between 1967 and 1970; neither should it be recurrence of various ethnics, tribal or religious killings. The indispensability of Nigerians living together in love and affections cannot be negotiated otherwise, it may one day perish. There are immense possibilities in forging a nation with common goal, centralized nationality and a noble destiny. The National Assembly possesses all legal (constitutional) means of preserving it by conciliation; the sword should never be placed in the hands of Nigeria to preserve our unity in diversity.

It is believed that a restructured Nigeria will promote self-reliance, productivity, accountability, proper utilization of resources for socio-economic development and reduce undue centralization of power at the national level. Similarly, by decentralizing and devolving power from the overburdened centre to the margins, genuine federalism will be achieved, liberate the local genius of the people and unfetter their creative and enterprising spirit. There should be a sincerer interaction amongst Nigerians, particularly the Northern Nigeria to assuage the fears and misconceptions surrounding the issue of restructuring.

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<sup>55</sup> Ernest Gallner, ‘Nationalism’; (1998) 116

