

## THE RESTRUCTURING QUESTION IN NIGERIA: THE TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS

**Francis C. ODEKE, PhD**

Department of History and International Relations  
Ebonyi State University Abakaliki.  
odekefrancis59@gmail.com/

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**Ikechukwu O. ONUOHA, PhD**

Department of History and International Relations  
Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki  
pabloletters@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This paper attempts an examination of the concept of restructuring for a better understanding of the term. The paper considers the necessity or otherwise of restructuring the Nigerian state structure as is currently called for. The origin and consequences of the politics of restructuring in Nigeria are equally given attention. Theoretically, the paper is based on the social identity theory first propounded by Henri Tajfel in his "Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict" (1979) which considered class or group's claims of superiority over other classes as the root cause of conflicts in the human society. The study sourced its information through the secondary sources. It uses the thematic and analytic approaches of research. The paper is of the opinion that the emergence of a group of politicians who see themselves as more powerful and relevant than others is responsible for the endless quests for the Nigerian state structure to be restructured. These groups are always guided by their selfish interests from the debates they instigate. In the debates, only the common people are sacrificed for the interest of the few cabal members. To save the commons who are more in number, the paper concludes that the cabal has to be done away with and a more purposeful leadership that will place the needs and interests of the common man above the narrow group interests of the few, brought to replace it.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Restructuring, Politicians, Selfish interests, the common man.

### Introduction

Since the colonial days restructuring the Nigerian structure has always generated heated public debates. The initiators of each phase of the debates are always the politicians, especially those within the corridors of power. Those who normally suffocate in the heat of the debates are common Nigerians dragged into a controversy they know little or nothing about. These commoners engage in the debates on ethnic considerations in support of their ethnic members within the corridors of power. They tow whichever line their "own" in power tows, believing their own to be the Saints in the game of power, and that whatsoever their representative does or says is the wisdom of the gods for the advantage of their region. Few commoners have the time to consider the implications of each debate and its real beneficiaries. Many may not know the real meaning of restructuring and the reasons for the heated debates on restructuring.

Those that provoke the debates are never always within the reach of the common people who are dragged into believing that whatever opinion their leaders are holding represents or serves the interest of all the people. But in the daily living conditions of the commoners and the flamboyance of their leaders, the difference of the two classes is clear. While the common people can hardly afford the necessities of their every day living, their leaders flaunt uncommon riches and flamboyance without actually working as hard as the commoners. The commoners work improperly clothed under the scorching sun from morning to sun set with crude implements but their leaders are always cutely dressed, working within numbered hours in air conditioned offices and are chauffeured in air conditioned cars to air conditioned homes. This was exactly how the colonial masters lived, making them look like gods to the suppressed indigenous peoples.

Man lives in a world of disequilibrium where those who encounter fortune by hook or line tend to force those still aspiring to encounter same out of the way or bend them into servitude through jobs that engage the unfortunate lots, robbing them of potentials, time and opportunities. While on such jobs, the employed is expected to work and do exactly what the employer designed to pursue, attain and sustain his/her interest. If the employee is directly affected by employment or any loved persons, he is expected to volitionally leave or be fired for compromising his/her job. The implication is that the employee, wittingly or unwittingly, creates some critical situations or violence that harms him and his loved ones as a result of the kind of job he is engaged in. Barash and Webel (2009) described this form of violence as “structural violence” by which people afflict themselves and their loved ones by their jobs’ prescriptions. According to them:

Structural violence usually has the effect of denying people important rights, such as economic well-being; social, political, and sexual equality; a sense of personal fulfillment and self-worth; and so on. When people starve to death or even go hungry, a kind of violence is taking place. Similarly, when humans suffer from preventable diseases or when they are denied a decent education, affordable housing, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, or opportunities to work, play, or raise a family, a kind of violence is occurring, even if no bullets are shot or clubs are wielded. (:8)

Continuing, Barash and Webel maintained that:

A society commits violence against its members when it forcibly stunts their development and undermines their well-being, whether because of religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual preferences, or some other social reasons. Structural violence is a serious form of social oppression, which can also be identified with respect to treatment of the natural environment ... structural violence is regrettably widespread and often unacknowledged. (:8)

Johan Galtung (1985), observed that under conditions of structural violence, “many people who behave as good citizens and think of themselves as peace-loving people, participate in settings within which individuals may do enormous amount of harm to other human beings without even intending to do so, just performing their regular duties as a job defined in the structure.” Of a truth, structural violence, including hunger, political oppression, and psychological alienation, often is unnoticed and works slowly to erode humanistic values. (Barash and Webel: 8) In Nigeria, all the foregoing factors of violence are observable from the East to the West, North and South, and the victims of it all are the common Nigerians. The instigators of the violent situations are the Nigerian political class who design and formulate virulent social policies as a means to securing their ends. The end losers in that endless war are the unfortunate majority (the commoners) in Nigeria. The politicians orchestrate such unholy war, in the words of Karl von Clausewitz (1780-1831), to secure their power, positions and material benefits.

### **Conceptualizing Restructuring**

Restructuring as a concept or an idea means to reorganize a system or an organization in a different way considered better than what has been existing. The system could be political, judicial or cultural. On the other hand, the organization to be restructured could be a business or social group. Whichever, restructuring recognizes that an amendment is needful in a group. It therefore, targets changes that can better answer the contemporary needs of the particular group concerned.

Restructuring has been variously used by individuals when they are talking about the need for reforms in their groups. In Nigeria, many conceptualize the term in ways that portray ethnic cleavages and sentiments when it comes to public debates on national issues. In that sense, restructuring is seen as agitation, separatism, secessionist bids, an outburst for public attention, and so forth. (Ekumaoko, C.E., 2018:3-4) All these depict the different notions about restructuring which simply means reform, remake, reorganize, etc. (Roget, P.M., 1962: 86, 89,106).

Taken from this view, restructuring in the Nigerian context should mean an attempt to re-order the socio-political systems in a way that could be beneficial to all component areas of the country. If that is acceptable, it becomes the prerogative duty of those Nigerians in decision-making positions to initiate and moderate the debate on restructuring and what should be the target (s) of the exercise. The reason for that task is based on the fact that people occupying decision-making positions should be conversant with the full meaning of politics and their responsibilities as people’s representatives. Thus, they are the expected custodians of the solutions to their people’s needs as well as those of the country at large. Many Nigerians are wont to believe that the demand for restructuring is peculiar to the Igbo who claim that they have good grounds to prove that, since the Nigeria Civil War ended in 1970 they have been treated as a defeated lot, and so marginalized as second citizens in their own country. But facts remain

that every ethnic nationality feels it ought to be recognized and made to count in the affairs of the country. Every ethnic group within the six geo-political zones in Nigeria has its peculiar needs which it variously drums attention to. Nigerians, who chose to attribute the call to restructure Nigeria only to the Igbo, leave a great lacuna without any concern for the truth. The cry to restructure the country is a nation-wide cry for justice, equity and openness in governance according to how each ethnicity is affected.

That the Igbo would prefer to be in Biafra as their country is quite a different issue from the question of restructuring the social and political systems of Nigeria to accommodate every section of the country equitably, and in comfort. When former United Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) disintegrated into separate countries, it did not mean that Russia was restructured to accommodate the interests of the States that left Russia. When Eritreans left Ethiopia, Ethiopia was not restructuring its social and political systems to satisfy the yearnings of the Eritreans. The same goes for Southern Sudan when it parted ways with Northern Sudan. What the Igbo, like other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, are demanding is an equitable formula for sharing the “national cake” for the peace, progress and unity of their country, Nigeria.

### **History of Restructuring in Nigerian Politics**

The debate to restructure Nigeria started first in the 1840s when Earl Grey proposed the idea of municipal government and its use in training West Africans in “the art of civilization and government until such a time the people became politically mature to protect themselves and their affairs to reduce British interference and assistance.”(Okafor, 1981:7) The concern in that restructuring was how to train West Africans in democracy as well as to identify the ideal political institutions for self-governance in the region. In 1886, Cornelius Alfred Moloney, the then administrator of the Lagos Colony, created a Board of health municipality which later became a training institute for the self-dependence of his colonial subjects and their eventual education for legislative and municipal matters. (Okafor: 1981) Moloney’s first set of students were traditional rulers from the Lagos areas who were not yet literate in Western education.

In 1898, the British government set up the Selbourne Committee to consider the future administration of the Niger areas in the hope of unifying them into one common country. The Committee recommended the unification of all the areas for smooth and profitable administration in the future. In 1900, a bold step in restructuring was taken in the Oil Rivers (Niger Coast) Protectorate and all the regions of the Niger areas south of Idah, were lumped together to form the Southern Protectorate under Raph Moor as High Commissioner. All the areas north of Idah became the Northern Protectorate with Frederick Lugard as the High Commissioner. In 1906 another move to restructure the areas that later became Nigeria was taken when the Lagos Colony and the Southern Protectorate were joined together. By 1910,

J.C. Wedgwood and other members of the British parliament began advocating for the total amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates into a single country as Nigeria for socio-economic and administrative reasons. Frederick Lugard was appointed the first governor of the two Protectorates in 1912. He was charged with the responsibility of studying and recommending to the British government proposals for the unification of the Protectorates, to remain sympathetic to the traditional system of government in the Northern Protectorate, and to eventually force that system on the Southern Protectorate. (Okafor, 1981:44) That imposition was the first major flaw in British colonial rule in Nigeria which was later to affect every sector of the new country several decades after the amalgamation.

On May 13, 1913, Lugard submitted his proposals, and on January 1, 1914, the territories of the Lagos Colony, Southern and Northern Protectorates were amalgamated. That restructuring exercise was a deliberate error that never considered the peculiar cultural, economic and political backgrounds of the different regions of the new country. Subsequently, Frederick Lugard was appointed the first Governor-General of the country. A make-shift constitution was put in place as government instrument to back the duties of the Governor-General. That constitution created a Nigerian Council with 30 Europeans and 6 Nigerian members (mostly illiterate traditional rulers) to advise the Governor-General. (Eyiye, 2005:117) Power was over concentrated in the hands of the Governor-General, a development that soon led to agitations, especially by the educated class in Nigeria, who persistently called for further restructuring of the imposed social systems in their country. As P.N. Chikendu (2003) observed:

It is clear that the 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria Northern and Southern  
Nigeria was done as an expedient policy in the economic interest of Britain...  
(Lugard) pursued a policy aimed at permanently dividing the North and  
which made him adopt a system of indirect rule for the North and to force  
it down the throat of the South. (:12-13)

For half a decade, 1914 to 1919, Lugard ruled Nigeria by that faulty and most contradicting political engineering. Sir Hugh Clifford inherited the faulty foundation as the second Governor-General in 1919, and was immediately besieged with the problem of restructuring to accommodate members of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) who had become restive due to their exclusion from politics by Lugard. The Congress had claimed political representation of the coastal and hinterland areas of West Africa, a claim Clifford refuted as selfish and delusional because the members had never penetrated the interiors of the areas they claimed to be representing; and 'when they did, it was based on the tracks beaten out through the ingenuity of' the colonial masters. (Okafor, 1981:82) Nonetheless, Clifford's political reforms tried to accommodate both the traditional rulers and the educated Nigerians as well as force Lugard's policy of Native Administration of the North on the South. According to

Clifford, he wanted to secure a fuller representation of local interests and to grant a better share in the decision-making process to the educated class from the various Nigerian communities who were more articulate in rationalizing issues. (Okafor 1981: 88)

The Clifford restructuring culminated to his popular 1922 constitution, and subsequently laid down the foundation of the endless agitations for reforms by the different ethnic nationalities that were lumped together as one country by Lugard. The Nigerian members of the NCBWA were all living in Lagos as the colonial masters, and had grown jealousy of the opulence of political offices displayed by the Europeans that they desired earnestly nothing less from those political offices. By 1960 when Nigeria was granted political independence, those educated Nigerians based in Lagos had no home-grown modern political system to take care of the divergent interests of the various ethnic groups. From the 1950s, these divergences had begun to manifest fully when Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo, was robbed of his electoral victory in the Western region and later, the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group walked out of an independence conference in Lagos to oppose the struggle for self rule in Nigeria. Later, Zik in protest to the broad daylight robbery of his political victory in the Western region (Achebe, 1983:58), fled to his Eastern region where he quickly displaced Professor Eyo Ita, whom Achebe described as an urbane and detribalized humanist politician as leader of government business, an act that was widely interpreted as personal vendetta against the Efik. The result was virulent protests in Calabar which gave Eyo Ita a good opportunity to fan red-hot violence in the entire Cross River region against common Igbo people who were made the unfortunate victims of what they knew nothing about till this day. (Achebe, 1983: 58-59)

In the colonial days, restructuring was seen as a concern “with the problem of reconciling in one whole the diverse elements which go to make Nigeria.” (Willink’s Commission, 1958:1) That problem included the reasons for the fears of the minority areas which led to their demands for independence of their separate States. It was during the long debates of the Constitutional Conference in 1953 that the decision for a Federation of three unequal Regions, with Lagos as federal capital, and residual powers with the Regions, was taken. The NCNC which had advocated a stronger Federation with many smaller separate States with lesser powers had to acquiesce to that position held by the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG), not because that position was better but to discontinue a prolonged debate that would stand against the advance for independence. The result was a Federation of one larger Region with a population twice than the other two regions joined together. In the three Regions, the populations of the major groups were about two-thirds to the one-third of the minority groups. It was that imbalance that informed the renewed agitations of the minorities for their separate States in the 1954 Constitutional Conference but their voices were stifled until the next Constitutional Conference in 1957 when the Secretary of State for the colonies set up a Commission of Enquiry to look into the fears of the minorities and recommend means of allaying them.(Report of Willink/s

Commission, 1958) Elechi, M. N. (2000) stated that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, even the major ethnic groups have many of their members who are engaging in renewed agitation for their own States because they feel marginalized and neglected by their supposed brethren that are better privileged. According to him:

The crave for new States in Nigeria... could be likened to a gust of desert wind, to a craze for a new fashion, or to a sudden heavy down pour on a sunny midday. The nation, almost inexplicably, woke up to entertain endless number of requests for the creation of new States and adjustment of some State boundaries. To ask for why or how this new phenomenon came about appeared to be a display of ignorance. It was better to fall in line. It was safer to adjust to the new trend and conform with the new culture.(Elechi, 2000:1)

Thus, as early as two years after independence, Nigeria was already in such a political mess that the 1966 coup became unavoidably another unfortunate journey in restructuring the young country. What followed was the politics of State creation in May, 1967 when Yakubu Gowon, the new Head of State, restructured the country into 12 States to replace the earlier four regions. The January 15, 1966 coup and the counter coup of July of the same year gave birth to the massacre of many military men and civilians, mostly of Igbo extraction in many parts of the country. (Orjiakor, 2007: xix) The result was the thirty months Civil War between 1967 and 1970 which saw more deaths of the commoners by hunger.

### **Politics of Restructuring and the Common Nigerians**

Politics is a game of brain and brawn; a chess game in which only the better schemers win. In Africa, if not everywhere, politics has no good relationship with morality. Politicians accept no responsibility for any ill consequences of their actions except where the consequences promote their interests. The people could be mobilized for a rally or a protest, and the bullets of State instruments of coercion or those of an opposition group would waste the lives of the people. In Odeke (2003) it was observed that the politicians may see the need to be comfortable with such a misfortune because in it they see more opportunities for promotions.

Selfishness as a key component of capitalism (Okonkwo, et al, 2018:376-377), was one early lesson the Nigerian politicians learnt from the colonial masters who never wanted them to participate in Nigerian politics. The colonial masters had preferred traditional rulers to the educated elements in politics, a development that was not acceptable to the Nigerian educated class. The result was a stiff class fight between the Nigerian educated class and the colonial officers which eventually edged out the traditional rulers from politics at the dawn of independence in 1960. It was the Nigerian military, seeking acceptance and legitimacy that restored the traditional institutions to political relevance for grassroots mobilization, first through Yakubu Gowon's creation of 12 States, then by the Murtala/

Obasanjo Local Government Reform in 1976. Since then, the traditional rulers have remained a pampered lot of Nigerian politicians who use them to mobilize support for their political interests. The many sectional violent reactions to some national questions are eloquent testimonies to how political leaders in Nigeria use the masses for cheap political popularity.

When the 1994 Ogoni struggle for resource control under late Ken Saro-Wiwa, motivated the Niger Delta militancy, the political class in that region quickly constituted the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, MEND, to co-ordinate the operations of the different militia groups that sprang up to seize the opportunity to unleash mayhem on Nigerians, especially common Nigerians in the area. (*New African magazine*, January, 2012:22) At the end a #50 billion amnesty was granted the Niger Delta region by late President Shehu Musa Yar-Adua from the North. In a swift reaction to lure Yar-Adua to grant the north its own share of the amnesty largess, the northern political class hurriedly started a campaign that eventually brought about the monster Boko Haram insurgency that has wasted the lives of thousands of innocent common Nigerians. In the South-east, the renewed agitation for the realization of the sovereign State of Biafra has claimed thousands of the lives of Igbo youths through the bullets and brutalities of Nigerian security agencies. From the north-east, members of the Miyeth Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), agitating for unmitigated freedom to graze their cattle anywhere in Nigeria, has become too wild and bloody with thousands of common Nigerians already wasted. Many homes of the displaced commoners are taken over as war booties by the herdsmen without anybody from the political class asking a question. In all these, members of the political class who often instigate most of these quests and debates, remain securely untouchable, leaving the common people to survive or die in their dilemma. The result is the unchecked proliferation of sectional groups and their blood-letting activities under the watchful eyes of the Nigerian politicians. (Uche, et al, 2017: 41-62)

### **Is Restructuring Still Necessary in Nigeria?**

The contradictions of the faulty foundation of Nigeria as laid by Frederick Lugard and his co-travellers will continue to throw up opportunities that will ever enrich political office holders in Nigeria the same way the colonial officers were enriched by their colonial opportunities in the country. Each time political leaders in Nigeria provoke a restructuring debate in the country, they also provoke sympathies from the common people of their various ethnic groups who line up in arms behind them in support of the stand of their representatives. Such supports very often go virile in which case the supporting commons lose their lives while their representatives are spared. In time of no controversy over anything, the representatives do not always care for the needs of the commons. As observed by Kuka (2009):

When Nigerians are in office, they seldom speak on-behalf of their people and for the righting of wrongs done them presumably through government negligence.(:2)



In the view of J.O. Odey (2015:24), Nigerians do not envisage a situation where a few people in the uppermost rung of the political ladder in the country would be living in a paradise while the rest of the population would be cast into destitution, hopelessness, misery and early death. Both Kuka and Odey are priests of the Most High God. Their opinions can be likened to the sermon on the Mount by Jesus Christ who counseled that blessed are the poor for theirs was the kingdom of heaven. That is the only hope of the commoners whose obvious end in supporting their political representatives remains untimely death. It therefore, means that the several restructuring debates in Nigeria from the colonial days have worsened the situation of the common man in the country instead of addressing them. Unfortunately, the leaders for whose sake the commons sacrifice their days, dwell continuously in relative peace and plenty. Chinua Achebe (1983:1) identified the cause of that mystery as the unwillingness of Nigerian leaders to 'rise to the challenge of personal example which (is) the hallmark of true leadership.' What Achebe meant was that if anything deserved to be restructured in Nigeria, it was the leadership of the country.

But that restructuring has to start with the caliber of men and women that emerge as leaders in the different epochs of the country's history. Except the leaders and leadership in Nigeria are simultaneously reformed first, the troubles with the country will persist without an end (Achebe, 1983: 1) In a plain view of a Priest, Odey (2015:17) noted that:

In a country where those who call themselves leaders abandon the sacred duty of harnessing and directing the resources of the (country) for common good and turn politics into the biggest and most lucrative industry, where this industry booms on the ruins of millions of human beings, where the leaders decide who will get what, how, why and when, anybody who thinks that (all is well in the country) will be making a great mistake.

In a country of so much wealth where only a few men and women live in opulence amidst so many wretched poor men and women who labour so hard and then die for the comfort of so few a people, any debate for restructuring should first of all, target the leadership, and then after, the social systems. To leave the Nigerian leadership untouched in any restructuring exercise will imply an acceptance to live in the tough days of colonialism, a kind of sorrowing and smiling in the face of all the ills of a society. Restructuring debates have been too many in Nigeria with their negative consequences on the helpless masses of the country. The Aba Women Riot of 1929 was a protest for the need to restructure the social systems, particularly the tax system, in Nigeria. The same were the reasons for the 1949 Enugu Coal Workers' protest and the workers general strike of 1964. The 1964 and 1965 federal and Western region election crises were two eventual precipitators of the Civil War in Nigeria in which millions of

commoners, civilians and soldiers, were wasted. In all these, and others in recent time, the leaders are always shielded by State instruments which have always abused the rights of common Nigerians, and hunted them down to their early graves. In the face of all these historic bloody examples, should restructuring debates in Nigeria always be done on arms to prove our support or rejection of our political representatives?

### **Summarizing Restructuring Exercises in Nigeria up to 2018**

From the 1840s when the British sought a way of involving West Africans in the government of their countries, the concern were how to get the right kind of political institutions and systems that would be profitably suitable for the region. Consideration was given to non-educated traditional rulers in preference to the educated elements. The reason was that since traditional institutions were in vogue in West Africa, it was ideal to train and use the rulers in that system in modern system of government for the good of the colonial masters. That was based on the belief that the traditional rulers were actually closer to their and can be regarded as true representatives of the people.(Okafor,1981:82) But that reason was unacceptable to the educated class which informed the nationalist struggle that eventually wrested political power from the colonial masters.

However, the nationalists had no indigenously developed modern system of government apart from the traditional systems of the various communities as well as the colonial system by which they had been inducted and trained in Western values and beliefs. With that Western background, they therefore, preferred to inherit all the colonial institutions at the exclusion of the traditional institutions which they had been taught were barbaric, satanic and backward. That parochial oversight soon resulted to crises and instability in the entire West African region, including Nigeria, such that in the immediate post-independence era the Nigerian political climate, for instance, had become so turbulent that all the regions of Nigeria were demanding the restructuring of the country and its social systems. The initiators of the demands were the same educated elements, the nationalists who had fought the colonial masters, and were in control of the new country. Signs of discontent began to manifest in the 1950s when in 1951 Awolowo and Azikiwe planted the seed of tribal politics in the country, fuelling ethnic demands for restructuring. In 1953, the Northern region demanded to opt out of Nigeria if the South would not drop its insistence for an early independence, and other discordant overtures that 'it seemed...Nigeria would split in two.' (Crowder, 1976: 230-234) Also, between 1953 and 1957, all the minority areas were demanding a recognition that would guarantee them self political right for fear of dominance by the majority groups. (Willink's Commission, 1958) The sectional demands for restructuring coupled with the ineptitude leadership of the Nigerian politicians, resulted to the revolutionary coup of January 15, 1966, and a counter-coup on July 29, 1966. General Aguiyi Ironsi who became the leader of Nigeria, had introduced a unitary system of government which was strange to the political class because it concentrated power in a central federal government. That arrangement brought the existing four unequal

regions of Nigeria under an omnipotent control of the central government, stripping the regions of their individual political authorities and benefits. The counter-coup of 1966 in which Ironsi was killed, to the Hausa/ Fulani educated and military elements, was to correct that poorly restructured system.

On May 27, 1967, Yakubu Gowon who emerged the new Head of State of Nigeria, restructured the country into 12 States (Orjiako, 2007: xix) to undo the Igbo population, but as it seemed, to uphold the Willink's report on the fears of the minorities within the Eastern region dominated by the Igbo. From Gowon, every military regime adopted the politics of State creation for public acceptance and legitimacy. That failed to answer the myriad social questions about Nigeria as all communities of each ethnic nationality yearned for a State of its own (Elechi, 2000: 15-23, 35, 74-76) The Murtala/Obasanjo Local Government Reform of 1976 helped traditional rulers back to political relevance. By 1960 when the British colonialists relinquished power to the middle-class in Nigeria, the sentiments of the Nigerian public against their traditional rulers were yet to die down. Their flagrant abuse of official positions, corrupt tendencies, arrogance, high handedness and aggressive treatments of their subjects disqualified them for any public office or responsibility. The middle-class now in power saw these irresponsible characteristics of the embittered traditional rulers as enough credentials to relegate them out of public relevance. The result was the total disregard, disrespect and non-challant attitudes to traditional systems by the new men in power in the immediate post-independence period.

Though the Arthur Richards constitution of 1946 and the Lyttleton constitution of 1954 had tried to restore the prestige of the traditional rulers, the local government reforms of 1952 by the Western Regional Government greatly reduced the powers of the traditional rulers, resulting to the displacement of the Native Authorities by local councils with elected members. The evolution of modern structures of government has continued to affect the influence of traditional rulers in post-independence Nigeria. Their involvement in party politics only guaranteed them opportunities to state patronage and resources but never enough prestige and influence to act as the traditional rulers of the pre-colonial era. They have become mere ceremonial heads of their communities, with whatever privileges and influence they enjoy depending on the prevailing political situation, and more so, on which side of the political divide they stand.

Shiyanbade and Ajuwon (2017) said that the post-colonial state (politicians and the people) see the traditional chiefs as collaborators of the colonial oppressors and for that and other reasons, were not to be trusted or given any major role in the new nation-state. That perception gave rise to the relegation of traditional authorities to the position of custodians of the customs and traditions of their people by all post-independence constitutions and governments. The contributions to the socio-economic development of their communities and states are now minimal since the state has taken up the responsibility of development and collection of taxes. Politically, they make no significant contributions

on policy issues that would affect their people directly. But when General Yakubu Gowon, then Nigeria's Head of State, adopted state creation diplomacy to seek acceptance and legitimacy for military governance, hope of restoration of traditional rulers into Nigerian politics began to flicker. The Murtala/Obasanjo's Local Government Reform of 1976 added an impetus that empowered them to reinvigorate their relevance at least in the Local Government Councils of the country (Orjiakor, N. 2007). When in 1989, Ibrahim Babangida encouraged full-blown grass-root elections after banning the old breed politicians, politicians that 'cared for the welfare' of traditional rulers eventually emerged winners of the non-party grass-roots elections. The 1976 Local Government Reform had specified conditions and qualifications for those aspiring for traditional ruler-ship in the new local government system.

According to Omole, B. (2016), the new emphasis on certain personal qualifications (by the Murtala/Obasanjo Local Government Reform of 1976) such as higher education, personal achievements, past and present status in government or private sectors as well as the extent of wealth for people that aspired to become traditional rulers in Nigeria, was a good development though it favoured only aspirants who had spent the better part of their life in the cities. (Achebe, N. 2017) With the traditional institutions back to partisan politics in Nigeria, agitations for restructuring have even gained more tempo as social-economic groups like the MACBAN, now rise with impunity on arms against other farmers in the country, to agitate for grazing rights anywhere in Nigeria. (Saturday Vanguard, June 30, 2018:11) Many are of the opinion that these agitations have both local and external sponsorships against the unity of Nigeria. (Saturday Vanguard, June 30:7) From that doubt, one wonders what has been actually restructured since the 1840s when the journey of restructuring started in Nigeria. Has the geography of the country or its corrupt social systems changed?

### **Conclusion**

The trouble with Nigeria lies in failed leadership. (Achebe, 1983:1) The political leadership in the country is too weak and complacent to tackle the different challenges of the component areas of the country. That weakness and complacency have their roots in the ethnic inclinations of members of the Nigerian leadership.

Every political leader in the country hails from one village or the other where social imbalances make life very unbearable. When an individual from one of these villages rises out of such impoverished background to a position of public responsibility, his people quickly remind him that his promotion had been the long expectation and prayer of the community, clan or region for a better life of all of them or at least, for the privileged few of them. In the office, therefore, the unprincipled leader in a determination never to return poor to his poor background makes concerted efforts to misappropriate any money entrusted to him in his official capacity, without considering the ill effect of his actions.

The problem of placing self above the country is the real problem of Nigeria. It is for that wickedness, such greed, ineptitude conceit and recklessness that this paper argues that what should be pulled down first, and then restructured, is the cabal called leadership in Nigeria. That leadership should be replaced with a political leadership that has the capacity and will- power to appreciate the sensitivity engendered by the country's diversity. (*Weekly Sunrise*, April 30/May6, 2018:5) In a country of so much wealth with an estimated population of about 220 million people, it is wrong that only about 40,000 to 50,000 men and women should constitute themselves into a cabal to enslave the majority. But if, and only if, the cabal is replaced with a leadership with human face, the tragedy of the commons will be over, and all other things in Nigeria will take a better shape.

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