ABSTRACT
Nigeria, as constituted presently has been a 'boiling cauldron' threatening to spill over on several occasions since it was arbitrarily put together by the colonial master through the amalgamation of diverse political entities in 1914. Congenital problems of incompatibility, mutual suspicion, and intolerance, exacerbated by the colonial policy of divide and rule, and the frequent mismanagement of the nation's diversity (especially ethno-religious) by the post-independence leaders have been stoking the embers of division in the polity (house?). Several opportunities to forge unity in diversity have been frittered away or deliberately manipulated in the pursuit of parochial interests deriving inspiration and support from primordial considerations rather than civic national cause. We attempt to establish in this study, based essentially on detailed historical analysis, that Nigeria have the potentials to transform to a united, non-divisive polity if the leaders could manage its diversity in a just, equitable, impartial, and patriotic manner. We believe that only this can allay the prevalent fear of marginalisation, and exclusion of the less privileged groups from the scheme of things at the national level thereby ensuring cohesion in the 'House'.

Keywords: divide and rule, national integration, primordial, inter-group relations, civil war, ethno-religious faultlines.

INTRODUCTION
Martin Meredith in his highly acclaimed book – “The state of Africa: A History of the continent since independence” – aptly described Nigeria (especially in the period 1960-1970) as a “House Divided” (Meredith, 2011: 194-205). This characterisation raises some posers and requires more elucidation in order to broaden the application of the phrase to depict the political fortunes of Nigeria since it was put together by the colonial master in 1914. In the first instance; was there a ‘House’ (properly so-called)? If yes, who built the ‘House’ and why? Who are the inhabitants and what is their role in the ‘building’ of the ‘House’. When and how did division set in? Was the division in the ‘House’ rectified in 1970 when the civil war ended? What is the state of that ‘House’ currently? A detailed interrogation of these posers and their appendages constitute the kernel of this study. ‘House’ as used here refers to a nation (in this context, Nigeria). Thus the concern here is how Nigeria as a nation was conceived, by whom and for the benefit of whom, when and how it has fared ever since.

Before we go further there is a need to have a proper understanding of the concepts of nation building, national integration and inter-group relations which we believe are central to this study. The process of nation building or state metamorphosis based on the Westphalia political system exhibits three distinct stages. First, there is a coming together of disparate peoples willingly committing themselves to a legal framework or treaty for the establishment and nurturing of a nation. This suggests that there must be a kind of identity congruence (Paden and Soja, 1970). At this stage the ideological basis, constitutions and the form and substance of government are mutually agreed upon and brought to life concretely. This could conceivably represent the early or formative stage of state development. This is followed by a response to, and accommodation of transformative challenges, conflict resolutions and management of diverse interests in such a way and manner to retain and sustain the interests of stakeholders.
It is after this that a real nation is expected to emerge. In this context the post-colonial Nigeria nation is presumed to fit into this scheme. But significantly the Nigeria that emerged at independence was a caricature (or at best a close imitation) of this typology. Specifically the leaders of the emergent nation have been battling with both congenital and self-inflicted problems and challenges prominent among which are ethnic and religious faultlines (Ekeh, 1975; Achebe, 1984; Bello, 2012; Ogbeidi, 2012). This development must have informed Meredith’s description of Nigeria at this period as a “House Divided”. However, we are set to prove in this study that there was no proper ‘House’ abinitio because Nigeria was a unilateral colonial creation. Even the nationalist leaders who championed the struggle for independence were not really convinced about the existence of a real Nigerian nation as the following statements from two prominent leaders affirm. Chief Obafemi Awolowo (who was to become the opposition leader in the first republic) in his book: “Path to Nigerian Freedom” published in 1947 famously declared that; “Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression”. And, in 1948, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (who was to become the Prime Minister at independence) was said to have declared on the floor of the legislative council that;

Since 1914 the British government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs, and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite... Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country (cited in Ayu: 2014:2)

These views are representative of that of the ruling elites most of whom rose to prominence through the manipulation of ethno-religious fault-lines. Rhetorical pronouncements afterwards in which they tried to modify this stand point by professing to forge unity in diversity were merely empty platitudes dictated by political expediency. Concrete actions were almost always animated and dictated by parochial considerations (Ajayi, 2014:83-98).

This brings us to matters of national integration and inter-group relations. National integration and nation building appear to “have similar connotations and so are often used interchangeably but quite appropriately nation building is the ‘end’ while national integration represents the ‘means’ towards that end” (Ajayi, 2013:139). Paden and Soja (1970) also asserts that national integration is “reduction in ethnic identity and stratification and the establishment of larger unity based upon associational ties”. What these positions imply is that inter-group relations must be reflective and supportive of this noble intention. By inter-group relations we refer to the nature and character of interactions between or among disparate groups. Nigeria is an amalgam of such groups or what Ojerinde (2000) rightly referred to as “ethnic nationalities that had lived on this land under established kingdoms, empires, caliphates and chiefdoms”. Although this scenario cuts across Africa, it should be noted, as Osaghae and Suberu (2005) have rightly done, that Nigeria is one of the most deeply divided states in Africa.

In order to enhance the expository intention of this study an indepth historical analysis anchored on proper placement of events, personalities, policies, and actions in time and space is the method adopted for this work. Rather than being a narrative, it is based on themes woven around the posers raised earlier. The selected themes are: i. Nigeria: The Birth of a Nation, ii. Nurturing and Sustaining the New Nation during the Colonial Era iii. The Politics of the Post-colonial period; iv. Concluding Remarks. These are taken together in a free flowing essay that employs contemporary secondary literature to attempt to fill the gaps and slippages in our understanding of the nature and character of the Nigerian nation. Fundamentally the study is an endorsement of Meredith’s observation as captured in the title but it goes further to locate the division in the ‘House’ in the colonial era as deemed appropriate. Now to the themes.

I. Nigeria: The Birth of a Nation

1914 is frequently mentioned in the literature as the year that Nigeria came into existence as a distinct political entity but it is important to note that 1914 was just the culmination of a process or series of events dating back to the 1890s. Ayu (2014) graphically captured the process in a tabular form as indicated below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Oil rivers protectorate amalgamated with other conquered coastal territories to form Niger coastal protectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Kingdom of Benin conquered and merged into Niger coastal protectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>More territories near Lagos conquered and amalgamated with Niger coastal protectorate to become protectorate of southern Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Protectorate of Northern Nigeria proclaimed as a sphere of influence to keep out other European powers. Of this we had entities as the Sokoto caliphate, Kanem Borno Empire, and other independent entities as Tiv, Igala, Jukun etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Colony of Lagos amalgamated with the protectorate of southern Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Amalgamation of the protectorate of northern Nigeria with the colony of Lagos and the protectorate of southern Nigeria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted with slight modifications, from: Ayu, I. (2014); The Break Up of Nigeria: Myths, Realities, and Implications – 5th Convocation Lecture, Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko.

It is implicit from this table that some amalgamation had taken place prior to 1893 (not captured in the table) as symbolised by the existence of protectorates which were also amalgams of several erstwhile independent communities / groups. Before the forceful bunching together of the various groups they were already organised into autonomous empires, kingdoms, caliphate, city-states etc (Tamuno, 1978) and attempts at creating mega states by the Oyo empire and the Fulani jihadists had been stoutly resisted as often as they were launched (Akinjogbin, 1998 & 2003 revised Ikiime, 1980). Thus the colonialists met on ground several autonomous groups often involved in wars, skirmishes, but also far-reaching commercial intercourse. This situation kindled the predatory instinct of the invaders who employed several unwholesome strategies like, intrigues, cajolery, deceit, frontal assaults, and ‘pacification’ to take over the groups piecemeal before conveniently merging them into protectorates as indicated in the table. And for reasons of political expediency, fiscal necessity, and administrative convenience, the protectorates were eventually amalgamated into a single protectorate of Nigeria through the protectorate Act of 1913 that came into effect on 1st January 1914 (Olaniyan, 2003). Significantly while these political machinations were being perfected the constituent units / groups were neither carried along nor consulted. Their feelings were also not considered before forcefully steamrolling them into a political contraption established chiefly to service colonial interests. It is important to note that for about 32 years the supposedly amalgamated northern and southern protectorates had separate administrative units. It was not until 1946 precisely that they were brought into a single administrative component (Cookey, 1986). Thus the division in the ‘House’ had been there from the very beginning but could have been minimised or even obliterated by a committed administration. However, colonial policies and actions exacerbated the situation as we shall demonstrate in the section below.

II. Nurturing and Sustaining the New Nation During the Colonial Era

Ordinarily one would have expected the ‘midwife’ that brought Nigeria to life in such circumstances to deploy tact, fairness, justice and equity in its management. But this was not to be as the colonial master opted for the corrosive policy of divide and rule which often pitched one group against the other. This bred mutual suspicion and intolerance thereby preventing the peoples from mustering a united front against colonial rule in good time. In effect amalgamation, repugnant as it is, may not necessarily be the problem as much as the way in which its outcome was managed. It is instructive to note that:

*The creation of modern states by force is not peculiar to Nigeria. Many modern states including, Britain (in the 11th century) Italy, and Germany, in the second half of the 19th century emerged from traditions of force. However, while these countries have achieved high levels of integration, Nigeria is yet to do so because of colonial economic interests and post-colonial leadership failures (Ajayi, 2014:84).*

It is hardly surprising therefore that since 1914 the new nation had been embroiled in crises of different dimensions that have been escalating progressively with the passage of time.
This unpleasant development must have forcibly struck Olaniyan (2003) when he lamented that:

*Although the motives for the colonial project were imperialistic and expedient, and although the motives negated its goals, amalgamation suggested the possibility of Nigeria. The problem, however is that the project has been seriously subverted by socio-political, economic and ethno-religious contradictions making the search for an enduring national cohesion at best a tantalizing possibility (Olaniyan, 2003:XV).*

Without mincing words the colonial policy of divide and rule was diametrically opposed to amalgamation and this constituted a congenital problem of nation building in Nigeria. The situation was further compounded by regionalisation which started with the Richards’ constitution of 1946. It will be recalled that this constitution divided the country into three regions along broad ethnic lines. These were the Northern, Western and Eastern regions. Other constitutions that followed – Macpherson’s (1951) and Lyttleton’s (1954) – retained and even consolidated this arrangement (Ezera, 1964). These constitutional arrangements encouraged fissiparous tendencies, selfish, and parochial orientation. The situation was akin to having three nations within a nation. Unfortunately some regional political parties soon emerged to canvass the interests of their regional bases.

It should be noted, however, that the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) had been formed in August 1944 under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay (President) and Nnamdi Azikiwe (Secretary) and that it was this organisation that provided the leadership for the national cause until 1951 when two new parties – the AG and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) were formed (Olusanya, 1980:). Thereafter political activities and the anti-colonial crusades were carried out in a piecemeal uncoordinated fashion by the regionally based political parties. Thus there was no unity of purpose and concerted action any longer. No development illustrated this schism in the nationalist struggle more than the reactions to the motion for self government for Nigeria in 1956 moved by Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group (AG) party in the House of Representatives in 1953. Predictably the western region and even the eastern region enthusiastically supported the motion. But the spokesman of the representatives of the northern region, Ahmadu Bello, wanted it delayed till “as soon as practicable” (House of Representatives Debates, 31st March, 1953: 1985-1993).

Evidently the North’s stand was informed by pragmatic evaluation of their prospects in an independent Nigeria at the proposed date. But they were misunderstood, roundly condemned, and ridiculed by other Nigerians. In fact the situation degenerated into a kind of north-south confrontation before the colonialists promised, through the Lyttleton constitution of 1954, self-government for any region that wanted it by 1956. Expectedly both the western and eastern regions grabbed the chance and became self governing in 1956 while the northern region tarried till 1959. This development further inflamed ethnic and regional passions and so the two halves of the country progressed towards independence with barely concealed mutual suspicion and antagonism. At independence, religion came into the mix thereby further compounding the volatile situation, as we shall establish in the next section.

### III. The Politics of the Post-Colonial Period

Nigeria became a sovereign nation on 1st October 1960 after more than sixty years under colonial tutelage. But independence did not translate to a clean break from the colonial experience as the problems that had been causing division within its ranks were carried over to the post-colonial period in more damaging forms. The fragile unity that facilitated the successful decolonisation process fizzled out gradually with the approach of independence. The struggle by the preponderant regionally-based political parties (NPC, NCNC and AG) for the exclusive control of the federal government assumed violent and unhealthy dimensions. Thuggery, arson, election rigging and other unwholesome political machinations were now regularly deployed to attain and retain power. Following the federal elections of 1959 the NPC and NCNC constituted the federal government while the AG became the opposition. The government was irascible and intolerant of opposition while the AG (opposition party) was unsparing and censorious. This provoked the federal government into decimating the ranks of the AG as a way of diminishing its influence.

Three major incidents reinforces this position. First, in 1962, the federal government responded to the personality clashes in the AG (a purely internal affair) by declaring a state of emergency in the western
region (the AG’s political base) at the end of which its stooge was installed as the premier of that region. Second, in September 1963, Chief Obafemi Awolowo (the AG leader) and some of his influential followers were jailed on trumped-up charges of treason (Jakande, 1966). This conveniently kept them out of circulation before and during the decisive federal elections of 1964 which the NPC-controlled government (in alliance with some minority parties) won in controversial circumstances (Dudley, 1973:1-86). And, third, was the nonchalant attitude of the federal government to the crisis situation that attended the western regional election of 1965 in the forlorn hope that the opposition would be permanently disabled thereby paving way for its total control of the region through its surrogate party (the Nigerian National Democratic Party – NNDP).

While this power play was going on in the west, the NPC-controlled federal government was also exerting its might in the north by deploying soldiers to brutally put down civil disturbances in the minority party-controlled Tiv region of the Middle Belt in 1962 and 1964 (Anifowose, 1982). There were also the controversial census exercises of 1962 and 1963 which were essentially ‘numbers game’ designed to confer numerical advantage on the North in order to advance its political fortunes at the expense of the other regions (Ayodele, 1999:41-57). From the foregoing the NPC – controlled federal government was not only intolerant of any form of opposition but also determined to repress and subject non-conforming communities, regions or ethnic groups to Northern oligarchy. But rather than achieve this motive, the manipulative tendencies and strong-arm measures alienated the groups from any pan-Nigeria orientation by imbuing in them a sort of persecution complex which encouraged a retreat to their ‘filial wombs’.

Within a space of five years the emergent nation was driven to the brink of disintegration by ethnic jingoism, nepotism, intolerance, and political disillusionment. The saving grace manifested in the form of military intervention on 15 January 1966. The coup halted the drift towards disintegration (at least for a season) and fostered renewed hope in the survival of the Nigerian nation. The initial enthusiastic welcome of the coup across the country in spite of its bloody nature attests to this. But this proved to be a hasty response as a countercoup was executed six months thereafter apparently to redress the real and imagined shortcomings of the earlier putsch and the government that it sired. For the records we can recall that nearly all the masterminds of the first coup were Igbo officers while most of the casualties (civilian and military) were of Northern extraction (Luckham, 1971).

Although the inconclusive nature of the coup did not allow the planners to form the government, the man who became the residuary legatee of the coup, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi (the erstwhile Chief of Staff), was also an Igbo man. Not only this, apart from refraining from punishing the coup plotters whom he put in ‘protective’ custody, he proceeded to surround himself with Igbo technocrats as advisers. He also effected promotions in the army which favoured Igbo officers disproportionately. However, his most telling political misadventure was the enactment of Decrees 33 and 34 which were widely viewed with suspicion across the country but especially in the North which understandably would have been adversely affected by the provisions of the decrees.

Decree 33 abolished all political parties and socio-cultural organisations that had provided the platform for the aggregation of the peoples’ views while Decree 34 enacted same day (24 May 1966) abolished the federal arrangement; proclaimed Nigeria a unitary state, and unified the regional civil services into a National Civil service (with the potential for cross country mobility of labour). This was unsettling for the North which had just lost the cream of her political and military elite on top of the subsisting paucity of educated elites there. Without doubt the North would have been completely eclipsed in the scheme of things at the national level if those decrees were to come into operation. It is hardly surprising therefore, as noted by Meredith (2011), that:

*The reaction in the North came swiftly. Civil servants and students staged anti-government demonstrations which soon flared into popular riots against Igbos living in the Sabon garis, the strangers’ quarters sited outside the walls of Northern towns. Several hundred Igbos were killed. ‘Araba!’ was the battlecry in the North – ‘Let us part!’* (Meredith, 2011:201)
There followed, on the 29th of July 1966, a countercoup masterminded by officers of Northern extraction which resulted in the assassination of Gen. Ironsii (the Head of State), Col. Fajuyi (Governor of the Western group of provinces) and several Igbo officers (Luckham, 1971:24-29). On the 1st of August 1966 Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon emerged from the ‘ashes’ of the countercoup as the new Head of State to the displeasure of Lt. Col. Ojukwu (Governor of the Eastern group of provinces) who refused to recognize Gowon as Head of State ostensibly because he was not the most senior surviving army officer.

This development and the renewed massacre of Igbo elements in the North – a situation which the federal military government under Gowon’s leadership did not make any serious attempt to curtail – compelled Ojukwu to order all Igbos to return ‘home’. This led to a massive exodus to the East. These happenings and some other factors (Nnoli, 1972:122) encouraged the aggrieved Eastern elites (military and civilian) to opt for secession from Nigeria. On the 30th of May 1967 a new nation known as Biafra was proclaimed by Ojukwu who had spurned “all attempts at compromise, rejecting concessions offered by Gowon and the federal government that would have given the Eastern Region virtual autonomy” (Meredith, 2011:203). Ojukwu’s intransigence might not be unconnected with the conviction that the East can survive as a sovereign nation because of the rich oil fields located there.

The impasse inexorably led to a fratricidal civil war that was fought with much bitterness resulting in the loss of millions of lives on both sides. Evidently the embers of mutual distrust initially ignited by the colonial policy of divide and rule and fanned subsequently by cut-throat competition amongst the ethnic groups have now become full blown threatening the corporate existence of the polity. The civil war lasted for about thirty months before Biafra was subdued by the federal forces. This was followed by Gowon’s famous declaration that there were ‘no victors and no vanquished’ in a rare gesture of magnanimity aimed at ‘binding up the nation’s wounds’. Other policies like renunciation of reparations, massive rehabilitation, return of assets etc. further demonstrated the determination of the federal government to ensure the re-integration of the Igbo into Nigeria. Gowon emerged as a national hero and a rallying figure whose name became synonymous with one Nigeria – “Go On With One Nigeria” – as frequently trumpeted by the government – owned media.

While it is true that the successful prosecution of the war had put paid to overt centrifugal tendencies (at least for a season) these were to remerge in subtle but equally damaging forms as from the 1980s. Religion had progressively coalesced with ethnicity, as a result of unbridled patronage of religions, to present renewed threat. It is an established fact that the North is predominantly Muslim while the South is predominantly Christian and this has been sharpening ethno-religious divide in the country (Enwerem, 1995; Okpanachi, 2010; Paden, 2007). Politicians have been exploiting this situation for selfish pursuits thereby inflaming passions in the process. This has continued to breed intolerance and religious extremism; all of which do not augur well for unity. In truth there were potentially integrative initiatives deployed by successive regimes since the Gowon era to foster unity in diversity but the frequent politicisation and manipulation of such forces for short term gains as well as official corruption have been diminishing their impact.

For instance the National Festival of Arts and Culture and the National Sports Festival were instituted to facilitate cross-cultural interactions on a wide scale. And in 1973 the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme was inaugurated. The decree establishing the scheme made it mandatory for graduates of some tertiary institutions to engage in prescribed national service in states other than their own for a period of one year before seeking permanent employment or proceeding for further studies. States were also created (mostly by the military regimes) ostensibly to satisfy the yearnings of minorities but the exercise progressively weakened the polyglot states vis-a-vis the centre in the supposedly federal arrangement that had been emplaced since August 1966. Thus rather than a kind of coordinate relationship between the two loci of power what we have been having even under civilian dispensations is a manifestly subordinate relationship between the states and the federal government at the centre. The skewed revenue allocation formula in favour of the federal government and the emphasis on a distributive pool rather than on a principle of derivation starkly exemplify this ‘unholy’ arrangement.

The response to this situation by the politicians has been their engagement in a do-or-die rat race to control the government at the centre exclusively. This has generated more crises, intolerance, distrust and
acrimony prompting the initiation of the policies of ‘Quota system’ and ‘Federal character’ to manage the situation in such a way as to ensure ethnic balancing in appointments and admissions to public educational institutions. Although all Nigerian constitutions since 1979 have these policies enshrined in them implementation has always been problematic. Some political parties have also been laying claim to a kind of zonal / rotational arrangements for filling political offices and appointments for the same purpose but a large segment of the population is still highly marginalised in the scheme of things. For instance the Niger Delta region that generates the bulk of the revenue accruing to the nation is one of the least developed areas in the country. Little wonder that it became a hotbed of violent militia groups involved in disruptive and terrorist acts directed against the oil companies and their state collaborators. While the assertive but moderate protestations of the Ken Saro Wiwa’s Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) had served to draw the attention of the international community to the deplorable situation in the Niger Delta, some more radical and violent groups soon hijacked the struggle. The disruptive activities of such militia groups as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys etc. adversely affected oil exploration and consequently revenue accruing therefrom such that the federal government had to resort to an amnesty program to placate them after several strongarm measures previously directed against them did not have the desired effect. However it should be noted that amnesty is a short term expediency, limited in scope and impact, designed to ensure that the oil flows without interruption thereby continuing to enrich state coffers. It has merely postponed the ‘evil day’ as youth restiveness in that region is beginning to escalate once more, especially among those who were not captured in the amnesty programme (Ajayi & Adesote, 2013). This could conveniently play into the hands of political mischief makers. In the other regions of the country we also have ethnic militia groups such as the Oodua People’s Congress (OPC) in the south west; Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the south east, and Arewa Peoples’ Congress (APC) in the North servicing geo-ethnic interests (Babawale, 2003). These are indicative of the discordant notes emanating from the ‘House’. These fissiparous tendencies show a loss of faith in the nation; a fallout of the insincerity of the leaders to the national cause usually preferring ethno-religious identifications primarily over and above the State. Ekeh’s (1975) brilliant discourse on the dialectics between the primordial public and the civic public alluded to this predilection.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS:

It is our submission, based on detailed historical analysis, that the ‘House’ (i.e. Nigeria) was never one or united from inception and that it had potentials to transform to a united polity if only successive leaders had managed its diversity in such a manner to ensure this. The selfish trend started with the colonial master and continued by indigenous leaders at independence. Meredith’s surreptitious attempt to exculpate the British colonial masters from blame in the inconclusive Nigerian project by glossing over their role in the making and unmaking of the nation has been laid bare by this study. While we agree with the position that since independence Nigerian leaders had ample opportunities to forge unity in diversity the prevalent attitude imbibed from the divide and rule strategy of their colonial mentors seem to have had far-reaching impact on their orientation and disposition. The trend has persisted up to now because the contemporary leaders are proteges of the ‘hybrid’ elites who blazed the trail at independence. In 1984, Chinua Achebe in his book: “The Trouble with Nigeria”, observed rightly that:

*There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate, water, air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership* (Achebe, 1984:1).

Therefore, what is to be done in this unpleasant situation? It should be noted that there is no quick fix solution to the problems of Nation building and that it is a gradual but continuous exercise. But it has to start somewhere and somehow. The starting point in this rescue mission, as we have suggested elsewhere (Ajayi, 2011 &2014), is for the people or their representatives to come together in a conference to
deliberate and agree on the terms, conditions, structure, and institutions for sustaining the union as in the case of the Westphalia political model discussed earlier. It is gratifying to note that an effort was made by the Goodluck Jonathan administration in this direction by convening a National Conference in April 2014. Although the way and manner in which it was constituted left much to be desired (especially in its representative character), it, at least, represents a ray of hope for the beleaguered nation. But the report of the conference is yet to be released or made known to the generality of the people. We are only hoping that it will not go the way of earlier attempts by previous administrations (Ajayi, 2011). The onus is now on the incumbent administration of President Muhammadu Buhari to release the report for scrutiny and possible endorsement by the representatives of the people in the National Assembly.

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