

Statehood, Citizenship Crisis and the National Question: Interrogating the Legal and Normative Construction of State Membership in Nigeria



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Abstract

The peculiarity of the formation, evolution and emerging nature of the post-colonial Nigerian state reflect a contradiction and crisis in forging formal, judicial and political claims to membership of the state. This paper interrogates how ineffective statehood, often occasioned by socio-economic and political exclusion and dominance results in the citizenship crisis in which legal and normative accounts of citizenship are constructed and contested. The paper draws its analysis from the failure of the Nigerian state to address the national question of the indigene-settler dichotomy and how it impinges on the interpretation of citizenship. The paper argues that state domination and control define the boundaries of citizenship in Nigeria on the basis of exclusion or inclusion against its formal precepts, thus, accounting for a citizenship crisis and the national question that needs to be resolved through a re-appraisal of the nature and role of the state in society. Thus, this study recommends that the Nigerian government should strive to practice good governance and adopt the tenets of the rule of law that guarantee equal rights and justice to all citizens irrespective of their affiliations, a greater sense of belonging and pride can be created in Nigerians.

Keywords: State, Statehood, Citizenship, Membership, Crisis, Nigeria

Introduction

The national identity debate and citizenship discourse in Nigeria today illustrate the complexity involved in defining Nigerian statehood and citizenship, especially in the light of today's conflict in the country. The Nigerian state conveys a contradiction of the nature of and limits to the liberal idea of statehood and citizenship inclusion, resulting in what is described as the 'existence of multiple and contending ideas of belonging and

identity' (Anderson et al, 2011) which has continually raised the national question on what constitutes Nigerian citizenship. Such fault lines of Nigerian citizenship characterize contradictions and conflict in which the legal accounts of state membership are defined by its normative or informal construction based on ethnicity set in practice. Anderson et al. (2011) further noted this to portray the essence of formal membership and legal status, the nature of citizenship in practice, 'as built from the ground up as well as gifted from the above' and 'the potential for disjuncture between citizenship and belonging'.

Kraxberger (2005) rightly refers to the complexity of the Nigerian experience as the "contested geographies of citizen-ship" derivable from "a confluence of geo-historical forces (cultural pluralism, colonialism, the political economy of oil and military rule... the proliferation of competing formal citizenship containers-cum-states" and deprivations that account for the "fractured and dysfunctional spaces of citizenship in Nigeria." The gamut of these issues forms the basis of this paper.

This paper therefore interrogates the extent to which citizenship can be referred to as the hallmark of the (Nigerian) state in the light of the foregoing issues. It argues that in theory and practice, equal status and attendant benefits of citizenship are generally often not guaranteed or deliberately not ensured by the state and/or are unattainable, resulting in an exclusion that breeds conflicts, especially on the basis of ethnicity, indigeneship versus settlers, religion and other issues of identity easily manipulated. These in themselves reflect the attributes which are symptomatic of the failure of the state to evolve a sense of statehood through state building and other processes of social engineering.

To evaluate the underlying basis for the issues under discourse, the paper examines the theoretical and conceptual understanding of the state and citizenship on the pedestal of the former's inability to forge a legalistic or statutory idea of citizenship in theory and practice. To achieve this, an assessment of the emergence of the Nigerian state is carried out to bring to bear how the legal and normative boundaries of its membership have been constructed and contested over time, especially concerning inclusion or exclusion. Thus, the dichotomy of indigenes versus settlers is also problematized in the continuum of how they challenge the established notion of citizenship and how they reinforce and reproduce conflicts, the national question and the search for peacebuilding in Nigeria.

Perspectives on Statehood, Citizenship and the National Question Statehood

Understanding statehood essentially demands understanding what the state is. In political discussion, conceptualizing the state reveals a multiple array of ideas that typify liberal and radical thinking to other contending variances that defy a general single definition. It is the absence of a general conception of a state that generates the debate on what the state is, its nature and its role as depicted by Lenin (cited in Okoli, 2005): "Every day, in one connection or another, you will be returning to the question: what is the state? What is the nature? What is the significance?" (p. 2).

This explains why liberal thinking and tradition conceive of the state as an indispensable political organization that serves as the night watchman imbued with the attribute of fostering order. Born in bourgeois scholarship and the Westphalian tradition, the state is seen as neutral and serving no particular interest, bearing the instruments of coercion. As noted by Okolie (2005), the state "merely enunciates the actors to compete on a level playing field. The role of the state therefore is primarily to ensure that no one actor holds such rules in the breach". Meeting social order and stability is thus associated with the role and purpose of the state. Contextually, such a state is expected to assign equal status to all citizens and ensure that they are treated equally (Osaghae, 1990).

However, the extent to which the state performs these roles is questioned by the Marxian perspectives. It is in such Marxian tradition that Ake (1985) referred to the state as:

A specific modality of class denomination in which class domination is autonomized. By autonomization, it is meant, that the institutional mechanisms of class domination are constituted in a way that they enjoy independence from... society such that they appear, following Engel (1978) as an objective force standing alongside society" (p. 105).

Consequently, this class-centered conception is explained in terms of a class struggle and the institutions of the state that support such classification, especially in maintaining the political and economic polarization of the society for the sake of a few. Thus, far from being neutral, the state is seen as advancing and protecting the interests of the owners of the means of production. According to Okolie (2001) the state in this sense "becomes the private property of officials in their struggle for self-advancement" along economic and political determinates or excludes others. Poulantzas (1973), Engels (1978), Alavi (1982) and other scholars in the Marxist tradition have extensively made contributions to the discourse on the nature of the state.

Generally, the state is defined by key elements that are characterized by a population (citizens), territory, government, and sovereignty that make it a supreme agency in a society. Thus, whether the state is seen as absolutist, constitutional, ethical, class/Marxian or pluralist (Idowu, 1999), it is expected to set the rules and determine supreme political autonomy in society and bear these key attributes.

However, the peculiarity of the emergence, the role and the nature of the African, including the Nigerian state is worth situating in our analysis. Most such states are characteristically associated with failure and so are illiberal, underdeveloped and with unhealthy institutions which Mohammed (1997) observed are indicative of the state's failure to "command the control of the society due to its illegitimate basis of authority, its ability to enforce compliance to its laws and the failure to development of the country" (p. 131).

This crisis of state formation in Africa is examined within the historical context of colonial ethnic identity formation of the state by Egwu (2004). This has also resulted in how citizenship is defined and constructed which is often problematic. Osaghae (1990) argued that this can be attributed to the artificial colonial creation and the "conflicts arising from the mosaics of centrifugal forces which separate them".

Thus, the idea of state-building and nation-building embedded in political theory was therefore found plausible in addressing the challenges of such states, including failed ones. The state-building paradigms explain the understanding that states need to be equipped with the institutional foundation necessary to increase their capacity to effectively assert self-governing powers on behalf of their own economic, social and cultural objectives (Stephenson, 2005). It is therefore, opined by Von Bogdandy (2005) that state building requires "the establishment, re-establishment, and strengthening of a public structure in a given territory capable of delivering public goods" (p. 586) with the essential requirement of creating sovereign capacities to establish collective power where the use of the physical force (by Weberian conclusions) may not be an end itself.

Almond and Powell's work on the challenges pertinent for the political system to cope with such issues as state building, participation, distribution, welfare and nation building and Pye's ideas on identity crisis, penetration crisis integration crisis, and distribution crisis (Ake, cited in Dakyen, 2010) form the theoretical basis for understanding the statehood question in Nigeria and how they impinge on interpreting citizenship and the national question.

Citizenship

So, how is citizenship contextualized in the context of a contrived state? Before this is contextualized, the idea 'citizenship' has to be addressed. Hence, citizenship simply refers to the membership of an individual to a state in which there are correlational expectations of allegiance to the state from the citizens on the one hand and protection is guaranteed by the state on the other. Gauba (2003) in a similar vein refers to citizenship as "the status of an individual as a full and responsible member of a political community" (p. 269) owing allegiance to the state and mutually befitting the state's protection. This also goes with the rights he enjoys and the expectation of performing his duties and living up to his obligations.

T.H. Marshall's modern account of the nature of citizenship explains the equal status of rights gained by members of the state and the duties they need to perform (Gaub, 2003). According to him, citizenship can be classified into three components with historical relevance: the civil, political and social components and the rights accruable to members in that order. Idowu (1999) classify these in the distinction between the constitutional and legal components of citizenship and the social dimension where constitutional rights of political participation and sharing of social heritage are ensured.

However, Abdu (2012) noted that Marshall's definition is regarded as deficient in "explaining the ethnic, religious, or racial divisions about national citizenship" that is apparent in "heterogeneous and plural societies or treated them as not so important when compared to social class division" (p. 3). Osaghae (1990) provides an explanation to this in which he observes that citizenship as the legal phenomenon of state membership by birth or naturalization is not itself problematic as is the question of conferring equal status "in theory and practice to all citizens... beyond sheer legalism" by the state.

It is within this reality that the legalistic approach to understanding citizenship in Nigeria often fails to abate the crises of identity manifested in ethnicity, ethno-nationalism and recurring conflicts on those bases. Nonetheless, citizenship emphasizes claims to territoriality and constructs a people's identity by drawing boundaries since rights and entitlements are tied to a particular territory. This defines both the legal and normative extent to which citizens can be accepted or rejected from a sociological perspective.

Hence, Ifdon (as cited in Idowu, 1999) has given the picture of the social conception of citizenship as being the product of history and culture derivable from interpersonal group relations. This is typical in Nigeria where sub-national identities are often held in high regard than a common sense of citizenship. Citizenship is therefore normatively defined in this sense. Unlike where Mancini (1998) describes the state as having boundaries and such boundaries include and exclude differential treatments of citizens and non-citizens, in Nigeria, the case is ethnicity defining and constructing normative citizenship as against its legal and political dimensions that account for conflicts and the affront on the national question of national identity. These issues will be elaborated upon in the course of our discourse.

The National Question

One of the issues at the heart of defining citizenship in Nigeria that breeds recurring identity conflict is summed in what is termed the national question. Alubo (2011) has postulated that it is a broad concept and consists of citizenship issues, identity and sense of belonging challenges, self-determination, the idea of one Nigeria, participation, ensuring law and order and the welfare of the citizens among a gamut of related issues. The examinations of many of the issues are tied in the preceding discussions.

Origin and Emergence of the Nigerian State: The Challenge of Statehood and the National Question

Nigeria is a product of the British colonial state that forcefully foisted the heterogeneous or popular ethnic groups into a nation-state with about 395 ethnic groups today. Nigeria's birth through the 1914 amalgamation created a highly complex state which was aptly referred to as mere geographical expression by a nationalist or a 'union of names' (Best, 2011). This is because before colonialism, though some of the nationalities had fairly inter-related harmoniously for centuries (Wada, 2006), colonialism is blamed for not only forcefully bringing the people together but employing divisive tactics of divide and rule to achieve their objectives of political control and economic exploitation e.g. the land and native right ordinance of 1910 which attempted to separate Northern ethnic groups from those in the south, including discouraging North-South migration that deepened a divided Nigeria. These were also evident in the indirect rule and Native Administration Systems.

It would however be expected that the end of colonialism would have created a new direction of nationhood or statehood. But Idowu (1999) noted that many challenges of assimilative and integrative nationhood began to emerge as the elites themselves could not find a common vision, unity or culture for the people. Wada (2006) has agreed no less in stating that "undue antagonism and rivalries between various ethnic groups" and other divides have been used by elites to polarize the citizens resulting in unending ethno-religious and communal conflicts that pervade the nation.

Similarly, contrary to the expectation of state or nation-building, the majority group in power use the state apparatus as an instrument of political domination (Idowu, 1999). Thus, many groups or parts of Nigeria feel alienated or disenfranchised against the minority ethnic groups. Indeed, Alubo (2011) captured this in what he terms the unresolved problem of nationhood in the same vein to imply that the Nigerian state has been unable to address the question of citizenship amid heterogeneity and conflict of interests, noting that in 1914 unresolved issues of citizenship were bequeathed to post-independence groups not feeling being part of Nigeria; this continues to breed conflicts on various issues and different scales.

Idowu (1999) also identifies the challenges of statehood to include the failure of that state to be independent, often enmeshed with the dominant class and so can be suspect as it is defined not by the state but by who captures and controls it to the detriment of others. These contending issues do raise questions as to what constitutes Nigerian statehood, citizenship and national identity and generally, the burning national question resulting in recurring conflicts on their basis.

Statehood and Citizenship in Nigeria: Interrogating the Legal and Normative Constructions and Contestations

The foregoing issues have set the agenda for ascertaining the nature of Nigerian citizenship from legal (judicial and governmental) perspectives to normative and often narrowed constructions. It is essential to put this in perspective as “claims and contestations over identity as a basis for determining who is included or excluded from participation or befitting from opportunities in particular situations” (Alubo,2003) has led to identity-based conflicts and contestations of citizenship in Nigeria. This is essential as citizenship entails rights, especially of participation and obligations aside from membership of a state, making it central to defining the contestations of citizens.

The defining constitutional basis of Nigerian citizenship was embedded in the 1960 independence and 1963 Republican Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as well as the Nigerian Citizenship Act 1960 and 1961 (Adigwe, 1979) and subsequent constitutional provisions. Characterized by provisions that bore vestiges of a colonial after-effect, the earliest two constitutions define Nigerian citizenship in relation to the colonial inheritance of the colonized areas, the United Kingdom or a British-protected person on the basis of birth, registration and naturalization. Nigerian citizens were therefore conferred Commonwealth citizenship as well.

The long period of military rule from 1966 till the 1979 democratic break implied the definition and construction of citizenship on the basis of some of the identified fault lines of statehood. Thus, both the landmark 1979 and 1999 Constitutions clearly defined Nigerian citizenship in a similar manner. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended, 2010) in chapter 3, sections 25 to 32 categorizes persons deemed as Nigerian citizens by birth, registration and naturalization, and other subjects of citizenship. According to section 25 (1) (a-c) Nigerian citizens by birth include:

- a) Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria: provided that such a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents.
- b) Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and.
- c) Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria (1999 Constitution).

The Constitution also outlines the fundamental human rights of citizens in the fourth chapter (sections 33-46) and the duties of citizens (section 24, a-f). To promote national unity and loyalty, the federal character principle is embedded in the 1999 Constitution in section 14(3) viz:

The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to commend national loyalty and thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies (1999 Constitution).

Similar trends are to be observed at all levels of government, including the establishment of the Federal Character Commission to redress imbalances and allay the fears of deprivation and marginalization in both private and public sectors of the various sections of the Nigerian state and define the extent to which the legal or judicial citizenship of Nigerians polity. These have been put in place to ensure or foster a sense of belonging by the various sections of the Nigerian state and define the extent to which the legal or judicial citizenship of Nigerians can be claimed.

However, it can be stated that this legal notion of Nigerian citizenship is more idealistic than real and has only heightened the complexity of the problem. For, example, Obianyo (2007) argues that such a conception provides a unitary picture of citizenship that fails to “appreciate the multiple dimensions of citizenships and the complex relationships among these dimensions of multiple forces of belonging and overlapping membership as can be found in defining who citizens are or are not their attendant roles which make it important, but does not depict the reality if strong ethnic bonds that depict citizenship normatively in Nigeria.

Therefore, it is still pertinent to note that the normative recourse to citizenship at the sub-state level than its legal forms can be attributed also to the (Obianyo, 2007) "feelings of alienation arising from the denial of rights to citizens" (p. 2). The spade of ethno-religious and other identity-based conflicts such as the Boko Haram terrorist insurgencies, Jos crisis, etc are rationalized and may be understood in this light. As opined by Babatunde (2011):

While studies on the issues of citizenship and belonging in relation to the political community have highlighted the conflict generating property inherent in denying of rights and privileges of citizenship as defined and set out in the written constitution documents... insufficient attention has been given to political instability and citizenship (p.5).

Closely related as a causal factor therefore is the fact that economic, social and political inequality explain the formation of political attitudes and interactions in the process of state-making where it was and is "constructed along the line of alienation and exclusion of ethnic societies from political participation and exercise of power" to conflicts and state failure (Babatunde, 2011). Thus, the idea of Nigerian citizenship mostly remains within the family, kin and community networks where the average Nigerian identifies more with his ethnic community than he identifies with Nigeria and to his ethnic community he owes duties, to the Nigerian state he expects rights (Obianyo,2007).

It is therefore concluded by Ekeh (cited in Babatunde, 2011) that in Nigeria especially,

three principal contradictory notions of citizenship manifest in terms of identification of citizenship with rights and not duties, disassociation of rights in respect of the concept of citizenship in political life: an amoral civic public defined in terms of one's ethnic group to which one's duties are paid, but from which we never expect any rights (p. 6).

This approximates Mamdani's (1998) two types of political identities: civic and ethnic analyzed in political and historical contexts that define racially distinguished citizenship rights that account for the settler-native question that is topical in this discourse.

Indigenes Versus Settlers Dichotomy the Citizenship Crises and Conflicts in Nigeria

The citizenship and national question in Nigeria's polity are intense in the indigene versus settler dichotomy that accounts for many conflicts and crises of citizenship.

The interpretations of citizenship based on ethnicity are relevant in Nigeria as it present one of the crises of the modern Nigerian state characterized by various identity conflicts. According to Best (2008), indigeneship entails "those who first settled on the land and, therefore, own the land" where the "indigenes have economic rights that non-indigenes do not" (p. 19). And since land and its ownership are fault lines in Nigeria they determine access to control of resources.

In analyzing the settlers versus indigenes dichotomy in Nigerian politics, Danfulani (2011) notes that:

in the history of political community, the question concerning who are "settlers" and who are "indigenes" exhibits the fact that the whole argument is within the realm of citizenship; and citizenship is a domain of exclusion and permanent contestation. Citizenship is often characterized by attempts by those in power who skew and manipulate it to exclude others on the basis of a certain construction of political identities, such as gender, class, religion, and/or ethnicity "indigenes" seek the exclusion of those described as "settlers" while those excluded on the ground of "settlement" seek to resist their membership or citizenship of the Nigerian state (p. 14).

Thus, whatever form of identity (religion, ethnicity, class or others), they often define the rights of members normatively. The indigene versus settler dichotomy reflects a system of "ethnic citizenship" that is culpable with the question of religion for the resurgence of conflicts and ethno-nationalisms in Nigeria. Danfulani (2011) has further posited that the basis for this lies in the failure of the emergent Nigerian he argues that when ethnic diversity militates against" minority interests, the tendency has been for tiny acephalous communities to coalesce in search of some form of group identity and group expressions" notable in group conflicts, distinctiveness and identity-contested issues.

Another dimension of the problem is defined by exclusions rather than inclusion of citizens in national issues where while Nigerians accept their citizenship of the Nigerian state, they sociologically identify with their local community by biological ties within a geographical space that distinguishes them as indigenes at the local levels of the soil' and the appropriation of certain benefits or rights against settlers. Referring to such exclusion, Idowu (1999) sees many a political interaction based on political alienation and domination which define the contestation for state power. For example, Obianyo (2007) has argued that an average Nigerian does not feel represented by members of other ethnic national or for that matter indigenes of other localities except their own.

Indeed, the Nigerian state via the 1999 Constitution appears to lend credence to the effect of the federal character principle whose basis is indigeneity and section 147(3) succinctly puts it thus:

Any appointment under subsection (2) of this section by the present shall be in conformity with the provisions of sub-section of this constitution: provided that in giving effect to the provisions aforesaid the president shall appoint at least one minister from each state, who shall be an indigene of such state.

This *de facto* acknowledgement or legitimization of indigeneship as normative citizenship in the constitution itself speaks of the contradiction inherent in constructing the citizenship and national question in Nigeria. The state's idea of the federal character policy, quota system, issuance of certificates of indigeneship in part or wholly give legal teeth to the 'nativisation' of citizenship (Alubo 2011) or what Mandami (as cited in Danfulani, 2011) notes as an ethnicized concept of citizenship which gives bearing to the fact that "to be accepted as an indigene one is expected to be a native; and to be accepted as a citizen, one is expected to be an indigene" (Momoh as cited in Danfulani, 2011). Mangvwat (2011) describes this as the theory of settler phenomenon indigeneship indigene-ship in Nigeria is associated with primordial identity formation. Understanding this as an outgrowth of culture and history is significant especially as such is also key to analyzing the nature of conflicts in Nigeria today and the need for peacebuilding.

Moreover, the indices for the citizenship crises in Nigeria, the indigenes/settlers' dichotomy balkanizes ethnic groups serve as a point of disunity rather than a symbol of unity in diversity as indicated by Alubo (2011). Thus, the concept of national integration is questioned in the construction and contestation for inclusive citizenship rights and opportunities. Again, as national integration and unity appear elusive under such a scenario, it remains a latent precipitant of conflict and it deepens the exclusion of indigenes against other citizens who are categorized as settlers.

The issues have found further expression in the tripod majoritarian of the Nigerian state in which the three dominant ethnic groups - Hausa, Yoruba and as long as their interests are not injured against other ethnic groups classified which creates fear in the minority groups often expressed in the demands for the creation of more states. Alubo (2011) aptly puts the point thus:

The ethnic tripod to which colonial powers granted independence is central to persistent questions of ethnicity, sense of belonging and crises of citizenship. This is precisely why most of the discourse on ethnicity and citizenship has been dominated by considerations of majority and minority and relative power differences between the two groups (p. 31).

With such an arrangement, the rights of the minorities are usually trampled upon by the majority over competition for access to resources, struggles for identity and self-determination such as the militants in the Niger-Delta, contests for political positions and opportunities etc. These agitations have had great implications over how conflicts play out on the indigenes versus settlers' question as may be exemplified by the Jos crisis.

Therefore, the indigene versus settler phenomenon is an affront to inclusive or legal citizenship as it normatively constructs and defines citizenship on a narrower basis of ethnicity and exclusion that breeds conflicts. Ethnic citizenship so defined draws the conclusion by Egwu (as cited in Danfulani, 2011) which states that:

While the indigenes seek exclusive control of existing social and political rights, millions of Nigerians live outside the socio-political space within all kinds of humiliation. While some have endured deprivations in positivity, others have contested their exclusion, leading to a spate of communal conflicts. In many instances, this has assumed the dimension of violent conflicts with dire consequences for development, national unity and the resolution of the National Question (p. 11).

Indeed, while the pre-conditions for citizenship rights are so normatively defined on an ethnic basis, all over Nigeria, it is notable that such do not only generate a national identity crisis but lead to conflicts which are continually prone to political mobilization and manipulation. Moreover, the notion of the liberal state is hardly reflected in the nature of the Nigerian state and so is the construction and contestation over state membership (citizenship) in Nigeria resulting in a statehood and citizenship crisis.

Options for Peacebuilding

The discourse of this paper thus far has focused on the fact that the nature of the conflicts being witnessed in the polity. The failure of the state to resolve the citizenship of indigenes against settlers breeds exclusion and conflict. This requires to be addressed for greater integration, development and peacebuilding. It is in this light that the following options are recommended:

1. More inclusive citizenship rights and opportunities must be ensured both constitutionally and in practice. To this end, less emphasis needs to be placed on citizens' ethnic identity, indigeneity, and other divisions that narrowly define citizenship on the normative basis of indigene-ship such as appointments, admissions and the provisions of tangible or intangible opportunities. This implies resolving the contradictions and ambiguities on the question of citizenship in the constitution and practice of Nigerian federalism.
2. Again, with good governance and adopting the tenets of the rule of law that guarantee equal rights and justice to all citizens irrespective of their affiliations, a greater sense of belonging and pride can be created in Nigerians. This also implies that the state and its institutions must be strengthened to address the challenges of governance such as corruption, nepotism and injustice that generate socio-economic and political exclusion and conflict
3. We also propose that greater integrative programs that would build trust, and mutual respect for the cultural diversities of Nigerians need to be constitutionally provided and be imbibed by both native and settler communities. For example, respecting and integrating the traditional and cultural ways of host communities would go a long way in building peace, mutual respect and bonds of unity.
4. Though it is also proffered that residency rights should be made to be operative all over the country for national integration where "all groups can still maintain their ethnic identities without being excluded from participation in decision-proposed by the constitutional amendment to foster residency over indigeneship and conflicts in Nigeria as minority groups may not equitably enjoy such rights in communities within 'majority' ethnic groups in the same country. With a more entrenched democracy in which state institutions are strong and functional, such may be considered in future constitutional amendments.

Conclusion

Though citizen-ship is the hallmark of modern statehood universally, in Nigeria, the marked feature of nationality is a citizen-ship crisis and proems of statehood defined in ethnic terms that result in exclusion, problems of marginalization, domination, alienation, identity issues and lack of national integration. These are at the heart of the national question where ineffective statehood results to challenging the legal construction of citizenship to contestations that manifest in conflicts. Accounts of such malaise are rooted in the faulty colonial construction of the state, and ineffective economic and political engineering of the state by the post-independence elites. the lingering indigenes versus settler's dichotomy and how they have provided a basis for conflicts. Hence, we have argued that unless participatory, integrative and inclusive conditions and structures of the Nigerian people, society and governance are put in place to address the multicultural diversities of the state, the quest to end conflicts. ensure national integration, resolve the national question and build peace would be elusive.

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