



Research Paper

Collective Victimization and Secessionists Agitations in the South East of Nigeria.

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Abstract

The schisms amongst the Nigerian disparate ethnic groups were not strange to the colonialists themselves. However, how these divisions have continually affected the Nigerian state, since its inception to the present era where it has become the fundamental pointer to large scale incidences of collective victimization and a sources of series of secessionists agitation in the country has become a source of concern. This paper modestly examines collective victimization and secessionists agitations in the South East of Nigeria. The paper is approached on the theoretical foundations of the Marxist Revolutionary Theory and the Frustration Aggression Theory. Due to its nature, sources of data were mainly from secondary sources; as such the design of the paper is descriptive-historical, which was aimed at describing the observation of the phenomenon in perspective. Written documents were analyzed with some form of content analysis. The paper found amongst others that; the major reason for the resurgent secessionists or separatist agitations in the South East of Nigeria is due to the feeling of collective victimization. Accordingly, the paper recommends amongst others, sincere and objective policy changes starting from the federal level and extending to the states will go a long way in restoring citizens' confidence in the Nigerian state.

Keywords: Collective victimization, seperatists, secession, south-east.

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I. Introduction

This schism amongst Nigeria's disparate ethnic groups were not unknown to the colonial Government, because as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, once boasted that "the only cement which kept the rickety structure of Nigeria together was the British (BusinessDay, 2021). He went further to predict that the country could breakdown after few months of independence. Though this has not happened, but events in the country in the past few years have shown that that possibility cannot be completely ruled out, if something drastic is not done. The increasing drums of separatism and secession being beaten by several ethno cultural and militant groups including the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), the Niger Delta Avengers, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta, Northern Elders Forum, Arewa Youth is a pointer to the fractured of the Nigerian state.

The May 30, 2017 "sit at home" order issued to all Igbos by the leadership of the IPOB to honour Ndigbo that were murdered during the Nigeria/Biafra Civil War witnessed disturbing success in most Igbo dominated States in South-Eastern Nigeria which strongly suggests that while the Igbos may have been defeated during the Nigeria/Biafra Civil War, the Biafra spirit is still alive (Adangor, 2017). This "sit at home" order is now becoming a key instrument of the agitations. And is now an order to be kept every Monday of the new week.

The current agitation for Biafra has its roots in the Republic of Biafra – a secessionist state in the former Eastern Nigeria, which existed from 30 May 1967 to January 1970. The cause of that civil war would depend on where one stands in the divide: for those on the federal side, the civil war was caused by the attempt by the mainly Igbo-dominated Eastern Nigeria to secede, meaning for such people the civil war was fought to keep Nigeria one. In fact the mantra during the civil war on the federal side was “to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done”. For those on the side of the short-lived Republic of Biafra, the civil war was precipitated by the pogrom in the North following the counter coup of July 1966. For such people, the civil war was a war of self-determination.

While it is normal for people on opposite sides of a conflict to have different narratives of the same event, what is clear is that many factors contributed to the civil war: the 1962/63 census controversy, the Western regional election crisis of 1965 and the federal election controversy of 1964. These crises created the condition for the unnecessarily bloody coup of 1966, which was initially well received. As it turned out however the coup created more problems than it solved. It turned out that most of the coup plotters were Igbos and most of those killed were non-Igbos while the Igbo political leaders somehow survived. The anger triggered in the North by this led to the counter coup of July 1966 in which the Igbo Head of State Aguiyi Ironsi and several Igbo army officers were killed. It also led to a pogrom against the Igbo in the North, in which an estimated 30,000 Igbos and others of Eastern Nigerian origin were killed. The pogrom in the North against the Igbo after the July 1966 revenge coup, and the refusal of Col. Emeka Ojukwu, who was military Governor of Eastern Nigeria to recognize Col Gowon, a Christian from the Middle Belt, as the new Head of State, generated a series of events that eventually led to Ojukwu’s declaration of the Republic of Biafra and the subsequent 30-month civil war (Adibe, 2016).

Since independence in 1960, one of the greatest challenges that the Nigerian state has had to confront is the issue of nation-building (Ikenna et al, 2017). This challenge has often been compounded by the inability of successive governments to address the problems associated with citizenship, religion, ethnicity, inequality, resource-distribution, native-settler dichotomy and the issue development (Duruji, 2010).

Tamuno (1970) opines that secessionist agitations which date back to the colonial era are a fall out of poor leadership and lack of an ideology with a mass appeal. During the military regime, the separatist tendencies within the various ethnic groups in the country did not have the room to be expressed due to the nature of military rule with its dictatorial tendency. However, the advent of democracy in the fourth republic since 1999 saw a resurgence of separatist agitations.

The coming of democracy in 1999 had heightened the hopes and expectations of the people that democratic practice with its ideals of fairness, freedom, justice, equity and mass participation would provide a veritable platform for the accommodation that could address the plethora of problems bedeviling the country. Sadly, however, such hopes and expectations were dashed, as the conditions, rather than abating continued to deteriorate. Several ethno-national groups like the Odua People’s Congress (OPC) in the South-West, Arewa Youths in the North, Niger-Delta militants under different groups, in the South-South, and several separatist groups like Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), in the South-East, sprang up, claiming victimization and marginalization by the federal government.

This modest paper examines collective victimization and secessionists agitations in the South East of Nigeria. The paper is segmented into five interrelated parts that all sum up to the whole. The first part is the introduction which is just concluded. The second part covers the theoretical foundation upon which the paper is anchored and a brief explication of relevant concepts of the paper. The third part is the synopsis of the method which the paper adopted in eliciting data and analysis. The fourth part deals with the discussing of the paper while the fifth part and of course the final part encapsulates the conclusion/recommendations of the paper.

Theoretical Foundations

The Marxist revolutionary theory of the right of nations to self-determination was adopted in this paper. The theory emerged from the strands of thought on the national question by radical scholars such as Marx 1846 (1964). Engels (1853); Luxemburg (1908, 1970, 1971); Pannekoek (1912); Renner (1917); Bauer (1924); Rodsolsky (1964). Stalin (1953); Paust (1980); Suzuki (1976), Markovits (2005), among others.

The theory assumes that there is dialectical relationship between the resolution of the national question and the right of national self-determination: only the freedom to secede makes possible free and voluntary union, association, co-operation and, in the long term, fusion between nations. Similarly, national liberation struggle of oppressed nations is seen as a democratic movement. Despite, the economic, cultural or “psychological” dimension of the problems, the question of self-determination “belongs wholly and exclusively to the sphere of political democracy” i.e. to the realm of the right of political secession and the establishment of an independent nation-state (Lenin, nd. p. 145).

The Marxist revolutionary theory of the right of nations to self-determination posits that “people may be dominated and governed only by their own consent. Self-determination is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril” (Temperley, 1920, p. 266). Thus, “all peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of the right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the General Assembly, Dec. 16, 1966).

The basic propositions of the Marxist revolutionary theory of the right of nations to self-determination are centered on some fundamental theses, which among others include:

1. Nation as a uniform and homogenous entity does not exist: each class in the nation has conflicting interests and “rights”.
2. State discrimination creates collective grievances and facilitates the formation of antagonistic groups and greater potential for collective action and even violence as individuals face similar circumstances and suffer from similar patterns of discrimination.

State-making in Africa is replete with contradictions. These contradictions are embedded in both vertical and horizontal relations among constituting the post-colonial state, and between them and the state itself. According to Ake (1996), vertical relations involve the imposition of domination over independent social formations by bringing them together into one polity dominated by a centralizing power.

On the other hand, horizontal relations have to do with struggle for domination and subordination among constituent social forces (groups) in the emergent state. These relations find expression in renewal of primordial identities and solidarity, communal competition among communities that were antagonistic prior to their common subjugation to the centralizing power, as well as demands for full or partial autonomy from the existing political system (Ake, 1996).

Rather than liberation and economic development, the Nigerian state immediately after independence and civil war, has become the instrument of suppression, oppression and in fact intimidation. Those who are limited by the persistent structural injustice have in many cases risen against it and that is why: the battle to control the state or have access to its resources has been particularly fierce and acute between contending political elites and the various social group and communities in the country (Okonta, 2008).

The above theoretical insight clearly demonstrates that political and economic victimization and marginalization and the attendant political insecurity occur when the central government fails to protect the citizens, or provide them with the basic social amenity/infrastructure. The strength of the theory as an analytical tool lies in the fact that it provides both conceptual and analytical framework that illuminates the linkages between the perception of collective victimization and horrendous oppression and marginalization by the Nigerian government on the one hand and the resurgences of Biafra separatist agitations on the other.

To properly situate the paper on sound theoretical foundation, with the view to reducing ambiguities the paper also aligns its discourse within the analytical framework of the **Frustration-Aggression Theory**. According to this theory, most aggressions have their origin in the perceived frustrations of an individual to attain his expected goal.

The frustration- aggression was developed by Dollard and his associates in 1939. The theory suggests that individuals become aggressive when there are obstacles (perceived and real) to their success in life (VandeGoor, 1996). The main explanation for frustration-aggression theory is that aggression becomes an outcome of frustration when the needs and desires of an individual is denied directly or indirectly and this feeling of disappointment may lead such a person or people to express their anger through violence to those who are held responsible or people related directly or indirectly to them. This is the case with the secessionist groups in the south-east. The relationship between the theory ‘frustration-aggression’ and ‘secessionists agitations in the south-east is that the perceived or actual marginalization of the people of the region by the Nigerian federal government has created a form of collective victimization amongst them. The resultant effect is that the people have become frustrated and of course aggressive. This aggression by the people has motivated the government to flood the area with security operatives who intimidate, torture and generally make life unbearable for the masses. This also constitutes a violation of the rights of people’s as their women are abused sexually, their men killed with reckless abandon by the security operatives.

The Concept of Secession

Until recently, secession has been a neglected term among philosophers. Two factors may explain why philosophers have now begun to turn their attention to secession. First, in the past few decades there has been a great increase not only in the number of attempted secessions, but also in successful secessions, and philosophers may simply be reacting to this new reality, attempting to make normative sense of it. The reasons for the frequency of attempts to secede are complex, but there are two recent developments that make the prospect of state-breaking more promising: improvement in national security and liberalization of trade. As the

fear of forcible annexation diminishes and trade barriers fall, smaller states become feasible, and independent statehood looks more feasible for regions within states. Second, in roughly the same time period, the idea that there is a strong case for some form of self-government for groups presently contained within states has gained ground. Once one begins to take seriously the case for special group rights for minorities especially if these include rights of self-government - it is difficult to avoid the question of whether such groups may be entitled to full independence or not. (Catala, 2013).

Secession is the withdrawal of a group from a larger entity, especially a political entity. Some of the most famous and significant secessions have been: the former Soviet republics leaving the Soviet Union, Texas leaving Mexico, Biafra leaving Nigeria and returning after losing the war and Ireland leaving the United Kingdom. Threats of secession can be a strategy for achieving more limited goals (Buchanan, 2007). It is, therefore, a process, which commences once a group proclaims the act of secession (e.g. declaration of independence) (Pavkovic et al, 2013) A secession attempt might be violent or peaceful, but the goal is the creation of a new state or entity independent from the group or territory it seceded from (Pavkovic et al, 2007).

There is a great deal of theorizing about secession so that it is difficult to identify a consensus regarding its definition (Pavkovic et al, 2007). There is also a claim that this subject has been neglected by political philosophers and that by the 1980s – when it finally generated interest – the discourse concentrated on the moral justifications of the unilateral right to secession (Pavkovic et al, 2008). It was only in the early 1990s when American philosopher Allen Buchanan offered the first systematic account of the subject and contributed to the normative classification of the literature on secession. Buchanan (1991) outlined limited rights to secession under certain circumstances, mostly related to oppression by people of other ethnic or racial groups, and especially those previously conquered by other people (Buchanan, 1991). In his own contribution, Gordon (2012) challenged Buchanan, pointing out that the moral status of the seceding state is unrelated to the issue of secession itself.

According to Butt (2017), states respond violently to secessionist movements if the potential state would pose a greater threat than a violent secessionist movement would. States perceive future war as likely with a potentially new state if the ethnic group driving the secessionist struggle has deep identity division with the central state, and if the regional neighbourhood is violent and unstable.

Types of Secession

Yates (1998) and Pavkovic (2003) have described a number of ways in which a political entity (city, county, canton, state) can secede from the larger or original state:

- i. Secession from federation or confederation (political entities with substantial reserved powers which have agreed to join together) versus secession from a unitary state (a state governed as a single unit with few powers reserved to sub-units);
- ii. Colonial wars of independence from an imperial state;
- iii. Recursive secession, such as India seceding from the British Empire, then Pakistan seceding from India, or Georgia seceding from the Soviet Union, then South Ossetia seceding from Georgia;
- iv. National (seceding entirely from the national state) versus local (seceding from one entity of the national state into another entity of the same state);
- v. Central or enclave (seceding entity is completely surrounded by the original state) versus peripheral (along a border of the original state);
- vi. Secession by contiguous units versus secession by non-contiguous units (exclaves);
- vii. Separation or partition (although an entity secedes, the rest of the state retains its structure) versus dissolution (all political entities dissolve their ties and create several new states);
- viii. Irredentism where secession is sought in order to annex the territory to another state because of common ethnicity or prior historical links;
- ix. Minority (a minority of the population or territory secedes) versus majority (a majority of the population or territory secedes);
- x. Secession of better off regions versus secession of worse off regions;
- xi. The threat of secession is sometimes used as a strategy to gain greater autonomy within the original state.

Rights of Secession

Most sovereign states do not recognize the right to self-determination through secession in their constitutions. Many expressly forbid it. However, there are several existing models of self-determination through greater autonomy and through secession (Adrei, 2003). In liberal constitutional democracies the principle of majority rule has dictated whether a minority can secede. In the United States Abraham Lincoln acknowledged that secession might be possible through amending the United States Constitution. The Supreme Court in *Texas v. White* held secession could occur "through revolution, or through consent of the States"(Pavkovic and Radan, 2007) The British Parliament in 1933 held that Western Australia could

secede from the Commonwealth of Australia only upon vote of a majority of the country as a whole; the previous two-thirds majority vote for secession via referendum in Western Australia was insufficient (Pavkovic and Ran, 2003).

The Chinese Communist Party followed the Soviet Union in including the right of secession in its 1931 constitution in order to entice ethnic nationalities and Tibet into joining. However, the Party eliminated the right to secession in later years, and had anti-secession clause written into the Constitution before and after the founding the People's Republic of China. The 1947 Constitution of the Union of Burma contained an express state right to secede from the union under a number of procedural conditions. It was eliminated in the 1974 constitution of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma (officially the "Union of Myanmar"). Burma still allows "local autonomy under central leadership" (Andrei, 2003).

As of 1996, the constitutions of Austria, Ethiopia, France, and Saint Kitts and Nevis have express or implied rights to secession. Switzerland allows for the secession from current and the creation of new cantons. In the case of proposed Quebec separation from Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada in 1998 ruled that only both a clear majority of the province and a constitutional amendment confirmed by all participants in the Canadian federation could allow secession (Andrei, 2003).

The 2003 draft of the European Union Constitution allowed for the voluntary withdrawal of member states from the union, although the member-state which wanted to leave could not be involved in the vote deciding whether or not they can leave the Union (Andrei, 2003) There was much discussion about such self-determination by minorities (Contiades, 2004), before the final document underwent the unsuccessful ratification process in 2005. Although in 2007 the Treaty on European Union included Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, the right to withdraw from the EU, which has been the case with Brexit. As a result of the successful constitutional referendum held in 2003, every municipality in the Principality of Liechtenstein has the right to secede from the Principality by a vote of a majority of the citizens residing in this municipality (Roeder, 2018).

II. Method

This paper adopts the descriptive and historical method. According to Kothari and Garg (2014:35), description research studies are concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual or a group. Descriptive research is concerned with the description of observation of a phenomenon. Here the objective is to collect data that can accurately evaluate Secessionist agitations and their effect on the political stability of Nigeria.

The population of the paper comprises all the human inhabitants of the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria. These include the five (5) states namely; Abia State, Anambra State, Ebonyi state, Enugu state and Imo state, put at a total of 21,619,400 (Twenty one million, six hundred and nineteen thousand, four hundred That is;

Abia	=	3,727,000
Anambra	=	5,271,800
Ebonyi	=	2,800,400
Enugu	=	4,411,100
Imo	=	5,408,800
Total	=	21,619,400

(Source: NPC, 2006)

The paper made use of data from secondary sources. Secondary data refer to the data that are already available. That is, they are data that have already been collected and analyzed by some other researchers or authorities. Secondary data can either be published or unpublished. It is from books, journals, articles, essays, magazines, the internet, and other scholarly research works. To be able to vouch for the authenticity and validity of such sources, this paper only used data that have original authorities and citations. Materials used were largely from papers, websites, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs. Written documents were analyzed with some form of content analysis. The paper also adopted some form of historical numerical data to support some findings. As such the qualitative method of data collection was adopted.

Collective Victimization and Secessionist Agitations in the South-East

The amalgamation of the Northern protectorate with the Southern Protectorate in 1914 gave birth to an entity called Nigeria. By this singular act, over four hundred ethnic nationalities, that were not only socially, politically and culturally different, but also existed as separate entities, were brought together to co-exist under one geographical and political unit. The journey to nationhood, which started and proceeded on the "wings of militant nationalism", gradually, degenerated into ethnic irredentism, with the emergence and preponderance of "regionalist and sectionalist orientations in the political struggle" (Ohaneze, 2002). Engulfed in simmering

ethnic tensions, rivalry and mistrust, Nigeria attained independence as a tripod of three ethnic-based regions, viz: North, Southeast and Southwest.

Scarcely had independence attained when the young state began to grapple with crises associated with contestations among the three major ethnic groups for political dominance. The crises culminated in coup d'état and usurpation of political powers in 1966, counter coup, or the so-called "July Rematch" and 30 months civil war. By the end of civil war in 1970, the control and use of state power had fallen into the hands of war victors who systematically centralized it. Since then, state power has been used to determine the character of accumulation and system of rewards in way that suggests deliberate attempts to disempower the Igbos politically, economically, socially and militarily, in contravention of the official policy of *no victor, no vanquished* declared at the end of civil war.

Politically, it has become a common practice to manipulate census figures in Nigeria to increase the population of the North and the Yorubas of the West and to reduce the population of Igbos. For example, the population of Igbo decreased from 17.16% in 1952/53 to 13.48% in 1991 (a decrease of 3.68%), while the population of the Yorubas in Western Nigeria increase from 16.00% in 1952/52 to 17.60% in 1991 (an increase of 3.88%) (Ohaneze, 2002).

The mass of data produced by a population census is critical for development and policy making (UNFPA, 2016). Planners need accurate census information for all kinds of development work, including: assessing demographic trends, analyzing socio-economic conditions, designing evidence-based poverty-reduction strategies, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies, and tracking progress toward national development goals (Corcos, 2017; Odenyi, 2005). In addition to aiding policymaking, population census helps in identifying forms of social exclusions, disadvantaged groups as well as empowering local communities by providing them with the necessary information to participate in local decision-making. In a nutshell, population census is used as a basis for allocation of resources.

Unfortunately, Nigeria has a history of problems with data collection. Results of the first post-independence census conducted in 1962 were withdrawn. The reliability of the 1963 census has been questioned. The results of the 1973 census were discredited and never saw the light of day, and no census was conducted in 1981. During the March 2006 census, thousands of enumerators walked off the job, because they had not been paid (Lalasz, 2007; NPC, 1991; Yin, 2007). Census figures have remained controversial in Nigeria due to apparent demographic manipulations of the Igbo from being one of the main ethnic groups in Nigeria to a minority status. Since census figures in Nigeria guide distribution of federal funds to each of the country's 36 states and 774 local government areas, as well as civil service hiring (Yin, 2007), deliberate reduction of the population of the Igbo in Nigerian federation is seen to adversely affect the volume of resources that accrue to the region.

Aside population census, states and local government are also basic units for sharing federal largesse in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the creation of the 12-state structure in 1967 was a civil war strategy used by the Federal Government to isolate, dismember and land-lock the Igbos to incite them against their neighbors with a view to frustrating their struggle for self-determination (Barrett, 2017). Apparently, table 1, which shows the distribution of states and local governments among the geo-political zones, clearly demonstrates that subsequent exercises in state and local government creations in Nigeria till date have continued to follow the same pattern.

Table 1: States and Local Government Area Distribution in Nigeria

S/No	Zone	No. of States	No. of Local Governments
1	North-Central	6 (16.67%)	116 (15.19%)
2	North-East	6 (16.67%)	110 (14.36%)
3	North-West	7 (1.44%)	181 (23.69%)
4	South-West	6 (16.67%)	138 (18.01%)
5	South-South	6 (16.67%)	127 (16.58%)
6	South-East	5 (13.89%)	94 (12.27%)
	Total	36	774

Source: Ohaneze (2002). *The violations of human and civil rights of Ndi Igbo in the federation of Nigeria (1966 – 1999). A petition to the Human Rights Violations Investigating Committee. Enugu: Anaap Press, P. 47.*

Of the six geo-political zones, Southeast has the lowest number of states and local government. Owing that state and local governments are used as basis for sharing federal resources, the rising Biafra separatism is, to a large extent, driven by a sense of victimization and gross injustice perpetrated through state and local government creations.

The process of political liquidation of the Igbo manifests glaringly in the deliberate state policy to exclude them from political apex. Unlike other geopolitical zones, no Igbo man, except Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi, has occupied the political apex of Nigeria. Hausa/Fulani have occupied the political apex for more than

nine years; Yoruba have occupied it for more than eleven years, while the Igbo have occupied it for just 6 months and 13 days. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was merely a ceremonial President. Table 2 clearly shows the regional character of the foregoing exclusion.

Table 2: Nigeria's Head of State/Government (Ethnic Tenure) (Oct. 1 1960-tilldate)

S/N	Name	Title	State	Ethnicity	Zone	Period	Ethnic Tenure
1	Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe	President (Ceremonial)	Anambra	Igbo	South	1/10/1960- 15/1/1966	5 Years, 5 months and 8 days
2	Alh. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa	Prime Minister	Bauchi	Jarawa	North	1/10/1960- 15/1/1966	5 Years, 5 months and 8 days
3	Maj. Gen. J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi	Head of State	Abia	Igbo	South East	16/1/1966- 29/7/1966	6 months and 13 days
4	General Yakubu Gowon	Head of State	Plateau	Angas/ Beron	North Central	29/7/1966- 29/7/1975	9 Years
5	Gen. Murtala Mohammed	Head of State	Kano	Hausa	North West	29/7/1975- 13/2/1976	6 months and 15 Days
6	General Olusegun Obasanjo	Head of State	Ogun	Yoruba	South West	13/3/1976- 30/9/1979	3 Years, 7 Months and 17 days
7	Alh. Shehu Shagari	President	Sokoto	Fulani	North West	1/10/1979- 31/12/1983	4 Years 2 Months and 30 days
8	Maj. General Mahammadu Buhari	Head of State	Kastina	Fulani	North West	31/12/1983- 27/8/1985	1 Year 7 Months and 26 Days
9	General iBrahim Babangida	Head of State	Niger	Gwari	North Central	27/8/1985- 26/8/1993	8 Years
10	Chief Ernest Shonekan	Head of State	Ogun	Yoruba	South West	26/8/1993- 17/11/1993	2 Months and 23 Days
11	General Sani Abacha	Head of State	Kano	Kanuri	North West	17/11/1993- 8/6/1998	4 Years 6 Months and 22 Days
12	Gen. Abdusalami Abubakar	Head of State	Niger	Nupe	North Central	8/6/1998- 29/05/1999	11 months and 21 Days
13	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	Executive President	Ogun	Yoruba	South West	29/05/1999- 29/05/2007	8 Years
14	Musa Yaradua		Kastina	Fulani	North West	29/05/2007- 05/05/2010	2 Years, 11 Months and 6 Days
15	Dr. Goodluck Jonathan	Acting Executive President	Bayelsa	Ijaw	South- South	6/05/2010- 29/05/2011	1 Year 23 Days
16	Dr. Goodluck Jonathan	Executive President	Bayelsa	Ijaw	South- South	29/05/2011- 29/05/2015	4 Years
17	Muhammadu Buhari	Executive President	Kastina	Fulani	North West	29/05/2015- Date	2 Years 3 Months 24 Days (As at Today 22/09/2017)

Source: Adapted from Ohaneze (2002). *(The Violation of Human and Civil Rights of Ndi Igbo in the Federation of Nigeria (1966-1999). A petition to the Human Rights Violations Investigating Committee, Enugu: Snaap Press, p. 47*

The capitalist state is not a neutral force in mediating and moderating political conflicts. By organizing production and defining the cohesion of the formation, the state primarily determines the character of accumulation and relations of production. In Nigeria, state power has been captured and used to further the interests of an ethnic group or a combination of ethnic groups that dominate the corridors of power (Vande, 2012). Therefore, the struggle and contestations for acquisition and use of state power in Nigeria have been patterned largely along ethnic lines. Given that the political apex of Nigeria has eluded the Igbo of Southeast, it would appear that the policy and programmes of the Nigerian government are deliberately designed to exclude them. The cut-off marks for entrance to federal unity schools for the 36 states of the federation is a case in point. Table 3 clearly shows that the Southeastern states of Anambra, Imo and Enugu have the highest cut off marks in Nigeria. The implication is that a primary school boy in Anambra, Imo and Enugu must score ten times above his counterpart in Kebbi, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara to gain entrance into federal unity schools in Nigeria.

Table 3: Cut-off Marks for Entrance into Federal Unity Schools for all 35 States and FCT

S/N	State	Male	Female
		North	
1	Adamawa	62	62
2	Bauchi	35	35
3	Benue	111	111
4	Borno	45	45
5	Gombe	58	58
6	Jigawa	44	44
7	Kaduna	91	91
8	Kano	67	67
9	Kastina	60	60
10	Kebbi	9	20
11	Kogi	119	119
12	Nasarawa	58	58
13	Niger	93	93
14	Plateau	97	97
15	Sokoto	9	13
16	Taraba	3	11
17	Yobe	2	27
18	Zamfra	4	2
19	FCT Abuja	90	90
		South East	
20	Abia	130	130
21	Anambra	139	139
22	Ebonyi	112	112
23	Enugu	134	134
24	Imo	138	138
		South South	
25	Akwa-Ibom	123	124
26	Bayelsa	72	72
27	Cross-Rivers	97	97
28	Delta	131	131
29	Edo	127	127
30	Rivers	118	118
		South West	
31	Ekiti	119	110
32	Kwara	123	123
33	Lagos	133	133
34	Ogun	131	131
35	Ondo	126	126
36	Osun	127	127
37	Oyo	127	127

Source: <http://dailypost.ng/2017/08/23/unity-schools-education-ministry-releases-20172018-admission-list>

Again, the present structure of the Nigeria Police-Force is an eloquent testimony of deliberate state policy of excluding the Southeast region. Unlike other geo-political zones. Police Commands in the Southeast report to AIG outside the region because there is no AIG based in the region to which the five Southeastern States will report. Abambra State Command reports to the AIG based in Makurid (North-Central Zones). Abia, Ebonyi and Imo States Command report to the AIG in Calabar (South South Zone) (Ohaneze, 2002).

Besides, there appear to have been social disempowerment of the Igbo through denial of employment in the federal sector, discrimination and attacks in various parts of the country at every slightest provocation, and neglect of minerals discovered in Igbo land, even when their exploration and exploitation would benefit the entire country. It is on record that Oil discovered in Nsukka area by SAFRAP (a Federal Oil Company).

. . . was sealed up with the expulsion of the company during the war, and to date the federal Government has not ordered resumption of activities. Natural Gas find in Ugwuoba, the largest deposit in Nigeria, has been sealed up as strategic reserve (Ohaneze, 2002, p. 42).

Moreso, the dredging of River Niger, construction of an inland port, and construction of the long proposed second bridge across River Niger to unleash the industrial potentials of the Onitsha-Nnewi-Aba axis appear to have remained indefinitely on the drawing board. So also the opening, expansion and modernization of Bonny, Opobo, and Port Harcourt ports to prosper Ikwerre, Obigbo, Adoada, Bonny, down to Aba. Onitsha and Nnewi. Igbo businessmen are rather compelled to go to Lagos, with all the inconveniences, to clear their goods, when it can be done easily at home (Igwe, 2016). All these have fed into infrastructural decay and bad governance at different levels of government to heighten Biafra separatist agitation in the Southeast and instability of the Nigerian federal system.

The instability of the Nigerian federal system did not start with the rebirth of constitutional rule in Nigeria in 1999. It was rather created by the British and made worse by the military usurpation of political power. For over 30 years, the Nigerian military dominated the political stage, imposed a reign of tyranny, abuse of human rights and the worst form of corruption in the society (Nwala, 2013). It also subdued the reality of political and economic domination in Nigeria.

However, the restoration of civil rule at the twilight of the twentieth century and the widening of political space let loose the gamut of centrifugal forces long held in check by the military. This led to the emergence of various groups and organizations with different histories and goals. Their objectives range from “drawing attention to the perceived marginalization of their ethnic group, or serving as pressure groups to influence the structure of power to reduce perceptions of marginalization of their group (Fadile, 2013, p. 19). It was at this point that the MASSOB emerged under the leadership an Indian-trained lawyer, Mr. Ralph Uwazurike, with the main goal of achieving self-determination. Since then, several other Biafra separatist groups such as BZM and the IPOB have emerged in the Southeast with the same objective.

However, though renewed Biafra separatist agitations in the Southeast dates back to 1999, when constitutional rule was restored, their activities have been intensified in the last two years, despite periodic crack down on their members by security agencies. While a number of narratives have emerged to explain this, the politics of exclusion, evident in the initial appointments by President Buhari in which the Igbo were completely excluded has remained the most appealing. Tables 4 and 5 below show clearly the regional character of President Buhari’s initial appointments.

Table 4: Service Chiefs Appointed by President Buhari and their State of Origin

S/N	Name	Position	State
1	Major- General Abayomi Gabriel Olonishakin	Chief of Defence Staff	Ekiti
2	Major-General T.Y. Buratia	Chief of Army Staff	Borno
3	Rear Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas	Chief of Naval Staff	Cross River
4	Air Vice Marshal Sadique Abubakar	Chief of Air Staff	Bauchi
5	Air Vice Marshal Monday Riku Morgan	Chief of Defence Intelligence	Benue
6	Major-General Babagana Monguno (rtd)	National Security Adviser	Borno

Source: *Premium Times, Tuesday, January 13, 2015*

Table 5: List of Buhari’s First Appointment

S/N	Name	Position	State/Geo-political Zone
1	Lt. Col. Abubakar Lawal	Aide de Camp to president	Kano State North-West
2	Femi Adesina	Special Adviser, Media and Publicity to the president	Osun State, South-West
3	Garba Shehu	Senior Special Assistant Media and Publicity	Kano State, North-West
4	Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure	State Chief Protocol/Special Assistant (Presidential Maters)	Jigawa State, North-West
5	Ahmed Idris	Accountant General of the Federation	Kano State, North- West
6	Lawal Daura	Director General, State Security Services, SSS	Kaduna State, North West
7	Amina Zakari	Acting Chairperson, Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC	Jigawa State, North-West
8	Habibu Abdulahi	Managing Director, Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA	Kano State, North-West
9	Paul Boroh	Special Adviser Niger Delta Amnesty Office	Bayelsa State South-South
10	Baba Haruna Jauro	Acting Director General, Nigerian Maritime Administration, Safety and Security Agency, NIMASA	Yobe State, North-East
11	Umaru Dambatta	Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Communications Commission	Kano State, North-West
12	Babatunde Fowler	Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS	Lagos State, South-West
13	Aliyu Gusau	Director General, Budget Office of the Federation	Zamfara State, North-West
14	Emmanuel Kachikwu	Group Managing Director, Nigeria National petroleum Corporation, NNPC	Delta State, South-South
15	Babachir David Lawal	Secretary to Government of the Federation	Adamawa, North East
16	Abba Kyari	Chief of Staff to the President	Born, North-East
17	Hameed Ibrahim Ali	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Customs Service	Kaduna State, North- Central
18	Kure Martin Abeshi	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service	Nasarawa State. North-Central
19	Ita Enang	Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (Senate)	Akwa Ibom State, South South
20	Suleiman Kawu	Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives)	Kano State, North-West
21	Modercai Baba Ladan	Director, Department of Petroleum Resources, DPR	Kano, North-West

Source: *premium Rimes*, Tuesday, January 13, 2015

The point being made is the systematic reduction of the Igbo of Southeast to a minority group of the Federal Government and coordinated attempts to exclude them from active involvement in governance at the federal level have given fillip to persistent separatist agitations in the region.

In addition to the conspiracy of the Federal Government, corruption and political illiteracy of leaders in the Southeast also continue immensely in the rising level of infrastructural deficit, disempowerment and social decay in the region, which are often exploited to mobilize people to engage in separatist agitations. For sixteen years of PDP rule, particularly the six years of Goodluck's administration, Igbos occupied the office of Deputy Senate President; Deputy Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives; Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SGF); Minister of Finance/Coordinating Minister of the Nigerian Economy; Minister of Health, Aviation, Labour; Chief of Army Staff, among others yet no meaningful improvement either in infrastructure or federal institutions was recorded in the Southeast. Those "who have access to Aso Rock and got fat contracts sustained the lies to hoodwink both the Aso Rock gods and the Igbos". The trend in social decay and disempowerment in the Southeast appears not to have abated, despite the change slogan of the ruling party, since three of the Southeast states of Abia, Ebonyi and Imo are among the ten states that owe worker despite the Paris Club loan refund.

Therefore, although the deteriorating material conditions of the people derive from the actions and inactions of the Nigerian government, which appear unfavourable to Igbo, and which have created the feelings of collective victimization among the people, the failure of governance at various levels has produced a disconnect between the masses and the government.

III. Conclusion/Recommendations

The major reason for the resurgent separatist agitations in the South east geo-political zone is the sense of collective victimization and marginalisation of the zone in terms of appointments of Igbo sons and daughters into key government positions since 1999 and especially from 2015 -date, opportunities in terms federal road infrastructure, Ports facilities to cater for the commercial and freight needs of the majorly business oriented Igbo population as well as the inability of the zone to produce a President of Igbo extraction since 1999. This brings to the fore the ethnic nature of the agitations and the politics of resource allocation and sharing in a multi-ethnic nation. The Igbos believes that some ethnic groups are being favoured more than others in the sharing of the benefits accruing from our commonwealth.

This paper, therefore, recommends that sincere and objective policy changes starting from the federal level and extending to the states will go a long way in restoring citizens' confidence in the Nigerian state, reducing the level of agitations and improving the climate of political stability.

The Federal government should sit down with the agitators and listen to their genuine concerns, allay their fears and show it means well for the agitators concerns relative to the positions of other ethnic groups. In effect, government and the agitators should make up their mind for reconciliation.

Political and economic resources should be distributed equitably among the various ethnic nationalities and groups. If these are done, agitations and discontentment by ethnic groups will be drastically reduced since the system already has a mechanism to evenly distribute resources to all ethnic groups and parts of the country without discrimination or bias.

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