

THE IGBO, MARGINALIZATION AND EMERGENCE OF SECTARIAN GROUPS IN SOUTH-EAST

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated the Igbo, their alleged cases of marginalization in the politics of Nigeria and emergence of sectarian groups in South East, Nigeria. The Igbo ethnic nationality is located in the South East, Nigeria. The Igbo is highly numerous and populous, with abundance of natural and mineral resources which contributes so much to Nigeria's national development. Besides, a good number of the Igbo have made and are still making valid contributions to Nigeria's political development. Yet, the Igbo is noted to have remained one of the ethnic groups in Nigeria that have continued to suffer alleged discriminatory treatment and marginalization from the powers that be at the centre. Historically, the Igbo has insisted that until 2018, the Federal Government has done little or nothing to address the myriads of the agitations that built up to the Nigeria-Biafra war. The reluctance of the Federal Government to fully re-integrate the Igbo into mainstream Nigeria politics, adopt the option of dialogue in addressing the alleged cases of the Igbo marginalization have therefore partly contributed to the emergence of sectarian groups in South-East, Nigeria. Notwithstanding the force option of the state, these sectarian groups have remained resolute in their demands. Materials for the study were sourced through the secondary method, content analysis was applied in the analysis. The study reveals that lack of genuine institution of social justice and good governance in Nigeria among others have resulted to the expression of disaffection among majority of people of the Igbo extraction. The paper recommends genuine restructuring of Nigeria's unbalanced federation and greater use of the political option and dialogue in addressing ethnic agitations in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Governance, South-East, Marginalization, Nigeria, Sectarian groups.

1. INTRODUCTION

The South East geo-political zone is among the multi-ethnic and heterogeneous groups that make up the political entity known as Nigeria. In the region, there has remained a lot of unresolved contending issues, some of which had earlier, contributed to the Nigeria –Biafra war of 1967-1970. Up till 2018, the area has continued to express several acts of State neglect over the yearning of the populace, bad governance, and alleged marginalization of the geo-political zone by the federal authorities especially since after the civil war (Ofoeze, 2009). This development has led to the expression of agitations and formation of sectarian groups in the zone, as the State has virtually remained adamant or non-challant to the entrenchment of the use of dialogue in bringing about social justice and equity in certain sections of the country, especially, the South East. Series of unresolved ethnic and minority complaints as well as other contending national issues heralded Nigeria's political independence in 1960. The haphazard manner the Nigerian State attended to some of the agitations was most unfair and unsatisfactory. The aftermath of the lacklustre attitude of the Nigerian State especially against the people of Eastern Nigeria then was the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra War that lasted between July 1967- January 1970.

The war was declared by the Federal Military Government under General Yakubu Gowon to restore the people of Eastern Nigeria especially the Igbo which declared secession from the Federal Republic of Nigeria back to the federation. Unfortunately, some of the issues that led to the civil war such as the alleged cases of Igbo marginalization in major national appointments, lack of meaningful Federal Presence in the citing of projects in the South East, resource control as well as other forms of discriminatory practices against the Igbo that led to their attempt to secede from Nigeria have not been satisfactorily addressed after over five decades of the civil war (Ndoh, 1997). Just before and immediately after the restoration of civil rule in Nigeria in May 1999, the various ethnic groups that felt marginalized in Nigeria especially the South-South and parts of

the South-West renewed their fight for various demands on the Nigerian State. Their major concerns arose in the areas of resource control, limited Federal Government attention on the resource base of the nation, political exclusionism among others (Monday & Samuel, 2016; Afoyemi, 2013). Hitherto, the failure of dialogue to resolve sectarian agitation especially in the Niger Delta areas of Nigeria for instance led to the formation of militant groups that had to engage the state in militant confrontation to drive home their demands.

Although certain concessions and Amnesty were made and granted to some sections of the country over their perceived victimization by the powers that be, no serious concessions have been made to the Igbo in real terms. The people of South-East extraction have therefore felt seriously shortchanged in the sense that the Federal Government had paid little or no attention to reintegrate the zone fully into the mainstream of Nigeria politics and carry the people along in the allocation of valued or tangible and intangible national resources since the end of the civil war. Instead, there has remained what the people generally describe as “an internal colonialism” and deliberate attempt by the dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria to keep the Igbo perpetually as second class citizens and under political bondage and servitude. The failure of dialogue to re-address this ugly development led the people to resort to the formation of sectarian groups that adopt non violent means to press it on the Federal Government to attend to their plight. Consequently, some sectarian groups such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), was formed in 2001 under the leadership of an Imo State indigene and London trained lawyer, Chief Ralph Uwazuruike who also later formed the Biafra Independent Movement.

The Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) also came up in 2012 under the leadership of an Afara (Umuahia) born prince, Nnamdi Kanu. Earlier, a socio-cultural group known as Oha na Eze Ndigbo had been championing the course of the Igbo Agenda in Nigeria through various persuasive means. The sectarian groups at various times have carried out several protests and demonstrations (some of which tuning into violence) between the group and Nigeria security agencies in several parts of the South East. The attempts were made to draw the attention of the Federal Government to the age long Socio-economic neglect, infrastructural decay, political marginalization, alienation and several acts of injustices meted out to the people of the South East that tantamount to the denial of their human rights by subsequent administrations in Nigeria (Ofoeze, 2009). It has been on this ground that these sectarian groups which often differ on the means of achieving their target are united on their quest to press for the secession of the Igbo from Nigeria’s federation. On several occasions, the Federal Government through its security operatives had resorted to the use of force to clamp down on the non violent activities of these sectarian groups. The Amnesty International had reported on frequent cases of extra judicial killings, torture and illegal arrest of IPOB members and their leaders. For instance, after the military invasion of the residence of the founder of the IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu and the raid on his father’s palace on September 14, 2017, the where about of both Nnamdi Kanu and his parents since after the incident has remained unknown; Thereafter, an Abuja High Court outlawed IPOB and declared it a terrorist group. There was also a sordid case of the arrest of some Pro-Biafra women in Owerri, Imo State in August 2018 who had to demonstrate to demand explanation on the whereabouts of their leader, Nnamdi Kanu. Before and after Nigeria’s independence, it has to be noted that some prominent sons and daughters of Igbo extraction had played (and still play) active roles in Nigeria’s socio-economic and political development.

Such persons included Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who was among those that fought for Nigeria’s independence and later became the ceremonial President; Onyiba Aja Nwachukwu (First Nigeria Minister of Education) in the First Republic; Godwin Umeh Ezuoke, Speaker, House of Representatives (Second Republic); Dr. M.I. Okpara and Akanu Ibiam (Premiers of Eastern Region); Dr. Alex Ekwueme (Vice President Second Republic); Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe (Chief of General Staff in the early days of the Babangida regime). Others that served as presidents of the Nigeria Senate at various times were: Chief Evan Enwerem; Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, Adolphus Wagarara; Ken Nnamani; and Pius Anyim who also served as secretary to the Federal Government under Goodluck Jonathan’s administration. Emeka Ihedioha was also the deputy speaker of the House of Representatives within the same period. Similarly, Lt. Gen. Ihejirika was formerly the chief of Army staff under Goodluck Jonathan’s administration. A good number of the Igbo have also served as ministers. The only sensitive position left for the Igbo under president Buhari’s administration is that of deputy Senate President which is occupied by Senator Ike Ekweremadu. It is therefore not an over statement to state that the Igbo have made enormous contributions to Nigeria’s overall development (Ugbalaa, 2017). Among the Igbo, their agitation over alleged marginalization and victimization deepened in Nigeria in 2015 after the election and swearing in of President Muhammadu Buhari under the platform of the All Progressives’ Congress (APC). The party could not secure much support from the South East as it won only in one state (Imo State) out of the five South Eastern States. In his subsequent remarks, the president stated that those states or zones that did not vote for his party should not expect much from his administration. The president later made well his assertion by not considering any Igbo among his core executive cabinet members, service chiefs, Chairman of sensitive Boards and citing of major federal Projects in the South East. This study therefore examined the Igbo, their alleged marginalization in Nigeria and emergence of sectarian groups whose objectives is targeted at the realization of the Igbo Agenda.

1.1 Brief history of the igbo

The Igbo ethnic group found in the South Eastern zone of Nigeria arose following series of administrative restructuring by the colonial and post colonial authorities that placed the Igbo among the Southern part of Nigeria. The area

“is bounded by Igala to the North West, the Idoma to the North, the Ekoid Bantu to the North-West, the Anang to the East, the Ijaw and other related people to the South and Edo to the West” (Afigbo, 2000:6). Similarly, a foremost sociologist, Uchendu (1965) noted that the area is located in South Eastern Nigeria between latitude 5 to 7 degrees in the Northern hemisphere and Longitude 6 to 8 degrees in the Eastern hemisphere. The Igbo as at Nigeria’s first Republic occupied an area of some 15, 800 square miles. Geographically, the Igbo is roughly divided into two unequal parts by the River Niger before the entrance to the Atlantic ocean with a network of distributaries characterized by its Delta (Ofoeze, 2009). A major Chunk of the Igbo territory is found in the East of the Niger under the latest arrangement by the Nigeria Government. Majority of the Igbo occupy the South East States of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. A few number of the Igbo are also found in parts of Ahoada, Omuma and Ikwere areas of Rivers State as well as in parts of Delta State such as Asaba, Ika and Agbo. Uchendu (1965) identified the physical features of the Igbo and the various rivers and belts covering the Niger, Imo, Anambra, Afikpo and Ikpo (Ebonyi) which are drained by the Cross River with the Udi highlands which contain huge deposits of coal. The Igbo has distinct geo-physical features that distinguishes it from other zones in the country.

The tropical climate of the Igbo stands at an average temperature of about 180f as well as an annual range of about 50C and 100C (Uchendu, 1965). Two distinct seasons in Igbo land are the rainy and dry seasons. Compared to other ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbo lack a definite homeland than their Igboland in Nigeria (Ofoeze, 2009). With their vast population, the predominant occupation of the Igbo in the pre-colonial period was farming and reliance on crude implements. Colonialism and the 19th century industrial revolution made impact on the Igbo material production and relations, adventurousness, adaptability, entrepreneurial skill, inventiveness and determination (Ofoeze, 2009). The Igbo enterprising Spirit led to their penetration and key roles in the various sectors of the colonial and present Nigeria economy (Achebe, 1981). At Nigeria’s political independence, the Igbo played a major role in the Nigerian economy and became the fastest growing economy in Nigeria. After independence however, the Nigerian State adopted some policies, programmes and actions which according to Achebe (1981:41) “led to the routing of the Igbo from the commanding height of the Nigeria economy” and this ended up leaving the Igbo economically prostrate and socially devastated (Ofoeze, 2009). The pre-colonial political system among the Igbo was described as egalitarian, ocephalous and generally democratic in nature as the system did not encourage anyone to unnecessarily exercise lordship over his fellow man. Similarly, the Igbo social life, and system also encouraged freedom and adventurous life to the extent that with hard work and determination each person was free to attain any height in life.

1.2 The Igbo and challenge of marginalization in nigeria

Oxford advanced learners dictionary (2006) defined marginalization as an orchestrated attempt by a politically or economically privileged majority group to make somebody, a people or a group feel less important to the extent of not influencing major decisions, events or outcomes. The idea behind marginalization is to put a group in a position of irrelevance by not according them their deserved socio-economic or political sense of belonging or right to meaningful existence in society or political community where they belong. Similarly, Ogu (2009) contended that marginalization has to do with any form of undermining, treating with levity, indifference, neutrality, or meanness of attitude towards a given value or anything directed towards the common good and general welfare of a group of people. The Nigeria civil war of 1967-1970 ended up deepening the punishment already placed on the Igbo as the war left them dangerously destitute and deprived (Ogu, 2009). In their desperate search for survival, the Igbo is now found everywhere humanly inhabitable given their adventurous Spirit and survivalist instinct. Late Gani Fahwehinmi in year 2000 during the anniversary of Nigeria’s independence aptly observed that the Igbo are the only group in Nigeria that can squeeze out water from the stone (Ogu, 2009). In his further analysis, Ogu (2009:44) contended that:

From the end of the war till date (2018), the Igbo have been systematically denied the privilege or right to federal infrastructural presence... It is therefore in desperate search for survival outside their land that the people of the zone have to migrate to other parts of the country, especially Lagos, their mass exodus to other parts of the country and beyond has remained intense and extensive to the extent that their own land have been left humanly and developmentally fallow. For a greater part of the Igbo existence in Nigeria, experience has shown that the Igbo is individually and collectively treated as second class citizens and secretly, directly or indirectly as vassals and prisoners of war. Different standards and criteria have continued to exist between the Igbo and people from other geo-political zones, for instance, on admission or appointment into Federal Government institutions. In most cases, the Igbo pass through their nose before they are considered for certain sensitive offers (in cases where such ever exist). A major disadvantage which for years has continued to prevail is that some of the top executive positions at the federal level are headed by non Igbo indigenes who often give preferential treatment to people from their own zones only.

The basis of the Igbo alleged marginalization in national politics in Nigeria stems from the fact that since Nigeria’s Independence, the zone has not been able to produce the nation’s President, either under civilian or military dispensation except the accidental six-month reign of Maj. Gen. J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi which was hotly resisted by the North, leading to the counter coup of 29th July, 1966. The late Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi’s regime was characterized by high level of uncertainties and tension before it ended disastrously. Several studies carried out by some Igbo scholars such as Azikiwe (1961), Achebe (1983) and Nnoli (2003) attest to the fact that the Igbo have continued to suffer fundamental rejection, discrimination and hatred

from majority of people and leaders from other zones. Such unwholesome actions and discriminatory treatment which have historically passed through some phases and periods have ranged from physical harm, economic disempowerment and political marginalization (Okechukwu, Nwachukwu & Chijioko, 2016).

Before Nigeria's political independence, there was already a feeling of collective victimization by the Igbo. Nnamdi Azikiwe noted this when he accused the British Government of spearheading certain acts of systematic discrimination against Eastern Nigeria, especially the Igbo. For instance, Azikiwe (1961) asserted that, it would appear that God specially created the Igbo to suffer persecution and be victimized because of their resolute will to live. In his further contention, Azikiwe (1961:245) submitted that: Socially, the British press has not relented in describing us as the most hated in Nigeria... Politically, you have seen with your own eyes how four million people were disenfranchised by the British for decades because of our alleged backwardness... look at our roads, how many of them are tarred vis-à-vis the roads in other parts of the country? How many of our towns for example have complete postal, telegraph, telephone and wireless services?... Does not the Ibo-tax payer fulfill his civic duty? Why then must he be the victim of studied official victimization.

The outbreak of ethnic clashes, hostilities and antagonism between the Igbo and other ethnic groups (not masterminded by the Igbo) in October 1945 in Jos led to the killing and loss of property of mainly the people of Igbo extraction. After eight years of the Jos riot, another politically masterminded riot took place in Kano which lasted four days beginning from 16th May, 1953. Although the riot resulted from the decision of the Action Group to hold a rally in Kano as part of the campaign to woo the North for an eventual self government in 1956, the main victims of the attacks were the Igbo. About 46 Igbo were left dead and 205 injured (Martin, 2006). The Nigeria-Biafra war which was fought in the Igboland territory was extremely costly for the Igbo as it ended up leaving the area much more devastated and worse off. The war which mainly resulted from series of injustice against the Igbo and the reluctance of the Gowon's regime to implement the Aburi Accord which the Nigerian government freely entered into with the Eastern region led to series of wanton destruction of the lives and property of the Igbo populace with a massive displacement and dislocation of the people. The civil war was more of a genocide against the Igbo.

The Nigerian soldiers during the war had no regard for globally established practices in the fighting of conventional or civil warfare as they concentrated their attacks on the civilian populace and targets. Worse still, the condition of the Igbo was made more precarious following part of the war time policy of the Federal Government which held that starvation was a legitimate instrument of warfare which debarred foreign aids, food and health assistance from the Red Cross and other Non-Governmental Organizations from getting to the Biafra territory. The denial of food and other meaningful assistance to Biafra led to food shortages, hunger, malnutrition, outbreak of diseases especially kwashiorkor, which led to the death of millions of people, particularly children. The wound left by the civil war on the Igbo populace has refused to completely heal, several decades after the end of the war. The Post war experience of the Igbo showed that the Federal Government has made little or no effort to re-integrate the secessionists to mainstream Nigeria politics. The policy of "No Victor, No vanquished" and Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Reintegration (the 3Rs) enunciated by the Gowon's regime as part of the reconciliatory efforts with the secessionists remained mere rhetorics as the policy was either poorly implemented or failed to concentrate on the war affected areas of Eastern Nigeria. Besides the post war relief efforts suffered from poor organization and implementation in the sense that basic resources were not provided in several places. Federal Government on her part concentrated on national reconstruction for the creation of the enabling atmosphere and conducive economic environment for the recovery of the national economy. Hence, direct person – person touch which was earlier proposed could not be sustained (Allison, 1987).

In addition, the Federal Government's failure to significantly address the humanitarian disaster occasioned by the civil war was described by Ohaneze Ndi Igbo and other pro-Igbo activists as the Federal Government's grand design to further the Igbo marginalization and victimization. The Biafran warlord, Odumegwu Ojukwu aptly accused the Federal Government of lack of genuine interest in reconciling with the separatists. Not too long after the war, Ojukwu had to lament that: What we have today is a white-imposed solution to satisfy white economic interests. Available reports reveal a proven reluctance or unwillingness by the Federal Government to federate. The basic needs of the people are lacking, no shelter, no money, etc. pledges made in course of the war are not fulfilled. There have been reports and denials about the true situation. I think uncertainty creates a most unfortunate situation, because all it can do is prolong the feeling of insecurity and hamper the progress of necessary reconciliation (Tekana & Samson, 1989:82). The Igbo frustration in Nigeria since the end of the Civil war has been changing in intensity, moving beyond the challenge of insecurity of lives and property to the wider areas of unfair economic policies, underdevelopment and political marginalization Programmes purported enunciated by the Federal Government to address infrastructural deficit of the Igbo have been described by the people as mere punitive measures designed by the centre to further impoverish the Igbo. Among others, the 1976 national boundary adjustment exercise ended up leaving the Igbo disadvantaged and short changed as the exercise excised and transferred some oil leases and minerals situated in Igboland such as Ndoni/Egbema and some parts of Ndoki South (Imo River) to Rivers and Cross River (now Akwa Ibom) States. This move deprived the Igbo the needed resources for development (Ogbuagu, 1983; Okere, 1998). The alignment of the Igbo into national politics through the Northern led and dominated National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in the second Republic led to the concession whereby an Iboman, late Dr. Alex Ekwueme was chosen as the Vice President under

President Shehu Shagari's administration (October 1, 1979 – December 31, 1983). Some other political concessions were also given to the Igbo during the period such as the election of Edwin Umeh Ezuoke as speaker of the House of Representatives among other concessions given to some Igbo indigenes for identifying with the party at the centre (Femi, 2015).

The restoration of democratic rule in May 1999 and the prominent role played by some Igbo politicians in the formation and identification with the dominant national party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) led to certain concessions to the Igbo such as; zoning the position of Senate President, Deputy Speaker, House of Representative and later Secretary to the Federal Government and Army chief of Staff at various times to the Igbo. However, following the victory of President Muhammadu Buhari after the 2015 general elections under the platform of the All Progressives Congress (APC) against the incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party, the Igbo almost lost out completely in national politics as the APC won only in one state (Imo) out of the five states in the South East. For over three years since his tenure, the President went ahead to exclude the Igbo in his core executive cabinet or national appointments, and headship of sensitive Boards, the Federal Government has also been reluctant to cite major Federal Government projects in South East, Nigeria. This development led to the resurrection of the Biafra feeling of alienation and renewal of the spirit of secession among the Igbo for which majority of the people acting under the aegis of sectarian groups agitate for the secession of the Igbo from the Nigeria federation (John, 2017).

1.3 Emergence of socio-cultural and sectarian groups in south east, nigeria

Noting their fate in Nigeria, the Igbo have resorted to various mechanisms to register their protest and ensure they are not lost out in the politics of Nigeria. Earlier, Nnamdi Azikiwe and other prominent igbo activists in both pre and post Independent Nigeria who led the dominant party in Eastern Nigeria, during the first republic, that is the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) had used the party's umbrella to galvanize peoples support and through non-violent means pursued the Igbo Agenda in Nigeria. According to Okechukwu, Nwachukwu & Chijioke (2016:19): Two broad responses which have been adopted by the Igbo against their perceived marginalization and victimization in Nigeria are mainstream inclusivism and radical separatism. The former represents the attitude of some of the Igbo who cherish greater political, economic and social involvement and inclusion of the Igbo in national affairs as a major tool for addressing the Igbo marginalization.

In the 1970s, for instance, several pro-Igbo group movements sprang up for the championing of the course of the Igbo. Prominent among these was the Ohaneze Ndi Igbo that emerged for the advancement of the socio-political and economic life of Ndi Igbo. Ohaneze Ndi Igbo stood for equality of states among the various geo-political zones, creation of additional state for the South East, true federalism, ceding the Presidential slot to Ndi-Igbo, restructuring and overall development of the South East zone. Ohaneze Ndi Igbo has been devising a lot of non violent approaches for the realization of the Igbo Agenda. To ensure that its messages and objectives get to the grassroot, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo had to set up a youth wing that coordinate the activities of the group among the Igbo youth in the major cities and capitals in South East, Nigeria and beyond. In the recent past, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo has joined other Pro-Biafra agitators to condemn perceived acts of injustices and discrimination meted to Ndi Igbo by the Nigerian state especially since the assumption of office by President Muhammadu Buhari. The non violent stand by Ohaneze Ndi Igbo in her bid to work for the actualization of the Biafra project has made it witness occasional fall off with some pro-Biafra agitators such as the IPOB and MASSOB.

Other pro-Biafra agitators and pan Igbo organizations that have been working for the full re-integration, accommodation and making the Igbo relevant in Nigeria's politics include; Biafra Independent Front, Alaigbo Development Foundation, Aka Ikenga, Mkpoko Igbo, Eastern Forum mandate union, Odenigbo Forum, South East movement, Igbo National Assembly, Ndi Igbo Liberation Forum, Igbo Salvation Front, Igbo Redemption Council, Igbo People's Congress and the Igbo Question Movement. These groups are found in several parts of the South East Zone (Okechukwu, Nwachukwu, & Chijioke, 2016). On several occasions these pro-Biafra movements have been engulfed in leadership crises as they have sometimes differed on the modus operandi for actualizing their vision. Hence, the two most vibrant pro-Biafra sectarian groups in recent years have remained the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

1.3.1 Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

MASSOB emerged among the Igbo of the South East, Nigeria. The Igbo people of South East have not relented in expressing their anger over their perceived intimidation, injustice and marginalization in Nigeria polity. The people contend that they have continued to suffer in the Nigerian state before and after the Nigeria – Biafra war. The emergence of MASSOB in year 2000 under the leadership of Chief Ralph Uwazurike demonstrated a resurrection and renewal of regional agitation for self actualization among the Igbo. Thus, whereas the Biafra spirit of 1967 – 1970 was defeated, the separatist spirit that led to the war refused to die several years after the war. Issues event haywire when in 2005 MASSOB reintroduced the Biafran pound into circulation. This move attracted the wrath of the Obasanjo administration which had to arrest the founder of the group and kept him incarcerated until he was released by late President Yar'Adua's administration in 2007 (Morgen, 2016).

MASSOB was founded as a non-violent civil rights movement whose goal was to work for the actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra through non-violent means. Its members were not expected to carry weapons or any instrument of

violence. The movement adopted and followed the philosophy and practice of Mahatma Ghandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. who stood for non violence. As part of its non-violent strategy, MASSOB had carried out series of mobilization, education and sensitization of the people of South East and parts of South-South to give support to the struggle. In the course of its activities, peaceful rallies and agitations, MASSOB has had violent clashes with the Nigeria security operatives. The repressive action of the state from Obasanjo's administration up till 2018 (President Mohammodu Buhari's administration) had resulted to series of torture, intimidation, killing, arrest and incarceration of thousands of MASSOB members. Over the years, MASSOB has been engulfed in series of leadership challenges among its rank and file. In addition, the continued repressive action of the state against the movement as well as the emergence of other pro-Biafra movements and agitators has been affecting the effective operation of the movement.

At the early years of the existence of MASSOB, Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) and other Human Rights activists condemned in strong terms the level of impunity the state demonstrated against some MASSOB members who carried out non violent demonstrations against certain actions of the state against the Igbo. There were serious cases of illegal arrests, torture, detention and extra-judicial killings of the sect members. Much of the campaigns and resistance shown by MASSOB before and in contemporary times have been targeted against certain oppressive, discriminatory and unfair policies and treatment meted to the Igbo by the Federal Government which the people have described as subtle ways of perpetuating the marginalization of the Igbo. The campaigns and sensitization which MASSOB embarked on against the Federal Government's alleged injustices against the Igbo were carried out across the major cities in South East, Nigeria and other selected cities outside the South East as well as major markets and motor parks. The areas included; Obigbo (Rivers State), Owerri, Njaba, Nwangele, Ngor Okpala, Okwe (Chief Uwazuruike's village). These cities are all in Imo State. Such also took place in Abia State cities of Obehie (Aba), Umuahia among others. Others include; Ihiala, Awka (Anambra State), Enugu, Abakaliki, Calabar, et cetera (Okechukwu, Nwachukwu, Chijioke, 2016; Okechukwu, 2001). The clashes MASSOB have had with state security agencies usually resulted to series of losses of human lives and property. Several cases of legal tussles between MASSOB, the state and its agencies were also rampant until the soft pedaling of the violent activities of the group due to a number of reasons.

Table 1: Some recorded death of MASSOB members in course of their non violent protests, awareness and sensitization at the hand of the Nigeria Police, Vigilante groups and Soldiers at various locations during President Obasanjo's administration, 1999 – 2007.

1.	Mr. & Mrs. Chioma Uwah, natives of Mbaise, Imo State.	27.	Ngagozie F. Mbamalu
2.	Mr. Bonaventure A. Dimnde	28.	Okechukwu Onyia
3.	Kelechi Enyinwa	29.	Samuel A. Chukwu
4.	Gerald Okafor	30.	Osita okeke
5.	Iloabuchi Odife	31.	Kelechi Uwajuaka
6.	Johnson Chigbo	32.	Peter Eziagu
7.	Emmanuel Udogwe	33.	Emeka Obialor
8.	Anuze Obodozie	34.	Chibuzor Eze
9.	Richard Okoh	35.	Andrew Anozie
10.	Chimara Onuegbu	36.	Aloysius Iheme
11.	Ikechukwu Iwu	37.	Eke Njoku (87 years)
12.	Emeka Enemchukwu	38.	Chukwuebuka Umesinwa (Ezinifite, Aguata)
13.	Uchenna Okpara	39.	Nduka Okoye (Awgu, Enugu State)
14.	Vincent Odeh	40.	Ndubuisi Owuisi (Umuwoba, Anambra state)
15.	Chika C. Nwiwu	41.	Nonso okafor (Ojoto, Anambra state)
16.	Peter Eze	42.	Ifeanyi Amah (Amasiri, Ebonyi State)
17.	Okwudiri okonkwo	43.	Cosmas Okorinna (Orlu, Imo State)
18.	Paul C. Nwachukwu	44.	Ikenna Obi
19.	Uchenna Okafor	45.	Silas Obi
20.	Chigozie Amara	46.	Silas Njoku
21.	Arinze Ugiri	47.	Jacob, no surname
22.	Ifeanyi, no surname	48.	Ebuka Uwezinwa
23.	Immaculata Uwa	49.	Israel Iheme
24.	Mmesoma Uwa	50.	Christian Ogere
25.	Samuel Ifejirika	51.	Okey John
26.	Augustine O. Obidinma	52.	Michael, no surname
		53.	Friday, no surname

Source: Republic report (2010, September 4), MASSOB: Chronicles of brutality in Nigeria; New York

The data shown in table 1 is just a tip of the iceberg considering the number of MASSOB members that have been extra-judicially killed by the Nigeria security agencies and state sponsored vigilante groups. Moreover, the extra-judicial killing of MASSOB members reached a crescendo in early 2003 before the conduct of the general elections of that year. On 29th March, 2003 for instance, several MASSOB members were extra-judicially killed when some armed policemen (mainly Hausa Policemen) opened fire on a large convoy of MASSOB members at Umulolo, Okigwe, Imo State. The firing was made to disperse them. In the process, 100 MASSOB members died, others sustained serious injuries. The police raid on some MASSOB members by the Nigeria police on June 16, 2003 at Nkpor (Onitsha, Anambra state) also led to the death of 17 MASSOB members. MASSOB was also allegedly implicated by Nigeria security agencies during the 2006 national census exercise that witnessed some disruptions and poor organization in certain parts of the South East. Several arrest of MASSOB members was made and about 62 of them killed.

1.4 The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

The IPOB is a secessionist youth militant movement situated in the South-East area of Nigeria. Biafra's agitation stems from the post war experiences of the Igbo in the sense that the Federal Government has remained adamant to addressing some of the circumstances that led to the civil war. The IPOB is made up of some youths who broke away from the MASSOB. The youths and their sympathizers or supporters from the South-South and parts of the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria feel marginalized and disenchanting with Nigeria politics which for decades has failed to properly integrate the Igbo in national politics. The group was formed in 2009 under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu, from Afara, Abia State. Ideologically, the IPOB was formed to adopt non-violent means to actualize the realization of the Biafra Republic (Ozeh & Ofodum, 2018). The IPOB set for itself the onerous task of grassroots mobilization and sensitization of the people of the zone over certain actions and policies of the Federal Government against the Igbo especially since the emergence of President Buhari's administration in 2015. They carried their campaigns to the major markets, motor parks and public gatherings in the South-East and parts of the South-South. The declaration of annual Biafra day by IPOB which is marked with an unofficial public holiday as well as their opposition or resistance to certain Federal Government programmes in the zone for long continued to attract the wrath of the State security agencies against the group.

IPOB also opened a radio Biafra which operated from London. It was through the radio that IPOB mobilized supporters for peaceful street protests which often turned violent between the group and Nigeria security agencies. Some IPOB members suffered series of arrest, torture, humiliation and extra-judicial killings by state security operatives. Up till August 2018, some IPOB members were still been incarcerated in several cells across the country. The leader of the IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu also suffered series of arrest and detention by the men of the Department of State Security (DSS) including that of October 17, 2015 (Azomba, 2015). The group had carried its campaigns for self determination and sovereignty to the international community. Nnamdi Kanu secured bail from detention after his arrest on October 17, 2015 after meeting his bail conditions. Unfortunately, most IPOB members and their leader could not adjust to the culture of silence that was expected of the group and its leader, by the state. Series of peace meetings, negotiations and reconciliatory moves were made by the major stakeholders in the zone including South-East governors forum, Ohanaeze Ndigbo and other notable politicians in the zone to brainstorm on how best to actualize the Igbo Agenda.

While Nnamdi Kanu was waiting for his case to be heard in court over alleged breach of public peace and treasonable felony, the Federal Government decided to undertake the repressive option. This time, the state put in place a Special Force known as "Operation Python Dance II", for the South-East led by the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. T. Buratai. The Special Military Force invaded major cities of the South-East especially the operational zone of IPOB. In the process, there were massive arrest and killings of IPOB members at Umuahia, its environs and across the South-East. The invasion led to the demolition of the family house and palace of the father of IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, at Afara, Umuahia, Abia State. Since after the invasion, the where about of the IPOB leader and his parents has remained unknown. Thereafter, a federal high court in Abuja declared IPOB a terrorist group and outlawed its existence. IPOB, however appealed against the judgment. The protracted absence or disappearance of Nnamdi Kanu coupled with the outlawing of IPOB went a long way to affecting the operation of the group.

1.5 Some record of deaths of IPOB members

Just like MASSOB, the non-violent and peaceful protests organized by IPOB has attracted severe wrath and brutal treatment from the Nigeria security operatives with the state doing nothing to checkmate the trend. Just in a single shooting, 12 IPOB members laid dead on 17th December, 2015 at Onitsha, Anambra State following sporadic gunshots by soldiers of the Head Bridge Market, Onitsha following IPOB members' jubilation over a court ruling in favour of the release of the leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu. Among the dead included; Peter Nwankwo (26), Michael Nweke (37), and Matthew N. Kanu (25). Before the Onitsha killings, the Inspector General of Police had directed his anti-riot squad to "maximally" deal with Pro-Biafra agitators. Similarly, Maj. Gen. Hassan Umaru (GOC, 3 Division of the Nigeria Army) had also in a press conference in Kobe cantonment, Plateau state insisted that "all those threatening and agitating for the dismemberment of the country shall be visited with the military's ROE (Rule of Engagement) to the fullest". With this mandate, incidents of extra-judicial killings and torture of MASSOB members became the order of the day. On 30th August 2015, 4 MASSOB members were killed in

Awka and Onitsha. 18 others were killed in Onitsha early December 2015. Between January and early February 2016, 36 members of MASSOB were killed at Aba. Among those killed in Onitsha and Awka on 30th August, 2016 were;

1. Ebuka Nnolum - Anambra State
2. Obasi Maduka - Ebonyi State
3. Anthonia N. Ikeanyionwu - Anambra State
4. Kenneth Ogadinma - Abia State
5. Chima Onoh - Enugu State
6. Angus Chikwado - Anambra State
7. Felicia Egwuatu - Anambra State
8. Okwu Friday

Source: Republic report, 2010: MASSOB Chronicles of Brutality in Nigeria, New York, P.6.

1.6 Killing of unarmed 22 IPOB members at a prayer session at national high school, aba on 9th february, 2016.

The above event was rather described as a holocaust or an execution. In obedience to the Executive order given to IPOB members to clear off the road, over 100 IPOB members joined in the prayer session at the National High School, Aba on 9th February, 2016. At about 12:00 noon that fateful day, a detachment of military personnel and policemen bulldozed their way into the school compound and began shooting sporadically. In the end, 22 IPOB members were left dead, with many injured. Among the dead included;

- Uche Friday, Aged 30, an indigene of Asa, Abia State.
- Emeka Ekpemandu, Aged 35, from Owerri Nkwoji, Imo State.
- Chiavoghi Chibuikem, from Obingwa, Abia State.
- Nzubechi Onwumere, from Orlu, Imo State.
- Peter, U. Chinemerem, Aged 27, from Isiala Ngwa North.
- Chigozie C. Nwoye, Aged 23, from Ezeagu, Enugu State.
- Chukwudi Onyekwere, Aged 26, from Aboh Mbaise, Imo State.
- Chibuzor Maduagwu, Aged 28, from Amauzari, Imo State. (Mayah, 2016, June 8).

1.7 Discovery of 13 decomposing dead bodies in burrow pits along abas – port harcourt road on 13th february, 2016.

A few days after the extra-judicial killing of some unarmed IPOB members during a prayer session at National High School, Aba, 13 dead bodies were later found in a burrow pit at the outskirts of Aba, Abia State. Contained on some of the dead bodies were different Biafra inscriptions and flags. The dead bodies were noted to be victims of extra – judicial killing by Nigeria security agencies. By march 2, 2016, the 13 bodies had been set ablaze and burnt beyond recognition in order to destroy the evidence.

1.8 Setting up of operation python dance ii for south-east, nigeria

In what the Federal Government under President M. Buhari described as incessant criminal activities, kidnapping, armed robbery, terrorism and sectarian agitations, the Federal Government constituted the above force for the South East, Nigeria under the control of the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai. The IPOB described the Operation Python Dance II as a: Wickedly, undemocratic, silent Jihadi war unleashed on peaceful Biafran population, in order to complete the extermination of the Igbo race under the pretext of military exercise in a peaceful civilian environment... where on earth is it heard that combat ready troops are deployed within the borders of a country to deal with a non-violent matter? Only in Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2018:40).

The force launched series of attacks and did a clamp down on the non violent rallies and activities of IPOB in the South East and its environs. The climax of the operation of the Special Task Force came on September 14, 2017 when the Force tortured, arrested and committed serious cases of extra-judicial killings of IPOB members in the South East, Nigeria and its environs. The worst hit was the home town of the founder of IPOB, (Afara-umuahia, Abia State). There was also the invasion and raid on the family house and palace of the father of the IPOB leader. Since after the incident, the whereabouts of Nnamdi Kanu and his parents have remained unknown. Besides, the Federal Government through an Abuja High Court did not waste time in outlawing the existence of IPOB which it labeled a terrorist group. Reasons for agitation for secession by sectarian and some other pro-Biafra groups in South-East, Nigeria A good number of reasons have given rise to the persistent quest for secession from the Nigeria Federation by the IPOB, other separatist groups and their supporters in South East, Nigeria. This study examined the following:

2. SHORTCHANGING OF THE IGBO IN THE CREATION OF STATES

The creation of geo-political zones or states has been one of the ways through which Nigeria as a federation has adopted to address the inherent complaints of domination and marginalization of the minority by the majority groups in Nigeria. Under the latest arrangement, some salient factors were undermined to the extent that such things like equity, fairplay

or fairness were hardly considered. For instance, all other geo-political zones in Nigeria except the South East has either 7 or 6 states whereas the South East has only 5 (Aribisola, 2015). No doubt, the North for instance, has consistently been enjoying a hegemonic and privileged position where it has the number of Local governments that is almost equal to what is found in the entire South East. This sad development has grossly reduced the revenue allocation accruing to the South East states from the Federal Government, although some of the South East states are oil producing states. Besides, the South East has also been denied the number of political representations and constituency delineation at various levels which has affected the pace of political and economic development of the area (Kalu, 2017; Odom, 2017).

2.1 Minimal integration of the Igbo in mainstream contemporary nigeria politics

The agitation for secession from Nigeria by Pro-Biafra groups got heightened in 2015 after the commencement of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. Previously, the Igbo had at various times identified with the ruling political party at the centre and that gave credence to the zoning of certain strategic national positions to the Igbo. Unfortunately, the failure of the PDP (which controlled more states in the South East) to retain the national power under former President Goodluck Jonathan after the 2015 Presidential elections led to the turning round of the clock against the Igbo. In his various speeches after his swearing in, President Buhari insisted that those states or zones where the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) did not secure meaningful votes should not expect much from his administration. Consequently, President Buhari had continued to exclude the Igbo in his major executive appointments and membership of sensitive Boards. The South East Governors Forum, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, the sectarian groups and majority of the people of the South East have continued to lament over the near absence of strategic federal projects or presence in the South East since the commencement of the Buhari administration. This obvious neglect of a zone that its people have been contributing to national development and from where part of the resources that sustains the nation are extracted has been a major source of agitation by the Pro-Biafra groups (Nwosu, 2017).

2.2 Poor infrastructural development and decayed social services in south east nigeria.

Poor attention given to infrastructure and the very sorry state of existing ones vis-à-vis what exist in other geo-political zones in Nigeria has continued to remain a major source of worry and bitterness among the people of South East. In contemporary Nigeria, the Igbo has not only been neglected in the distribution of core national infrastructure but have continued to suffer socio-economic and political neglect and suppression by the powers that be. Gross infrastructural decay and bad road network and near absence of social amenities has remained a major bane against meaningful development in South East, Nigeria. The poor network of roads have led to loss of man hour as it has led to frequent road accidents which has claimed hundreds of lives and destruction of goods and property. A good number of the federal roads in South East have become death traps and almost impassable. No day hardly passes without the sad experience of fallen down of long vehicles and trucks carrying petroleum products and other valuable goods. The bad roads include those of: Onitsha – Owerri road, Aba – Owerri road, Enugu – Port Harcourt expressway, Umuahia – Ikot Ekpene road, Okigwe – Owerri road among others (Ogu, 2009). Expressing his view when he appeared before the Senate Committee on Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) on November 23, 2017, the Minister of works, Power and Housing under president Buhari's administration, Babatunde Fashola admitted that roads in South East zone were in decrepit, unspeakable and appalling state. The condition of the roads have remained distressing and painful (Fashola, 2017). The roads in South East states in particular are not only in dilapidated state but have suffered long period of neglect and maintenance as some of the roads were built about 50 years ago. The dearth of other social infrastructures and amenities such as quality education, pipe borne water, power among others have remained worrisome in the South East zone.

2.3 Political exclusion and alienation

Historically, there has persisted an entrenched politics of exclusionism and alienation by the majority ethnic groups against the minority. The Igbo has remained the worst victims of this for many years running. There has been a grand design and subtle strategy by the major zones in the country to strangulate or cripple the efforts of the Igbo in attaining national relevance (Ofoeze, 2000). Some efforts and promises made in the past to address this ugly trend arising from Igbo agitations ended up as mere rhetorics as certain recommendations made to ensure genuine integration of every part or zone in the country could not see the light of the day. Only the Igbo has lost out in the efforts made so far to pacify the zones that have felt victimized or marginalized at one time or the other because of certain actions of the powers that be at the centre. For instance, the South West (Yoruba) felt highly embittered and aggrieved over the annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential election by the Babangida's regime when late Chief M.K.O. Abiola was leading in the released results. That action nearly tore the unity of the country apart. To pacify the South West, efforts had to be made for the zone to produce the second executive President of Nigeria in the person of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, May 29, 1999 – May 29, 2007 (Etoghagua, 2007).

Following the volatile nature of the Niger delta (South South) and the emergence of militant groups in the area over their alleged long period of neglect by the Federal Government and oil multinational companies that operate in the area, efforts were also worked out to give the people a sense of belonging through the emergence of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan as the 4th Executive President of Nigeria under the aegis of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Up till 2018, the Nigerian State has remained adamant and non-challant to the full reintegration of the one-time civil war devastated Igbo and encourage the zone

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have a slot to produce the President of the country. The Igbo has therefore continued to suffer political alienation and marginalization especially as it affects the highest political office in Nigeria. The data in table 1 clearly illustrate this.

Table 1: Nigeria Heads of State (Military & Civilian), their tenure duration and geo-political zone

S/N	Name	Tenure Duration	Region/ Geo-political Zone	State
1	Alhaji Tafawa Balewa (Prime Minister)	October 1, 1960 - January 15, 1966	North East	Bauchi
2	Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe (Ceremonial President)	October 1963 - January 15, 1966	South East	Anambra
3	Gen Aguiyi Ironsi	January 16, 1966 - July 29, 1966	South East	Abia
4	Gen. Yabuku Gowon	July 19, 1966 - July 1975	North Central	Plateau
5	Gen. Murtala Muhammed	July, 1975 – February 13, 1976	North West	Kano
6	Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo	February, 1976 – October, 1979	South West	Ogun
7	Alhaji Shehu Shagari	October 1, 1974 - December 31, 1983	North West	Sokoto
8	Gen. Muhammadu Buhari	December 31, 1983 - August 29, 1985	North West	Katsina
9	Gen. Ibrahim Babangida	August, 1985 – August, 1993	North Central	Niger
10	Chief Ernest Shonekon	August, 1993 – November, 1993 (Interim Government)	South West	Ogun
11	Gen. Sani Abacha	November, 17, 1993 - June 8, 1998	North West	Kano
12	Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar	June 9, 1998 - May 29, 1999	North Central	Niger
13	Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (Civilian President)	May 29, 1999 - May 29, 2007	South West	Ogun
14	Alhaji Musa Ya'Adua	May 29, 2007 - 2010	North West	Katsina
15	Dr Goodluck Jonathan	2010 - May 2011 (Acting President)	South South	Bayelsa
16	Dr Goodluck Jonathan	May, 2011 - May 29, 2015	South South	Bayelsa
17	President Muhammadu Buhari	May 29, 2015 –	North West	Katsina

Source: Compiled by the researcher (2018)

The data in table 1 clearly reveals the level of domination and hijacking of the highest political office in Nigeria under the various dispensations (civilian and military) by a particular group, that is, the North. It has to be noted also that apart from the 6-months turbulent reign of late Maj. Gen. J.T.U. Aguiyi Ironsi (an Igbo) that ended disastrously on July, 1967, no other person of Igbo extraction has ever occupied the Presidential seat, 58 years after Nigeria's political Independence.

2.3.1 Poor engagement and empowerment of the Nigeria and Igbo youth

The survival of the Nigerian youth especially those from Igbo extraction has continued to be made difficult, precarious and vulnerable. Their deepening socio-economic predicament and circumstances have resulted to a perpetual fear of the future and a state of uncertainty. The state has failed to develop an enabling environment and genuine ways of properly engaging the youth to enable them contribute their quota to national development (Alozie, 2017). The level of poverty, outbreak of diseases, youth or graduate, unemployment among the Igbo youth in particular has remained alarming with no hope in sight. Although the multi-ethnic Nigerian state claims to be promoting national integration by according respect to persons irrespective of tribe, religion, sex or party affiliation to travel and domicile anywhere in Nigeria, the Igbo youth are generally hated by their other Nigeria comrades. Hence, they are often given quick notices, where they domicile outside the South East or are massively killed during religious crises they did not even mastermind. On some other cases, they are attacked or killed and their shops and places of abode demolished or set ablaze. To penetrate some national public institutions or secure jobs has remained a hard nut for the Igbo youth because their people are not there. They are often used by obnoxious politicians as political thugs, drug bandits and lured into doing the dirty jobs by the powers that be, who later dump them.

The little initiatives of the Igbo youths are often suppressed (because they are not from the favoured zones) by an "Omnipotent state" which uses its undisciplined and uncultured security operatives to harass, intimidate, threaten and make the environment unsafe and uncondusive for the youth at the slightest provocation. The state leadership has virtually failed to fulfill her campaign promises to create jobs, build industries and revive decaying ones; provide security, reduce the cost of governance, and social services especially education and health; fight corruption in an unbiased and non partisan manner and promote equalitarianism (Bassey & Agbor, 2015). Some programmes and projects initiated by the state for youth survival such as N-Power, poverty alleviation, the "Youth Must Work", skill acquisition among others have rather been hijacked or remained doubtful or deceitful as the impact of such has been lacking. In a case of the abdication of Government responsibilities to the people whose interest it is supposed to protect, frustration and disillusionment had therefore set in among the youth who have been compelled by nature to react in diverse forms.

2.3.2 *Non relaxation of age long anti-Igbo policies by the federal government*

Several years after the end of the Nigeria-Biafra War, it is quite disheartening to note that some anti-Igbo policies that were targeted at punishing the Igbo after the war are yet to be relaxed even though the war ended with the slogan of “No Victor, No vanquished” (Etoghagua, 2007; Ademoyesa, 1981). Such policies included: the dispossessionist policies that led to the abandoned property policy: the policy of transferring some mineral rich Igbo territories to some other ethnic groups or states; the lopsided nature of the various development plans that ended up alienating the Igbo; the exclusionist policies that robbed the Igbo appointments into certain sensitive national positions (Ofoeze, 2009). In addition, the policy of 3Rs of the Gowon’s regime (Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation) which were meant to focus on the areas devastated by the Civil War ended up doing otherwise. Finally, the deprivationist policies put in place such as the displacement of the Igbo from educational and other institutions in the North in particular barred the Igbo from getting to certain positions in the Northern civil service; creation of different criteria for admission and employment into federal institutions with the Igbo in focus among others are yet to be revised in order to enable the Igbo feel welcome in a country to which they freely belong. Instead, the Igbo have been branded with some derogatory names such as rebels, stubborn and seen as individualistic and opportunistic (Achebe, 2012; Nwankwo, 1985).

3. CONCLUSION

The Igbo, situated in the South East geo-political zone of Nigeria is an area that has human, economic and political relevance. Some prominent citizens of the area played useful roles in the struggle that built up to Nigeria’s political independence. Since Nigeria’s existence as a political entity, the Igbo has continued making enormous contributions resulting to national development in Nigeria. The foundation of ethnic minority complaints and agitations in the country was laid as far back as the colonial era when certain issues that should have promoted mutual co-existence between the centre and its component units in a multi-ethnic state were undermined due to the divide and rule policy of the colonialists. Unfortunately, contemporary managers of state affairs are yet to find lasting solutions to some of the critical factors agitating the minds of some of the ethnic groups that feel marginalized and alienated. Unresolved political issues and differences with respect to what some geo-political zones in Nigeria feel should accrue to them, have continued to threaten the unity and stability of the nation. In Nigeria, there have been alleged and often proven cases of persistent marginalization, victimization and domination by some dominant ethnic or geo-political zones against the less dominant ones. For the Igbo, some of the discriminatory treatment the zone claims it receives from the Nigeria state had earlier led to the Civil War. Several years thereafter, no genuine effort has been made by the Federal Government to resolve such differences or fully re-integrate the Igbo into mainstream Nigeria politics. This development has subjected majority of the Igbo and groups to attempt taking their destiny into their hands. The best approach or means of achieving the Igbo Agenda in Nigeria has led to dissenting voices including the formation of sectarian groups. As some press for re-structuring, some others press for outright secession from the Nigeria federation which implies the resurrection of the Biafra spirit of 1967 – 1970. Majority of the Igbo are however, united in their opinion that the Nigerian State has been unfair to the Igbo by almost subjecting the people to the status of second class citizens and failing to appreciate the valuable contributions of the Igbo to the development of Nigeria.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings of this study, this paper hereby make the following recommendations: Firstly, Nigeria government at all levels should endeavour to entrench social justice and rule of law in concrete terms. To realize the vision of one Nigeria which for long has been struggled for, the state should not continue to allow different standards for different people because of where they come from. Selective application of justice which has guaranteed certain favours to the people from some zones should be discontinued. Next, dysfunctional governance which has remained the bane against Nigeria’s development should henceforth be dethroned in Nigeria’s democratic leadership. Governance in the country must be carried out having accountability, equity and fairness as watchwords. The state should not continue to harbor sacred cows in administration. Proven cases of corruption should be visited with appropriate sanctions and corrupt leaders punished accordingly. Appropriate legislations should be enacted to nationalize or confiscate every proven illegally acquired property or wealth. Thirdly, the independent mindedness which characterize the lives of most Igbo and which has so much contributed to their success in business and commerce and least to their national political participation should not continue among the Igbo. They should rather be broadly focused and use appropriate political alignment to reach out to likeminded individuals from other geo-political zones.

Furthermore, in as much as the state is expected to de-emphasize on militarized approach on handling civil matters especially under a democratic dispensation, the South East agitators and their supporters should also be treading the ground softly. Effort should be intensified by them to study and apply international best practices in the struggle for an autonomous status from an already existing sovereign state. Finally, the state and her development partners should not relent in making provisions for the funding of development projects and technical assistance in order to come up with initiatives targeted at improving the socio-economic conditions of the youth and people of South East, Nigeria and finding lasting solutions to the demands of the Pro-Biafra agitators.

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