

Governance challenges and resurgence of Igbo nationalism in Nigeria: Dissecting Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

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Abstract

Purpose: The remote and immediate causes of the Nigerian civil war are rather deepening in the psyche of Ndi-Igbo in contemporary Nigerian politics and administration. Amidst the introduction of the Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation (3Rs) policy over four (4) decades ago, the Ndi-Igbo are not just marginalized but alienated and separated from political power and its benefits in an ethnically and religiously deeply divided federation. More divesting wounds are flagrantly being inflicted upon the Igbo nation. The course pursued by secessionist Biafra between 1967-70 has continued to resonate in Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). This paper thus seeks to dissect the activities of IPOB in relation to national security in Nigeria. It also attempts a polemical analysis of IPOB as a separatist movement and the implications for the integration of Ndi-Igbo into the mainstream of Nigerian power politics.

Research methodology: The paper adopts a qualitative research approach using an in-depth review of extant literature for informed comprehension of the dynamics of secession and unification in a deeply divided federal state of Nigeria. Using a theory of Secession: The Case for Political Self-Determination, the paper submits that treatments being meted out to the people of Igbo nation are compelling to separation.

Results: It surmised that Ndi-Igbo is systematically sidelined and alienated from major political positions and that the allocation of key values is skewed against the Igbo nation. It thus recommends significant devolution of powers to foster an all-inclusive and participatory governance model.

Recommendations: It also recommends the adoption and implementation of a balanced federalist accommodative principle for national cohesion, integration, and development of the Nigeria state.

Keywords: *Ndi-Igbo, Federalism, National Cohesion, Separatist Movement*

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1. Introduction

More than half a century on from the declaration of the Sovereign State of Biafra in May 1967 and its subsequent subjugation into the Nigeria state through unrelenting coercion with overt demarcations of victor and vanquished for and against sections of the country in the governance and administration,

calls, agitations and movements for secession are growing again. Nigeria has been engulfed in a perennial battle to keep the country together and tackle the myriads of socio-political and economic problems that initially created the environment for conflict after the civil war in 1970 (Nimfel & Anjide, 2022). Nationalistic calls and movements for freedom and separation from Nigeria have been burgeoning across ethnic and religious divides. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the South-South geo-political zone and the erstwhile restiveness of the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in South-West Nigeria form part of these agitations. The most pronounced agitation for secession comes from South-East Nigeria where the majority of the citizens of the zone aspire for a Biafran state (Abada, Omeh & Okoye, 2020). Nigeria has remained deeply divided with an unfathomable level of acrimony, disunity, and discrimination in resource allocation. The vanquished in the civil war, Biafra and its people have been relegated and alienated from the government. The issues that necessitated the civil war have flagrantly assumed drastic dimensions without attention to the policy of the Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation (3Rs) which the military government under Gen. Gowon put in place to erase the scars of the civil war (Udeajah, 2017). The people of Biafra are yet to be rehabilitated rather more injuries are gruesomely afflicted on them. Studies indicate that the new wave of ethnic agitations particularly from the Southeast was due to the failure of successive Nigerian governments to properly implement the post-war reconciliation program of the Federal Government enunciated by Gen Yakubu Gowon-led military regime. The failure of successive Nigerian governments to implement the 3Rs policy was the major rationale for the emergence of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movements (Nwangwu, 2023). Clearly, winning the war is easier than winning the peace. The military defeated secessionist Biafra to win the civil war but Nigeria is yet to win peace owing to its inability to achieve re-integration of Ndi-Igbo into the Nigerian political community. The Nigerian civil war has formed part of Nigerian history that cannot be expunged in a jiffy. Record of the dead will remain in peoples' psyche until the Igbo nation is rehabilitated and properly re-integrated or granted leave of separate existence. The stoppage of the study of History as a subject at post-basic education levels in Nigeria is not likely to hide the scars and heal the emotional trauma of the war (Shorr, 2021).

More than twenty-three years into the return and practice of civil rule (democracy), successive governments and administrations have accentuated the injuries of the war and widened the drive for secession (Daly, 2020). The people of the Southeast as well as some perennial minorities and those other sections and groups of the Nigerian state who are not wielding political powers have continued to be segregated in infrastructure development, employment, and distribution of other socio-economic values. As events unfold, the Ndi-Igbo are systematically getting segregated and excluded from the politics and administration of Nigeria. Starting with Igbophobia, when Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, who held sway in the then Lagos legislative elections in the 1950s, was frustrated out for not being a Yoruba man by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his cohorts to ethnic cleansing and pogrom meted against the Ndi-Igbo in the northern part of Nigeria before the genocide of 1967-1970, many more pieces of evidence depicting segregation against Ndi-Igbo abound (Ogbonna, n.d). The people of the Southeast (Ndi-Igbo) are not just alienated from the government but distinctly excluded from holding certain key positions in government (Omoniyi, 2021). Treated as second or even third-class citizens, issues affecting the southeast are not just neglected but not considered deserving by the government at the center. The government, especially the President Muhammadu Buhari-led civilian administration, treats them with a lot of disdain, scorn, and seclusion. The government exhibits a lot of hateful actions against the people and turns around to label their grudges and grievances expressed through social media as hate speech impinging on the corporate existence of Nigeria (Chiamogu, Obikeze, Chiamogu & Odikpo, 2021).

What is more, social diversities of ethnic, religious, and economic dimensions are the primary facilitators of socio-economic and political conflicts in Nigeria (A. P. Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2020; P. Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2019; Okibe, 2022). Diversities of conflictual dimensions polarize multicultural societies rearing up-scaled resentment and group consciousness that accentuate social fractures creating heightened political competition. This paper, therefore, seeks to scrutinize the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as an emergent Igbo youth frontier movement

with a view to determining the rationales for rising agitations in relation to Nigerian national security. It also attempts a polemical analysis of IPOB as a separatist movement and the implications for the integration of Ndi-Igbo into the mainstream of Nigerian power politics; while analyzing the implications of IPOB activities vis-à-vis integration of ndi-Igbo in Nigerian power politics and agitations for secession.

2. Literature review

2.1 Governance Challenge

Governance is a complicated concept that describes structures and processes for openness and inclusiveness in the functioning of government (A. P. Chiamogu, 2017). It involves justice and fairness in resource allocation and distribution where all sectors, segments, and sections of the society are properly and duly represented. It entails greater citizens' participation in government where decisions are made with human faces reflective of the common good and general interests. Accordingly, the UNDP (1997) cited in A. P. Chiamogu and Chiamogu (2020) define governance as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels". Governance thus involves the mechanisms, processes, and structural arrangements through which citizens and groups aggregate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences. Similarly, Schmitter (2019) observed that the concept of governance as used in the World Bank's perception, is equivalent to "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development". By implication, the concept of governance ensures accountability, rule of law, responsiveness and stability in public affairs.

Unfortunately, the art of governance has continually eluded many developing nations especially those with enormous natural resources endowment as fondly found in the Southern metropole. The continent of Africa suffers from brazen governance challenges. Most successive political leaderships in Africa (military and civilian) have flagrantly and continuously denied their people good governance in the quest for materiality and maintenance of perpetual political relevance (Idowu, 2020). In such countries, Nigeria inclusive, political leaderships have not charted sustainable course(s) for functioning governance structures that could lead to development but retrogression. Accordingly, Okoi and Iwara (2021), observed that "the failure of governance in Nigeria manifests in the declining capacity of political leaders to recognize systemic risks such as election fraud, terrorist attacks, herder-farmer conflict, armed banditry, and police brutality and put in place the necessary measures to navigate these challenges". Widespread political corruption leading to socio-economic disparities among the ethnic nationalities in Nigeria has exacerbated agitations on primordial considerations. Since 1999, the democratic space has been dominated by political elites from certain sections of Nigeria who consistently violate fundamental principles associated with a liberal democratic system, such as competitive elections, the rule of law, political freedom, and respect for human rights (Okoi & Iwara, 2021). Nation-building and political integration are elusive because socio-economic relations fan the embers of polarized diversities that facilitate instability. Resources distribution constitutes the major preoccupation of the government which renders the state rentier with a consuming economy necessitating weak administrative institutions, political corruption, shrinking civic space, widespread electoral malfeasance, poverty, massive unemployment and orchestrated insecurity. In this instance, political leadership becomes clannish and lopsided in resources allocation thereby limiting mass participation and openness in public affairs (Mkandawire, 2015). Under this condition, centrifugal forces are accentuated with ethnicization and religionization of politics where marks of accommodative measures are jettisoned for primordial ties in public business without recourse to merit and federal character (A. P. Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2020; P. Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2019).

2.2 Igbo Nationalism

This is another concept about the variety of nationalist ideologies concerning Igbo people as an ethnic nationality in Nigeria (Nwangwu, Onuoha, Nwosu, & Ezeibe, 2020). It describes drive and commitment to the struggle for self-determination, security of Igbo people's lives and property, and preservation and promotion of cultural heritage by socio-cultural groups and movements of Igbo descent and orientation. In contemporary times, Igbo nationalism is observed mostly in the activities

and actions of such groups and movements as Ohaneze Ndi-Igbo, Igbo State Union, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). All ethnic and sectional groups and movements propagating self-determination for Ndi-Igbo from Nigeria profess to love and care for the culture and people of the Igbo nation that must be sustained in the Nigerian federation. Whereas some of the groups advance ideals and precepts for mainstreaming Ndi-Igbo in the Nigerian project, others create and struggle for outright self-determination for Ndi-Igbo as the realization of defunct Biafra.

Such Igbo groups and movements underscore remarkable historic continuities and construct Igbo collective memories as a chain of violent events that run through successive generations manifesting in forms of recurring killings, pogroms, genocide, scornful disregard and discrimination against Ndi-Igbo by rival ethnic nationalities like the Hausa/Fulanis and personality of successive political leaderships (Harnischfeger, 2011). The ordeals of the civil war are the dialectics of interpreting present-day conflicts in inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria. The deliberate exclusion from political power affects all Igbo people, not just the political elites that compete for government appointments and contracts because powers are wrestled and used to advance ethnic or group interests in Nigeria.

Since the return to civilian rule (democracy) in 1999 through successive political leaderships from Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria has witnessed a high spate of violence, militancy, insurgency, separatist movements, and insecurity (Onuoha, 2012). The advent of democracy with autocratizing leaders has continued to blockade the vents of civic engagement in the age of new media which is persistently granting spaces for hitherto suppressed and dormant ethnic forces to express their grievances. Accordingly, Duruji (2009) observed that concerns for the security of life and property of Ndi-Igbo gave birth to the declaration of the Republic of Biafra in 1967 while the renewed demand for Biafra and Igbo self-determination relates more to the deliberate exclusion of members of the ethnic group from holding key political positions in Nigeria; an issue that civilian rule was expected to attenuate in participatory democracy. Unfortunately, the situation has been made worst since 2015 with the President Muhammadu Buhari-led federal government whose character is closing civic spaces and advancing Fulani supremacy in blatant disregard for the principles of federal character (Oloja, 2021; Udenze, Anih, Eme, & Okeke, 2021). Ndi-Igbo is obviously marginalized and not getting a fair share and deal in the Nigerian project when compared with other major ethnic groups leading to the emergence of socio-cultural groups and ethno-nationalist movements whose rhetoric and analyses of the narrative advance, incite, and generate resentment and protestations against the Nigerian state.

2.3 Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

The struggle for the sovereign state of Biafra has been ongoing since Nigerian independence. The Igbos of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo states had led some collaborative ethnic minorities of the old Eastern region to declare the Biafran state in 1967 but lost the ensuing war to the Nigerian government under Gen. Yakubu Gowon. The war ended in 1970 when Biafran forces surrendered but successive Nigerian governments are yet to reconcile, rebuild and reintegrate Ndi-Igbo into the Nigerian political community. As a result, groups and movements advocating a separate country for the people of the southeast (Ndi-Igbo) have emerged (Bybee, 2017). From the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the early 2000s, followed by the Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF) to the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), struggles and agitations for Igbo self-determination have assumed the form of violent conflict and taking up arms against the Nigerian state. These groups have continued the narrative and promoted Igbo resentment and consciousness against the Nigerian state as presently administered.

The Indigenous People of Biafra is thus an ethno-nationalist organization of Igbo people seeking the restoration of the independent state of Biafra through a referendum (Allison, 2017). The organization was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a political activist prominent for the contemporary Biafran independence movement. IPOB supporters are mainly Igbo people of the Southeastern part of Nigeria who criticize the Nigerian federal government for lopsided resource distribution, ethnic marginalization, denial of key political positions, and arbitrary deployment and use of law

enforcement agents especially the military in Igboland. IPOB has variously been described and referred to as a secessionist and separatist movement struggling for Igbo self-determination (Allison, 2017; Ekpo & Agorye, 2019). IPOB succeeded the defunct Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). It is an organization that stands against any form of injustice, alienation, and marginalization of the Ndi-Igbo in the Nigerian state with the solemn belief in the struggle for the realization of a separate state of Biafra from Nigeria.

Consequently, the paper is guided by three conjectures designed to guide generalizations and the conclusion of our findings. The hypotheses include the following:

This paper, therefore, seeks to scrutinize the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) as an emergent Igbo youth frontier movement with a view to determining the rationales for rising agitations in relation to Nigerian national security. It also attempts a polemical analysis of IPOB as a separatist movement and the implications for the integration of Ndi-Igbo into the mainstream of Nigerian power politics; while analyzing the implications of IPOB activities vis-à-vis integration of Ndi-Igbo in Nigerian power politics and agitations for secession.

1. Poor governance by successive Nigerian governments is responsible for the geometric rise in agitations for succession by Ndi-Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria
2. Continued political exclusion of Ndi-Igbo in Nigerian power politics is fanning the embers of Igbo nationalism as exemplified by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)
3. Rising agitations of Ndi-Igbo as orchestrated by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is negatively impacting Nigerian national security

3. Methodology

The paper adopts a qualitative research approach using an in-depth review of extant literature for informed comprehension of the dynamics of secession and unification in a divided federal state of Nigeria. Through a document review approach in library research design, we x-rayed the resurgent feeling of deprivation and exclusion from the politics and administration of Nigeria leading to Igbo nationalism. It is also observed that the gradual but systematic alienation of Ndi-Igbo from holding certain key political positions, employment, and even in the distribution of values is inciting but successive political elites have continued to deploy the state apparatuses of force to quell the agitations of Igbo people. Just like or even worse than what was seen in the pogrom, Ndi-Igbo has become the sacrificial lamb of the Nigerian state. It further observed that Nigeria has never been so deeply divided and that ethnic nationalities and other sectional groupings are reacting to acts of nepotism and segregation from the Nigerian federal government.

The right to self-determination by people of common descent, historical background, and shared politico-economic and social experiences portrays chances of sovereign statehood and freedom for all peoples in the international order (Fisch, 2015). The right to self-determination equally portrays the danger of avoidable fragmentation of sovereign states where it degenerates to secession but the declaration of rights to freedom founded in equity, justice, and fair play still provides a latitude for self-determination against oppression and domination.

The right of groups to secede entails that members of such group or the group in its entirety must suffer from certain injustices for which secession is the appropriate remedy of last resort (Buchanan, 1997). Similarly, Wellman (2005) posited that "any group has a moral right to secede as long as its political divorce will leave it and the remainder state in a position to perform the requisite political functions". The keywords in this conception are 'certain injustices', and 'secession as appropriate remedy of last resort'. We hold that the phrase 'certain injustices' in this case refer to and or include neglect, discrimination or marginalization, and or alienation from perks of government and skewed resources distribution that sidetracks the section or group of the sovereign state in question. The phrase could also express continual or perennial violent conflicts against a group or its members in such manners that the latter are deprived of fair deal and justice. At this, the rationale for the continued stay together of the group in the sovereign state becomes questionable.

At the verge of the foregoing, we adopted the theory of Secession: The case for Political Self-Determination as propounded by Wellman (2005) to underscore and extricate the conditions and treatment meted out to Ndi-Igbo in the Nigerian state with a view to establishing if the case of certain injustices have or are yet to be made in their continued to stay together with other members of the Nigerian state. At this, it is observed that the civil war was caused by security threats on the life and property of ndi-Igbo during the early independence period and that the present situation has become very excruciating in terms of the rate of killings and deprivation of opportunities in a state that ought to be founded in equity and justice. It is further established that the present political leadership headed by President Buhari is tending to use state apparatuses of coercion against ndi-Igbo and about visiting vested anger on the freedom fighters for constituting about 5% against 97% of his political supporters at the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections. At this, he refers to Ndi-Igbo as "a dot in a circle" that is inconsequential. The resultant conflagration fosters withdrawal, resentment, and widespread violent conflicts against the state by the people. What other forms of injustices could be greater than the constant killing of Ndi-Igbo through Operation Python Dance, arbitrary deployment of military forces to decimate them, and flagrant use of the language of genocide against Ndi-Igbo by the President.

4. Result and Discussion

Poor leadership and irresponsibility on the part of successive governments have greatly severed the corporate existence of the Nigerian state (Aboekwe, 2019; Anazodo, Igbokwe-Ibeto, & Nkah, 2015; Fagbemi & Omowumi Adeoye, 2020; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). Public institutions of governance and administration are weak, made subserviently, and personalized by public office holders in the executive arm of government. Separation of powers and the rule of law are lopsided and administered to suit the personality of existing political leadership. There is an acute lack of state capacity to deal with the rising complexities of governance in Nigeria. Socio-political and economic realities indicate state failure and collapse of the coercive force of the government in matters of public interest. Both extractive, distributive, and rejuvenating capabilities of the Nigerian state have collapsed in overt citizens' withdrawal indicative of a lack of trust and confidence. Long periods of widespread insecurity, the ineffective process of the rule of law, dishonesty, unresponsiveness, and widespread political corruption amongst successive political leaders constitute the bane of governance in Nigeria. As a result, despite Nigeria's embrace of democratic governance, the majority of the citizens live in abject poverty, and squalor and grapple with high rates of unemployment, dysfunctional education at all levels, injustice, electoral malfeasance, discrimination in resources distribution, large-scale uprising, violent extremism and conflicts, militancy, terrorism, and underdevelopment. Socio-economic and political injustices ranging from group and ethnic marginalization, unequal distribution of values, political exclusion, and deprivation among other vices associated with prebendal politics explain the spate of polarization and ethnic chauvinism in Nigeria. Both religion and ethnic affiliations are politicized in relation to resource allocation and distribution.

What and why is it that the component units of the Nigerian state cannot harmoniously coexist and form a political community? Social diversities are the primary determinants of inter-group and ethnic relations especially in resource distribution in Nigeria (A. P. Chiamogu & Chiamogu, 2020; Okpeh, 2007). The national government has assumed excessive powers and become a depository of functions against the dictates of constitutional democracy. The central government is the epicenter of all power configurations, it determines who gets what, when, and how. The executive arm of the government has ascended many powers and unilaterally centralized the practice of federalism in a manner that presidential democracy has become damaging to unity in diversities. The character and personality of the president determine the nature and direction of power politics in Nigeria. Where ethnic and religious ties are predominant, political leaders favor their roots and origin. Loyalty and allegiances are tied to groups and sections of the country: nobody is a Nigerian - Buhari is Fulani, Jonathan is Ijaw, Obasanjo is Yoruba. Ndi-Igbo is in the markets facing draconic economic policies that make their business environments very unstable and unpredictable. Nigeria had adopted several accommodative measures ranging from federalism, multi-state system, bicameralism, federal character, National Youth Service Corps Scheme to political power shift, geopolitical zones and zoning but national integration has constituted a mirage (Chukwuemeka, 2012). Structural imbalances in forms of state, local government and representation in National Assembly grant a section of the

country an unwavering edge over other component units. The nature of power-sharing in the state is such that the federal government wields overwhelming powers based on the structure and composition of the items on the exclusive legislative list. This list represents those items that only the federal government has the power to decide and implement. It contains about 68 items that cover virtually all the major trappings of a state in terms of economic and socio-political configurations (Obiora, Chiamogu, & Chiamogu, 2019). The component units of the Nigerian federation thus are allowed those functions contained in the concurrent legislative list within which still the federal government has domineering influence since any legislation by the component units that contravenes those of the federal government is null and void to the extent of its inconsistency with those of the federal government. Hence, even the residual list is not exercised in exclusive manners by the units. Thence, the ascendancy of the national government in Nigeria becomes overbearing and overarching in a manner that it determines all spheres of relationships and dynamics of life in the Nigerian state. The federal government, therefore, becomes a depository of powers in the place of the constitution because of collapse of institutions and structures of governance and administration arising from long reign of militocracy.

The existence of over 250 ethnic groupings in a manner that mapped the Hausa/Fulani as the North while placing the Igbo and Yoruba (two completely divergent major ethnic groupings as the South) on the other part engenders unimaginable dichotomy in a lopsided federation that is invariably skewed to favor the north presently dominated by the Fulanis. Those three ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba) have continued to maintain dominance over several others that are enmeshed in the self-realization struggle in the Nigerian state that is structurally demeaning and designed to subjugate them. All political divisions/partitions place the North at a vantage position in all forms of the bargain as can be seen in Table 1 below. With 19 states and the FCT, the North definitely dominates the entire South which has only 17 states thereby making all forms of competition susceptible to northern conquest.

Table 1. Geopolitical Zones showing their Number of States and Local Government Areas

S/N	North (NC)	Central	North East (NE)	North West (NW)	South East (SE)	South South (SS)	South West (SW)					
1	Benue	22	Adamawa	22	Jigawa	27	Abia	17	Akwaibom	31	Ekiti	16
2	Kogi	20	Bauchi	20	Kaduna	23	Anambra	21	Bayelsa	9	Lagos	20
3	Kwara	16	Borno	27	Kano	44	Ebonyi	13	CrossRiver	18	Ogun	19
4	Nassarawa	13	Gombe	11	Katsina	34	Enugu	17	Delta	25	Ondo	18
5	Niger	24	Taraba	16	Kebbi	22	Imo	27	Edo	19	Osun	30
6	Plateau	17	Yobe	17	Sokoto	22		95	Rivers	23	Oyo	34
7		112		113	Zamfara	14				125		137
8					FCT	6						
						192						

Source: Compiled by the Researchers from existing literature

The Six geopolitical zones in Nigeria represent the division of the country into six zones which consist of states who share similar cultures, close territories, and ethnic backgrounds. It is a political calculation though not enshrined in the constitution but was introduced during the regime of President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) as a dependable way for value allocation. Table 1 above shows a formula that granted the North nineteen states with 417 local governments leaving the South with seventeen states and 357 local governments at a marked difference of 60 local government areas. These political divisions and units form the basic structures for resource distribution. Remarkably, the

table further shows the South East with the least number of states - five (5) and local governments forty-three (43) respectively while other zones have a minimum of six states. The North Central (NC) has six (6) states with forty-nine (49) local governments, North East (NE) has six (6) states with forty-eight local governments, North West (NW) - seven (7) states with ninety-eight local governments, South-South (SS) has six (6) states with fifty-five local governments and South West (SW) has six (6) states with seventy-one local government areas. A situation where these structures of administration and governance constitute the parameters for resource allocation leaves the South East at the mercy of the other geopolitical zones for equitable and fair representation and development. The number of representatives and volume of resource allocations make it extremely difficult if not impossible for the Southeast to muster the requisite number/majority to change or influence policy direction and earn desired attention from Nigeria as presently constituted. Table 2 below illustrates the level of structural imbalance that is impeding equity and fairness in the composition of the Federal House of Representatives in Nigeria.

Table 2. List of Federal Constituencies by Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria

North Central		North East		North West		South East		South South		South West	
Benue	11	Adamawa	8	Jigawa	11	Abia	8	Akwaibom	10	Ekiti	6
Kogi	9	Bauchi	12	Kaduna	16	Anambra	11	Bayelsa	5	Lagos	24
Kwara	6	Borno	10	Kano	24	Ebonyi	6	CrossRiver	8	Ogun	9
Nassarawa	5	Gombe	6	Katsina	15	Enugu	8	Delta	10	Ondo	9
Niger	10	Taraba	6	Kebbi	8	Imo	10	Edo	9	Osun	9
Plateau	8	Yobe	6	Sokoto	11		43	Rivers	13	Oyo	14
	49		48	Zamfara	7				55		71
				FCT	6						
					98						

Source: Compiled by the researchers from existing literature

Table 2 above again demonstrates the domination of the South East in the scheme of affairs and politicking in Nigeria with the least number of representation in the Federal House of Representatives. The Northern states again wield an unimaginable majority at the chambers with 195 against 169 members of the Southern states in the 360-member house. Realizing that ethnic orientations and colorations define socio-political and economic relations of the component units of Nigerian federalism, we make bold to state against any form of equivocations that all votes and proceedings in the National Assembly follow ethnic and group boundaries and interests. Hence, the Igbo people who constitute the South East as a defeated member of the Nigerian Union easily sidetracked, marginalized, and dominated in a clear *democracy* form of decision formulation and resource distribution in Nigeria.

4.1 Resurgence of Igbo Nationalism: The Role of IPOB

The thought of the civil war evokes a feeling of ethnic cleansing, insecurity of lives and property, and discrimination against Ndi-Igbo. It resonates with horrific images of victimhood and nostalgic attachment to defeat vindicated by ill-treatment and injustices meted out to Igbo people by successive Nigerian governments especially the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari whose hatred manifests in political vendetta against the people. The imageries of the massacre, pogrom, mass hunger, and starvation, loss of 3 million Igbos in the 30-month civil war create hatred, animosity, resentment and, victimhood narratives generating ease in the ethnic mobilization against a state and its government that is yet to heal the wounds of the war. Accordingly, Adibe (2017) remarked that the Ralph Uwazurike-led Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

gave birth to resurgence of struggle for Biafran independence through peaceful protests in 1999. MASSOB was a movement of young Igbos (both at home and in the diaspora who shared divergent perceptions and ideologies of the struggle) to express their grievances against the Nigerian state and leadership for injustices against Ndi-Igbo. It died off after President Jonathan ordered the release of its leaders from detention in 2011. Continuing with the struggle, a faction of the movement - the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) led by Nnamdi Kanu assumed the mantle in 2012. IPOB started with the resuscitation of Radio Biafra for the education and sensitization of Biafrans who were rendered dormant by the Nigerian media. Radio Biafra is used to mold the Igbo consciousness and promote nationalist narratives to the world. It drew and attracted many Igbo listeners and supporters to its nationalist propaganda. It uses provocative rhetoric and expressions, which the Nigerian government considers hateful and incitement to violence and war to attract and spike the government. The Buhari administration popularized the radio when the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission tried blocking it from broadcasting and detained Nnamdi Kanu for 2 years. At the age of exponential advancements in ICTs, upon release from detention, the movement emerged even stronger on social media and digital/online broadcasting. Radio Biafra is and remains the fulcrum of Biafran mass education and awareness of the victimhood narrative and mobilization of group/ethnic consciousness. Similarly, some other groups: Biafra Independent Movement (BIM) emerged from MASSOB and IPOB and Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) under the leadership of Benjamin Onwuka (Adibe, 2017). The Biafra Zionist Movement/Federation became popular when it declared a new state of Biafra on 5 November, 2012. In a bid to hoist the Biafran flag, BZM attacked Enugu State Government House on 8th March 2014 and attempted seizure of radio and television stations of Enugu State Government on 7th June, 2014 (Edike, 2014).

More so, the inefficient and subsequent failure of the postwar transitional justice program to address the volume of human rights violations and genocidal crimes against Ndi-Igbo, the horrible memories of the war are still fresh in the minds of many Biafrans to date (Ugorji, 2017). The generational trauma and persistent yearnings for justice were not addressed by the 3 Rs policy and are being accentuated by the actions and inactions of successive governments in Nigeria. Fifty-one years after the civil war, Ndi-Igbo (in the Southeastern part of Nigeria) are feeling completely marginalized and alienated from the federal government of Nigeria. They are deprived of holding key political positions such as the President, Inspector General of Police, Chief Justice of Nigeria, and Service chief among others. They are further discriminated against in the distribution of national positions in ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). Employment opportunities are shared and reflective of primordial ties by public officeholders. Ndi-Igbo is treated as a defeated group and being subjected to undue servitude as losers in the Nigeria/Biafra civil war.

Reinvigorated waves of agitation for Biafra state emerged with palpable frustration amongst Ndi-Igbo that Igbo presidency could not be realized in Nigeria where people vote along ethnic lines. This situation was amplified by glaring facts of the federal government's failure to address the issues of development in the southeast marked by the oblivion policy of committing discussions around the Nigerian-Biafran war to eternal silence through the removal of history in educational curricula in Nigeria. This sheer lack of accurate information about what really happened during, after, and post-civil war experiences of Ndi-Igbo generated an unmarked impetus for aggravated agitation. Surviving parents and relatives told versions of their agonizing stories to their grandchildren in highly conflicting and polarizing narratives thereby making Biafra a metaphor for perennial agitation in Nigeria. Ndi-Igbo has remained a victim of unfair relationships and treatment by the federal government. The arrest and protracted incarceration of Nnamdi Kanu by the Department of State Service (DSS) from October 2015 to April 2017 resulted in the rapid spread of the pro-Biafra independence movement. Mazi Nnamdi Kanu has continually used the Radio Biafra platform and IPOB movement to call for a referendum that would pave the way for Biafran independence. These calls pointing at serial injustices against Ndi-Igbo have inspired unmitigated calls for a national debate about the nature of the federal structure of Nigeria. Virtually all other ethnic groups in Nigeria are today demanding restructuring to decentralize more powers from the central government to allow component units of the Nigerian Federation greater autonomy to manage their affairs and pay royalties to the Nigerian union. IPOB as a pro-Biafran independence movement organization has

successfully attracted public attention and earned massive support and sympathy from Igbo people and many other marginalized nations in Nigeria. Some of these other marginalized nationalities may not share in the IPOB approach but subscribe to their demand for justice and fair play in Nigeria. IPOB uses stories and video clips of the genocide and massacre of Ndi-Igbo in the civil war to shape the shared history and individual memory of Ndi-Igbo.

4.2 IPOB and National Security in Nigeria

Virtually all groups, sections, and ethnic groupings in Nigeria are involved in agitations for justice, neglect, and or bad governance but agitations around Biafra have remained the most prevalent. Whereas, the Yorubas have both direct and indirect forms of agitations against the Nigerian state via calls for Oduduwa Republic and Sovereign National Conference for the continued corporate existence of Nigeria; the north features irregular demands for Arewa Republic; the people of the Niger Delta partakes in separatist movements by their demands for Niger Delta Republic and resource control. At this, Adibe (2017) observed a general feeling of alienation and dissatisfaction by most component units of the Nigerian federation, a situation that deepens mistrust and incentivized separatist agitations. Invariably, secession threats have become powerful instruments of political negotiation in Nigeria (Aremu & Buhari, 2017). Accordingly, Ojukwu (1989) maintained that "self-determination becomes a norm when the right possessed by a group of people to make a choice that works for them concerning the way and by the person they desire to lead them is taken away from them". It is the nature of differences inherent in the Nigerian political system that has made crises and agitations unavoidable. IPOB is a generational response to the serial denial, neglect, killings, and injustices of the Nigerian state against Ndi-Igbo. The group agitates for self-determination from the Nigerian state for the independence of the Biafra Republic but the Buhari administration which is intolerant of Ndi-Igbo has singled it out for extinction. All other groups in Nigeria are agitating for restructuring and possible dismemberment from the Nigerian state but the actions of Ndi-Igbo receive the most drastic and draconian repression without negotiation. The government under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua negotiated and granted amnesty to Niger Delta militants, President Buhari is negotiating with terrorist Boko Haramists, Bandits, and Kidnappers in the North East and North West but is deploying operation Python Dance and shut-in-sight measures to wipe out peaceful Igbo protesters carrying Biafran flags in Southeast. No government has brought Ndi-Igbo to a round table for discussion let alone attending to the perennial issues of scornful neglect and exclusion from political positions and infrastructure development.

The renewed agitations are not just based on the ill of post-independence Nigeria that gave rise to the Nigerian-Biafran civil war but the continued subjugation of Igbo people in a country that is supposedly theirs. Political exclusion of Ndi-Igbo at the federal government level; massive graduate unemployment and widespread poverty; unfavorable economic policies, lack of infrastructure development, and forced migration leading to brain drain in the region resonate trans-generational trauma necessitating violent conflicts and propensity to rise against the Nigerian government. Agitations for Biafra independence have varied consequences for the Igbo ethnic group (Ugorji, 2017). Massive youth involvement in protests, violent conflicts, and attacks on security formations threaten public peace and security in the Southeast. The failure of governments to address the demands of IPOB and its commitment to coercion has made the group violent with an implementation arm called the Eastern Security Network (ESN). The ESN is a response to the horrific activities of the killer Fulani herdsmen in the region. Where the government did not see anything wrong in the destruction of farmlands and attacks on farmers resulting in general lawlessness and widespread farmers/herders conflicts across geopolitical zones, IPOB instituted ESN to watch and counteract the herders in Igboland. This gave rise to anarchy and a general state of insecurity where killing and banditry are going on unchallenged. It further degenerated to national insecurity where hoodlums and 'unknown gunmen' are killing uniformed men across the region with reckless abandonment. Law enforcement agencies are yet to unravel the identity of the 'unknown gunmen' but are tending to associate them with IPOB. IPOB as a non-state actor has become a significant force to reckon with in the Southeast. It imposes curfews and restrictions on movement with massive compliance as was seen in the sit-at-home orders of 2019 and 2021. Compliance with the 2021 sit-at-home order was deafening and colossal. All streets of major cities in Igboland were deserted and no iota of economic activities were

witnessed in the region. Currently, IPOB decides what and when it wants Ndi-Igbo to partake in national activities. The conduct of 2017 gubernatorial election in Anambra state witnessed very low turnout because IPOB insisted that the people should not participate. As Anambra state prepares for another round of gubernatorial elections in November 2021, tension is rising because IPOB has declared that there will be no elections in the state. Ndi-Igbo listens, obeys, and complies with IPOB instructions because the government does not provide remedies to issues in contention.

5. Conclusion

The Nigerian state is grossly marked with social diversities characterizing politics and administration. Orchestrated governance failure has continually pushed Ndi-Igbo and many other ethnic groups/nationalities to the background of socio-political and economic relationships. Initially, the Hausa/Fulanis were dominant but in contemporary terms, the Fulanis under the assumed protection of President Muhammadu Buhari (their son) have conquered and dominated the Hausas thereby making a whole group (Akingbe, 2022). The Fulanis have dominated all other ethnic and sectional groups in the Nigerian state and are fast riding and feasting large on the Nigerian patrimony. This perpetual dominance results in the emergence of both ethno-nationalist and ethnic militia groups staking their claims and seeking to re-assert their identities in the struggles against domination and or exclusion from access to power and resources. At that, the evils and injustices meted out to Ndi-Igbo have not abated since after the civil war. Successive Nigerian governments have not implemented the 3Rs policy and as such are yet to rehabilitate, reconstruct and integrate Ndi-Igbo into the Nigerian political community. It has rather exacerbated and assumed varied damaging forms resulting in overt victimhood with spiraling and aggravating resentment and agitations for self-determination. These agitations are championed by such groups as IPOB whose commitment to Biafran independence is drowning all other group struggles in contemporary Nigeria. IPOB employs the vicissitudes and images of the Nigerian-Biafran war to mobilize aggrieved members against the Nigerian government. These mobilizations are functional because the Nigerian government is not doing anything tangible to address the issues and re-integrate Ndi-Igbo into the Nigerian project.

The activities of IPOB have geometrically risen beyond the control of the federal government because the ills of the late 1960s that necessitated the civil war have taken adequate hold of the system again. It is generating untoward security challenges in the entire southeastern states, limiting economic activities and the movement of goods and services. It has got to a situation where IPOB has taken hold of Mondays thereby reducing working days without regulations from the government.

Consequently, there is an urgent need for systemic change in Nigeria. Starting from administrative and governance structures to power configuration, we recommend a redefinition of the corporate existence of Nigeria to allay the fears of the component units and restore justice and fair play. In doing this, we are of the view that the items packed in the exclusive legislative list should be decentralized to grant the component units more autonomy in order to achieve Nigerian unity in diversity and make the central government less attractive. This way, the institutions of government and administration would become virile, safeguarding, and more functional according to constitutional provisions. That would, in turn, enthrone the rule of law and resuscitate trust, restore people's confidence in the Nigerian state and guarantee greater citizens' participation in public affairs. We strongly believe that those objective structural and policy changes would engender participatory democracy in Nigeria where equity and fair play shall reign supreme thereby generating harmonious co-existence, peace, and formation of a Nigerian political community devoid of stereotypes and mutual suspicion between and among ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria.

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