

Biafra Resurgence:

State Failure, Insecurity and Separatist Agitations in Nigeria

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Abstract *This work critically examines the issues undermining the unification of Nigeria, using indicators and concepts including failed state, separatist agitation and insecurity. It forays into the inherent issues underlying the Biafran movement and the ways in which those issues, as well as Biafran agitation, are inimical to Nigeria's development. Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation facing challenges within the balance of economic development along ethnic divisions in society. The current problems facing the Nigeria government and the Biafra separatist agitators originate in the causes and the effects of the Nigerian Civil war (06 July 1967 - 15 January 1970). Biafrans who are geographically in the South and South-East of Nigeria feel and believe that their economic and developmental prowess are not well represented in the Nigerian state, and this lack of representation leads to marginalization. This marginalization is evinced by untold hardships such as poverty, lack of infrastructure for health care and education, and generally impaired wellbeing. In order to examine these issues, this paper adopted qualitative research and intrinsic approach methodology, along with relative deprivation theory. The paper identifies and discusses the problems associated with separatist movements and how they affect national and social security, and argues that while the definition of state failure is contested and therefore Nigeria cannot yet be called a failed state, but certainly a fragile state.*

Keywords: Biafra, insecurity, state failure, Nigeria, separatist movements, colonialism

Introduction

One of the main problems of the Nigerian government is that it often overlooks the challenges that undermine social security until a serious problem presents itself. From a global and international perspective on separatist movement, Brian et al. assert that ‘nearly two dozen separatist movements are active worldwide, concentrated in Europe and Asia. At least seven are violent and reflect ethnic or religious differences with the mother country.’¹ This *shows that separatist movements span the globe.* Similarly, Bieri indicated that agitations towards self-determination through independence have been on the increase in the EU recently. A major issue fuelling these agitations is the economic crisis and an interrelated crisis of confidence that is overwhelming the continent.² The question that naturally comes to mind concerning separatism is: what are the underlying factors causing separatism and movements for self-actualization/determination? In response to that question, Dean described that there has been an ongoing debate among scholars of separatist movements who disagree on the following key point:

One of the motivations for creating new political units is the desire either to protect or to acquire wealth in a situation where territorially-based economic inequalities exist. While other scholars disagree with the significance attributed to economic inequality in separatist movements.³

According to Brian the number of countries with separatist movements peaked in 2008.⁴ It is therefore worth noting that, as of 15 November 2015, the separatist movement for Biafra has re-emerged in Nigeria. This study explores the resurgence of Biafra, its causes and its overwhelming effect of undermining Nigerian unitization. In Nigeria, the political system and the democracy that the nation adopted for governance is not only faulty but bedevilled by anomalies. As a whole, Nigeria is yet to understand the tenets of democracy or how to govern the country properly. Brown see Elaigwu pointed out that it was less than a century ago that the heterogeneous peoples of what is now called Nigeria were geographically enclosed according to the grid of the colonial masters and administered as one territorial unit against their wish.⁵ In other words, Nigeria was born as a result of Britain’s policy of imperialist. As a result, dissatisfaction continues to emanate over the years, a trend which dates back as far as the colonial, military regime era and all the way up to present-day civilian rule.

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An in-depth evaluation of these periods reveals that Nigeria is yet to get it right in terms of national governance. Brown noted that the political elites often create political styles that are inconsistent with the Westminster-style political system adopted at the time of Nigeria's independence in 01 October 1960, and that this dissonance makes the attainment of good governance elusive.⁶ In other words, copied western-style political systems have challenges in serving and addressing the multi ethnic groups in Nigeria. Despite the replacement of the British Parliamentary system of government by the United States presidential system in 01 October 1979, the influence of the copied Westminster political system lingers on. No political party or system is 100% effective in satisfying every facet of the society, but for positive progress in Nigerian society, the political system must be expected to offer more positives than negatives for the society it governs.

Ekpenyong, identified different patterns of conflict arising from the interaction of political, economic and social instability due to bad governance.⁷ This study anchors on Goetz' identification of the root of conflict in Nigeria as being based on religion and ethnicity.⁸ Supporting this view, Lenshie see Shettima and Kashim assert that 'Nigeria with so many ethnic, religious and sectional groups paints the picture of a potentially vulnerable society to conflicts.'⁹ When tension was doused during the dawn of civilian rule in the last decade, the government saw the need to foster more integration and unity among Nigerians. Part of their efforts was the "federal character principle," instituted in the 1979 constitution by the Nigerian government to represent the interests of different ethnic nationalities that make up the country.

The federal character principle is one of many policies for the integration of different ethnic groups in the country. It suggests an attempt to build a nation where equal opportunities abound and where every individual can feel that he/she has equal chance to participate in society and politics without the bias of ethnic affiliations.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the federal character principle has under-represented different ethnic groups in Nigeria and has not been fair as it should be. This statement is supported by Bello, who points out that although 'the purpose of the principle of federal character is laudable, unfortunately, the application and operation of the principle tended to differentiate rather than integrate Nigeria.'¹¹ Nonetheless, Okolo argues that, against the ills of federal character principle, national integration is pivotal and absolutely necessary for the stability of the country.¹²

Many challenges and problems have emerged to put pressure on Nigeria's fragile economy and social security, factors which are leading towards state failure. The most pressing issue concerning security for the Nigerian people is the issue of terrorism amongst Nigerians themselves. The needs of every person in society revolve around food, shelter and clothing. Currently, support for a separate state of Biafra is resurging in Nigeria, which mainly takes the form of separatist agitation, including terrorism in a minority of extreme cases. There are widespread dissatisfactions among South-Eastern Nigerian protesters with the way that the Nigerian government governs the country. In this study, due emphasis is given to the stresses and strains encountered by Nigerians.

Methodology

Qualitative research with an instrumental case study approach was adopted for this study. This study is an exploratory study focused on learning about and depicting a theoretical idea in a real life context. It is a study of a particular experience of the phenomenon of separatist agitations/movements, with a view to further exploration of the indicators of human security and, conversely, state failure. The instrumental case study provides an insight into the resurgence of the Biafra separatist agitation phenomenon, insight which might help to inform academic and political leaders wishing to dissolve separatist agitations through inclusive developmental projects that foster harmony in this heterogeneous nation. The adoption of an instrumental approach for this study helps to refine the theory adopted to the specific context of the historic Biafran movement. The scope of this study is limited to Biafran agitation in Nigeria from its inception to its resurgence in 15 November 2015, and the ways in which this phenomenon undermines Nigerian security.

Conceptual Clarifications

State Failure—Akude stresses that there is longstanding ambiguity concerning concepts of state failure and state collapse.¹³ The distinction between the two concepts was articulated by Akude see Tetzlaff who highlighted that state failure is a long-term and multidimensional process while state collapse is the endpoint of state failure process.¹⁴ Along the same lines, ever since the terrorist attacks on the United States, and its publication of a National security Strategy, failed states

are perceived to be a haven for al-Qaeda terrorism.¹⁵ In summary, ‘a failed state is characterised by social, political and economic failure.’¹⁶

To illustrate these definitions of state failure by focusing on Nigeria, the government seems to be helpless to prevent or adequately respond to the frequent bombing and killing in Nigeria, which leads to questions concerning the ability of Nigeria’s national security to function proactively. Taking into consideration the different definitions of failed states and state failure, such as Tetzlaff, and oviasoge,¹⁷ the Niger Delta, located in the South of Nigeria, and the Boko haram in the North East, both serve as good examples through which to examine the inefficiency and lack of trust which are the tenets of state failure. The Nigerian government has failed to effectively address the constant vandalization of the oil pipeline which is the nation’s economic hub, or the incessant bombings by Boko haram. Regardless of the amount of government effort employed to stop such activities, they continue. The Federal government has now put all military action in Niger delta on hold, partly due to threats from Niger Delta militants that they will destroy governmental structures.¹⁸ Both the Nigerians responsible for these attacks and the Nigerians affected by the constant power outages and other damage done by these attacks have expressed a lack of trust in the government’s ability to attend to their affairs and needs. The reprisal of attacks on governmental structures, including the vandalization of oil pipelines (which drive the bulk of the Nigerian economy) is an escalation of tensions that have built up over the years, including the degradation of the environment and livelihood of the people of the Niger Delta. Eyo-Essien see Uwhejevwe-Togbolo indicated that oil spills did not receive attention until the late 1970s, with poor implementation of memorandums of understanding (M.O.U) between oil companies and host communities. Furthermore, environmental degradation and lack of employment have been explicitly blamed for this trend of attacks.¹⁹ These attacks have become a threat to national security, and the Biafran separatist movement reveals a similar resurgence of pre-existing tension and dissatisfaction.

Insecurity—To conceptualise insecurity, one needs to first understand the concept of security itself, and to disentangle the idea of security from normative and empirical concerns without questioning the legitimacy of those associations. Baldwin and Waltz talked about forms of security and survival of states in terms of military capacity on security and reduced vulnerability. Ayoob deviated from traditionalist

and realist approaches like Baldwin's and Waltz' by expounding that problematic factors of insecurity are divided into two categories: increased legitimacy accorded to ethnic nationalism by the international community; and the increased incidence of state failures.²⁰ It is the first category, ethnic nationalism, which provides the context for the discussion of the Biafran movement in this paper. Working from the understanding that the state exists solely for its citizens - to protect their lives, property and well-being - Adagba, Ugwu and Eme noted that, 'insecurity refers to the breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic and political that have contributed to recurring conflicts.'²¹ Ajodo-Adebanjoko and Okorie conceptualise insecurity as a situation of fear and harm towards an individual with regards to issues bearing on politico-strategic, socio-economic or ecological issues.²² Finally, 'the Copenhagen School of Security Studies conceptualise security as a process of social construction of threats which includes securitizing actor[vi] (mostly political elite), who declares certain matters as urgent and posing a threat to the survival of the referent object, that, once accepted by the audience[vii], legitimised the use of extraordinary measures for neutralization of the threat.'²³ Although this section only briefly introduces the concept of security, a detailed explanation of insecurity as it impacts Biafran people (to such an extent that it results in mass mobilisation and agitation) will be discussed in the section below titled State Failure and Insecurity as Indices of Biafran Resurgence in Nigeria.

Separatist Agitation—Osaghae et. al. pointed out that agitation linked to social movements often manifests from grievances and social discontent against dominant practices, behaviour and conduct in the political economy such as exclusion, marginality and inequity.²⁴ Furthermore, Osaghae et. al. see Medearis described social movements as 'collective challenges (i.e. agitations), mounted by relatively marginal groups against powerful elites and dominant ideologies.'²⁵ In some cases, these agitations serve as the only equipment ordinary people have with which to fight against powerful political activities, opponents and states. Horowitz, on the other hand, conceives of separatist agitation as emerging out of the doctrine of self-determination. The occurrence of separatist agitation gives credence to the power of ideas in the political space. For him, separatist agitation can be appropriately seen to be a working out of the logic that 'political self-expression', usually on a territorial basis, is a necessary accompanying feature of group distinc-

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tiveness.²⁶ Arguably, the factors that are attributed to separatist agitations, or secessionist threats with special reference to Nigeria, are: ‘the country’s heterogeneous ethnic composition, cultural diversity, vast size, difficulties of transport and communications, varied administrative practices, and controversial political and constitutional arrangements, besides all the problems connected with the introduction of federalism, personality clashes between Nigerian leaders before and after independence, and the absence of a strong ideological magnet.’²⁷

Having noted that there is no well-established theory of secessionism, Boyle, and Englebert, indicated that groups facing discrimination are the most likely to resort to separatist violence. Thus, they called for political understanding of “separatism as an act of state formation, precipitated by tyranny and failure, and fueled by memories of a shared past” Furthermore, Boyle and Englebert’s findings revealed that ‘separatism is mostly a response to political conditions, rather than the manifestation of cultural differences or the exploitation of economic opportunities.’²⁸ The conceptualization of Boyle and Englebert based on failures, shared past with economic opportunities in regard to the Biafra context are also explicated in the discussion below.

Theoretical Clarification

Relative deprivation theory—was first developed by Runciman to explain attitudes of social inequality in twentieth-century England.²⁹ The major tenet of relative deprivation theory describes that people deprived of the things of high importance or necessity in their society - such as status, money, rights and justice among others - tend to join social movements with the hope or expectation that their grievances or dissatisfaction will be attended to. Thus, Runciman recognise ‘egoistic deprivation which refers to a single individual’s feeling of comparative deprivation and fraternal deprivation, also called group deprivation... refers to the discontent arising from the status of the entire group as compared to a referent group.’³⁰ Flynn see Singer noted that fraternal deprivation may strengthen a group’s collective identify.³¹ Flynn argued that relative deprivation theory belongs to the larger body of interdisciplinary work known as social movement theory. Social movement theory, as described by Flynn, began in the late 19th century and includes the study of social mobilization, including its social, cultural, political manifestation and consequences.

This theory has been critiqued by scholars for failing to explain the

reason that some people who feel marginalised do not take action by joining social movements. This theory has been further contested by researchers of relative deprivation theory, who point out that the factors of the theory fail to indicate another unseen factor that moves individuals or groups of people towards social movement, which is 'the will or their will.'³² The 'will' suggests that individuals are propelled into, or determine to join, a social movement whose activity they believe can address their discontent or marginality within society and work to resolve the prejudices they face. In other words, individuals engaged in social movements activities believe in the strength of their 'willpower' to help them achieve meaningful results. A denial or removal of this willpower prevents some individuals from joining, despite facing the same problems or issues as those who join social movement activities.

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On the other hand, Gurr explains relative deprivation in relation to the psychological frustration-aggression theory which argues that the 'raison d'être' of human attitude to violence is the mechanism inherent in frustration-aggression. Though Gurr notes that frustration does not explicitly imply violence, when it is sufficient and prolonged it often leads to anger which degenerates into violence. The 'relative deprivation' hypothesis of Gurr portrays the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they can actually get. Gurr emphasise that the propensity for collective violence strongly differs with the intensity and scope of relative deprivation among collective members.

Making inferences from Gurr's ideas concerning relative deprivation theory, it becomes evident that the struggle for a separate Biafra is the expression of frustrations held in common by collective members of relative 'homogeneous' societies. The frustrations and agitations conveyed by the members of Biafra is not always or inherently violent, as explained by Gurr, but can take on violent dimensions when prolonged. The primary grievances among those who struggle for Biafra varies. Some of these variations manifest in what the peoples of Biafra feel they deserve, such as good standard of living in society, or else what they hope to achieve if such demands are not met, such as separation from Nigeria in order to address these issues through a new government of their own – one which shows due concern for its people.

Rationale Behind the Choice of Relative Deprivation Theory on the Biafra Case Study

Relative deprivation theory describes an individual or group experi-

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ence that occurs when people are deprived of something they either hold dear or feel entitled to. It explains the economic, political and social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute; based on perceptions of justice and self-worth just as much as on the need to fulfil basic human rights. Moreover, relative deprivation theory highlights poverty and social exclusion. The consequences of relative deprivation manifest through behaviours and attitudes, feelings of stress, political attitudes and participation in collective action. The grievances as defined through the deprivation aspect of this theory are considered instrumental in analysing the convolutions of inequality and the 'raison d'être' of the Biafran separatist movement and agitations in Nigeria. In other words, the theory explains the Biafra agitations as responses to deprivation and inequality that led to Biafran grievances, and explains in part the motivations for protests and rebellion against the state which is perceived as failing or insecure.

State Failure and Insecurity as Indices of Biafra Resurgence in Nigeria

Central to this study is the Biafran movement, which spans over four decades, having surfaced over four decades ago, quietened, and resurfaced again. Currently, the Biafra resurgence agitations have attracted serious attention, including that of the international community, as no one knows the dimension it may ultimately take. One of the advantages of the Biafra conflict that took place during the Nigerian Civil War (06 July 1967 - 15 January 1970), as noted by Goetz is that, 'Biafra served as one of the first conflicts where issues of more contemporary complex emergencies began to develop. Biafra taught the international community how to better provide and coordinate aid and assistance to those affected by a complex emergency.' However, from the humanitarian point of view in preparation for emergencies, Goetz, points out that, little has been accomplished in applying the lessons learned during the Biafra civil war to present day complex emergencies.³³ In other words, there remains the need to understand the historical nature, causes and effects of the civil war so as to better prepare for future emergencies.

The concept of 'failed state' is central to understanding problems of political practice and the social system of a nation. Di John described state failure in less developed countries as the effect of poor economic performance and breakdown of legitimacy and political virility of

states.³⁴ Furthermore, Di John noted that failed states are a haven for terrorist organisations and international criminal networks, due in part to the evident negligence of world powers. Di John emphasise that this attraction for criminal networks and organised terrorism is not limited to countries such as Somalia, Haiti and Iraq (as explicitly mentioned in his study) but is evident in practice in Nigeria.

The concept of failed state made earlier this paper is re-emphasised by Rotberg who asserts that the failure of nation-states can be attributed to internal violence with inability to provide positive political goods to its citizens and inhabitants.³⁵ This ineffectuality makes the government lose their legitimacy until it gradually becomes illegitimate in the eyes and hearts of a growing percentage of its citizens. The current administration in Nigeria has proved that political goods within Nigeria are shattered. An illustrative example of state failure in Nigeria is the inability of the federal government to pay its state workers for months after payment is due; increases unemployment among the youth; mass retrenchment of workers in the public and private sectors.³⁶ Also there are factional splintering and a gradual increase of internal violence leading to international concerns.

On the Failed State Index in 2016, Nigeria was ranked 13th most likely to fail out of 177 listed countries.³⁷ Kinnan et al. indicated that not only would it be very dangerous for Nigeria to hit state failure, but that it takes states who have failed a very long time to recover.³⁸ Examining other factors leading to state failure, such as separatist agitations, reveals that these agitations are based on the struggle to address the ‘needs and wants’ of individuals or groups of people in order to live a normal life in the society. The inefficiency of the government to produce the basic things needed by the citizenry leads to agitations, which can potentially take on a violent dimension if not attend to. Concomitantly, it is argued that government failures are characterised by horizontal and vertical inequalities in countries across Africa which have produced ‘democratic paralyses.’³⁹ According to Ekeh, democratic paralysis manifests in the form of severe consequences and emboldened sentimental ties along ethno-cultural identity in order to starve the state of the required loyalty.⁴⁰

Englebert and Hummel argued that Africa has experienced fewer secessionist movements over the past 40 years than any other place in the world, which indicates that there is less likelihood of secession in Africa.⁴¹ As valid as their forecast may appear on empirical grounds,

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it fails to account for what could happen and what may not happen in the Nigerian context. Generalisation of secession findings, data and debates on grounds of empirical finding are not enough to ascertain what will and will not take place in Africa. Every single case of a secessionist movement in Africa is unique, and so it is with the Nigerian context. Things are not always as they seem, even with scenario-building and calculations, due to persistent unexplained factors. In other words, Nigerian issues are always unique and ductile. Before the problem of terrorism came into Nigeria, Nigeria was not seen as a state or a country that welcomed terrorism, but was instead known as a peaceful and calm state that attracted many immigrants who could peacefully live without problems in the very regions which are now troubled. Current observations and experiences of the Nigeria political systems, combined with deductions based on theories of unstable democratisation, allow this paper to assert the view that Nigeria could be considered a failing state.

The resurgence of ethnic agitations in Nigeria including ethnic militias such as MASSOB/IPOB of Eastern Nigeria, shows a major problem with unification and a sense of oneness in Nigeria, a problem which the government has failed to aptly manage. Successful states are distinguished from weak, failed or collapsed states based on their performance in discharging the most crucial political goods.⁴² The issue concerning ethnic militias is not limited to MASSOB/IPOB. In fact, the antecedent of MASSOB emergence lies in the OPC, led by a young Yoruba carpenter with the advertised mission to mobilise the Yoruba to break away from Nigeria and establish a new state named Oduduwa, after the mythical primogenitor of their ethnic group.⁴³ This shows that ethnic tension in Nigeria is not an unusual occurrence.

The history of secessionist threats as the instruments of political bargains is a feature of Nigeria's political evolution. This dates back to 16 May 1953 when the northern region threatened to secede, based on the motion passed by delegates from the South that proposed Nigeria's independence be granted in 1956. The Northern threat of secession had its roots in fears that the Northern region was unprepared to compete politically or economically with the South within an independent, unified Nigeria. Nonetheless, the motion was dropped in preference for unified Nigerians. On 30 May 1967, the secessionist state of Biafra was declared, and this declaration gave birth the Nigerian civil war.⁴⁴ Since the civil war, there has been a conscious attitude among different

ethnic groups in terms of relating to each other. In other words, there exist 'deep seated xenophobic attitudes' among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. These xenophobic attitudes are noticeable in stereotyping, with derogatory generalisations present throughout Nigeria, such as the following attitudes between the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa (Igbo being the most populous ethnicity represented by the Biafran movement, and the others being outside of that movement). The Yoruba call the Igbo "a je okuta ma mu omi" which means a person with a stone heart, or probably, dangerous and unforgiving. The Igbo, in return, call the Yoruba, "ndi ofe nma nu" which means those who use excessive oil for cooking and the Hausa call the Igbo "yanmiri do do'n doya" - 'he who eats yam' while the Igbo, on the other hand, call the Hausas, "Onye Ugu" which means someone from the hilly region. It is worth noting that there are deeper meanings attached to these stereotypic terms aforementioned. Lester and Coster said that 'the devastation of the war left a legacy that impaired Nigerian unity and development for years.'⁴⁵ As pointed out earlier, the origin of separatist agitations in Nigeria is based on popular dissatisfaction, mainly with the inability and inefficiency of the government in addressing the needs of the people. To clarify further, the origin of separatist agitation groups in Nigeria such as the O'odua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Egbesu Boys and other ethnic militias can be traced and linked to political marginalization, unemployment and poverty, collapse of social infrastructure and state welfare programs and also the inefficient and corrupt state systems. Furthermore, Agbu emphatically expressed that,

The tripod ethnic terror machine represented by the OPC, MASSOB and APC, may turn out to be the greatest threat to Nigeria's unity in this millennium. Experience has shown that civil wars develop when regional or ethnic movements are emboldened by state incapacity to challenge their legitimacy or by a perceived ethnic enemy within the contested political and economic spaces. This is already happening in Nigeria.⁴⁶

Agbu's view helps to explain the general problem of unrest more specifically as it applies to the Nigerian context, rather than as a generic global phenomenon in heterogeneous nations.

Why is Biafra Undergoing a Separatist Wave?

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On 30 May 1967, Lieutenant Colonel C. Odumegwu Emeka Ojukwu, the military governor of Nigeria's eastern region, declared the independence of the 'Republic of Biafra' Ojukwu led a breakaway movement composed primarily of ethnic Igbos who had suffered persecution and massacre at the hands of supporters of Nigeria's Federal Military Government (FMG). Refusing to acknowledge the secession, the FMG, led by Major General Yakubu Gowon, invaded Biafran territory in July, commencing a brutal civil war that spanned two and a half years and claimed the lives of between half a million and two million Nigerians.⁴⁷

After the civil war, unfortunately, Nigerians are still grappling with the issue of unity in a heterogeneous nation. Akin to the Biafra separatist agitation and its militia is the stated goal of MASSOB, as noted by Okonta, which is the peaceful dissolution of Nigeria and the re-emergence of a new sovereign state in the Eastern part of the country to be known as the 'United States of Biafra.' Additionally, the bone of contention among the Biafra separatist agitations against the Nigerian government is based on the fact that the Igbos have been marginalised and neglected since the military rule era in the country, which has led to the denial of provision of infrastructure, social amenities and livelihood opportunities in the federal government sector. This marginalization of the Igbos in the country's economic and political life is indeed a continuation of the 'war against the Igbo' by other means.⁴⁸

The Biafran agitation and grievances are better understood not by political portfolios or appointments of the southern region in Nigeria, but the human and economic development of the region. After the civil war, the 'non-inclusiveness' of the Igbos and other ethno-phobic behaviors in the top political circles (where deliberations concerning the country are meted out), caused the South East industries and businesses to believe that they would have limited space within a federal political system. Although the South-East region was given political portfolios, the evidence suggests that these portfolios were seen as not accommodative enough and non-effective for the human and infrastructural development of the South East and Southern regions. Consequently, the non-enabling environment and policies which diminished the livelihood and political prospects of Southern Nigerians led to agitations and calls for Nigerian dissolution, originally ignited through peaceful protest.

Simply put, the marginalization of the Igbos in Nigeria can be termed as a horizontal inequality problem which manifests in their diminished political participation and economic aspects. Dixon and Gurr described this inequality as the concept of collective disadvantages in material well-being, political access, or cultural status in comparison with other social groups.⁴⁹

Building on Gurr's model of inequality, Dixon's description of a model for ethno-political rebellion is useful for conveying the Biafran struggle:

Ethno-political action presupposes an identity group that shares valued, cultural traits and some common grievances or aspirations. These sentiments and interests provide the essential basis for mobilization and shape the kinds of claims made by group leaders. The timing of action and the choice of strategies of participation, protest, or rebellion depend largely on political opportunities external to the group, principally its relationship to the state and external actors.⁵⁰

An observation of the resurgence of the Biafran separatism movement in Nigeria finds a good fulcrum on Gurr's model for ethno-political sentiment and strategy. This model, which combines repression, grievances, mobilisation, and rebellion is a useful lens through which to explain the intricacies of the Biafran struggle. One interesting link of Gurr's theory in the case of Biafra is the interwoven concept of grievance. The range of grievances held by the Biafran movement also serve to portray Nigeria as a failed state according to Rotberg, who avows that failed states are 'tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions. Thus, in most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals. With varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state.'⁵¹ Rotberg's definition captures or represents what is obtainable for Nigeria as a state in this contemporary era. The problems of Biafran ethnic militias, ethnic violence, militant groups and insurgency in Nigeria are all indicators of failed state. Consequently, this leads to the question of insecurity, a question which begs for an answer. In Nigeria, as in every other society, 'there is a hierarchy of political goods and none is as critical as the supply of security, especially human security.'⁵² Security in Nigeria continues to be undermined by corrupt political leaders, practices, and failed agriculture, power and education

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structures and systems. These root causes are compounded by their effects, symptoms such as the teeming populations of unattended and unemployed youths in Nigeria. These youths are bereft of their livelihood potentials. The same insecurity and marginalisation that push youths to agitate for improved chances of survival result in some of these youths becoming instruments of violence and crime. Using unemployment as an indicator or yard stick for examining the causes of youth agitation and violence, the statistical data below reveals some of the reasons youth tend to avail themselves for protest and agitations.

Examples of the repression that breeds Biafran grievances and agitations range from harsh governmental policies on Biafran businesses to destruction of markets and landed properties. A good number of Southern Nigerians have complained about how their property was destroyed by the government after land allocations for building and marketplaces.⁵³ These actions make them to leave their region for a more enabling environment in other parts of the country where they can live and continue on with their business. These actions by the government are interpreted as repression and marginalization. Destruction of these landed properties is not limited to Southerners, however, they do experience a disproportionate amount. Another problem that illustrates their marginalisation is the killings and destruction of their market at the slightest religious conflict in the country, which tend to be mostly between Muslims and Christians in the North, yet the Igbos feel the most loss of property and life. These trends over the years have concretised and reconstructed the mind of the average Southerner in Nigeria to see themselves as a member of a different people that needs and believes dissolution of the country is the best way for them to meet their needs. Thus, a social construct has been born out of relative deprivation.

The bar chart below depicts the unemployment rate in Nigeria:



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Fig. 1: *The unemployment rate of people in Nigeria. Source: www.tradingeconomics.com National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria.*

The chart above shows the unemployment rate of people actively searching for jobs in Nigeria as a percentage of ‘labour force’ between Late 2007 and early 2015. The chart provides the latest unemployment rate according to the National Bureau statistics in Nigeria. The problem of this chart is that it has inaccurate details and erroneous. However, most statistical data on Nigerian unemployment rates like the one shown above have such erroneous interpretations that they could not be used by the government to address the issue of unemployment even if the government decided to. A detailed and comprehensive statistical analysis of unemployment in Nigeria will reveal more accurate statistics than those claimed by the behemoth National Bureau of Statistics. The claim by Nigerian Statisticians about the country’s unemployment rate standing below 10% is met with scepticism based on how the data are gathered.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The theory adopted for this study has been instrumental to its conceptual ability to explain the Biafra agitations in Nigeria. This paper has used the theories of relative deprivation and ethno-political grievance to address and discuss the reasons why the Biafran social movement has risen up against the Nigerian state. Knowingly and unknowingly, government policies and practices have aided the Biafran agitation through direct and indirect discrimination manifested in the South-East and Southern regions of Nigeria. The Biafran issue has now taken on another dimension, with recent petitions for a referendum. The

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problems of separatist agitation in Nigeria would not have been a major issue if the government had adhered to 'simple' rules such as the provision of equal rights through genuine inclusiveness of development and justice within the country. The issues raised in this paper do not only affect Nigeria, however the combined effect of these issues is unique in magnitude, as well as the comprehensive variety of issues which have drawn international attention from key bodies such as the European Union. The salient issues highlighted herein are the systemic insecurity in Nigeria and the resurgence of the Biafran movement. Forceful repression by the government through military responses to peaceful protests by unarmed civilians should be revisited and reduced to its barest minimum. This trend only reignites deep-seated waves of anger in people. To this end, Soyinka said that 'Biafra cannot be defeated, once an idea has taken hold, you cannot destroy that idea, you may destroy the people, the carriers of that idea on the battlefield...but ultimately, it is not the end of the story.'⁵⁵

One of the main findings of the theory of relative deprivation as it applies to this study is that, when a group of people is marginalised for a very long time, relative deprivation paves the way for social movements and reconstructions of identity. The relative deprivation theory adopted in this study has shown how deprivation and marginalization of the people of Biafra has spurred deep-seated grievances against the state on the grounds of secession. The concept of state failure is contested, and while it probably doesn't apply to Nigeria today and considering the economic and social tension on Nigeria over the years and Nigeria still unified, credit should be given to the government. However, as of today, Nigeria is seen as a fragile state. This fragility reveals the weakness or ineffectiveness of the central government to exert practical control over much of its territory; low-provision of public services; widespread corruption; criminality; refugees; involuntary population displacement; and sharp economic decline.⁵⁶ The aforementioned problems are evident across Nigeria. The fragility of the state can potentially be alleviated, though, depending on how the state is governed. If the current Biafra agitators settle for reintegration in the country, then the following recommendations are suggested to enhance the nation's unity.

Recommendations

Without order of preferences or provisions of necessary conditions for curbing separatist agitations, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. True inclusive political institution in Nigeria should be practiced
2. Inequality among ethnic representatives that leads to problems at the micro level should be addressed
3. The needs of the people should be attended to, and paramount is the issue of unemployment among the mammoth graduates produced every year without jobs. Addressing this issue will involve indigenous developmental and economic project involving the youths; and also thereby help to reduce poverty
4. Social security measures be implemented for the citizenry
5. Environmental and public health issues should be addressed
6. Adequate infrastructures should be provided for the country, without regional bias
7. More stringent rules should be implemented on fight against corruption
8. Abuse of power should be readdressed within the legislative framework.

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