

Minoritarian Nationalism and National Integration in Nigeria: An Examination of Separatists' Movements in South-East in the Fourth Republic

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Abstract

The Nigerian State since independence is be-deviled with mirage of problems, amongst which is minoritarian nationalism, a situation in multi-cultural societies where aggravated incidences of marginalization, deprivation, suppression and erosion of trust and confidence in the distributive justice system cause conflicts, and occasioned certain segment, ethnic, religious or tribal, which are in Minority to engage in separatists' agitations for self-determination, which is an obstacle to national integration. This paper examines the Movements by Separatist groups in South Eastern Nigeria in the fourth Republic, and its correlations with national integration. The study is Qualitative; relevant data are drawn from secondary sources which are descriptively analyzed. The Structural Conflict Theory (SCT) is used for theoretical analysis. Its basic assumption captures the intense marginalization and inequalities that exist due to the ways society is structured. This infused rivalries amongst regional actors for biological and ontological needs, which often politicized militancy. The paper establishes the nexus between cultural solidarity, existential threat, and survival, with inter-ethnic hostilities, the formation of separatists' movements, and the absence of national integration. It props inter-alia, for inclusive governance, restructuring, and fiscal federalism to build mutual trust among the various ethnic groups and accommodate minority concerns. This will enhance national development, entrench the preference for territorial nationalism and cement the esprit-de-corps towards national integration, and the destiny of One Nation.

Keywords: *Separatists movements, Majority ethnic groups, Minorities, Nationalism, National integration*

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Background to the Study

The recorded human history is the history of struggle for power and resources, prerequisites like social class, ethnic identity, and group formation are drivers for this struggle. The colonial inheritance created the crisis of legitimacy whereby race, colour, tribe, religion and finally ideology provided the *raison d'être* for collective political existence, legitimacy and mobilization at the detriment of national unity and integration. In older literature on political Science, there would hardly be any reference to majoritarianism and minoritarianism. These are recently coin-words, thus, there haven't been many treatises on this subject; however, in almost all countries in the world it is inevitable that a certain segment, that is, ethnic, religious linguistic or ideological would be in the minority and some others would be in the majority (Kamath, 2019). At the global stage, there are minorities like the Jews, the Palestinians, the Hindus, the Black Americans in U.S.A., the Africaners in South Africa, the Sunni Arabs in Iraq, the Alawite in Syria, the Arabs in France and the Tutsis in Rwanda to mention but a few. The point is that it is only natural that Minorities exist and will continue to exist in one form or another anywhere in the world.

Thus, a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria similarly has its majority ethnic groups and the minorities; the country is structured into different strata with three main ethnic groups of the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, while there exist several minority ethnic groups such as the Efik, the Ibibio, the Birom, the Bura, the Tiv, Idoma, Ijaws and the Nupes to mention but a few. Minorities have been dealt with very poorly in Nigeria, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Muzaffer, 2019). Since independence in 1960, there have been struggles amongst the minorities and the majorities in Nigeria over natural resources, distributive justice, and political power; this led to a Civil War between 1967 - 1970. The war was fought between mainly the Secessionist Igbos, under the platform of Biafra, and the rest of Nigeria (Ibeanu, Iwaumadu & Chijioke, 2016). Report has it that over three million of citizens mainly of Igbo extraction were killed. In recorded history, this was the first major crisis that arrests and obstructs national unity and integration in Nigeria. The causes of the war are very controversial, the general consensus among historians, social commentators, and political Scientists was fear of domination and the struggle over economic resources (Scarborough, 1998).

Several decades after the civil war, there still persist serious rivalry among the major ethnic groups and the minorities in Nigeria over issues such as political participation, restructuring, and resource sharing formula etc. While the status-quo is seemingly protected and preserved, it is equally being resisted by the minority ethnic groups represented by Socio-cultural Associations and/or ethnic militia groups. This is being exemplified by the activities of the Ndigbo, MASSOB, IPOB, MEND, NDPVF, OPC, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) etc. Successful governments have tried to find solutions for the above mention problems but to no avail. Thus, Nigeria slides deeper into the “rivers” of disunity and underdevelopment. It is noteworthy to say that the aforementioned ills have made all the geo-political zones the bastion and stronghold for terrorism, banditry, commercial kidnapping, cattle rustling, militancy and for Separatist Movements seeking for self-determination from the geographical space called Nigeria. No doubt, this state of affairs is affecting Nigeria's quest to achieve national unity, national integration, sustainable development, economic growth, poverty

alleviation, fighting insecurity, addressing humanitarian catastrophes and environmental sustainability (Ogege, 2013).

The upsurge in ethno-nationalism and minority agitations particularly in South-South, South-East and North-East in recent times in Nigeria has particularly, halted national integration, interrupted peace, social-stability and produce serious Separatists agenda and upheavals within the territorial space. majoritarianism, which accelerates ethno-religious politics, corruption, nepotism, prebendalism, deprivation of power within the Nigerian political space leads to frustration and anger among minority ethnic groups. This also exacerbates existential threats and the fear for loss of identity, assimilation, marginalization, sense of deprivation, sense of powerlessness among the diverse minority ethnic groups. The consequence of these factors is the thirst for separatism, secession, resource control, terrorism and banditry, driven by minority ethnic groups, as epitomized by extant happenings in Nigeria. These factors according to Maina (2012) have continued to generate tensions that is sapping the country of its vitality, and aggravating unhealthy competition among different ethnic groups in the country.

Other sources have cited the continued dominance of the country's socio-economic and political situations by a section of the country since independence as the fundamental reason for the ensuring discontents among minorities of the diverse ethnic groups and their socio-cultural groups, and in some cases, “Separatists Movements” distorting and threatening the pre-independence peaceful co-existence among ethnic nationalities, deepening mutual suspicion & distrusts, and hindering national integration (Senan, 2007). It is within this context that this enquiry examines how ethno-religious cleavages have assumed a frightening height, and engineered socio-cultural solidarity and mobilization for Separatists' tendencies and/or Self-determination under the platforms of MASSOB and IPOB in South Eastern Nigeria in the Fourth Republic, against the backdrop of national integration. In this pursuit, the paper argues that the persistence of grim factors anchored on Identities cited above makes the country vulnerable for breeding Separatists Movements and trade the tumbled pathways to economic insecurity, endemic poverty, high level of illiteracy, physical insecurity, mass youth unemployment, which takes us far away from national integration, and accelerates disintegration, making the quest for national integration a mirage. Thus, it is suggested that demopolized governance, (inclusive governance), restructuring, and fiscal federalism which are embodiments of good governance are sine-qua-non in Nigeria's Fourth Republic to ensure a robust distributive justice, build mutual trust among the various ethnic groups and accommodate minority concerns. These will to a great extent limit and/or halt the “art and science” for the emergence of Separatists Movements in Nigeria and centripetally, consolidates her efforts towards national integration.

Conceptual Explanations

Minority Ethnic Groups

The term minority is most commonly used to refer to an ethnic group along racial, national, religious, tribal or cultural lines. The minority ethnic group holds a disproportionate amount of political power and suffers from marginalization, oppression, repression and suppression

from the majority or main ethnic groups. It should be noted that these majority ethnic groups also constitute minorities in the collective whole of national parameters.

Minoritarian Nationalism

Minoritarianism is a neologism for a political structure or process in which a minority segment of a population has or lacks certain degree of primacy in the entity's decision making, especially, in the distributive justice system or better still, in the fair and equitable distributions of common wealth. Minoritarianism is reinforced by the awareness of common identity among members of a particular social group in terms of a distinctive share culture, common ancestry and historical memories, association with a specific territory, a sense of common solidarity and common religion, to mention but a few (Encyclopedia Britannica). Minoritarianism may be contrasted with majoritarianism; it is sometimes used to describe agitations and/or uprisings by minority group(s), such as an ethnic group delineated by religion, language or some other identifying factors referred to above. The word minority according to Muzaffer (2019), weakens the unity of the country and draws dividing lines between groups in a comity of Nations. It has been tagged a menace which it has indeed become, as explained in the Nigerian context.

National Integration

As a social science concept, there are plural definitions and meanings to National Integration. Morrison and his associates (1972), perceives National Integration as a process by which members of a social system develop, sustain and maintain intricate linkages so that the boundaries of the system persist over time, and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behavior. In this process, the members of the social system develop an escalating sequence of contact, cooperation, consensus and community, or communalism. This implies that national integration is a situation whereby members of a community have a common sense of belonging within and among themselves. However, in the opinion of Duverger (1976), national integration connotes a process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious enclave, on an order its members regard as equitably harmonious. This explains a situation whereby members of a community through solidarity formed a united front to live together in peaceful co-existence. In the views of Coleman and Rosberg (1964), national integration is the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and the discontinuities in the process of establishing a homogeneous socioeconomic and political society or community.

This lays credence to the issues of unity in diversity, and the consolidation of centripetal factors as against centrifugal phenomena. This commonality shall only become possible when members of multi-ethnic societies or nations like Nigeria, jettison their different identities, and in the spirit of brotherhood, enacts and embraces the tenets of a fair and equal distributive justice system of the commonwealth and other socio-economic and political opportunities. In the context of the conversation on the problematic, national integration denotes majoritarian nationalism in heterogeneous or plural societies towards the quest for national unity, growth, development and peaceful co-existence. When this situation is solidly established, then the esprit-de-corps for one nation, one people, and one destiny would have been robustly

materialized and/or achieved. This is the basic thesis of national integration which minoritarian nationalism and separatists' movements debar, negates and frustrates in the Nigerian State.

Theoretical Framework

In a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual or group is denied either directly or by the indirect consequence of the way a society is structured; the feeling of deprivation and frustration compels such person or group to express their anger through the machinery of violence that is directed at those perceived to be responsible for their misfortunes or others groups who are directly related to those frustrating their expectations (Ogege, 2013). In this parlance, the Structural Conflict Theory (SCT) is very germane in providing explanations of such phenomena. This theory has dual orientations and/or perspectives; foremost, is the Marxist's Radical Structural Theory (RST) of Dialectical School, the chief proponents of this school were Karl Marx (1867-1883), Fredrich Engels (1884) and V.I. Lenin, to mention but a few.

The second aspect of the theory is the Liberal Structuralism, represented by Ross (1993), Scarborough (1998), and the popular work of Johan Galtung (1990) which gave detailed analysis of structural violence. The tenets of SCT is compatible with the provisions of the Transformative Theory (TT) which addresses the major concerns of the individuals, groups, cultures, institutions, communities and societies to transformation and/or change. The major thrust of the theory is that incompatible interests predicated on competition for resources, which in most cases are scarce, as responsible for social conflicts (Collier, 2000). It should be noted that, Marxism as a theory in its thesis on "historical materialism" present conflict as mostly tied to economic structures and the inequalities inherent social formations or institutions.

However, the main thrust of the Structural Conflict Theory (SCT) is enveloped in ways Societies are structured and organized. It perceived social problems like political and economic marginalization (exclusion), exploitation, oppression, repression, suppression, injustice, poverty, inequality to mentioned but a few as drivers of conflicts in societies. Structuralists maintain that conflict occurs because of the oppression, repression and suppression that are inherent in human societies; evidenced by the domination of minority ethnic groups by the majority ethnic groups. This point was made lucid by Karl Marx and other scholars like Friedrich Engels, Joseph Lenin, Walter Rodney etc, they faulted the inherent inequalities of the Capitalist form of government as a basis for exploitation, which often generates conflicts. Hence, according to these Scholars, a socialist revolution led by the mass of the people (working class) against the owners of means of production (Bourgeoisie) will lead to the overthrow of the Bourgeoisie and establishes a just equitable social order.

The Marxist tradition has been extended by the Neo-Marxist, most of them are of the "Underdevelopment and Dependency School" in developing economies. Some of the renowned theorists in this school are Andre Gunder Frank (1970), Walter Rodney (1973), Bala Usman (1990), Samir Amin (1997)). They explained the relationships between

“Development and Underdevelopment”, and proffered fundamental reasons why the Third World countries are not developing. One of the reasons is that the relationship between the third world countries and the world capitalist system is structurally exploitative and retarding development. Consequently, most of these scholars, particularly, Walter Rodney, opined that this structural relationship between the World Capitalist System, represented by Western Countries, and the third world countries must be broken and/or de-linked for the Third World Countries to experience development (Rodney, 1973). The relevance of this theory to this study, can therefore never be overemphasized, because as long as the various ethnic groups in Nigeria continues to be divided, there are bound to be conflicts which will manifest in Separatists' agitations for self-determination; which is an anti-thesis to national integration.

Methodology

As a qualitative research work, this study adopted documentary method of data collection that rely on secondary sources like Newspapers, Journals, Magazines, Government publications, textbooks, Internet and other official documents. This method was adopted because it leveraged the researcher to gain access to facts or data that are very difficult or impossible to get through primary sources. The method also assisted in gaining access to information or data that have existed in the past. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) observed that the Qualitative research method is concerned with providing and/or developing explanations of social phenomena aimed at helping us to comprehend the world in which we live and why things are the way they are. The method is suitable to this paper because it facilitates understanding on the research problem, and provides resources required. The data generated were descriptively presented or analysed; and based on the outcomes, conclusions were drawn.

Minoritarian Nationalism in South-Eastern Nigeria in the Fourth Republic

Since independence, Nigeria as a sovereign nation-state with its multi-ethnic and multi-religious conflagrations is plagued with avalanche of chronic challenges. Sixty years after independence, efforts at solving these numerous problems hindering her national integration, growth and development have yielded no serious outcomes. In most cases, minority agitations are characterized by a common consciousness that makes it exclusive in relations with others within the polity or in the comity of a geographical space. Social relations based on rejection are inherent in discrimination expressed in marriages, job, housing, admissions into educational institutions, political appointments, award of contracts, citing of industries and/or projects. It becomes possible under these circumstances for the minority groups to adopt aggressive behavior and hostility towards the other ethnic groups as a means of limiting competition in its favour. Consequently, agitations, upheavals, riots and other forms of violent agitations become “instruments” in the relationship among the different ethnic groups (Nnoli, 2014).

What appears to be critical about minority agitation is the experience of a people or group to exploitation and oppression, and the possibility of shared and more authentic or self-determined alternatives. This implicit ontology in part explained the persistent historical failure of liberal democracy to achieve anything more than token inclusion in power struggle

or structures for members of marginalized minority groups as the case of the South-East. Thus, according to Cudd & Wikipedia (2019) individuals are oppressed by virtue of their relationship in a particular social group, that is, a collective whole, whose members have relatively little mobility into or out of the collective whole, who usually experience their membership as voluntary, who are generally identified as members by others, and whose opportunities are deeply shaped by the relation of their group to corollary groups through privilege, oppression, repression and suppression. The implication of this is that the polity become heated with political and/or Separatists' Movements.

Some mobilization has been peaceful, but many armed groups have also been formed, at times with the tacit approval or complicity of the mainstream political movements. For instance, Kesselman (2010) noted that in the oil producing regions and its vicinities, these militia groups live off the pay they received in providing security for oil bunkering, and the proliferation of arms and ammunitions; these are illegal criminal networks, often involving individuals in the oil industry, political leaders, and the military, that tap into pipelines, siphon oil, and sell it in the black market. Ethnic politics, religious identity have remained constant features of the nation's socio-economic and political agenda. Moreover, the issues of marginalization, exploitation and suppression of minorities have aggravated these challenges and have put the nation in a circumstance of comatose. Consequently, efforts at building a united Nation has been a failure; this is as noted by Chinedu (2015) in the unnecessary Nigeria-Biafra civil war from 1967-1970, thus, post-civil war relations has been noted for minority features, as each ethnic group struggles to project its ethnic interest first in the stead of a collective national interest.

It was noted that when minority groups within a polity feels threatened, exploited and marginalized or denied its own share of the commonwealth, especially those within or in the neighbouring geographical areas, its relationships with other ethnic groups in the polity would degenerate into conflicting interests. It is of note that since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, that is the fourth republic, minority-based mobilizations including the activities of militias and separatists' movement have increased across the country; it is obvious that political leaders have oftentimes formed alliances with such groups, and increasingly using them as political thugs. In the history of Nigeria, and in the context of this study, the largest of such groups is the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East. The modus-operandi of these groups points to separatism and self-determination, this situation exposes the cosmetic nature of the desired national unity in Nigeria. It is in search of solution for the things “that fell apart”, and made Nigeria to have no peace, that such concepts like the Federal Character Principle, Quota system, Zoning formula, Derivation policy etc were introduced. Let us now look at two Separatists Movements in the South-East in the Fourth Republic within the quest for the Republic of Biafra.

The Republic of Biafra

The Republic of Biafra had previously existed as an Independent Republic declared by the late Odumegwu Ojukwu for three years, 1967 through 1970. The result of the tension between

Biafra and the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) resulted in the bloody Nigerian Civil War that lasted for three years. In 1970, the Biafran forces surrendered through the armistice brokered by the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) (Akuchu, 1977). The Republic of Biafra drew international support principally from France, Israel, and the Ivory-Coast; while the United Kingdom and the then United State of Soviet Russia (USSR) were the main supporters of the Nigerian government (EST Conor, 2015). The FGN fought very hard to preserve the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), and since the end of civil war, it for bit through Constitutional provisions the idea of an Independent State of Biafra (Encyclopedia Britannica). The casualty of the war was enormous, there were an estimated 3.5 million deaths that were heavily civilian, caused by starvation and death on the side of Biafra (Ibeanu, Iwuamadu & Chijioke, 2016). Thus, Biafra is officially a State in West Africa that existed between May 1967 – January, 1970. Dim Odumegwu Ojukwu was the official leader of Biafra.

Radical Igbo activists and teeming youth still agitate for, and resonate the 'spirit and letters' of Biafra within the context of Igbo nationalism in the Nigerian geographical space, and beyond. However, it has been argued by Jibo (2019), that most political elites of Igbo extraction only “sing-the-song of Biafra” for political inclusion, clientelism, patrimony and prebendalism. In other words, Jibo observed that there is no genuine commitment for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) within the political Elites from the South-Eastern geo-political zone. Never-the-less, Separatist Movements like MASSOB and IPOB are zealous to actualize a Biafran Republic.

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

This is a Secessionist Movement in Nigeria associated with Igbo nationalism which supports the recreation of the independent State of Biafra. The group was floated in 1999 in Lagos by an Indian trained Political Scientist and a lawyer, Ralph Uwazuruike. He took into consideration the travails of the Ndigbo, so many years after the Civil War. He also considered the Aburi Accord that was not implemented and the principles of 3Rs, Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, that was jettisoned by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The main preoccupation of MASSOB is to agitate for the secession and sovereignty of the South-East and South-South geo-political zones of Nigeria to actualize the Republic of Biafra (Mahr, 2018). MASSOB has its headquarters at Okwe, in the Okigwe district of Imo State. The Group's philosophy is predicated on the popular principle of non-violence as propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. Thus, according to Ralph, MASSOB is a peaceful group which has a twenty-five (25) stage development plan to actualize its goals and objectives peacefully.

However, the Nigerian government accused MASSOB of inciting violence against its corporate existence, and Uwazuruike was arrested in 2005 and detained on treasonable charges; he was later released in 2007 (Senan, 2007). At a point, MASSOB formed alliance with Niger-Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and championed the release of Alhaji Mujahid Asari-Dokubo, the leader of the NDPVF, who was imprisoned for similar charges at that time. In 2009 MASSOB launched “the Biafran International Passport”, which according to Ralph, is in response to persistent demand by Biafrans in the diaspora (Biafra News, 2009). However, in recent times MASSOB has been factionalized, and some zealot members of

Biafra Independence Movement BIM in 2015 tried to expel its leader, Ralph Nwazuruike, alleging that he had compromised the secessionist agenda and pocketed some 100 million naira of the group's funds. Sources close to the group indicated that one Uchenna Madu was named the new leader of MASSOB (International Crisis Group (ICG), 2016).

However, Uwazuruike in a media report dismissed his purported expulsion from the group, insisting that he remained the leader of the group. It was further noted that both Uwazuruike and Madu led factions of MASSOB have been engaged in a war of words claiming to have expelled each other's faction from the movement (ICG., 2016). It was later observed that Uwazuruike formed a MASSOB faction called Biafra Independent Movement (BIM) following his alleged expulsion from MASSOB. However, Uwazuruike announced at a news conference that the change of name became necessary due to the introduction of violence to the group's activities by actors he described as “disgruntled dissidents” or a faction sympathetic to Nnamdi Kanu. It is also in public domain that after falling out with Uwazuruike due to ideological differences on the ways Biafra can be actualized, Nnamdi Kanu, a disciple of Uwazuruike, founded a secessionist group called the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) (ICG, 2016).

The Trend of MASSOB's Activities

Through a 25 Stage development plan, MASSOB intended to meet the following objectives.

i. Hosting of the Biafran flags:

At its inception, MASSOB mobilized its members and focused on the organization of peaceful protests and rallies aimed at creating awareness on its missions and vision. These demonstrations and protests climaxed with the hoisting of the Biafran flags at strategic locations in the entire South East. It was observed that in recent years, this practice has been reserved purposely for celebrating key dates and events or in commemoration of deceased members of MASSOB.

i. Protests and agitations:

Any time MASSOB members were arrested or killed by the security agents of government, its members will embark on civil protests to express their dissatisfaction. It was noted for posterity that the residence of the late leader of Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe, was burnt down in one of MASSOB's protests. Col. Joe Achuzie (rtd), the then Secretary-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, exonerated the group from any blame, and accused the security agents of what he described as “recklessness and irresponsibility” (News Watchngr, 2013).

ii. Re-introduction of the Biafran currency:

Sequel to the hoisting of the Biafran flags, the leaders of the group thought it wise to re-introduced the Biafran currency. Thus, in this direction, the old Biafran currency was introduced into circulation in 2005. This singular act drew lots of excitement from all Ndigbo, especially as one Biafran pound was said to exchange for hundred and seventy naira at the border communities of Togo and the Republic of Benin (News Watchngr, 2013). The then President, Olusegun Obasanjo liken the Biafran pounds to a collector's item and attributed its

high exchange value to its relative rarity as a memorial treasure. This was Obasanjo's reaction to the Biafran currency.

iii. Introduction of the Biafran passport:

The Biafran passport was introduced in 2009 as part of the programme to celebrate MASSOB's 10th anniversary. The leader of the Group, Ralph Uwazuruike informed that the introduction of the Biafran passport was to address the persistent demands from stakeholders in diaspora (Vanguard News, 2009).

iv. Liaison or alliances with militant groups in the South-East and South-South for the realization of MASSOB:

As a strategy for collaboration and partnership, and to facilitate synergy and support, the leadership of MASSOB found it necessary to form alliances with other similar groups in the South East and South-South. Hence, the NDPVF under Asari-Dokubo became its ally.

Government's Reaction to MASSOB's Activities

Since its inception in 1999 as a Secessionist Movement, its activities have made the security agencies engaged its members in a violent manner; the grassroots information manager of MASSOB, Kelechi Chukwu has alleged mass arrests and killings of its members by government forces. He said the government forces carried out secret executions of MASSOB members in detention centres and prisons all over the country. In May 2008, the group released a list of 2, 020 members alleged to have been killed by security agents penultimate 1999. The MASSOB leader, Ralph Uwazuruike, has suffered several arrests and charged with treason. It has been observed that in 2011, Uwazuruike and 280 MASSOB members were arrested in Enugu while attending a function in honour of Ojukwu. However, some days later President Jonathan ordered for their release (Administrator, 2015/www.enugustatedirect.com).

In February, 2013, MASSOB claimed that the several corpses found floating in the Ezu River on the boundary of Enugu and Anambra States were those of its members previously arrested by the police for violent protests. The group claimed that the police routinely arrest and executes members of MASSOB without proper trial (www.sunnewsonline.com/news). On May 31, 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan branded MASSOB as one of the three Extremist Secessionist groups threatening the security and the corporate existence of Nigeria. Jonathan declared that the "Nigerian State faces three fundamental security challenges posed by Extremist Secessionist groups like Boko-Haram in the North East; MASSOB in the South-East; the Odua People's Congress in the South-West" (www.punchng.com/news).

The Nigerian police arrested 25 members of MASSOB on 13 September 2015 who were marking their 16th Anniversary. MASSOB claimed that at St Charles Lwanga Catholic Church, Okpoko, 18 members were arrested, while one was shot; that at Iba Pope Catholic Church 19 members were arrested, while at Awada, 11 members of MASSOB were arrested; similarly, at Awka, two MASSOB were arrested by the police. information was at the instance of the MASSOB former Deputy Director of Information and Strategy, Mazi Chris Mocha (www.punchng.com/news).

Independent People of Biafra (IPOB)

This Indigenous People of Biafra is a Secessionist Movement or group that leads the calls for Biafrans freedom from Nigeria. Its absolute goal is the pursuance and restoration of an independent State of Biafra for the people of the old Eastern region of Nigeria through a referendum or otherwise (Allison, 2019). The Group was founded by Nnamdi Kanu in 2012. It renewed calls for peaceful settlement of their grievances through a referendum in the Nigerian State that were part of the old Eastern region. Supporters of Biafran independence are predominantly within the territorial space of the defunct Biafran State (www.bbc.com/news/world). IPOB claims that the Biafrans are oppressed and marginalized by the Nigerian government through various ways, e.g. lack of equitable resource distribution, poor investment, political and military appointments and an unfair discrimination based on identities (Ibeanu, Iwuamadi, and Chijioke, 2016).

The IPOB occupied a position of prominence after Biafran Independence Organizations like MASSOB AND BIM got weakened. Over time, the Federal Government of Nigeria FGN through its security agents has been cracking down on IPOB members who peacefully protested Kanu's arrest and incarcerations, and declared it a terrorist group. IPOB has now metamorphosed from a group to a movement of the indigenous Biafran population who are discontent with the maladministration of the Nigerian State. There are unconfirmed reports that Biafrans all over the world have identified with the Movement, thereby making IPOB to be the main instrumental symbol for the Biafran restoration and/or for the actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (Bybee, 2017).

Activities of the IPOB

i. Leadership Legitimacy:

Nnamdi Kanu is the leader of IPOB, he has dual citizenship of British and Nigeria. Having work with Uwazuruike in MASSOB as an information strategist, he gained popularity from his broadcasts on Radio Biafra in London, which was established in 2009. He established IPOB in 2012 when he fell out with his former Master, Uwazuruike. The Radio Biafra operating from London broadcast messages or propaganda that called for freedom of Biafra, and it heavily criticize the “fantastic” corruption in Nigeria. According to Bybee (2017) Kanu's activities in the Biafra Radio catalyzed his rise to the public scene, as he was previously an unknown person. Kanu was arrested by the Nigerian security forces on 19th October 2015 on charges of sedition, ethnic incitement and treasonable felony (Ibeanu, Iwuamadu, & Chijioke, 2016).

ii. Protests:

Sequel to the arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu, there has been a group of pro-Biafran protesters who have been leading protests and demonstrations all over the South-East geo-political zone to pressure for the release of Kanu. In the words of Mahr (2018), Nnamdi's arrest and detention has gravitated IPOB supporters into gaining further fraction, as the mobilization of members grew three-folds. These protests and demonstrations sometimes became violent as the Police and the protesters clashed, leading to the killing of members of the group, and those of the Police force in Aba, Onitsha, Enugu and Umuahia (Allison, 2017).

It was also observed that the cause in rising protests is attributed to the perceived political exclusion of Ndigbo in the Nigerian Project and the reminiscences of the trauma that continues/persists as an effect of the Nigerian civil war.

As a basis for its actions and activities, IPOB supporters cited the historical events such as the 2016 election of President Donald Trump, and Britain's vote to exit the European Union (BREXIT) as proof of the international support for self-determination (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world>). According to many sources, Donald Trump's victory provides hope for the IPOB group in their quest to secede from Nigeria. It is hoped that Trump's political interests are in line with propping Biafra because of oil pursuits. The source alleged that U.S oil companies' output in Nigeria have been drastically cut by militants in the Niger-Delta, who have been attacking oil pipelines and installations, and abducting foreign oil workers for ransom. Consequently, the leaders of IPOB contend that it is within the economic interests of the U.S. to support the Biafran secessionist movement due to the upheavals in the Niger-Delta (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world>). However, it is imperative to note that President Trump is yet to make any public pronouncement in support of Biafran self-determination. The pro-Biafran agitators called for the immediate release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and other Biafran activists in jails. More fundamentally, the protesters want a referendum organized by FGN to determine the exit of the South-East (Ndigbo) from the Nigerian nation (EST, Conor, G. (2015).

iii. **Alliances with other Groups:**

IPOB emerged to continue the movement that had been piloted by the extremist group of Igbo extraction. Before IPOB, there were MASSOB, BIM, Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM). Most of the members of these groups work in harmony, and they have common objective, that is, the actualization of the Republic of Biafra. The BZM was led by Benjamin Igwe Onwuka; after a rally on 5th November, 2012 in Enugu, members of the group engaged in violence with security agents, thus several of them were arrested, tortured and detained for treason by the Nigerian security agents. Thus, the BZM's activities were scaled down in view of arrests, torture, and trials of many lead members of the group. At the heights of their vibrancy, each of these Separatist groups in the South-East drew sympathies from other minority groups in the country.

FGN Reaction to IPOB's Activities

The Federal High Court in Abuja declared IPOB as a terrorist organization on 18th September, 2017 (<https://punchng.com>). The Court supported its actions with what he termed the criminal and terrorist activities of IPOB in the entire South-East geo-political zone. The IPOB, however challenged the proscription and sought to reverse the Court's decision in 2018, but to no avail. Thus, until the Court's ruling is overturned, IPOB remained a terrorist group, under the Nigeria's Terrorism Act. According to Maya (2016), the Nigerian State has utilized brutal excessive force to harass and suppress pro-Biafran movements; he claimed several members of IPOB have been massacred and extra-judicially killed by the Nigerian State. The Amnesty International corroborates this with a report it released detailing that countless of IPOB protesters were killed between the 29th through 30th of May, 2016 during a security operation aimed at preventing IPOB members from marching from Nkpor motor park to a mass rally (Amnesty International Report, 2016).

However, the Nigerian Army claimed that they acted in self-defense, and that the death count lies at five (5) in the stead of fifty (50) as widely reported by media. It is very interesting to note that these killings have not been investigated by the Nigerian State despite urgings from Amnesty International. Furthermore, Human Rights Organizations (HROs) have been keeping records of extra-judicial killings of Biafra agitators, they claimed that from August 2015 through February 2016, 170 unarmed civilians were killed and that 400 persons were arrested, tortured, and charged or detained without proper trial (Maya, 2016).

Nnamdi Kanu's Trail, Detention, Bail and Disappearance

Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB was arrested and detained over a year without trial and was arraigned on 8th November, 2016 for charges of criminal conspiracy, membership of a proscribed organization and intimidation of the general public. Due to intense pressure on government from the South-East Principal stake holders, he was bailed on 26th April, 2017 based on health grounds with some stringent conditions. After the bail, he disappeared in September, 2017 after an alleged attack by the security agents on his country home in Umuahia. In a Biafra Radio broadcast in London, Kanu explained that he had to escape because the Nigerian government want him death, that was why the military bombed his village home (Onyeji, 2019).

The military authorities denied such attack, but zealots IPOB members provided a video footage of the attack. Since then Kanu has failed to appear in Court to answer to the charges against him by the FGN. There have been speculations that he had fled to Israel for safety; this was reinforced when a facebook livestream video showed an individual that looks like Kanu performing prayers at the Western Wall in Jerusalem (<https://www.timesofisrael.com>). However, the Israel's foreign ministry said it cannot confirm this allegation because it does not have any official evidence of Kanu in the Country (<https://www.africatimes.com>). Further to Kanu's disappearance, the Court has revoked the bail granted to Kanu, and the trial Judge Binta Nyako has ordered the immediate arrest of Kanu and/or his Surety, Senator Enyinnya Abaribe. This objective has not been met.

Nnamdi Kanu's Pronouncements and Agenda in Exile

a. Kanu sends strong warning to Supreme Court over Imo State election:

Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB spoke on his expectation from the Imo State governorship election review by the Supreme Court. He warned in a broadcast via Radio Biafra that what the people of the state want is a fresh election and urged the Supreme Court to respect the wish of the people (Philip, 2020).

b. IPOB leader to organize one million Biafrans to march for freedom:

The IPOB leader announced from his abode overseas that he will lead 'One million pro-Biafran activists' on a march for freedom, civil and political rights, on Saturday, 20th of June, 2020 in Washington D.C, the United States of America. He revealed this in a circular released by the group (Naija News, 2020).

c. IPOB's appeal to the international community to rise up and stop atrocities against Christians in Nigeria:

The leader of IPOB in exile has called on the United States' Department of State, and the International Community to rise up and stop atrocities against Christians in Nigeria; he made this call on the micro-blogging site in reaction to the continued detention of Leah Sharibu since her abduction two years ago, the burning of Churches, and the recent beheading of a CAN leader in Michika, Adamawa State by members of the Boko-Haram terrorists (Philip, 2020).

d. IPOB's view on the crisis between Abba Kyari (CSO to the President) and Babagana Monguno (NSA):

Kanu said the clash between Monguno and Kyari is a confirmation that President Buhari is not in charge of his government. He said he concurs with Monguno that Abba Kyari truly overrides orders of the Nigeria's President. The IPOB leader was reacting to the leaked memo from the office of Babagana Monguno that Abba Kyari overrides the President's decisions. Kanu concludes that the Nigerian State is being governed by a Cabal in the Aso Rock Villa, because the President has lost control.

e. Nnamdi Kanu's comment on the death of his parents:

Kanu said with the death of his parents, late HRH Eze Israel Okwu Kanu and his wife Ugoeze Sally Nmeme Okwu-Kanu, who were buried on Valentine's day, Friday, February 14, 2020 in their country home, the agitation for the actualization of Biafra Republic will know no bounds (Philip, 2020).

National Integration

According to Otite (1990), integration assumes a power of its own in binding multi-ethnic groups into a formidable whole without the erosion of their unique characteristics or inherent identities. That process involves a fair, just, and equitable distribution of resources and the guarantee of access to national opportunities. The fundamental essence of integration, is the establishment of a homogenous society out of an existing heterogeneous one. Thus, Coleman (1964), referred to it as a progressive reduction of ethnic, cultural and regional tensions in the process of nation building. Pragmatic features for integration revolve around culture, folklore norms, resource distributions and the bridging the lacunae between the social categorizations in a society. This prompted Azeez's (2004) perception of integration, as the willingness of multi-ethnic groups in an enclave to familiarize over a period of time towards the reduction of their distinctive characteristics in evolving a collective whole.

In a general term, integration of sub-cultures and groups refers to inculcating a feeling of togetherness amongst the various sections of a country. In real terms these consist of the preservation of cultural identity within identities, and the peaceful co-existence amongst groups for the greater prosperity of the nation. Integration is therefore an inter-group activity which is limitless, seamless and sustainable. It orients in different aspects; social, political, psychological and economic. It is therefore a constellation of different norms and values through a network of social, moral and political institutions. National integration is largely a

psychological process incentivized by deliberate creative governance mechanisms and policies in educational process that generates a development of feelings of unity, solidarity and cohesion, in the hearts of the people; a sense of common citizenship (destining) and a feeling of loyalty to the nation (Morrison, 1972). Azeez (2004) broadens this conceptualization of integration to refer to the absence of decisive separatists' movements that would balkanize the nation or drastically jeopardize the power of the central governments, vis-à-vis the presence of attitudes through the society, that give preference to national public interest as distinct from primordial interests. Where primordial loyalties to one's community, tribe caste, religion or language persist, it is considered by the national leadership as the most serious threat to national integration, this is the situation in Nigeria exemplified by the activities of the separatists' movements in South Eastern Nigeria in the Fourth Republic which is the epi-centre of our conversation.

Since de-colonization, national integration is one of the most acute problems be deviling the Nigerian State. This led one of Nigeria's political leaders to describe Nigeria as a mere geographical expression, instead of a conglomerate of people with avid desires of building an indivisible, united and strong nations in a comity of Nation (Maina, 2018). There are a wide range of problems associated with different nationalities in Nigeria. There are issues with ethnic, tribal, religions etc. that are currently obstructing the unification of the country. There are issues involving the relations between states and various regions in the country with the central government facilitating the persistent calls for resource control, fiscal federalism, restructuring, and good governance. The totality of these constitutes the “National Question or the quagmire of National Integration”. This intricately refers to the difficulties or problematic in transforming parochial interests of cleavages in the Nigerian State, to national loyalties and identities that are Nigerian. Put differently, this has been the desire for national integration seemingly pursued by various regimes with varied degree of commitment since independence (Otite, 1990). What has emerged as a new dynamic in the task of national integration is the inability of the Nigerian society to create a public authority that can legitimately exert itself throughout the national territory.

Closely related to this was the failure of national elites to create an integrated national community. Nigerian 'national elites' have remained culturally distinct in orientation and attitude and are united only as a plastered-cluster for maintaining access to the national purse for self-aggrandizement. Regional and linguistic cleavages have maintained a strong hold on the posture and outlook of national elites. Thus, when these elites fell out of favours at the national or sub-national levels, they resorted to ethnic identities, they activate and inspired sentimental ideologies and propaganda for the mobilization of ethnic solidarity for separatists' agitations or self-determination, which further extends the horizon of national integration, and makes it national mirage.

I concur with Kukah (2018), Odinkalu (2019), Jibo (2019), and Sanusi (2020) when they independently observed that the difficulties to national integration in Nigeria are rooted in the country's colonial inheritance/ heritage in which the British enshrined the “seeds of discord” for what has become an enduring rivalry and divisiveness amongst the various ethnic

nationalities forcefully amalgamated in 1914. For example, colonial policies in education and administration reinforced south and north identities by reordering their prosperity in eschewed opportunities. While missionary education was totally disallowed in the north for much of the early colonial period, it was allowed elaborately in the south. Colonial administrative mechanisms like the indirect rule system reinforced the powers of the Emirs who exploited taxation as a tool for subjugating non-Muslims in the North (Kukah, 2018). The colonial regional arrangement further favoured the north disproportionately in spatial and numerical terms. The Northern region had a huge advantage in landmass over the combined area of the southern region. Colonial authorities ignored the minorities' agitations in the country who yawned under marginalization (Odinkalu, 2019). Besides, when independence was eventually conceded it was on a “platter” of Northern terms (Kukah, 2018).

Successive governments in Nigeria could not address minority concerns until the regime of President Umaru YarAdua, which offered amnesty to the Niger-Delta Militants, commenced concrete actions for the cleansing of Ogoni land, and integrated Biafran war veterans into the national pension payroll. Other regimes in Nigeria, save that of President Goodluck Jonathan, destroyed a workable federal arrangement and caused internal divisions among the various ethnic groups and social dichotomies. The outcome of this scenario worsened internal conflicts and wrecked cohesion in a national security institution (The Army), thereby throwing up a more divisive nation. To buttress this point, it was observed that since the end of the Nigerian civil war, an Igbo Military officer was never appointed as the Chief of Army Staff, until the President Goodluck Jonathan's regime which promoted an Igbo man (Azubuike Ihejirika) to the rank of Lt. General and appointed him as the Chief of Army Staff, a position hitherto preserved for military officers from the core north (Odinkalu, 2019). This was fundamentally to ease the fears of the Ndigbo and to reconcile and reintegrate them into the Nigerian Project to accelerate national unity and development.

It is hoped that all stakeholders in the Fourth Republic, particularly the political class, must harness the nation's great potentials in her diversities to unlock the opportunities for good governance inherent in democracy to address minority concerns of marginalization, restructuring, alleviation of poverty, provision of jobs, and a fair and just distribution of commonwealth. These would lessen the induced agitations for self-determination by Separatists Movements like MASSOB and IPOB, and foster the spirit of brotherhood and communalism, which are major drivers for national integration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conversation on “Minoritarian Nationalism and Separatists Agitations in the South-East” explained in this inquiry no doubt establishes the nexus of cultural solidarity, existential threat, and survival, with inter-ethnic hostilities and Separatists agitations towards self-determination for the agitators and their sympathizers on one hand, and on the other hand constitutes great obstacles to national integration, threat to peace and unity of the country, and national development more than any other factor. As narrated above, ethnic-based associations or better still, Separatists Movements particularly, MASSOB and IPOB emerged

as a result of the continued political divides and marginalization that are injurious to the security and social stability in Nigeria which has nailed Nigeria on the group popularly known as “Less Developed”, “Underdeveloped”, “Developing Economies” or “Third World Countries”. However, all hope is not lost, there should be optimism in the on-going efforts at finding political solution to the numerous challenges facing the country, particularly, agitations that are Separatist in content; thus, the paper advance the following Suggestions and/or Recommendations.

- i. The Nigerian State must turn away from a system of politics dominated by big-men and godfathers, vis-a-vis; a competitive Oligarchy, to a more pragmatic and sincere representative government that addresses the fundamental interests of under-privileged citizens.
- ii. Nigerians must collectively pursue political arrangements that is inclusive and accommodates the nation's diversity and jettisons Identity Politics. In this pursuit, politicians must change in fundamental ways for democracy to become more stable and legitimate for good governance to thrive. This will ultimately halt and/or discourage the formation of Separatists groups in the Country. Consequently, the present democratic government (Fourth Republic) must find ways of moving beyond Separatists agitations and tendencies and develop a truly national political process that would facilitate development, alleviate poverty and in which mobilization and conflicts along minority ethnic lines gradually fissile out. Leaders must strive very consciously to exhume those factors that ensured peace and stability in indigenous pre-colonial era for the betterment of all citizens
- iii. Nigerians at home and in the diaspora, must understand, promote, and preserve those values that ensure harmony and mutual respect for individual rights, opportunities and privileges to avoid discontents. Nigeria as a country must adopt positive political trends from countries like the USA Britain and France, where there are minority groups and ethnicity, but they serve positive purposes. For instance, there are not such considerations of issues like state of origin, federal character and quota system in national discourse, as such policies are inimical to comprehensive and equitable national development and sustainability.
- iv. The cardinal ideal of a true servant leader should form the foundation and platform for the selection and election of leaders in Nigeria. Leaders must rethink the African democratic principles of Communalism as a guiding light to leadership aspirations. This enthrones equity, fairness and justice for all citizens and the outcome may be salvaging the country from the proliferation of Separatists' groups with all their attendant activities that retards peace, security, unity and development in Nigeria.
- v. Lastly, it is suggested that an inclusive governance, restructuring, and fiscal federalism are sine-qua-non in Nigeria's Fourth Republic to build mutual trust among the various ethnic groups and accommodate minority concerns. This will avoid leadership legitimacy crisis, political violence, and entrench the preference for “Territorial nationalism as against Minoritarian nationalism” and Cement the esprit-de-corps towards the destiny of One Nation

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