



Research Article

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IPOB Agitations for Self-Determination and the Response of the Federal Government of Nigeria: Implications for Political Stability

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Abstract

This study examines the strategies of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) agitations and the response of the Nigerian government towards IPOB agitators and its implications on political stability. The study adopted the use of survey research design. The sample of the study was taken from IPOB members in selected six locations of six states including Abuja. The selected locations were chosen due to the high activities of IPOB group. Using a sample size determination table, the sample size of the selected areas was summed up 385. In-depth interview was the second method of data collection. The returned copies of the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings showed that the government's strategy for dealing with the Biafra separatist movement has focused mainly on police action, most times, involving excessive use of force. It can be concluded that the recurring agitation for Biafra has serious implications for political stability and democratic consolidation. Finally, it was recommended that the positive responses of government on development projects and inclusivity in governance will determine the courage IPOB and the Biafra movement will have going forward.

Keywords: Agitation, Democratic Stability, Development, Self-determination, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a separatist group that agitates for self-determination of their people. Studies have shown that agitations of different groups in countries of the world do have effects on the political stability of the countries involved (Shehu, Othman & Osman 2017; Ugo, Ukpere & Ashiwhobel, 2012). The effects on countries may be positive or negative. The way the country is affected will largely depend on the strategies the groups have adopted in their agitations and the nature of government's responses towards the agitating groups.

Every group has its reasons for agitating for self-determination. Ojukwu (1989) argues that self-determination becomes the norm when the right possessed by a group of people to make a choice that works for them concerning the way and by the person they desired to lead them is taken away from them. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) are pro-Biafran group that agitates for self-determination from the Nigerian government. The group agitates for self-determination from the Nigerian State for the independence of the Biafra Republic. It is worthy of note that the Republic of Biafra was a secessionist state which existed during the period of Civil War in South-Eastern

Nigeria between the period of 30 May 1967 and 15 January 1970 which undoubtedly affected economic activities (Nafziger, 1972).

Amnesty International (2016) has submitted that IPOB has utilized its London-based Radio Biafra Station in reaching out to a lot of their dissatisfied youths and that Nnamdi Kanu, being the IPOB leader and the Radio Biafra Director, has made use of the station in reaching out to supporters both within and outside the country. The agitations of IPOB the group and all the strategies used cannot be separated from the political stability of Nigeria. As observed by Obasi (2017), the use of force by President Muhammadu Buhari in responding to the IPOB's agitations has not been productive as it inflames passion and increases people's sentiments on separation that may eventually lead to political instability. The Nigerian army's invasion of Nnamdi Kanu's home happened 24 hours after it announced the commencement of its operation Python Dance (Part Two) in the South-Eastern states (Ogbonnaya-Ikoku, 2017). The IPOB leader's home invasion has not brought any peace between the agitators and the Nigerian government. As made known by Adonu (2018), some Biafrans were taken away and killed in cold blood without any cause at the time of September 2017 operation's Python Dance and they have not been buried until now. Similarly, the rally organized in honor of Donald Trump's victory resulted into violence leading to 11 deaths and injuries of many (BBC news, 2017).

The Nigerian federal government has gone ahead to proscribe IPOB and designate them a terrorist group through a court judgment. According to a report by Scanneews (2018), on the 20th of September 2017, Justice Kafarati with an order proscribed IPOB and designated it a terrorist group upon an ex parte application by the attorney general of the federation and minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami. Declaring the group a terrorist group implies that the group from now will be handled as terrorists by the security forces if they should be found gathering or engaging in any of their activities (Gabriel, Agbakwuru, Yakubu & Agbo, 2017).

One other implication is that anyone found guilty of belonging to IPOB, could be made to serve 20 years in prison when convicted and as provided by section 2 (3) (i) of the terrorism (prevention) acts 2011: a person who belongs to a proscribed organization commits an offence under this Act and shall on conviction be liable to imprisonment for a maximum term of 20 years (Obiejesi, 2018, p. 1).

The question that bothers the mind presently is, whether there is a relationship between IPOB's agitations for self-determination and the responses of the federal government of Nigeria? And then, what are the implications for political stability with respect to the relationship between IPOB's agitations for self-determination and the responses of the federal government of Nigeria?

The present study unravels different ways the Nigerian government has responded to the group (IPOB) on their agitations for self-determination. The study also avails more information on how the agitation of IPOB has affected political stability in Nigeria. The research reveals the different ways the Nigerian government has responded to the group (IPOB) on their agitations for self-determination. Additionally, through this inquiry, contributions are made on how the Nigerian government can be aided in the formulation of policies on how to handle agitating groups and how to ensure that there is a minimal number of agitating groups in the country thereby maintaining political stability in the country.

The paper is structured into five sections; introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, conclusion and recommendations.

2. The Concept of Self-Determination and Political Stability

Self-determination is a desire of every group as it will undoubtedly prepare them towards greater achievement. Weller (2009) sees self-determination as the people's right towards the freedom of determination of the state of their politics and at the same time follow up with the evolution of their economy, social well-being, and their culture. The people's economy, politics and sociocultural aspects of life have been embedded in the foregoing definition. According to Carley (1996), self-determination is about putting an end to colonialism and bringing about new states. Conversely, An-naim and Deng (2006, p. 202) see self-determination as it is related with the right of people in the

areas colonized to attain independence; but many ethnically or religiously based internal conflicts indicate pressures to extend the principle to ethnic, religious and linguistic areas. All these factors as religion, culture, linguistics are not exactly the same case in countries with conflicts, as there are differences which boil down to politics and historical backgrounds.

Accordingly, Umozurike (1990) and Imhonopi and Urim (2013) argue that the principle of self-determination honors the freedom of the people to arrange their tomorrow in the areas of politics which may be a unitary system, federal system, or a confederal system or other formation that the people will be satisfied with. Thornberly (1997) posits that self-determination represents the right of people in the determination of their own destiny. In other words, people can make their life to be worth living or not, but whatever they make out of life remains their choice. Akanji (2012) maintains that a mere explanation of the concept of self-determination references the right of the people to possess a state of their own, enjoy self-government, and have self-management or home rule.

The notion of self-determination as expressed by Anaya (1996) is based on the philosophical affirmation of the push of humans to change what they want to achieve into a real form in addition with the postulates of inherent human equality (Bereketeab, 2012, p. 12). The question still remains that to what extent has the existence or achievement of self-determination been able to remove crisis from the land of the achievers. This notion is proved by the statement of Pavkovic and Radan (2013) when they referred to the self-determination expression as a dynamite that gives out false hope leading to its execution which results in loss of lives. This submission shows that self-determination that is clamored for by a majority of people, especially in Africa, has its negative implications. It is also important to ponder on whether the gains outweigh the risks that follow the agitations or even the achievement of self-determination by any group.

According to Pei-linghu (2014), the term right to self-determination is made clear as people's right. This reminds one about the homogeneity of people: do the people seeking freedom have things in common or are there still great internal differences that will likely pose challenges to the achieved freedom? The end result is stated by Ojukwu (2008) when he argues that, the submerging and alienation in a state of a group that already has a partial or total feeling of being part of the state can lead them to demand separation from the nation. Some of these groups may have suffered deprivation of their needs while some may be working towards the prevention of such an ugly occurrence. In reality, these different positions can possibly lead to a crisis which may be manageable or unmanageable and this outcome is highly dependent on government's actions. The right to self-determination is well recognized at the world level and needs to be respected. In the United Nations Charter, the right to self-determination, which is a key human right, is enshrined. The Charter has stated that each state has the right to freely choose and develop its political, social, economic and cultural systems (Cristecu, 1981).

The position of the United Nations here has buttressed the freedom of people as they demand self-determination, whether it is about social, political or economic freedoms. These three factors cover virtually all aspects of man's life. Self-determination that brings about withdrawal from the state is assumed to have met with the satisfaction of some normal conditions. Firstly, it would bring about a situation without war, a secure environment, stability in all aspects, and development. The second condition is instability and insecurity should not emanate from it (Bereketeab, 2012). On the other hand, achieving self-determination should not be selfishly pursued. The different way it affects the people around is of ultimate importance for their sociocultural and economic well-being.

A backup to this is the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution as amended (1999, p. 39) section 42 sub-section (1), which has specified on the treatment of citizens from any part of the country:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not by reason only that he is such a person:

1. be subjected either expressly or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which the citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups places of origin, sex, religion or political opinions are not made subject; or
2. be accorded either expressly by or in the practical applications of any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is

not accorded to the citizen of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions.

The constitution of any country stands as a body of laws through which that country is governed. It is also important to determine if constitutions are followed by the leaders or those with the mantle of authority. In a situation where the part of the constitution has taken care of human rights, unity, equal treatment and other factors that give people of a state a sense of belonging, why are there still agitations for self-determination? The answer to this borders on the applicability of the existing constitution. The question of applicability of the constitution in any country is highly determined by the leadership of the country. In every country, leadership is very important for its development. That is, the rise and fall of any organization greatly depends on the nature of its leadership; and the ability of any organization is a direct outcome of its leadership, for example, when leaders are weak, the outcome results in a weak organization and when leaders are strong, it tends to a strong organization (Gberevbie 2017). In this same vein, Olaopa (2016) has attributed the poverty in Nigeria and other countries to poor leadership decisions (Abasilim, Gberevbie & Osibanjo, 2019; Gberevbie, Joshua, Excellence-Oluye & Oyeyemi, 2017). In other words, the leadership of every country or state cannot be disputed as the bedrock of its survival. Therefore, a positive change in any political system must include its leadership (Imhonopi, Urim, George, & Egharevha, 2013; Okafor, Imhonopi, & Urim, 2011).

On the other hand, political stability is when political institutions and systems are firm and steady in their ways of operations having the existence of authority without threat (Ugo et al., 2012). In this situation, the people within the political system will have a sense of security and political participation. Political stability means that the political situation of the country can be predicted thereby making the environment to seem conducive for intending investors both from within and outside the country (Ene, et al., 2013).

Sottilota (2013) has identified political stability as a controversial concept stating its three interpretations as meaning: firstly, the non-existence of domestic civil conflict and violence that can become widespread; secondly, the longevity of government and thirdly, the absence of structural change. In other words, political stability suggests that no change can be effected both from outside and inside the political system. In the opinion of Paldam (2016), he maintains that political stability can be seen in four different ways which are, stable government, stable political system, internal law and external stability. In different countries, a stable political system can be strengthened through justice, honesty, accountability, and transparency. This level of stability can be achieved through coordinated enlightenment whose outcome will largely depend on different levels of development. In the last fifty years, Africa has been known for its political instability but one thing has remained unexplained, which is, leadership being the major problem of Africa. Africa has seen its freedom fighters that brought independence such as Robert Mugabe turn to dictators, thereby looting the national treasuries, institutionalizing tyranny and a constricted political space and practicing sit-tightism with political office (Ong'aya, 2008). Bueno de Mesquita (2000) has maintained that autocracies are synonymous with stability in leadership as leaders sometimes use their own discretion to plan out on how to encourage growth. This is a position against democracy which believes in much due process and consultation thereby not ceding authority or decision making to a tyrant, a leader or minority. Clarification has also been made on how ordinary Africans fought mightily in their own way, made their dissatisfaction known over such dictatorial impositions arising out of international conspirators like in the case of Yahya Jahmeh of the Gambia, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and others (Ong'aya, 2008). This means that western countries have in different ways been contributors to the problems of Africans in relation to political instability.

3. Manifestations of Agitations for Self-Determination around the World

Different countries of the world have experienced agitation for self-determination which took different dimensions depending on what they fought for. Within the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Kosovo was a self-governing state within the Republic of Serbia. Borgen (2008) reported that, in 1989, the autonomy of Kosovo was ended by Slobodan Milosevic. The situation in Yugoslavia was that of power tussle between the powerful and the less powerful.

Borgen in an analysis of Kosovo reported how Kosovar Albanians sought and restored autonomy for Kosovo throughout the period of 1990 and how the Serbian government put in place military actions in the state in 1998 resulting in activities spreading to different places. It is worthy of note that countries have all means available to them to decide on peaceful resolutions without external intervention. The situation with Kosovo and the fight for self-determination coupled with the breakup of Yugoslavia, the UN handling of Kosovo, made the Kosovo case a special one. This is, however, not common in other countries that have issues of self-determination.

In the case of Catalonia, the struggle for self-determination has also been visible as is seen in Biafra, Eritrea, Somaliland, and others. As reported by BBC News (2017), assessment of all the regions in Spain has stood Catalonia out as being at the top in terms of wealth coupled with its 16% addition to the national population and responsible for 19% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Spain but the Catalans are of the opinion that the central government has exploited them by taking more from it and giving back less to them. The bitterness of having their independence wished away coupled with many years they have experienced recession and reduction in public spending led the Catalans to go to the polls to decide with a vote on their independence. Organizers say 90% backed independence, but the Spanish leadership declared the votes as illegal (BBC News, 2017). An apology has been sent out to the Catalans by the representative of the Spanish government as a result of lots of injuries sustained by members as the police tried to put an end to the voting (BBC News, 2017). The Catalan parliament then openly made a declaration of their independence and this was met with Madrid suspending the independence of the Catalans, removing their government and forcing on them a direct rule. In this case, Catalans in their struggle for self-determination lost the autonomy they had enjoyed over the years such as controlling their own education, banking system, and others to the central government. In Madrid, the Catalans in their struggle for self-determination have also raised a situation of political instability in their land.

Sharkey (2016) has reported on the plan of Bougainville determination to conduct a referendum before the year 2020 in their fight for self-determination. This has become a focal point as the whole world is watching to see the outcome. It must be noted that Bougainville has suffered violent secession, imperialist invasion and suppression. Every agitation has their background factor and this has been explained in the case of Bougainville. It was through fierce fighting that Japan was able to occupy Bougainville in the Second World War (cited in Sharkey, 2016). Self-determination is the desire of every country that feels they are being held down by another.

The United Nations have gone ahead to sponsor a 'Popular Consultation' on August 30, 1999, where East Timor voted to thrash the Indonesian autonomy offer supervised by the United Nations as part of the change to an independent state (Drew, 2001). Indonesia was under pressure to leave East Timor as a result of which on October 15, 1999, a repeal on their unpopular law of July 1976 which annexed East Timor was done by the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (IPCA) (Drew, 2001). This situation undoubtedly brought in place a good foundation for the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to fully take charge of East Timor. Copenhill (2000) submitted that there has been a huge success in security improvement in East Timor and that INTERFET peacekeepers possessed strong control of all parts of territory with the extinction of fear of insecurity. Copenhill (2000) also reported that the refugee camp of Indonesia at one time had about 150,000 East Timorese in a very dehumanizing condition in militia-controlled camps.

Differences in the historical nature of political struggle have continued to characterize global politics. In the case of Puerto Rico, the Americans took them over from Spain in 1898 and granted all of them US citizenship in 1917, thereby solidifying the complex position of the Island (Tihanyi, 2015). Similar to numerous events in other islands, the Indigenous People of Puerto Rico were nearly brought to extinction at the time they were conquered by Spain and the people that resided on the Island in contemporary times do not have in existence the rightful inheritors (Rasmussen, 2010). In other words, the present people have no link with the previous indigenous natives but are made up of a combination of descendants of the European settlers and those Africans that were brought in through slavery.

Many of the agitators for self-determination are external, while some are internal. A good example of internal self-determination is that of Chiapas, Mexico. In Chiapas, Mexico, the *Ejercito*

Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional, EZLN, launched its campaign from the Lacandon jungle in 1994, attracting the attention to the battle faced by the totality of the indigenous people of Mexico. According to Karklins (n.d.), the Zapatistas are encouraged by their love for their culture to keep their own native ways of organization, grassroots governance of the economy which needed quick attention with the high level of intrusion of world economy into different parts of Chiapas and in addition, the coming into place of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

4. Agitations for Self-Determination and the Responses of the Federal Government in Nigeria

In modern Nigeria, threat for secession is not new, different groups in the country have fought in different ways as they continue to struggle for self-determination. This is supported by Akanji (2012) when he argued that some ethnic militias such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and others alike from the period of the late 1990s have put in place ethnic and sub-ethnic militant groups in the political landscape of Nigeria. Asaji and Egberi (2015) align with the statement when they argue that rivalry exists among different groups with regard to sharing of what he called 'national cake', which is another way of saying illicit public wealth to the detriment of the people.

The threats to withdraw from the Nigerian government cannot be said to be new in Nigerian politics. Apart from pro-Biafran agitators, the threat has come from the Northerners and South-Westerners to secede. Secession has indeed been a powerful instrument used in political negotiation in Nigeria particularly between the period 1950 and 1964 (Aremu & Buhari 2017). Different groups believe their presence in the Nigerian political system is valued both politically and economically thereby with high hope of achieving their set objectives. Ayoade (2010, n. p.) confirms this position, joining with it that, "the Northern Region, considered "big, strong and reliable", had issued an "Eight-Point Programme" threatening withdrawal in 1953. Similarly, the West had also threatened to withdraw in 1953 on the state of Lagos" (Aremu, & Buhari, 2017, p. 7).

Another example of a secessionist group is that of the Ijaw led by Isaac Adaka Boro who mobilized a sizeable number of his Ijaw people to wage war against the Nigerian government under the leadership of Late General Aguiyi Ironsi in 1960. As stated by Chronicles (2017), Isaac Adaka Boro's major reason was to establish a republic that was independent for his Ijaw people of the Niger Delta but was not as lucky as his soldiers met with defeat and Boro together with his lieutenants faced trial for treason and were convicted. It is the outcome of fear of not getting one's fair share or one's desire where one is entitled to enjoy some privileges in society that sometimes leads to such agitations and rebellions. The root cause of the crisis in Nigeria is the issue of discrimination and this is not unconnected with the resources that exist in the localities. There have been concerted efforts to remove existing fear of discrimination through the introduction of certain policies such as:

- The introduction of unity schools and Federal Government secondary schools ----1966
- Abolition of regional structures and the creation of states ---- 1967
- The introduction of the National Youth Services Corps (NYSC) ----- 1973
- The subdivision of the country or the old southern and northern divide into six geopolitical zones ----- 1993
- The establishment of the Federal Character Commission (FCC) ---- 1995
- The introduction of the principle of 'Rotational Presidency' or power shift ---- 1997 (Malachy, 2012, p.18)

All these policies stated above are good only when properly implemented. It is the nature of differences inherent in the Nigerian political system that has made crisis and agitations unavoidable. In support of this argument, Obasanjo (1989) noted that multi-ethnicity and multilingualism are not only applicable to Nigeria but can be found in different parts of the world. He referred to ethnic differences as very natural to man as having limbs are natural to mankind. In other words, ethnicity should not be blamed for all problems of differences and backwardness that go with it since Nigeria is not the only country with such a feature. In the same vein, "the unity of

Nigeria has been equated with a Catholic marriage where it is assumed that the partners may not be happy, but cannot break up" (Enojo, 2016, p. 64). In this regard, the continuous stay of different groups in Nigeria seems to be against their will.

The Nigerian constitution has posited the indivisibility of the country despite the differences in existence. Azikiwe (1964) argues that there is nothing wrong with tribalism since it can be used to set up national unity. He supported the view that tribalism is found everywhere and that it is natural and normal giving the importance of working together and keeping the people's identity as it will develop into a new community (Nwoko, 1988). It is also believed by some scholars that the government of a country can design any means available to it to ensure unity. In the statement of Olsthoorn and Simpson (1993, p. 29) "Kill the tribe to build a nation" was the motto of the rulers and intellectuals in almost all African countries.

Nigeria is not alone in this ugly situation of disunity and agitations. In the submission of Roskin (1989), he made it known that Britain that is seen as a well-integrated country had a bloody war in and with Northern Ireland. He pointed out places such as France, Spain, Canada, and Yugoslavia as countries where regional problems have come to the fore. In the tackling these problems, the government should never abandon its responsibilities as it relates to national development. In the submission made by Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016), the Nigerian government has adopted the use of security agencies such as the police as the best way of tackling the agitating IPOB coupled with high level use of coercion and repression. Responses of any government towards a group can make or mar the stability of such a state. The implications range from embarrassment meted out to Nigerian citizens by IPOB groups abroad, such as that of the former Imo State Governor, Rochas Okorocha at Catham house in London. Abonyi (2016) revealed that Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State had travelled to London to deliver a lecture on human development but could not achieve that as circumstances he met on ground made him to deliver Biafra agitations to the world and make it go viral while his planned lecture was never heard of. The drama that ensued between the governor and the IPOB group in London became embarrassing for the governor in particular and Nigeria specifically.

Similarly, another incident is worth buttressing here. As a form of heating up the polity and creating instability, a partisan group in support of President Muhammadu Buhari, under the aegis of the Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG), raised a false alarm that the embattled leader of the proscribed indigenous people of Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu, had mobilized Nigerians living in the country to attack the president when he visited the United States to speak at the United Nations General Assembly. Daniel (2017, p.1) captures the inciting saga as follows:

In the mail signed by the spokesman for the CNG, Abdul-Azeez Suleiman, the northern leaders said that the action was also intended to further provoke the northerners and incite the world against the Nigerian leader and his government. But the northern group vowed to make appropriate response to the IPOB provocation by taking its position against the antic of the proscribed organization to the UN. The northern group however hailed the south-east governors for proscribing IPOB once it was declared a terrorist group by the Defense Headquarters (Daniel, 2017:1).

In this line, it has become clear that agitations and embarrassment of Nigerian politicians abroad can be provocative for another tribe or group of people having a different interest to protect. In the same direction was the recent attack on the former deputy senate president, Senator Ike Ekweremadu in Germany as he attended the second annual cultural festival and convention put together by the Igbos in Germany (Akelicious, 2019). IPOB gave reasons for the attack on the former senate president, in a statement issued by the IPOB publicity secretary, "Today being the 17th day of August 2019, the Nuremberg IPOB family in Germany in keeping with the directive from our leader to hound all instigators of Operation Python Dance, is glad to report that Ike Ekweremadu was confronted and duly hounded out of a so-called new yam festival event in Germany" (Akelicious, 2019, p.2). These are all implications of the different ways the Nigerian government has handled the agitations of the IPOB.

Such situations and implications of government responses towards IPOB agitations are identified in the table below:

Table 1: Compilation of Some Media Reports on Killings/Responses towards IPOB Members

S/N	Source(s) of Information	Location of Incidents/issues	Description of Incident/Issue
1	National Ambassador, 22 May, 2018	Abia State	IPOB: Blood Spills as Police Stab and Arrest Jewish Worshippers in Abia
2	This Day, 22 September, 2018	Awka	IPOB Representatives Meet UN over Killing of Members
3	Vanguard, Tuesday, 19 January, 2016	Aba, Abia State	A joint team of police and the army killed 8 people and injured about 30 others during a protest for the release of Nnamdi Kanu
4	Vanguard Wednesday, 1 June, 2016	Abuja	Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu, condemned the killing of pro-Biafra protesters by security agents and called on the Senate to treat the issue under matter of urgent national importance
5	The Guardian, Friday, 18 December, 2015	Onitsha, Anambra State	Soldiers allegedly killed five IPOB members and injured 30 others celebrating purported news of the release of IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu

Source: Field Survey (2018)

Countries in most cases do not solely bear the consequences of their instability. The existence of struggle and eventual war in any country has a great tendency of affecting in different ways other countries that are closer to it. The presence of war in Yemen has been a damaging one for the interests of the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the Yemeni people. It has lighted a humanitarian tragedy known all over the world. This situation has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the number at the risk of starvation is put at 14 million (Feltman, 2018). However, the situation in Yemen cannot be likened to that of Chechnya.

Differences in the evolution of people do always determine how their struggle for self-determination will go. The crisis in Chechnya is a representation of ever-rising problems for the global community at the time terrorist acts existed across nations and the desire to keep the state away from collapsing (Kasymov, 2010). The Chechens have gone through historical sufferings of torture in the hands of the Russians and are never ready to give in to the authority of the Russian government. Kasymov (2010) reported that Russia's continuous deployment of its forces to stop the activities leading to independence is highly pronounced only in Chechnya and a better solution has not appeared that will reduce casualties.

Aceh for a long time has agitated for self-determination from Indonesia. Aceh has lasted under the Indonesian government for half a century period with a long period of human rights abuse by the Indonesian government (Global Non-violent Action Base, 2001). A lot of killings of the Aceh people were recorded in their struggle for self-determination; deaths of sixty people and 150 with wounds in the village of Pulo Rungkom, in May 1999, and a number of people ranging from 53 and 72 in July who lost their lives in Beutong, at a primary school that belongs to the Muslims (Global Non-violent Action Base, 2001).

The People of Barotseland have also been involved in the struggle for self-determination. A notable thing about the Barotseland is their cultural features which have lasted under the British Protectorate and the non-recognition of the regime of Kaunda (Englebert & College, n.d). As a result of the Barotseland's commitment to their land and culture, the traditionalists always threw their weight behind the struggle for self-determination. All the demands of Barotseland people are efforts towards their being determined to be able to handle what concerns them without external intervention. Those fighting for the breakaway of Barotseland to become its own state created a scene that has made Barotseland a shadow of its freedom in the time before the colonial rule and half autonomy after colonial rule (Nwanna, 2017).

In different countries of the world, agitations for self-determination have been movements on thorns. In other words, it has never been easy for any group. Those that have achieved self-determination never achieved it on a platter of gold. The struggles were characterized by a level of

political instability which may have played a positive or negative effect towards the achievement of freedom.

5. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts group theory as its analytical framework. The choice of the theory is based on its identification of the importance of groups in society. The group theory is associated with scholars, namely, Bentley (1908); Truman (1951); Smith (1964); Lande (1973); Garson (1974); Varma (1975); Jordan (1999); and more recently the works of LaVaque-Manty (2006) and Duruji (2010) in their studies of different groups within a political system. One of the major assumptions of group theory which was from Truman (1951) is that a good feature of a group is their sharing of behaviors and desires on the ground of which demands are made on the government and other groups present in society towards putting in place, taking care of and improving the values of their desires (Onah, 2010).

Another major assumption of group theory is that stability in the society is maintained by the balance of group pressures and the adjustment of government operations (Varma, 1975). This indicates the great role the government is expected to play towards the maintenance of law and order through the shaping of activities of the different groups existing in the political system. This assumption also implies that the success of any government is determined by the way and manner it was able to handle the existence and operations of the groups within the political system. This assumption is very relevant to this study and the achievement of set goals by the different groups coupled with the response of government towards the agitations of self-determination.

The different groups in the society also have their interrelationship with other groups with the major aim of achieving their set objectives. The group theory has stressed the importance of the group in the society. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a group that has been made possible due to the coming together of different individuals that have interests in the objectives of IPOB. These individuals that made up IPOB shared attitudes on the ground of which they agitate for self-determination from the Nigerian government. IPOB has its way of operating as the group theory has stated about every group.

In the Nigerian political system, IPOB is a group that exists among the complexity of other groups as Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Fulani herders, Boko Haram, Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and other groups that exist within the political system. As a group, IPOB struggles to achieve its set objectives (realization of self-determination). Group theorists did not leave out the importance of government and its policies. The Nigerian government with the application of its policies also engages in mediation between different groups that exist within its political system and ensures the existence of peace and security of lives and property.

The stability that is visible in Nigeria highly depends on the balance of pressures that may emanate from those complex groups as stated. Varma (1975, p.162) ratified the assertion when he stated that "these groups are in a state of unceasingly doing things together and in their politics, there is evidence of men bypassing other men by their behaviour in different ways... the dispersal of one grouping of sources by one grouping". It also shows that one group may work towards being more powerful and outstanding than the other groups. This attitude exists between pro-Biafran groups such as IPOB and MASSOB including some splinter groups that have come out of the existing ones viz. Biafra Independent Movement (BIM), and Biafran Zionist Movement (BZM). This is visible among the groups even when they have a common objective as the achievement of self-determination.

Soeters (2005) submitted that most times it may be impossible for the existing central power to control a group and that becomes a problem for the state. On the other hand, the uncivilized manner of tackling groups may emerge due to the situation that may demand such action. This situation, therefore, signifies the inability of the government to mediate between groups thereby creating a wide room for political instability that will never do any good to the political system of any country.

6. Methodology

This study applied a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. This is justified by the fact that the measurement of the independent (self-determination) and dependent (political stability) was taken at approximately the same time without any intention of controlling or manipulating the variables under the study (McNabb, 2012). The population of this study comprises of IPOB's members in the selected areas of study which are: Mbaize Independent Unit (Imo State), Owuwanwu unit Fegge, Onitsha (Anambra State), Ogoni Mobilisation Unit (Rivers State), Ikot Ekiriba Unit Akpabuyo (Cross Rivers State), Favour Unit Igbanke (Edo State), Apapa Unit 1 (Lagos), and Gariki (Abuja). The rationale for choosing these areas of study was based on the assessment of the intensity of IPOB's operations in the areas.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of three hundred and eighty five (385) copies of questionnaire were randomly administered to the members of the indigenous people of Biafra in Nigeria and Diaspora. Three hundred and seventy six (376) copies of the questionnaire were retrieved and found suitable for analysis, which amounted to 97.7% response rate. The descriptive statistics of the items are demonstrated in Figure 1 and Table 2.

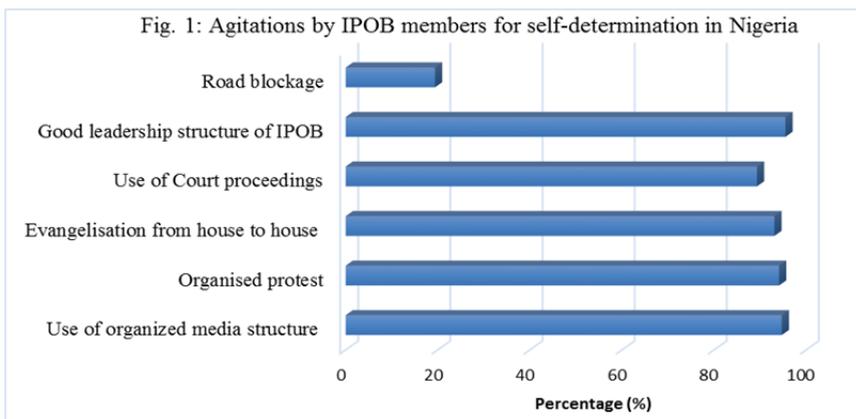


Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Showing Government Responses to the Agitations for Self-Determination by IPOB in Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Killing of IPOB members	254 (67.6%)	85 (22.6%)	28 (7.4%)	9 (2.4%)	376 (100%)	3.553	.7356	1
2	Support referendum	106 (28.2%)	77 (20.5%)	43 (11.4%)	150 (39.9%)	376 (100%)	2.369	1.2645	4
3	Arrest and imprisonment of IPOB members	240 (63.8%)	110 (29.3%)	11 (2.9%)	15 (4.0%)	376 (100%)	3.529	.7405	2
4	Respect for human rights of IPOB members	70 (18.6%)	110 (29.3%)	24 (6.4%)	172 (45.7%)	376 (100%)	2.207	1.2064	5
5	Nigerian Government call for negotiation with IPOB members	34 (9.0%)	31 (8.2%)	79 (21%)	232 (61.7%)	376 (100%)	1.646	.9687	6
6	Harassment of IPOB members by Nigerian security forces	235 (62.5%)	114 (30.3%)	11 (2.9%)	16 (4.3%)	376 (100%)	3.510	.7518	3
Average Mean Score							2.802		

Table 2 revealed government responses to the agitations for self-determination by IPOB in Nigeria.

Respondents from different states/countries affirmed most of the items. Specifically, respondents across the selected locations claimed that the killing of IPOB members (average mean value of 3.553); arrest and imprisonment (average mean value of 3.529); and harassment of IPOB members by Nigerian security forces (average mean value of 3.510) were the responses of government to the agitations for self-determination by IPOB in Nigeria. Astoundingly, most of the respondents disagreed that Support for referendum (average mean value of 2.369); respect for human rights of IPOB members (average mean value of 2.207); Nigerian government’s call for negotiation with IPOB members (average mean value of 1.646) as responses of government. By implication, this study has shown a high-level of negative response of the Nigeria government towards IPOB agitators. Government’s response consequently cannot aid political stability in Nigeria.

To identify whether or not there is a relationship, and to examine the degree of the relationship between agitation for self-determination and government responsiveness, the use of the Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was adopted. Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient has been credited with establishing an index of the relationship between two variables. The correlation analysis is represented by the symbol r and it reflects the degree of the linear relationship between two variables. On implications, the responses of government specifically on the issues of development projects and inclusivity in governance will determine how much support IPOB and the Biafra movement will have going forward in agitations. Therefore, the government needs to develop institutional and structural policies that will take cognizance of the underlying factors driving the agitation for Biafra and make concrete moves to address such grievances.

7.1 Decision Rule

Using the guide that Evans (1996) suggests for the absolute value of r :

.00-.19 - “very weak”; .20-.39 – “weak” , .40-.59 – “moderate”, .60-.79 – “strong”, .80-1.0 – “very strong”.

H_0 : Agitation for self-determination has no significant relationship with government responsiveness.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix of Agitation for Self-Determination and Federal Government Responsiveness in Nigeria

Correlations			
		Agitation for Self-Determination	Government Responsiveness
Agitation for Self-Determination	Spearman Rank (r)	1	.603
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.006
	N		376
Government Responsiveness	Spearman Rank (r)	.603	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	
	N	376	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Source: Field Survey (2018)

In table 3 above, the relationship between agitation for self-determination and government responsiveness was investigated using Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables (agitation for self-determination and government responsiveness). This means that an increase in the agitation for self-determination has led to an increase in government’s responsiveness in Nigeria.

The findings corroborate the work of Ibeanu et al. (2016) which had concluded that the Nigerian government had adopted the use of security agencies such as police as the best way of tackling the agitating IPOB members with the use of stringent coercion and repression. From the

interview, it was observed that the government's way of handling the Biafra separatist movement has concentrated majorly on the actions of the police, and in many occasions comprising of excessive use of force. This point is reflected clearly in the views of the majority of our survey respondents who were asked to state the ways that the government has currently responded to Biafra's agitations.

On the contrary, the police also have a position that the group IPOB is sometimes violent and are also killing their members on duty. The position of the Police aligned with the statement of the Acting Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Delta, SP Charles Muka as reported by Mamah, et al (2016, p.1):

The protesters became violent fought the security men sent to watch the protest, ended the lives of two and caused injuries on two. We decided to send our men to ensure a violent-free protest, but it came as a surprise that the people still turned violent. It was surprising that our men were fought at Okwe Junction in Abraka area of Asaba, the group murdered a police Corporal and took away his AK47 rifle.

In a similar reaction by the Anambra State government, the commissioner for information and communications strategy, Ogbuefi Tony Nnacheta announced, as reported by Ujumadu (2016), that it had been brought to the attention of the government that the illegal demonstration of IPOB group had caused panic at Nkpor/Onitsha area of the state but however believed that the police were on top of the situation. The Police (2018) in order to maintain law and order insists that any rally or gathering that does not obtain police permit is already an unlawful one because anything can emerge out of it. The police and other security agents make serious efforts to disperse any of such gatherings. In affirmation, the police (2018) during an interview was asked about the response of the government towards the agitating group-IPOB; their response was: "Remember the security agencies are working for the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government has made its stand on IPOB group known. They are a terrorist group according to the government. There is no terrorist group that needs tender care. They should be tackled bumper to bumper and matched force with force."

A Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Barrister Seyi Sowemimo argues that:

I have some difficulty in classifying them as a terrorist organisation because you could also call this a political struggle, although it's not supposed to be an armed struggle. There is a tinge of criminal offence associated with it. Those that have committed offences and are members of IPOB should be charged to court under the appropriate law but classifying the organisation as a terrorist one is not helpful. (Sunnews, 2017, p. 1).

In an opinion piece, Fisayo Soyombo (2017, p.1) argues that "how on earth can IPOB members be terrorists when notorious killers, the herdsmen, have no such designation? We are talking about a group that was named in 2015 by the Global Terrorism Index as the fourth deadliest terror group in the world.

Only Boko Haram, ISIS, and al-Shabab were deemed deadlier than this nomadic group of militants". Not yet done, the essayist said, "If IPOB members are terrorists, what do we say of the militants in the Delta, particularly the Niger Delta Avengers, who actually did terrorize Nigeria by freely bombing oil installations, consequently plummeting oil production capacity, which in turn lowered the country's crude oil earnings.

Reports showed that there has not been a direct negotiation between the IPOB group and the government. Ibeh (2018) submitted that any negotiation may have been an indirect one. Coupled with these government negative responses to agitations are other areas of marginalization that have also raised the tempo of agitations. Adekunle (2017, p. 1) argues that the responses of the Nigerian government to Biafra have been disappointing:

Nobody from the South East (Igbo) was reportedly considered for an appointment even as a gatekeeper was appointed in these tranches of appointments. This is the first time nobody from the South-east geopolitical zone is represented in the National Security meeting. In as much as the

state of origin should not matter where productivity is prioritized, however, in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria, where national appointments are considered the rights to enjoying "national cake", sidelining any section in key appointment is often a subject of unhealthy misinterpretations. It cannot be logically and justifiably explained or proved that there are no qualified and capable individuals from the Igbo group who can handle national assignments. More so, naturally, there seems to be an aspect of human instinct that reacts against perceived and proven injustice.

Similarly, Kumolu, et al. (2017, p.1) account the outrage that spread in some parts of the country over lopsided recruitment and appointment into strategic political positions. According to Nwachukwu (2017), Prof. Pat Utomi argues that,

Biafra is a metaphor for a discontent writ from many Nigerians. The people in the North-East are Biafrans because they are unhappy with Nigeria. Many people in the North-Central are Biafrans because they are unhappy due to herdsman destruction. Many in the South-South are Biafrans because they are unhappy with Nigeria and across Nigeria, there is general democratization of discontent among the majority of the people.

One of the reasons why the agitations for Biafra have been ongoing is because Nigerian leaders and their followers have never learnt from their mistakes. Scholars of Nigerian politics have tended to focus on ethnicity and inter-ethnic competition for federal power to explain why agitation for Biafra tends to recur. The main argument of this perspective is that Biafra agitation is a political expression of the economic frustrations of young people. These frustrations are, however, perceived by these agitators as resulting from the marginalization of the South-East in national economic life.

8. Conclusion

The freedom of expression under the democratic government which came back in 1999 gave room for the group such as IPOB to freely express their opinion and tender their dissatisfaction with the government in power. It can be concluded that the current agitation for Biafra by IPOB has led to different levels of human rights abuse by the Nigerian security agents as they try to maintain law and order. This study has depicted the negative response of the Nigerian government towards the IPOB agitators. Government's response, as the study shows cannot improve or sustain the political stability in the country. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables (agitation for self-determination and government responsiveness). This means that an increase in the agitation for self-determination has led to an increase in government responsiveness in Nigeria.

This study, therefore, recommends that sincere and objective policy changes starting from the federal level and extending to the states will go a long way in restoring citizens' confidence in the Nigerian state, reducing the level of agitations and improving the climate of political stability. The study also recommends that a Peace and Reconciliation Commission needs to be put in place by the Nigerian government to engage with pro-Biafra groups in an effort to fashion out the best ways towards resolving the agitation for Biafra. The Commission should also undertake consultations with state governments and other relevant stakeholders with a view to encouraging them to buy into the peace initiative and identify the specific roles they would play in the reconciliation process. The core objectives of the Commission should include:

- To provide a platform for pro-Biafra groups to express their grievances, and for the government to channel them to the appropriate quarters for redress.
- To develop a compendium of quick intervention measures by different actors including federal, state, and local governments, to address the grievances underlying the agitation for Biafra.
- To formulate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating how measures of redress will be recommended and implemented.

Secondly, the Nigerian Federal Government should retract the use of force and repression in tackling IPOB agitations but instead embrace peaceful resolution. The Nigerian government also needs to carry out a re-orientation of its security agencies to curtail any form of indiscriminate use of arms, while promoting respect for human rights as they work to maintain law and order.

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