

A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE BIAFRAN AGITATIONS AND THE QUESTIONS OF NIGERIAN AMALGAMATION IN 1914

Amanambu, Uchenna Ebony, Ph.D

Methodist Church Nigeria, Umuobiala, Isuikwuato L.G.A Abia State

Email: ebonyuchem@gmail.com

Abstract

Historically, at the arrival of the European colonials, many African tribes were forcefully conscripted to form most of the present states. After much pressure, they gained independence from the colonial masters but these colonies inherited the same mentality, arrangements and system from their old colonial masters. Virtually all the boundaries of these colonies were superimposed on the land with little or no regard for the culturally coherent groups of people. Nigeria founded in 1914 by the colonialists is a good example of the loose correspondence between nation and state that exist in Africa today. Just as it is in the cases of Middle East, Turkey, Iraq and Iran which are homes to Kurdish tribe who are now minority in each of these countries. The Kurdish has made repeated attempts to break away from each of these countries to form their own original unified states. The striking features of these former colonies have been unhealthy mismatches of statehood and nationhood. Some of the handy terms from these groups are "Resource Control, marginalization, secession and Restructuring". Nigeria is almost at a cross road because of how to build a national cohesion. This is because in addition to the avoidable but self inflicted Nigerian-Biafran war, the current fearful and fierce agitations for the independent Biafra, many leaders and other tribes have risen to question the rationale of the amalgamation and existence of the country as one.

Keywords: Biafra, Agitation, Amalgamation, Nigeria, Igbo.

Introduction

Arguably, there are two issues that have dominated public discourse in Nigeria lately. They are the performance of the current administration vis-à-vis their 2014/2015 campaign promises especially the horrible economic situation and the controversies surrounding Biafra and the Nigerian state. The later has been very sensational and forceful. The Nigerian state where all these quagmires are raging came into being by the British amalgamation agenda of 1914 according to Akani (1999) has over five hundred and ten (510) languages and dialects are spoken within its borders of Nigeria (p.61). There is also an important religious, split, as

the north is primarily Muslim and the south primarily Christian. Until 1960, Nigeria was a British colony and like most colonies, it was not basically constructed for internal coherence but rather for the administrative and economic convenience of the British. Apart from the Nigerian Biafran war between 1967 and 1970, the pressure and movements of Biafra secession have gathered ferocious momentum especially in recent time. While some believe it is achievable, others term it “politics” and many others believe it is part of Nigerian deficient social structure. There have been series of arguments as to whether the Biafran movements and agitations are legal. Obviously, the Federal Republic of Nigerian 1999 Constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981, the Common Wealth of Nations Declaration on Democracy, Human Rights and Good Governance of 1990, United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights of 1945 and her other humanitarian laws make provisions for the engagement and actualization of self determination so long as the principles of non-violence are strictly maintained. Whatever the case, the latest movements and agitations for the independent of Biafra state out of Nigerian state has not been in the interest of Nigeria either.

Clarification of Some Terms

Critical means making a careful judgment about the good and bad qualities of something or somebody. *Reflection* is the act of casting one's mind back so as to give a careful thought and consideration on something. *Biafra*-is a republic founded in the eastern Nigeria which existed from 30th May, 1967 to January, 1970. *Agitations*-the plural form of “agitation” means a situation in which people protest or argue especially in public with the aim of achieving a particular goal. *Questions*-the plural of the term “question” have many entries but here it implies a subject or point for debate, dispute, controversy or a problem for discussion, under discussion and a matter for investigation. *Amalgamation* is the combination of one or more companies to form a larger entity

In the context of this study, a Critical Reflection on the Biafran Agitations and the Questions of Amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 means unbiased analyses of why there have been incessant demands by the Igbo tribe to pull out from the merger of 1914 which metamorphosed into the present day Nigerian state. Adopting the theory that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere as propounded Martin Luther king Jr, this study is enthused by the fact that the unification has been directly and indirectly blamed for almost all the instabilities in the country including the irrepressible movements and agitations for the secession of

Biafrans from the 1914 merger of other entities that formed the present day Nigeria.

Highlights on the Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Post Colonial

Nigerian Politics

Abiola (1984) states that between the eleventh century and the European colonial conquest in the nineteenth century, the area known as Nigeria today was homes of sophisticated kingdoms and societies (p.153). The meaning of a kingdom is the existence of a king and without a king, there will be no kingdom. Adigwe (1979) said that the Sokoto Caliphate was conquered in 1903 and after the conquests the British were able to create the Northern Nigerian protectorate. In 1906, the colony of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria which included the former Niger Coast Protectorates that were hitherto administered separately were merged and became the Southern Protectorates. Lugard who had gone to Hong Kong as a Governor for six years later returned to Nigeria in 1912 and two years later, from January 1914 amalgamated both the Southern and Northern protectorates and the newly united Colony was presided over by a Proconsul, who was given the title of a Governor-General of Nigeria (p.170).

Olusanya (1999) notes that Nigeria had its first Constitution in 1922, usually regarded as the Clifford Constitution and its Committee comprised fifteen unofficial members nominated by the government, three unofficial members representing Lagos, Calabar Municipal and the East as well as thirty official members (p.544). Salmone (1991) has submitted that the Emirs settled more into their roles as reliable agents of Indirect Rule (p.55). Anyaele (1987) states that Britain agreed then to share power and responsibility with Nigerian politicians though on representative institutions only. Nigeria was granted independence on 1st October, 1960 under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary system of government. The constitution gave a substantial measure of self-government for the country's already created three regions. Abogurin (1999) affirms that the major political parties in the early Republic such as NCNC, AG and NPC had emerged in the late 1940s and early 1950s as regional parties (p.86).

However, Tanko (2003) argues that at independence, even when the departing Colonialists favoured the NPC's view above other political parties, none of them could form enough strong party to control the national government. Therefore, a coalition was adopted that produced Tafawa Belewa as the Prime Minister while Nnamdi Azikiwe became the Governor-General and later the President after the Republic in 1963 (p.6).

Meanwhile, the Military came on the scene on 15th January 1966, when Major Nzeogwu and five other majors staged a coup-d'état that claimed the lives of many people including Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Belewa, Col. Unegbe and others. Uwechue (2003) said that the coup of 1966, though, later turned sour, brought in Major General Aguiyi Ironsi as the ruler between January and June 1966. When Ironsi took over in 1966, he appointed Military Governors for the four regions. Another coup was staged by the northern soldiers in July of the same year and it claimed the life of Ironsi (pp.34-64). Ademolekun (1985) confirms that the exit of Ironsi's regime brought in General Gowon who divided the four regions into twelve States. The Eastern Region under Lt Colonel Ojukwu rejected the move (p.11).

Oyewole and Lucas (2000) note that Ojukwu's demand that the most senior Military Officer in the Army being Brigadier Ogundikpe should succeed Ironsi instead of Lt Col. Gowon was rejected by T.Y. Danjuma, Murtala Mohamed, Martin Adamu and other northern groups who carried out the mutiny. With this and other factors such as massacring of the Igbo people in the north and Gowon's inability to abide by the Aburi Accord made late General Ojukwu to declare the independence of Biafra and the Nigerian civil war ensued (p.401). Modupe (2000) states that the often mentioned Aburi Accord was held in Aburi of Accra in Ghana with the aim of averting the impending Nigerian Civil war (p.35). The war ensued with bitter and bloody ending in the defeat of Biafra in 1970. Anyaele (1987) said that Gowon's administration was knocked out of office after series of allegations such as corruption and inability to announce a realistic time for Civilian hand-over (p.301). Awosefo (2005) avers that Murtala Mohammed and his group took over the government (p.136).

Furthermore, Ademolekun (1985) said that Murtala Mohammed's regime was short lived through a bloody coup of 13th Feb.1976 while his Second in-Command General Obasanjo, completed his programme of Civilian rule that later produced Shehu Shagari as the president in 1979 (p.22). Oyewole and Lucas (2000) affirm that there were six political parties that contested for the elections during the Shehu Shagari era. In 1985, Mohammad Buhari took over the government from Shehu Shagari through a coup d'état (p.474). Awosefo (2005) states that Buhari's government was on 27th August 1985 overthrown through a bloodless coup that produced Ibrahim Babangida. He continued until in 1993, when he bowed to public pressure after the annulment of the widely-talked about June 12th 1993 election believed to have been won by late M.K.O Abiola. He inaugurated the Interim National Government headed by Shonekan and in

his word “stepped aside”. But on 17th November 1993, late General Sani Abacha forced Shonekan to resign and he took over government (pp.143-144). Abacha died in office on 8th June, 1998 (p.11).

Adamolekun (1999) confirms that Abdulsalami Abubakar, who handed over to a Civilian rule under Olusegun Obasanjo, on 29th May, 1999 took over after Abacha’s death. Therefore, the death of Abacha and the transition agenda carried out by his successor, Abdulsalami brought about the Fourth Republic (p.24). Nigeria re-attained democracy on 29th May 1999, when it elected Olusegun Obasanjo who after eight years handed over to Umar Yar'adua on 29th May, 2007. After prolonged illness, Yar'adua died on 5th May 2010. Then with the “doctrine of necessity” as propounded by the National Assembly, the Acting President, Goodluck Jonathan who acted as Vice President before then was on 6th May 2010, sworn in as the replacement for the late Yar'adua. Jonathan picked Namadi Sambo, the former Governor of Kaduna State to be his deputy until in 2015 when they vacated offices for General Mohammad Buhari (rtd) and Prof. Yemi Osinbajo respectively.

Brief History of Biafra

According to Anseth (2015), there was a Biafra before it lost its sovereignty to colonial powers. Early modern maps of Africa from the 15th-19th centuries, drawn by European cartographers from accounts written by explorers and travelers, reveal that the original word used by the European travelers was not Biafra but “Biafara”, “Biafar” and “Biafares” (p.3). Biafraland.com said that Biafra is an almost rhomboid shaped territory which is demarcated to the west by the lower reaches of the River Niger and its Delta, to the East by the Obudu plateau and the Highlands of Oban and Ikom, to the south by the Bight of Biafra and to the North by an administrative boundary following, approximately, the seven (7) deg. N. latitude. The total area is over twenty nine thousand four hundred (29,400) square miles (p.34). The Biafran State was officially recognized by Gabon, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Zambia. Other nations which did not make formal their recognition but provided support and assistance to Biafra includes Israel, France, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Rhodesia, South Africa and the Vatican City.

Some of the Metamorphoses of 1966 Biafran Struggle

The struggle for the state of Biafra which many people hoped to have ended courtesy of the Nigeria Biafran war has given birth to at least three known movements that have continued with the ideals and vision of the struggles. Even

though their approaches differ, the mission remains the same. These movements include Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Nnanna (2015) said that Barrister Ralph Uwazuruike led the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) which popped up in the middle 1990s and declared a non-violent agitation. MASSOB mustered the youths, held rallies and planted the Biafran flag, often getting into serious odds with the police and other security agencies. In 2012, another activist, Barrister Ben Onwuka, came up with his Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) and staged an abortive invasion of the Enugu State Government House, the symbolic "Biafran seat of power" (p.3). Kanu's incendiary broadcasts gave flesh to IPOB which is the acronym for the Indigenous People of Biafra. The movement has succeeded in mobilizing millions of Igbo youths worldwide who have been protesting the peace of Nigerian embassies and officials around the world. The routine demonstrations and protests, which started long before his arrest got me worried for several reasons. All these movements claim to be the original inhabitants and rightful owners of the lands and communities of the southeast, some parts of south-south and middle belt Nigeria.

Biafra and the Questions of Nigerian 1914 Amalgamation

The issue surrounding the Nigerian amalgamation has remained a controversy in Nigeria. It has received more of negative appraisals than positive ones. For example, Paden (1986) avers that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe once said to Sir Ahmadu Bello, "Let us forget our differences"... But Bello responded, "No, let us understand our differences. I am a Muslim and a Northerner. You are a Christian, an Easterner"(pp.66-98). In the same way, Amanambu (2012) succinctly samples some of the perceptions of Nigerians rulers about the 1914 amalgamation thus, Chief Obafemi Awolowo said, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression" In 1948, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stated in the Legislative Council, "Since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite...Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country." Sir Ahmadu Bello described the amalgamation of the Northern and the Southern Provinces as "The mistake of 1914." In his Maiden Broadcast as Head of State on 1st August, 1966 General Yakubu Gowon did say, "The basis of unity is not there". One time Vice-

President of Nigeria, Alex Ekwueme states, "Ours is hardly a Federation except in name" (pp.122-123).

Similarly, Richard Akinjide, former Nigerian Attorney General and Minister of Justice in Akinnola (2000) said that Nigeria is a very complex country whose problems started in 1894 when Lord Lugard arrived. Major Lugard was not originally employed by the British government but he was employed by companies. He was first employed by East Indian Company, the Royal East African Company and then the Royal Niger Company. It was from the Royal Niger Company that he transferred to the British government (p.2). Fafowora (2013) confirms that Britain was not looking for new colonies or territories in West Africa but was preoccupied with the penchant for trade and free markets (p.13).

Ishiekwenesep (2011) quotes Richard Akinjide as having argued that unless people know the background of the amalgamation, people will not know the root causes of Nigerian problems. According to him, in 1898, Lugard formed the West African Frontier Force initially with two thousand soldiers and about ninety (90) percent of them were drawn from the North and that was the beginning of Nigerian problems. It led all the coups and counter-coups in Nigeria. In some of his dispatches to London, Lugard said a number of things which are the root causes of yesterday and today's Nigerian problems. The amalgamation of the South without necessarily the people became crucially important to British business interests. They needed a Railway from the North to the Coast in the interest of their business. Lugard said that the North was poor, they had no resources to run the protectorate of the North, had no access to the sea and that the South had resources and educated people. Therefore, because it was not the policy of the British Government to bring the tax-payers money to run the protectorate rather it was in the interest of the British tax payers that there should be the amalgamation. What the British amalgamated was the administration of the North and South. "In fact, the so-called Nigeria created in 1914 was a complete fraud". It was created not in the interest of Nigeria or Nigerians but in the interest of the British. The structures created were as follows: Northern Nigeria was to represent England, Western Nigeria like Wales while Eastern Nigeria was to be like Scotland. In the British structure, England has permanent majority in the House of Commons. There is no way Wales can ever dominate England neither can Scotland dominate Britain. But they are very shrewd to the point that they may allow a Scot to become a Prime Minister and they can allow a Welsh to become Prime Minister in London but the fact remains

that the actual power is rested in England. Thus, Lugard created a kind of Nigeria where a permanent majority goes to the North. The population figure at that time was so fraudulent that a British Colonial Civil Servant who was involved in the fraud tried to expose it but he was never allowed to publish it (pp.9-11).

The stand of Biafra on the theory of Nigerian amalgamation may not be different from the rest of many other Nigerians. Apart from those milking from the national patrimony many have questioned the rationale behind the amalgamation. Beside other factors as enumerated earlier, Laccino (2015) avers that Biafra movements have declared the expiration of a so-called "amalgamation contract". They cited the time fractured as one of their reasons to justify their position. According to them, the amalgamation contract must within one hundred years.

In view of the above, there are many causative factors that negatively authenticate the expiration of that document and propel the Biafran agitators.

The Metonymy and the Extant Causes of the Biafran Agitations

The Faultiness and Deceptive Motives of the Unification: The foundation for the unification was deceptive and thus created imbalance among the people. Whenever a process of building any long lasting venture is faulty and fraudulent, with time the result will be questionable. The British interest in the unification was purely to enlarge their commercial and political horizons. The people including the Biafrans have risen to question it. Onumah (2015) believes that those who view the Biafran agitation and rampaging Fulani herdsmen killers as an Igbo and Fulani problems respectively are not well informed or subjective (p.5). In other words, all the ugly tides in Nigeria are the products of faulty establishments carried over by faulty leadership.

Structured Suppression, Injustice, Hatred, Insecurity and Desire for Survival: Arguably, the British planted the seed for the persecution and marginalization of the Igbo race. Hence, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe in a speech at the meeting of the Igbo State Assembly (ISA) in Aba, in present day Abia State on Saturday, 25th June, 1949, lamented the social, economic and political persecution which the Igbo tribe had been subjected to. Similarly, General Effiong the man who surrendered Biafra to Nigeria remarked,

"Throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self defense where peaceful negotiation (sic) have failed. We are no exception.

We took up arms because of the sense of insecurity generated in our people by the events of 1966. We have fought in defense of that cause”.

The most brazen injustice against Igbo tribe was that sinister and cold-blooded murder of her Sons and daughters by the Nigerian state for no justifiable reason. The pogroms against them include, Jos 1945 massacre, Kano 1953 and 1966 pogrom and 1967-1970 Igbo genocide. It has been hoped that the country has learnt her lessons but after the war, Odey (2009) said that many Igbo people have been gruesomely murdered in the primes of their lives in the North. For example, Akaluka was slaughtered in Kano in 1994 (p.41). Unarguably, this could have reminded the Igbo tribe of the past Biafran war experiences. Ogbeche (2016) notes that Methodus Chimaije Emmanuel, a 24-year-old Igbo Christian trader based in Padongari, Niger State was on Sunday 29th May, 2016 butchered with three other persons including one personnel of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and about thirty shops looted by Hausa Muslims over allegations of blasphemy (p.3). Muhammad (2016) concurs that a 74 year old Igbo woman, Bridget Agbahime was on Thursday 2nd June, 2016 gruesomely slaughtered by Hausa Muslims at Kofar Wambai market Kano in the presence of her husband over alleged blasphemy (p.6) in the area of infrastructural developments, it is on record that the Southeast has no single functional International Airport. The River Niger cannot be in any other part of the Nigeria without being dredged and accorded a befitting seaport, let alone building another bridge that will support the ailing one. There is no Federal Government industry that can beef up markets in Igbo-land.

Since the abolition of regionalism and the introduction of statism in 1967, no befitting railway has been constructed throughout Igbo-land. All other geopolitical zones have the minimum of six states but the case is different with the South Eastern zone. All roads in Igbo land are death traps. The only Federal Government presence in Igbo land is the brazen floodgate of its legion of security apparatus with her sophisticated arms in order to taunt and attack MASSOB and IPOB members especially with the so-called “Operation Python Dance”. Despite the non-violent posture of the Biafran movements, they are being hounded and murdered with impunity while states such as Kaduna and Benue where thousands of people have been roasted by the rampaging Fulani herdsmen and sharia agitators have not received such militarized exercises. The nature and pattern of federal appointments in Nigeria is another inflammable factor in the agitations of Biafra. For example, Abdulrahman (2015) lists the first and second batches of appointments made in the current Nigerian administration which

sparked off outrage across the country especially among the Igbo speaking areas. They are Aide de Camp: Lt. Col Abubakar Lawal (Kano State, North-West and husband to President Buhari's foster daughter), Special Adviser, Media and Publicity: Femi Adesina (Osun State, South-West), Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity: Garba Shehu (Kano State, North-West), State Chief of Protocol/Special Assistant (Presidential Matters): Lawal Abdullahi Kazaure (Jigawa State, North-West), Accountant General of the Federation: Ahmed Idris (Kano State, North-West), National Security Adviser: Babagana Monguno (Borno State, North-East), Chief of Defence Staff, Abayomi Olonishakin (Ekiti State, South-West), Chief of Army Staff: Tukur Buratai (Borno State, North-East), Chief of Naval Staff: Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas (Cross Rivers, South-South), Chief of Air Staff, Sadique Abubakar (Bauchi State, North-East), Chief of Defence Intelligence: Monday Riku Morgan (Benue State, North-Central), Director General, State Security Services: Lawal Daura (Katsina State, North-West), Acting Chairperson, Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Amina Zakari (Jigawa State, North-West later replaced with Prof Yakubu Mamood (Bauchi, North East), Managing Director, Nigerian Ports Authority: Habibu Abdulahi (Kano State, North-West), Special Adviser, Niger Delta Amnesty Office: Paul Boroh (Bayelsa State, South-South), Acting Director General, Nigerian Maritime Administration, Safety and Security Agency: Baba Haruna Jauro (Yobe State, North-East), Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Communications Commission: Umaru Dambatta (Kano State, North-West), Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service: Babatunde Fowler (Lagos State, South-West), Director General, Budget Office of the Federation: Aliyu Gusau (Zamfara State, North-West), Group Managing Director, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, Emmanuel Kachikwu (Delta State, South-South later replaced with Dr Maikanti Kacalla Baru (Bauchi North East), Secretary to Government of the Federation, Babachir David Lawal (Adamawa, North East), Chief of Staff to the President: Abba Kyari (Borno, North-East), Comptroller-General, Nigerian Customs Service: Hameed Ibrahim Ali (Bauchi State-North East), Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service: Kure Martin Abeshi (Nasarawa State, North-Central), Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (Senate): Ita Enang (Akwa Ibom State, South-South). Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives): Suleiman Kawu (Kano State, North-West), Director, Department Of Petroleum Resources, Modesai Baba Ladan (Niger, North-Central) Managing Director, Asset Management Company of Nigeria, AMCON, Ahmed Lawan Kuru (Kano- North-West), Commissioner for Insurance and Chief Executive of the National Insurance Commission, Mohammed Kari (Kano-North-West) (pp.4-6).

Nobody from the South East (Igbo) was reportedly considered for appointment even as a gatekeeper was appointed in these tranches of appointments. This is the first time nobody from the South east geopolitical is represented in the national Security meeting. In as much as the state of origin should not matter where productivity is prioritized. However, in 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. Moreso, naturally, there seems to be an aspect of human instinct that reacts against perceived and proven injustice.

Meanwhile, Nnanna (2015) argues that the youth have seen how Igbo students were allotted higher cut off marks than their counter parts before they gain admission into federal schools. They have watched with shock how the presidency of Nigeria has changed hands between the North and the West. They have even seen how a Southern Minority held it for five years only for it to go back to the North with a Western vice president which indicates where it might be heading next. Amidst these prevailing situations, several questions boil in their minds such as, “does it mean that Igbo people do not matter? Were they forced back to Nigeria only to be kept in subjugation?” The first six months of the President Muhammadu Buhari regime has made matters maddeningly worse. All the positions in the three branches of the Federal Government that matter have been handed over to Arewa Muslims with Igbo indigenes present in this government only as ministers (pp.9-10). Similarly, Kumolu, Ebegbulem, Enogholase, Nwabughio, Agbakwuru, Una and Bello (2017) account of an outrage that spread in some parts of the country over lopsided recruitment into the Department of State Service (DSS). For example, Katsina state, the home state of President Buhari and the Director-General of DSS got fifty one (51) of the four hundred and seventy nine (479) new recruits which was more than the forty four (44) new cadets recruited from the five South-Eastern states. However, Senator Ekweremadu, said the reality on ground is that Buhari administration has excluded the Igbo people from Nigeria. He decried the sacking of the National Pension Commission (PenCom) Director-General, Mrs. Chinelo Anohu-Amazu from Anambra State just two years into her statutory five year and her replacement with Aliyu Dikko from Kaduna State against the provisions of the Pension Reforms Act 2014 (p.7).

It is into such a festering atmosphere that MASSOB and IPOB resurrected the aborted struggle by the Igbo tribe between 1967 and 1970 to abandon Nigeria and establish their own independent republic. They had aimed at establishing a “land of freedom” where they will be free from “internal slavery”. According to Nnanna (2015), Col Joe Achuzia, Biafran war hero and Secretary-General of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) sums it thus “we fought for survival! We fought to prevent us from being exterminated (p.7). According to Nwachukwu (2017), Prof. Pat Utomi argues that Biafra is a metaphor for 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 herdsmen destruction. Many in the South-South are Biafrans because they are unhappy with Nigeria and across Nigeria, there is a general democratization of discontent among majority of the people (p.13).

The Biafra struggle for a republic out of Nigeria is simply secession-garbed reactions of the Igbo tribe against the perceived and real structured injustice, dehumanization, nepotism, gang-up and hatred meted out to them by the Nigerian state and Nigerians.

Why Biafran Agitations Have Been Sensationally Attractive

Ironically, many opinion leaders in Igbo land did not support Biafran agitations. For instance, Nwosu (2000) notes that an umbrella group of all Igbo organizations in Nigeria, Ohaneze Ndigbo and Odumegwu Ojukwu who led the 1967 secessionist struggle unequivocally denounced and dissociated themselves from MASSOB (p.2) In view of these, what then have made these agitations highly attractive?

Poor State Responses Adekunle (2017) argues that the responses of Nigerian government to Biafran have been disappointing. He cites the case of the leader of IPOB who was made a hero by holding him close two years of incomprehensible judicial rigmarole and executive procrastination. His final release on bail with these stringent conditions made him more popular. For instance, he was asked to (a) Produce three sureties who must deposit the sum of one hundred million naira each, (b) Produce a highly placed person of Igbo extraction, (c) Produce a respected person who resides and owns landed property in Abuja and ensure that (d) One of the sureties must be a highly respected Jewish leader;(e) Must not attend any rally or grant an interview; (f) Must not be in a crowd exceeding ten persons and (g) Must surrender his Nigerian and British passports. But surprisingly within three days, the bail conditions were met. Apart from the trial

itself being needless, it is doubtful whether the stringency of the bail conditions did not violate the purpose of a fair trial and the constitutionality of bail (p.2).

Perhaps, the government had thought that the incarceration of Nnamdi Kanu and other IPOB members would silence the agitations but to the chagrins of both government and others, the issue was kept on the front burner for the entire duration of the incarceration of the IPOB leader. Unarguably, the previously little or unknown Nnamdi Kanu and the IPOB soared into global significance swallowing the popularity of its rival, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). Nnamdi Kanu has received the supports many reputable figures such as Charles Soludo, Pat Utomi, Uzor Kalu, Peter Obi among others. It can be argued that the government hopes of defeating or silencing the group with state security forces have not bore fruit. This is because Biafra is a movement that exists more in the mind and can only be defeated with superior ideology. Biafra has over the years morphed into an ideology, partly as a result of the complicity of an insensitive government that failed to understand the beginnings of the movement and was also unable to offer a closure to the fractures and contradictions that triggered the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war.

The inability and unwillingness of state actors to correct the faulty foundation associated with the amalgamation of Nigeria: As it has been adroitly noted, virtually everything that Nigeria is facing today come as result of the fact that the Europeans instituted and established marginalization, ethnicity, inept leadership, fraudulent methods of imposing rulers, South and North dichotomy, religious intolerance, electoral fraud, corruption and impunity are among some of the unwanted factors that are questioning the 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria. But surprisingly, the rulers pay lip services to these factors probably because they are beneficiaries of the faultiness of the state. In this type of environment, Biafra agitations become attractive to the shortchanged groups.

The Mentality of Majoring in the Minor: If the amount of energy dissipated by the rulers and state of Nigeria in fighting the Biafran agitators and oppositions is channeled towards checkmating the Fulani herdsmen's genocidal activities and improving the lives of Nigerians, undoubtedly the agitations for Biafra will be less attractive. But because the state actors and the state itself have not prioritized what is needful, these agitators have capitalized the loopholes to create uneasiness in the country. Igbo land is militarized because of nonviolent MASSOB and IPOB groups while Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen are feasting on innocent blood in Bornu, Yobe, Adamawa, Kaduna and Benue states.

Leaders have not learnt their lessons from the previous wars. 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. According to Umoru and Alaribe (2017), Senator Ike Ekweremadu while reacting to the humanitarian crises in the North-East said that the crises arose because Nigerian rulers have not learnt any lesson from the causes and crises of the Nigeria Biafran war. They have failed to build the internal capacity and mechanisms for managing such situation (p.8). Whenever a leader succumbs to the pressure of placing sentiment above reasoning and sound-mindedness, the outbreaks of war, violence, overt and covert conflicts, crises and squabbles with their fatalities are bound to occur. Biafran agitations and other agitations lay credence to these facts. Nigerian civil war could have been avoided if the leaders have allowed reasons to dictate their actions and inactions.

Household enemies: Another depressing factor fuelling of Biafra agitations in Nigeria is the brazen impunity of many Igbo political rulers. Virtually all the manageable state roads across Igbo land were roads built after the civil war by the likes of late Sam Mbakwe and few others. All the monies accrued to these states from Federal government and the exorbitant taxations they muscle out from the poor masses are serially wasted by these politicians and their cronies. If they have done things differently by providing leadership, Biafra agitations and its attendant consequences could have been checkmated.

Towards Checkmating the Resurgence of Biafra Agitations

- i. Nigerians seem to be reactive people and hardly pro-act. Nigerian leaders will usually wait for trouble to brew before scampering for solutions. Leaders should be proactive in managing the ingredients that breed the agitations.
- ii. Igbo people should not be overtly or covertly reminded of the gory of the civil war.
- iii. The No Victor No vanquished statement of General Gowon after the civil war has been a ruse. Let urgent and concrete steps be taken to address it.
- iv. Let the youths and the other agitators be made to channel their energy towards the moves for restructuring the country on the path of justice because using the Southern Sudan's experience, there is no guarantee that Biafra republic will be the messianic and utopian society they are longing for.

- v. Let justice, equity, sense of reason and fairness be hallowed by the leaders because they are the bedrock of any progressive society.

Conclusion

More than one hundred years after the Lugard's amalgamation and forty-two years after the end of the devastating Nigeria Biafran civil war in which government troops fought and defeated Biafran secessionists, the dream of independence has not died. Despite the fear and tears that are raging in the land, the Biafran flags still coloured almost every corner of the major Igbo states. The name "Biafra" means different things to different people. To those in top political positions of the country whose interests are at stake, Biafra is an unwanted element that should be destroyed. To some of them from the Biafran side that witnessed the horrors of the war, it is a negative issue that should not be recalled. It means tragedy of diseases, kwashiorkor, killings, genocide and man's inhumanity against his fellow men. To few enlightened and objective Nigerians, Biafra means injustice, denials and suppressions. But the present crops of Igbo youths find the name very attractive, lovely, respectful, hopeful and many men, women and children waved the flags with hope and dream. A hope born from the very depth of their souls and the dream of a nation whose sun would one day rise up high to shine forth for justice and equity. The recent sit-at-home order by the IPOB to commemorate the Biafra Day across the Southeast and some south-southern states had said it all. In the midst of the state misguided responses to the Biafra agitations in Nigeria, there are issues that must critically be considered and they are the dangers these agitations pose to other peaceful individuals who want squalor in the midst of debilitating Nigerian atmosphere spurred by corruption and structural injustice. Secondly, there is no guarantee that subsequent governments in the future will draw positive lessons from the impasse largely occasioned by governments' poor responses. Conclusively, a well breast fed child can only do these two things: the child either sleeps or goes on to play. Therefore, as long as injustice, oppression, dehumanization and hatred reign in the Nigerian state, Biafran agitations and questions on the amalgamation theory will continue.

References

- Abiola, O. (1984). A textbook of West African history AD 1000 to the present day. Ado-Ekiti: Omolayo
- Abdulrahman, A. (2015). Outrage grows across Nigeria as Buhari's lopsided appointments continue. <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news>
- Abogurin, S.O. (1999.). Religion and Democracy in Nigeria ORITA journal of religious studies. Ibadan: xxxi/1.pp.286-98.
- Adekunle, A.A. (2017). IPOB's Kanu and the road to Erehwon *The Nation*. 30th April.
- Ademolekun, L. (1985). The fall of the second republic. Ibadan: Spectrum.
- Ademolekun, T. (1999). The role of religion in the political and ethical re-orientation of Nigeria in ORITA journal of religious studies. Ibadan: xxxi/1- 2. pp.19-28
- Adigwe, F. (1979). Essentials of government for West Africa. Ibadan: university press.
- Akani, A.A. (1999. "Theo- Democracy and Islamic Approach to Nigerian's Quest for a Political Ideology" ORITA journal of religious studies. Ibadan: xxxi/1-2, pp.61-70.
- Akinnola, R. (2000). Excerpts from the book "Fellow Country Men- the story of Coup D'etats in Nigeria.
- Amanambu, U.E. (2012). *Sharia implementation: a challenge to the Nigerian nation state*. Okigwe: Whytem.
- Anyaele, J. (1987). Comprehensive government for schools. Lagos: Johnson.
- Anseth, M. (2015). *Name of Biafra-origin-meaning*. <http://www.nairaland.com>. Accessed 2nd Feb. 2017.
- Awofeso, O. (2005). "Military Disengagement from Politics in Africa: The Nigeria Experience" in Oyari O. Eds. Issues in African politics. Nigeria: Data-Globe.

- Fafowora, D. (2013). Lord Lugard and the 1914 Amalgamation of Nigeria. *The Nation* 14th Feb.
- Kumolu, C. Ebegbulem, S. Enogholase, G, Nwabughio, L, Agbakwuru, J, Una, E and Bello, B. (2017). "Outrage over FG's appointments and why Katsina got 51 DSS slots" *Vanguard* APRIL 30
- Iaccino, L. (2015). *Ipob, Massob and Buhari's government: How is Nigeria dealing with pro-Biafran separatist movements?* 29th July. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ipob-massob->
- Modupe, O. (2000). *The shariy'ah debate in Nigeria*. Ibadan: sefer.
- Nwachukwu, J.O. (2017). "Why every Nigerian is a Biafran-Pat Utomi" *DailyPost* 8th May.
- Nwosu, P. (2000). "Nigeria: Ohanaeze Declares Biafra Dead ... Disowns MASSOB." *Post Express* 12 May.
- Odey, J.O. (2009). *C.A.N. my foot: the reckless utterance of a wilful president*. Lagos: Emmafids
- Olusanya, G.O. (1999). "Constitutional Development in Nigeria since 1861-1960" in Ikime, O (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian history*. Ibadan: Heinemann
- Onumah, C. (2015). "We Are All Biafrans!" *Sahararepoter* 7th Dec.
- Oyewole, A. & Lucas, J. (2000). *Historical Dictionary of Nigeria*. Maryland: Scarecrow
- Paden, I. N. (1986). *Ahmadu bello sarduana of sokoto values and leadership in Nigeria*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Salmone, F. (1999). "Ethnic Identities and Religion" *Religion and society in Nigeria historical and sociological perspectives*. Ed. Olupona Jacob and Toyin Falola. Ibadan: Spectrum, pp.45-64.

Tanko, P. (2003). "Inter-Religious Dialogue as a tool for the transformation of Northern Nigeria" *Bulletin of ecumenical theology*. 15(1) pp.1-36.

Ishiekwenesep T. (2011). The Amalgamation of Nigeria Was A Fraud- A Rejoinder! *Sharareport* 15th June.

Umoru, H and Alaribe, U. (2017). We failed to learn from Biafran war-Ekweremadu. *Vanguard* 19th March.

Uwechue, R.(2003). *Reflections on the Nigerian civil war: facing the future*. London: wordmithess.