

Political Economy of Autonomous Communities in Southeast Nigeria: A Study of Select Autonomous Communities in Anambra State, 2003-2023.

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Abstract

This paper explores “The Political Economy of Autonomous Communities in Southeast Nigeria a study of Anambra state 68 Autonomous Communities” Currently, Nigeria runs a Federal system of government which has been criticized as defective because of its unitary operative mechanisms. In a true Federation, as exemplified by the USA, the center is weakened through significant decentralization processes in order to strengthen the federating states and component units. The government process also involves fiscal federalism where each federating units is free to generate and control their resources and remit commensurate revenue to the federal Government in form of taxes. These states will therefore take greater responsibility for developing their local communities, enact relevant laws, control their security apparatus and maintain a significant level of autonomy and so the three-tiered government structure in Nigeria’s federal system has proven insufficient due to the rising population and development needs in rural communities, where local government autonomy is lacking. Consequently, there is a growing recognition worldwide of the need for power devolution and decentralized decision-making and governance, as government activities and population growth continue to increase. This paper therefore argued that Nigerian current federal system is disadvantaged to the people of southeast due to less states and local governments in the zone which consequently cause the rise in demand for creation of autonomous communities as alternative for the purpose of bringing development to the grassroots. In terms of methodology, the paper is primarily located in qualitative cannon and adopts the explanatory research design. Data for the research is generated from primary and secondary sources. The primary source involved a semi-structured interview key informant (KII) that was administered to selected stakeholders in the zones, while the secondary data is generated from books, government publications and other relevant document. The bulk of data generated is analyzed through textual data analysis. Using the conglomerate society and growth models approaches, the study argues that there is need for the government of the state to return the recognition to all the 68 autonomous Communities of the State, as it can conveniently carter for it and it still fall short of numbers in other states of the southeast despite the fact that Anambra state is more populated than other states in the zone. Based on the findings from this paper, recommendations where advanced to aid future projects and program of the government.

Key Words: Autonomous Community, Political Economy, Southeast.

Introduction

The major challenge to leadership in Nigeria today is how to translate the ideals of nationhood into practicable realities beneficial to every citizen. Currently, Nigeria runs a

Federal system of government which has been criticized as defective because of its unitary operative mechanisms. In a true Federation, as exemplified by the USA, the center is weakened through significant decentralization processes in order to strengthen the federating states and component units. The government process also involves fiscal federalism where each federating units is free to generate and control their resources and remit commensurate revenue to the federal Government in form of taxes. These states will therefore take greater responsibility for developing their local communities, enact relevant laws, control their security apparatus and maintain a significant level of autonomy.

In Nigeria of today, the reverse is the case. The central government is quite dominant because of over-centralization of powers and control of national resources by the Federal Government. Over the years, agitations for true fiscal federalism have been strident without any fruitful results. This problem has been supported by the Nigeria 1999 Constitution as amended that promote a rentier Political Culture and Economy where resources allocation favors some section of the country against others. This therefore explain why the coexistence of center-seeking and center-fleeing forces in Nigeria federal arrangement seems to have resulted into delicate state apparatus (Nwadigwe, 2006).

Consequently, resources allocation in Nigeria is still constitutionally based on the number of states, Local Governments and Federal constituencies in the country. Hence, geopolitical zones with more states, constituencies and Local Government will continue to receive a greater share of the national revenue and amenities. This is the political logic behind the frequent agitation for creation of more states and Local Councils by various sections of the country. Apart from senatorial zones where each state has three each and one for FCT, making 109 Senators nationwide, other component units remain lopsided. Federal Constituencies are largely determined by the number of Local Councils. Therefore, revenue allocation for constituency Projects will constantly be in favor of States with more Local Councils. Similarly, in the distribution of subventions from the Federation Account, the geopolitical zones with more States and Local Councils will receive more funds monthly (Aghadiuno, 2016 and Amali, 2023).

In this case, the Southeast geopolitical zone with the smallest number of States and local Councils in Nigeria will remain disadvantaged. Despite her population density, efforts to create an additional State for the zone to bring it at par with most other zones have been frustrated and thwarted by the political shenanigans of the National Assembly dominated by the northern oligarchy. Out of the 774 LGAS in Nigeria, only a very small portion is in the southeast while the north has the largest number. In fact, Kano State alone with 44 Local governments has more Local Council than Anambra, Abia, and Ebonyi put together. The economic implication of this reality is quite glaring. Thus, those with more revenue allocation usually resist the creation of more LGAs and States elsewhere to avoid relinquishing part of what they currently receive. At the state and local levels, resources are distributed according to the number of the electoral wards and autonomous communities available. Consequently, wise community leaders in the southeast zone, realizing the difficulty in getting more Local Council created for them have decided to focus on creating more autonomous communities to avail them a greater share of resources in their states. In addition, autonomous communities are regarded by governments as development partners' who independently generate revenue, embark, on developmental projects and assist in maintaining adequate security through the grassroots intelligence networks (Amali, 2023).

From the last census figures, Anambra with the single largest concentration of markets in West Africa is the most populated State in the southeast. Although it has more

LGAs than Abia State, yet Abia has double the number of Autonomous communities than Anambra and more being created. The same scenario exists in Imo State at present. Interestingly, the autonomous community issue has not led to violence and mayhem in those States. The wisdom behind the autonomous community creation is to facilitate equitable distribution of the wealth of a State and challenge local communities to take control of their destiny by driving the engine of their development initiatives. At present, the Anambra State Government has unofficially elevated the Town Unions to a fourth tier of government. The Anambra State Association of Town Unions (ASATU) is increasingly becoming a focal point in State policy initiatives (Nwadike, 2018 and Amali, 2023). Indeed, the European Union community development projects on strengthening budget transparency through public participation involve advocacy visits to ASATU and budget training off Town union executives and traditional rulers. The policy was partly based on the repeated complaints and allegations by the various communities that funds given to LGAs are often embezzled without any visible developmental impact on the grassroots. But the Town Unions executives are considered to be known by and closer to their people who can hold them to account.

Between 2014 to 2021, the state government, developed a Multilevel Participation and Community development that term to recognize the communities as fourth-tier governance for bottom-top development model and doles out revenue and facilities worth N20 million for Community-Choose-Your Project Scheme to 179 officially recognized Town Unions, for community projects such as construction and rehabilitation of classrooms, roads, clinics, water supply, grants to widows and the elderly as well as maintenance of security through vigilante services. Hence, Town and villages with more autonomous communities continue to receive more funds and facilities. Unfortunately, some people in Anambra State view the autonomy community system as divisive and oppose their creation. These oppositions are often championed by traditional rulers (Igwe) who perceive that their territories and areas of influence are being reduced. Others view it as a form of secession by their subjects through the balkanization of their kingdoms and creation of "rival" Igwe and royal cabinets.

But these perceptions are indeed misconceptions based on ignorance, greed and unfounded fear of public disdain. Incidentally, such feelings are common in Anambra State hence some of them vehemently resist the socio-economic and political change associated with the autonomous community system. Sociologist and development scholars globally attribute resistance to change to two major factors: First, those who resist change may be uniformed about the comparative advantage of the new order. Second, others who resist change may be beneficiaries of the old order and hence want it to continue. In Anambra case, these factors are also key determinants in the reactions of the people to the autonomy status granted to 68 Communities in 2002 by the Anambra State government. It is gratifying to note that a great number of the people are becoming better informed about the benefit of the autonomous community system. This is also being reinforced by the visible dividends of the Autonomy as funds, facilities and services are distributed to new communities on equally basis thereby doubling the amount of assistance being received before the autonomous era.

Historical Background of Anambra State

The geographical area known today as Anambra State of Nigeria came into being, along with eight others, on 27th August 1991, following the creation of states exercise of that historic year, by Gen Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida Military Administration. It was created

from the old Anambra State. Significantly, it derives its name from Omabala River (Anambra River) which is a tributary of the majestic River Niger. The capital of Anambra State is Awka, but it has Onitsha and Nnewi as its two major commercial centers. The Onitsha main market is reputed to be the largest of its kind in the West Africa sub-region. The state covers an area of 4,416sq km, has tropical rain forest vegetation, humid climate with a temperature of about 87F and a rainfall of between 152cm-203cm. Situated on rolling flat land on the eastern plains of the River Niger, the State has a population of 4,055, 048 people, according to 2006 census. There are few states in the country that have as many neighbors as Anambra State, which shares boundaries with Abia, Delta, Enugu, Imo and Kogi States.

Anambra State has 21 local government areas and 179 Communities, spread in three senatorial districts. One of the special characteristics of Anambra State is the immense resourcefulness of its people who carry on a most animated business and other relationship with people who come across them. Perhaps, because of this, the state for its survival is dependent on both inter- and intra- peace, harmony and uninterrupted flow and exchange of ideas, goods and services.

There is no question at all that there is a large variety of ways, especially through “do-it-yourself” development programmes, that clearly give expression to the people’s commitment in several community development efforts. These efforts, which are easily visible in the areas of construction of rural roads, culverts and bridges, health institutions, rural electricity supply, educational institutions, borehole etc, have now come to acquire a proverbial dimension. Thus, the highly industrious and resourceful people of Anambra State have done remarkable development work in all parts of the state with energy and determination. Indeed, the rich human resources of the state are not in doubt. People of Anambra are known for their enterprising disposition. Perhaps, nowhere is the tenacity of Anambra people more evident than in their vigorous struggle for personal achievement. The Igbo language is the mother tongue, but English is widely spoken and a lot of the non-literate population understand and speak broken English. However, a small group of Igala-speaking people exist in Anambra West LGA of the state. In addition, citizens of the state live and work in virtually every part of the country and easily learn the languages of their places of sojourn. They also integrate easily with host communities where they find themselves.

Because of their friendliness and large-hearted nature, Anambrians, have very high regard for, and are openly generous to strangers. Indeed, the people are willing to go great lengths to shower their well-known traditional hospitality on visitors and strangers.

Table 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS IN ANAMBRA STATE AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

S/N	NAMES OF LGAs	NAMES OF COMMUNITIES
1	Aguata	Achina, Aguluezechukwu, Akpo, Amesi, Ekwulobia, Ezinifite, Igboukwu, Nkpologwu, Oraerifite, Uga, Umuchu, Umuona
2	Anambra East	Aguleri, Enugwuotu, EZI-Aguluotu, Igbariam, Nando, Mkpunando, Umueri, Umuoba-Anam Ikem-Ivite.
3	Anambra West	Ezi-Anam, Ifite-Anam, Olumbanasa, Oroma-Etiti, Umuenwelum-Anam Ukwalla, Owelle, Inoma, Nzam

4	Anaocha	Adazi-Ani, Adazi-Enu, Adazi-Nnukwu, Agulu, Aguluzigbo, Akweze, Obeledu.
5	Awka North	Achalla, Amansea, Amanuke, Awba-Ofemili, Ebenebe, Isuaniocha, Ugbenu, Urum
6	Awka South	Amawbia. Awka, Ezinato, Isiagu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise, Okpuno,
7	Ayamelum	Anaku, Ifite Ogwari, Igbakwu, Omasi, Omor, Umueje, Umuerum
8	Dunukofia	Ifitedunu, Nawgu, Ukpo, Ukwulu, Umudioka, Umunachi
9	Ekwusigo	Ichi, Ihembosi, Oraifite, Ozubulu
10	Idemili North	Abacha, Abatete, Eziowelle, Ideani, Nkpor, Obosi, Ogidi, Oraukwu,
11	Idemili South	Akwa-Ukwu, Alor, Awka-Etiti, Nnobi, Nnokwa, Oba, Ojoto
12	Ihiala	Amorka, Azia, Ihiala, Isseke, Lilu, Mbosi, Okija, Orsumoghu, Ubuluisi
13	Njikoka	Abagana, Abba, Enugwu-Agidi, Enugwu-Ukwu, Nawfia, Nimo
14	Nnewi North	Nnewi
15	Nnewi South	Akwaihedu, Amichi, Azigbo, Ebenato, Ekwulumili, Ezinifite, Osumenyi,
16	Ogbaru	Akili-Ogidi, Akili-Ozisor, Amyi, Atani, Mputu, eagwe, Ochuche, Ogwu-Aniocha, Ogwuikpele, Ohita, Okpoko, Ossomala, Umunanki
17	Onitsha North	Onitsha
18	Onitsha South	Fegge
19	Orumba North	Ajali, Amaetiti, Amaokpala, Awa, Awgbu, Nanka, Ndikelionwu, Ndiokpaleze, Ndiokolo, Ndiowu, Ndiukwenu, Oko, Okpeze, Omogho, Ufuma.
20	Orumba South	Agbudu, Akpu, Enugu-Umuonyia, Eziagu, Ezira, Ihite, Umuchukwu, Ogbunka, Ogboji, Oneh, Owerre-Ezukala, Umunze, Umuomaku, Isulo
21	Oyi	Awkuzu, Nkwelle-Ezunaka, Nteje, Ogbunike, Umunya
	21	179

Theoretical Framework: Conglomerate Society Model and Growth Model.

Professor Kenneth Post and Professor Michael Vickers wrote a book with the title "Structure and Conflict in Nigeria 1960 - 65". In the book the authors described and analyzed the conflicts in Nigeria, particularly those arising from the Nigerian Federal election of December 1964/March 1965 which events were precursors to January 1966 Coup

and the Civil war of 1967-70. The learned professors used two conceptual models to explain their theme. The model used were Society Growth Model and Structural Conglomerate Frame model as a vehicle for explanation, its essence derives from the demonstration of certain relationships among things which exist in the real world. The purpose of a model is threefold; it seeks to organize data so that we can better understand their relationships, it should be heuristic, that is, should lead us to discover new relevant data, and it should enable us to predict what might happen given certain conditions in the communities. In usage of this two theories in this work is that it helps to bring out more clearly the reason why conflicts ensued between communities and the need for expansion.

Growth Model and System of Reward Model

The Growth Model stipulates that when an existing community grows rapidly in population, the growth mechanism would spark off a number of actions and reactions leading to the break-up of the existing community and demand by parts of it for a separate autonomous status. As the existing community becomes difficult to manage with the existing structures and institutions it becomes dichotomized and, a group may migrate away from the existing, one. Inevitably, accusations of marginalization become the order of the day. The migrated part being disgruntled may end up setting up informal structures of governance to run its town affairs. The location of facilities for the parent community and the migrant one may become so problematic, competitive and crisis-ridden, that agitation for separate autonomous government becomes fait accompli. The incumbent Traditional leadership, on realizing the opposition against it, may resort to some forms of fence-mending by recruiting some of the opinion leaders in the opposition into its fold, employing the tactics known as "divide and rule" which often fails as yet another powerful group may emerge to champion the course of the agitators. Examples of new communities growing from the old one abound in Anambra State, in almost all the three senatorial zones of the state.

There used to be one Adazi which has grown to the present day three autonomous communities of Adazi-Ani, Adazi-Enu, and AdaziNnukwu. It used to be one Anam community which has grown to EziAnam, IfiteAnam, Oroma-Etiti-Anam, Umuenwelum Anam, Umueze-Anam and Umuoba-Anam autonomous communities. It was one Aguleri Community which gave birth to the present five autonomous communities of Aguleri, Enugu Otu, Mkpunando, Eziagulu-Otu and Ifite- Enugu. The growth model may account for the spate of demands which led to the creation of multiple autonomous communities in the South East Zone of Nigeria, particularly in Abia, Imo and Enugu States.

After the recognition of Ikem-Ivite, Mkpunando, Inoma, Owelle and Ukwalla autonomous communities, by Mbadinuju Administration in 2001, there was an inundated demand for new Autonomous communities, leading to the creation of the controversial sixty-eight autonomous communities whose case was nullified by the Appeal Court at Enugu. The appellant still of 68 communities have gone to Supreme Court to seek redress for their grievances. Some of the still-born communities have some merits for creation while some of them could not be justified by the "Growth Model" or the Conglomerate Community Model.

Post and Vickers" averred that if political and administrative institutions and processes appear to be "neutral" with regard to cultural groups, they may also create new roles for individuals which are regarded as separate from their cultural identity. Conversely the most dangerous situation here would be if the political and administrative systems appeared to be dominated by a single cultural group. From all indications the

factors stipulated in the Conglomerate society model and the Growth Model seem to be at work in the creation of all the 68 communities in Anambra state and could be used for scientific studies of the creation of Community Autonomy throughout southeast Nigeria.

Methodology Explanatory research design was used to explore literature in the investigation of the paper research problem. Documentary method of data collection and group focus discussion aided with key informant interview was utilized to generate data from secondary sources for this study. A textual analysis rooted on systematic logical induction was used to argue the hypotheses.

Creation of Autonomous Communities in Southeast Nigeria, With Particular Reference to Anambra State

Originally, every group of Igbo settlement was independent or autonomous as it took charge of its governance without reference to eternal body. So, Sequel to the Nigerian 1976 local government reform, it becomes important that Local Government Administration needed a well-structured community administration and hence Governments started paying attention to the number and structure of communities in its domain. The responsibilities fell on State Governments to create or recognize autonomous communities throughout Southeast. Dr Chimaroke Nnamani, Governor of Enugu State (1999-2003) took the bold step of restructuring the existing towns and villages in the State into three hundred and eighty-four (384) autonomous communities on September 28th, 2002 in line with the prevailing wind of change blowing across the South Eastern Nigeria. Each autonomous community was ruled by a paramount Chief or Traditional Ruler called Igwe or Eze. Due to further demands the Enugu State government found it advisable to create more autonomous communities bringing the number to about (400) four hundred.

Table 2: LIST OF STATES AND NUMBERS OF LGAS/COMMUNITIES AND POPULATIONS IN SOUTH EAST ZONE 2001-2002

S/N	States	Number of LGAs	Number of Communities	Population (In Millions)
1	ABIA	17	800	4,143,100
2	ANAMBRA	21	179	4,177,828
3	ENUGU	17	400	4,690,100
4	IMO	27	637	5.4
5	EBONYI	13	137	3,242,500
TOTAL	5	95	2,153	21,653,528

In response to our key informant questions, the people of Enugu confirmed that they are better off with the creation of those communities as it had removed the constant bickering and animosities among the villages that constituted the former larger towns. Removed too were the unwholesome competitions existing between different groups and personalities jostling for recognition and supremacy in the complex towns which have now been cut down to smaller autonomous communities in line with the wishes of the towns. Compared to the existing 179 autonomous communities in Anambra State, it is obvious that Anambra State fell short of half the number of autonomous communities in Enugu State, even though Anambra is larger in population than Enugu State. It is likely that the former Governor of Anambra State, Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju (1999-2003) and his state legislators had their eyes on Enugu State when they created the 68 autonomous communities which Dr. Nwabueze Ngige's Administration (2003-2006) annulled as soon

as it came to power. There seemed to exist the sharing of political policies among the five states of the South East for apart from Enugu and Anambra States the fever or contagion of autonomous communities' creation spread to other Igbo States of Imo, Abia and Ebony states.

In Imo State the creation of autonomous communities is an on-going process. At present Imo State government has six hundred and thirty-seven (637). A political pundit from Anambra State told us that he was religiously studying the Imo model of community-based Local Administration with a view to recommending it to the Government of Anambra State for adoption. Should Anambra State Government accept that recommendation, it would be prepared to create many more autonomous communities. With the Imo standard of about 5000 citizens per community, Anambra state with the present population of over 10 million would qualify to create over eight hundred (800) autonomous communities from its present 179 communities. The Imo model is not a novel thing in Anambra State; after all it was tried in Old Anambra State soon after the Civil War when Anambra State created Community Councils to administer autonomous communities. Many infrastructures in Anambra State were built by communities with the help of Town or Community Unions.

Abia State currently has the largest number of autonomous communities among the five states in Southeast, Nigeria. With over eight hundred (800) autonomous communities, Abia ranks first in autonomous community's creation in Southeast, Nigeria with more than double the number in Enugu State and four times more than the Anambra State number. Yet the quests for the creation of Autonomous Communities in Abia State were peaceful and orderly. The Abians seem to be in love with multiple autonomous communities ruled by the Ezes as in Imo State.

Ebonyi State is at the bottom of the ladder when we compared the number of its autonomous communities with those of other Igbo States. With only one hundred and thirty-five (135) recognized autonomous communities so far, it appears that the contagion of autonomous community creation in its neighboring states of Abia, Imo and Enugu States had failed to infect Ebonyi the Salt of the Nation. Ebonyi shares the low figure of autonomous communities with its distant neighbour, Anambra, the Light of the Nation. Both states have less than two hundred autonomous communities but while Ebonyians seem to be satisfied with the low figure of autonomous communities there is obvious rumbling and grumbling in Anambra state as we can see in the paragraph that follows.

Recognition of Five Autonomous Communities in Anambra East And West Local Government Areas 2001

Anambra State of Nigeria, official gazette dated 17th September, 2001 embodied Law No 8 - Local Government (Amendment) Law, 2001, which recognized in section 3 (0) three new autonomous communities from Anambra West Local Government Area, namely Owelle, Ukwalla, and Inoma as well as two new autonomous communities from Anambra East Local Government Area, namely Nkpunando and IkemIvite. The leaders of these five communities told government that they had been autonomous but were seeking government recognition. IkemIvite had been a separate autonomous community with the name of Ikem., before its temporary union with Nando around 1940, only to re-assert its autonomy officially in the year 2001. Owelle, Ukwalla and Inoma according to their early history had been existing separately as communities in Olumbanasa clan. At a point in time things meant for the three communities were given in the name of Inoma which

started dominating and marginalizing their neighbors, Owelle and Ukwalla. Ensuing conflicts forced them to reassert their separate autonomies in 2001.

Perkings' report of 1958 recognized EziaguluOtu and EnuguOtu Mkpunando as separate autonomous communities but they were jointly ruled by the traditional ruler of Aguleri from where they migrated across river Omabala, to their present homes. During the Mbadinuju Administration of 1999-2003 not only did EziaguluOtu and Enugu Otu regain their autonomy but Mkpunando which used to be part of Enugu OtuMkpunando obtained its separate autonomy with a separate traditional ruler. In the case of Nkpunando, the Growth Model are appropriate for analyzing its separation from the parent stock, Aguleri. The early people of AguleriOtu comprising OromaOtu now known as EZIAGULU Otu and Enugu-Otu and Mkpunando left Aguleri for greener pastures across River Omabala where land was very fertile and abundant. The river and its tributaries harbored plenty of fresh water fishes. From being migrant farmers and fishermen, those early people decided to settle and do their farming and fishing close to their settlements. They paddled down to Otuocha market their locally designed dug-out canoes to sell their fishes and farm produce.

Eventually their populations grew and they became autonomous communities within Aguleri. With time the elites there felt that they could manage their affairs without taking orders from the political elites of the mainland Aguleri located several kilometers of bad roads and difficult river routes. As we were told, it was the colonial Administrator called, Perkings who in 1958 issued a Report which classified and recognized EziaguluOtu and Enugu Otu, Mkpunando as autonomous communities. Even after that Report, those communities were bracketed in the document showing that they were still under the traditional ruler of Aguleri. After the creation of the New Anambra state in August 1991, the people of Enugu OtuMkpunando/ Eziagulu-Otu made spirited efforts to de-bracket their communities from a single traditional ruler. Edict 13 of 1991 effected this change and showed vacancies of traditional stools in Enugu Otu/ Mkpunando and Eziagulu-Otu. Enugu- Otu, /Mkpunando seemed more vibrant in pursuing the consummation of its autonomy. This was realized fully with the crowning of HRH Igwe Anthony Nchekwube Oguguo as the first traditional ruler of Enugu Otu/ Mkpunando on 5th April 1995, followed by that of Titus Nwattah of EziaguluOtu on August 29th, 2002. Unfortunately, these two traditional rulers did not live long in their new royal thrones as death shortly dealt its deadly blows on them. The Local Government Amendment law 2001 backdated to 1st July 2000 separated Mkpunando from Enugu Otu, thereby officially recognizing a third autonomous community from AguleriOtu. HRH Igwe Alexander Anakpulu Edozieuno had been championing the struggle for autonomy of all the AguleriOtu communities and had also been instrumental to obtaining Government recognition of Igwe Anthony Ogugua and Igwe Titus Nwattah of EnuguOtu and EziaguluOtu autonomous communities respectively. God crowned his efforts by making him the first traditional ruler, Igwe, of Mkpunando as a reward for his untiring efforts towards the emancipation of his people. The current traditional Ruler of Mkpunando is His Royal Highness Igwe Johnson Nnalue who told us during the oral interview, that the struggle which started in 1987 consumed most of his people resources and consumed some of them. Asked what any community seeking autonomy should do, Igwe Johnson Nnalue, replied, those who wish to venture into the task of getting autonomy should lay a solid foundation. There must be unity of purpose and strong commitment to the cause, no matter the sacrifices involved. They should be ready for immolation, deprivation, ostracism, betrayal, man's inhumanity to man, sabotage, and sharing prison cells with criminals. Seekers after

autonomy should not put their hands on the plough and look back. Problems and attacks could come from all sides but like a woman in labour, there should be enough courage and determination to deliver the child which would bring back smiles to frowned faces, and hope to the hopeless. Autonomy is like the meat of the elephant," AnuEnyi", it does not finish. It is like the biblical five loaves of bread and two fishes that never finished. Generation after generation will continue to enjoy the sweet fruits of autonomy. It will clothe the naked, cure the sick, give jobs to the unemployed give food to the orphans, widows and widowers and elevate the down-trodden to unimaginable heights. "Seek you the political autonomy of our community and other things you cannot imagine will be added to it, health/medical centers, schools and scholarships, pipe borne water, electricity, tarred roads, agricultural establishments, industries and tourism, booming markets, housing estates, universities, and so on Igwe Johnson recommended a strong purposeful Igwe for any emerging autonomous community. Said he, "Money should not be the main criterion for selecting the traditional ruler or the community would live to regret the good thing God has done for them". He said that the Chieftaincy constitution of emerging autonomous communities should better provide for rotational democratic rulers instead of hereditary rulers. There should be co-operation and collaboration between the Igwe and his cabinet Chiefs on one hand and the town Union executive on the other", concluded the Igwe of Mkpunando. On his part, the traditional ruler of Ukwalla, HRH Joseph Ajado, Egashi Ukwalla, maintained that Ukwalla, Owelle and Inoma had been separate, though small-autonomous communities in OluMbanasa clan, until such a time Government Administration grouped the three communities into one larger community popularly referred to as InomaAkator for administrative convenience.

The unity could not be sustained due to the tendency of Inoma to play the big brother and to monopolize resources and benefits accruing from government to the utter neglect of Ukwalla and Owelle. Igwe Ajado lamented that the cheating and marginalization meted to Ukwalla and Owelle led to constant conflicts between the three components of InomaAkator. The conflicts led to the intervention of one Military Administrator after another. Each time the Administrator invited Inoma to dialogue Owelle and Ukwalla will attend, but Inoma will failed to honour the invitation, due to guilty conscience. When Inoma failed to respond to one of the invitations of the Military administrators, he was worried and directed the partition of the three components of InomaAkanator into separate autonomous communities. The minutes of the military Administrator to his permanent secretary on the partition became the impetus for Owelle and Ukwalla to separate by the Anambra State House of Assembly during the Mbadinuju Administration asking the House to legislate separation of the three components. This was approved embodied in the Local Government Amendment Law /2001, the Igwe narrated. Inoma did not oppose the creation nor did it take up arms against the two communities. The three components of Inomaanator were wiser, they installed their three Igwes and town union leaders in accordance with the laws of Anambra state. It is worth mentioning here that the traditional ruler of the new autonomous community of Ukwalla, HRH Igwe Joseph Ajado is a prominent member of Anambra State council of Traditional Rulers. The three communities got their three SUV vehicles from the state government as they got their two times N20 million communities choose your project initiative 2018-2021 and other monthly stipends and annual road rehabilitation palliatives and security vans and allowances for their respective vigilante groups. No wonder Igwe Ukwalla confirmed that there is no disadvantage for being an autonomous community.

When asked whether it was a good policy for a sitting Governor to create many more autonomous communities in his state, Igwe Ajado replied that it was good, but that it should not be overdone as was the case in Imo and Abia States. To him the creation of Autonomous communities in the two Igbo states of the South East had exceeded his ideal range while in Anambra with 179 Autonomous communities Igwe Ajado felt that even if the 68 communities in court were approved, Anambra State still remained within his ideal range. This is his personal opinion on the Creation of Autonomous Communities in southeast Nigeria.

The Creation of 68 New Autonomous Communities in Anambra State

The recognition of Anambra State Government of the five autonomous communities of IkemIvite, Mkpunando, Owelle, Ukwalla, and Inoma gave rise to a spate of demands for autonomous communities in Anambra State, some genuine, others spurious, when judged with our two hypothetical models of Conglomerate Society and Growth Models.

The government of Anambra state during the dying days of Mbadinuju Administration in 2003 created upwards of sixty-eight autonomous communities which were subsequently annulled by the Administration of Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige. Consequently, the 68 autonomous communities challenged the withdrawal of their recognition in High court Awka and got judgment in 2006, Government appeal the suit and got judgment in their favor as the Appeal court Enugu set aside the lower court judgment in 2013. The matter is still pending in the Supreme Court of Nigeria which is the final arbiter in the unending-dung chequered history of the creation and annulment saga. The repealing document only withdrew the government recognition but did not stopped their autonomous status as all the 68 communities are autonomous today with traditional Rulers and town union government. Though they do not belong to the ASATU but they had their own Association known as Association of 68 Autonomous Communities of Anambra State

Table 3: NEW AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITIES CREATED IN 2002 AND ANNULLED IN 2004

Original Community	New Autonomous Communities
Amanuke	IfiteAmanuke
Nawfia	Umuriam
Umuomaku	Umungada
Umuchu	Ibughubu, Achala and Osete
Achina	Isi Achina
Ojoto	Ojoto-Obiofia
Ukpor	Anaohia,Umudike,Durumaduru,Uboma,Amakom, Ohamadike, and Ebe
Uke	Obinabor
Nnobi	AwudaNnobi
AdaziEnu	Enugu Adazi
Amichi	Afube, Ezeudene, and Ebenasa
Anam	UmuobaAnam, and Umudora
Aguleri	EnugwuAguleri, IfiteAguleri and Igboezulu
Odekpe	OgbeEtiti
Olumbanasa	Odomagu and Odekpe
Omasi	Omauno
Ihiala	Ihite, Unwaiwala, Ubahuekwem Ogborolsi and AkwaEzekenye
Amorka	Eziala

Okija	Umuohi
Orsumoghu	Orsuelulu, Isingwu, Ihuowerri and Ebenato
Mbosi	Ihiteoha Mbosi
Uli	Iziama, Umuoma, Ihite, Ndiakaba, Umuaku and Alukabia

As we explained, after the recognition of the five autonomous communities from Anambra East and West the Governor's office and the State Legislative Assembly were flooded with demands for new autonomous communities. The lobby by vested interest was so intense that the House hurriedly passed a bill, called Autonomous Communities Recognition law, 2002 which sought to make provisions for the recognition of autonomous communities in Anambra state, and for other incidental matters connected with it. It was on the basis of that law that the above sixty-eight autonomous communities were created. The lobby of the protagonists overwhelmed the opposition. Many of the Igwe of the existing communities did not want the slashing of their dominion or areas of control. They wanted the status quo to remain. But the elites from the new Communities spared no efforts to see that their new communities were carved out and recognized by the state government. The referenda stipulated by the law were rushed and manipulated in some communities to ensure that the creation was actualized despite the opposition from the conservatives. Some unworthy communities were created due to irresistible lobbies from some people who wanted to enjoy the benefits of autonomy and particularly from some wealthy people who wanted to upgrade their status by aspiring to the traditional ruler stools of the new autonomous communities. Some existing traditional rulers did not like to live and see their prestigious positions bastardized by the entry of some people they felt were not qualified to join the prestigious elite group of traditional rulers, so we had two groups pitted against each other, in each of the existing communities from which autonomy was sought.

As soon as Mbadinuju left as Governor of Anambra State those opposing the creation of new autonomous communities reached Ngige and his House of Assembly castigating the previous Administration for creating what they regarded as mushroom, unviable autonomous communities. So in 2004 the Administration of Dr. Chris Nwabueze Ngige repealed the autonomous communities (Recognition) Law 2002 with Autonomous communities (Recognition) Repeal law 2004 which in effect cancelled the recognition given to the 68 new autonomous communities of Mbadinuju Administration. It was a deadly blow given to some personalities who were already parading themselves as the traditional rulers (Igwe) of their newly created or recognized autonomous communities.

The expected happened when sixteen persons representing sixteen of the annulled 68 autonomous communities headed for the High court of Anambra State sitting at Awka. The communities represented in suit No. A/98/2004 challenging the cancellation of their autonomies were Isioba, UruaguNnewi, Isuanaoma, IfiteAguleri, Umuchiana, UgwuAwgbu, EnugwuAdazi, IfiteAmanuke, IgboezuluAguleri, Isiachina, IkengaNri, Osete, Ibughibu, AwudaNnobi, Achaia Ukwu and Akwaezeakaenyi. The defendants in the case were, Anambra State House of Assembly, Anambra State Government, and Attorney-General of Anambra State, Hon Mike Balonwu Speaker Anambra State House of Assembly and the Clerk of Anarnbra State House of Assembly. The presiding Judge was His Lordship Hon. Justice Umegbolu Nn Chief Justice of Anambra State.

In his judgment dated Monday 11th December, 2006 Justice Umegbolu gave judgment to the plaintiffs, of which Anambra State under Mr. Peter Obi appealed against Umegbolu's Judgment at the Court of Appeal at Enugu and obtained a judgment

sustaining the Anambra State Autonomous communities (Recognition) Repeal Law of 2004 which nullified the autonomy of the 68 newly created Autonomous communities in the state, protagonists of the autonomies have since gone to Supreme Court of Abuja to have their autonomies restored. All fingers are crossed until the Supreme Court gives its judgment on the appeal.

Some people in Anambra state loathe the idea to indiscriminate proliferation of autonomous communities in Anambra state as they alleged was done in Abia state. Some maintain that even if the 68 communities were allowed in Anambra State it is still within a sensible range; even as some again still prefer the present number or just a little more additional autonomous community. It is the similar argument that people make for the creation of more states and more local government areas so that dividends of democracy would reach the grassroots, while others are bothered by the high cost of administering more autonomous communities, more wards, more local governments and more states. It is the position of this paper, that the 68 autonomous communities currently in Supreme Court are qualified to be recognized as an independent community. The population of Anambra State is large enough to create more autonomous communities in the state to drive development to the grassroots.

Striking The Balance Between Integration and Disintegration in the Autonomous Creation in Southeast Nigeria

To write of striking a balance between integration and disintegration is to get involved very seriously in value judgment, as is commonly said in popular parlance that one man's meat is another man's poison. Of course, politics is characterized by value judgment, for David Easton identified the political system as being concerned with "the authoritative allocation of values for a society, David Easton (1960). The institution or structure that makes the authoritative decision of where the community or society would stay within the continuum of integration-disintegration range is very much involved in value judgment of where it thinks would best suit the overall interest of the leadership, and people. (Aghadiuno, 2016)

Within the community or society, interests are diverse, for while some of the decision makers tilt to the ideological left, some are inclined to the right. Some leaders prefer the middle between the left and the right, while some others prefer a little to the left and a little to the right. In concrete terms some community leaders are in love with large communities and would like their community to remain large and not fragmented into smaller autonomous communities. Yet some other political elites may think that their community and their people stand to gain materially and otherwise when it is split into two or more autonomous communities. This class of people has their eyes on government resources being allocated to each autonomous community. There may be some community leaders whose interest in splitting their community into two or more autonomous communities is based on their ambition to aspire to the position of the traditional ruler or the president general which eludes them in the existing large community (Aghadinuno 2016).

In Europe we witnessed the enthusiasm that led to the creation of nation states in what historians branded 'Nationalism'. Not too long after the cooling of the spirit of nationalism, we witnessed an upsurge in opposite direction seeking unification of all European States in what is known today as European Union (EU). In less than 50 years of the union, the Europe is now engulfed with desire for Autonomy occasioned by Brexits (Britain Exits) and quest for Multilevel governance, recognizing smaller independent entities and Nationality, (Amali, 2023)

The balance in the defunct Union of Socialists Soviet Republic (USSR) was tilted towards integration until centrifugal forces set in and dismembered the Soviet Union into smaller independent and autonomous countries. Africa was originally made up of small tribal independent groups until the European scramble for Africa took place in the 19th century, resulting in the unification of discrete nations to suit the economic interests of the European Colonial masters. The Berlin conference of 1884 -1885 laid down the principles of European demarcation of Africa into Colonial territories. It was in that spirit of economic interest to the metropolitan Britain that Lord Lugard integrated and amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates into one country which he called Nigeria, on January 1st 1914.

Diverse interests led to the creation of the Mid-West Region as the fourth region in Nigeria after, Northern, Eastern and Western Regions. The pendulum of integration swung towards disintegration in 1967 when Lt Col Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, reacting to Lt Col Yakubu Gowon's creation of 12-state structure for Nigeria and the pogrom unleashed on the Igbos, led the Eastern Region to opt out of Nigeria as he declared the sovereign state of Biafra. After a gruesome war lasting for about three years, (1967-70) the Biafran secession was brought to an end and the 12-state structure prevailed, as one Nigeria. A renewed urge for the restoration of the Sovereign State of Biafra has re-surfaced under the leadership of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and his Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), (Amali, 2023; Aghadiuno 2016)

The Nigerian pendulum continued swinging and the Military Administrations ended up with the creation of 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja, just to satisfy various interests and demands. The Local Governments in Nigeria similarly grew to 774. One may ask whether the Federal Government of Nigeria has struck an acceptable balance in its structure. The Igbos of South East Nigeria and some other ethnic groups will definitely tell you that the structure is lopsided in their disfavor. As the Igbos argue, the South East zone is the only Zone in Nigeria with only five states while other zones have six states each and the North West, seven. This deprivation manifests in the allocation of least resources to the southeast zone against the Northern and country which he called diverse interests led to the creation of the fourth region in mid-Western Regions.

This less state and refusal to create another state amount to shortfall in the resources to the zone from the Federal Government. The zone is also marginalized in terms of the number of local government areas, the number of Senators and representatives to the House of Representatives, as well as Ministers and other political appointees based on number of states and local governments. The present Administration has been bombarded with demands for the creation of new states and local governments. At the last count we have demands for over 88 new states. It is our hope that the Federal Government will strike the right balance in the demand to create or not create new states and new Local Government Areas to the satisfaction of the greater number of its citizens, and for equity, justice and good governance (Aghadinuno 2016). Our sojourn into national politics should not deviate us from the local issue of striking a balance between creating and not creating new autonomous communities in southeast even though the issues are similar.

As we stated earlier, it was out of intense demand or lobby made by some important personalities in Anambra state that Dr. Chinwoke Mbadinuju's Administration (1999-2003) created 68 new autonomous communities. It was due to counter demands and lobbies that Dr. Nwabueze Ngige's Administration (2003-2006) annulled the creation. Mr. Peter Obi's Administration (2006-2014) toed the line of Dr. Ngige by supporting the annulment in the Appeal court of Enugu. Peter's support was based on the inputs from the political system

which castigated Dr. Mbadinuju for creating what some analysts' labeled "mush-room" autonomous communities (Aghadiuno, 2016).

Although the Igwe of Ukwalla, HRH Joseph Ajado, Chief JC Nwakpadolu the Chairman of 68 Autonomous Communities in Anambra State and many other stakeholders in Anambra as our key informant interviews shows supported the creation of the 68 autonomous communities in Anambra State when they contended that their creation was still within "a sensible limit," though they were quick in castigating Abia and Imo states for turning tiny villages into autonomous communities with their numerous 'Ezes' receiving salaries from the scarce resources of their respective state governments. The demands to create and not create new autonomous communities in southeast Nigeria will continue just as the demands for the creation of new states in Nigeria will continue until the concerned state governments and the Federal Government strike acceptable balance in the structure of the communities and the society based on equitable allocation of scarce resources and good grass-root governance, (Amali, 2023).

There used to be one Adazi which based on good local judgment gave birth to Adazi-Enu, Adazi-Ani and Adazi-Nnukwu. There used to be one Ukpo but good judgment led to the creation of IfiteDunu out of Ukpo. Similarly, there used to be one Anam, but due to growth, they agreed to have five autonomous Anam communities. There used to be one Aguleri community which gave birth to now five autonomous communities approved by government.

In taking the delicate decision relating to integration or disintegration, separation or amalgamation, leaders should be careful to obtain the opinion of the generality of the people and ensure the maximization of the peoples' interests, not only in the short run but also in the long run. In the current demands for community autonomy in Anambra state, the leaders and the led should seek the face and the guiding hand of God to enable them strike the balance between integration and disintegration. The guiding principle should be the optimum benefit, justice, fairness and satisfaction of the generality of the people.

Community as Fourthtier Governance in Anambra State

In ancient time a group of people in Igboland Southeast Nigeria, might settle wherever they fancied and take care of their own, welfare without interference from any quarters. Eventually the settlement grew as the population grew and villages emerged. The settlement had a name with which all the villagers identified themselves. This is the entity the Igbos call a community. The inhabitants introduced themselves by saying that they come from such and such community or town. In all intents and purposes, such community with all the villages therein governed itself (Ajamma, 2005; Aghaduno 2016; Amali 2023).

The community accepted some people especially the elders to make certain decisions on its behalf as its leaders. Some age grades were assigned some roles. Such Community becomes a typical autonomous Igbo community, and there were so many communities like it. When the colonial masters came, they started a slow process of restructuring, rationalizing and recognizing communities for administrative purposes. They created what came to be known as warrant chiefs to help them administer the autonomous communities they recognized. That was how the colonial masters and their agents started a process of recognizing groups or settlements as autonomous or self-governing communities. For instance, it was the colonial Administrator of Onitsha district called Perkins who, in 1958, saw the need to recognize EziaguluOtu and EnuguOtu, Mkpunando as autonomous communities. Hitherto both communities had existed as

autonomous communities but without recognition from Government (Aghadunu, 2016). At that early time as of now, the elders had some leadership roles to play in southeast Nigeria in a system generally called gerontocracy or rule by the elders. Igbo communities had been democratic and republican in their governance and, unlike the Yorubas and Hausas; they had no powerful kings like the Obas and Emirs. That is not to say that they had no prominent people who played some roles in community governance. By and large the Igbos had depended on the elders and community assemblies and some titled men, like NdiOzo, to make authoritative decisions for their communities. It was some of these prominent Community Leaders that were made warrant chiefs by the colonial administrators. All Igbo communities were autonomous in the sense that they independently made decisions relating to their welfare and community governance. However, the warrant chiefs were in charge of collecting taxes for their colonial masters and for enforcing colonial criminal laws (Ajamma 2005; Aghaduno 2016; Amali, 2023).

In 1976, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced three tier system of government with the local government constituting the third tier. With the prominence given to local Administration, the Igbos started emphasizing Community Administration. Sequel to the Local Government reform of 1976, the old Anambra State Government introduced the concept of Traditional Ruler for each autonomous community. Professor Godwin Odenigwe, as the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy matters called the traditional rulers of the then Anambra State the "Igwe" of their respective communities. Hitherto Igbo communities had no kings, no Ezes and no Traditional Rulers. To qualify as a community, you must be recognized by the state government, and the traditional ruler or Igwe was also subjected to an agreed procedure for recognition. Apart from the prestige attached to the recognized Igwe, certain stipends began to accrue to him for the roles he played in the governance of the community (Anambra Traditional edit 1981).

Some villages or communities which could not scale the huddles of the initial recognitions started to mobilize and position themselves for recognition. Potential notables' stakeholders, who desired to wear the toga the prestigious traditional ruler or Igwe, geared up and position their community to be recognized as a community, (Amali, 2023). So, originally, every group of Igbo settlement was independent or autonomous as it took charge of governance without reference to any other external body. Local Government Administration needed a well-structured community administration and hence Governments started paying attention to the number and structure of communities in its domain. The responsibility fell on State Governments to create or recognize communities throughout Anambra state.

The Administration of Gov Willie Obiano (2014-2021) further elevated the status of the Communities to what he termed "Fourth tier of government" in 2016 when he began a project of 20-million-naira Community chose your project initiative. He argued during the 2017 Anambra Budget presentation that the Anambra model had moved from third tier of federal, state and local government to fourth tier model that now include Community and town government. Therefore, according to him, Anambra State has federal, state, local and community government to drive her development initiatives for the people. To give effect to this, the government developed a community based Vigilante group, through a state government law passed and amended in 2017. The amended law made the Community Igwe the Chief Security Officer of the Community and Chairman of the Community Security Committee. The Community vigilante amended law also recognized the Community President-General who is the administrative head of the community as the

Secretary of a three-man security committee of the Community, while the community vigilante chairman often called CSO (Chief Security Officer) make up the three-man security committee of the community as a member of the committee. Each of the 179 recognized Communities in the state has 20 vigilante officers whom the state government pay ten thousand Naira only monthly wages, except that Onitsha and Obosi Communities where increased to 40 each due to its population and its strategic position as the commercial city of the state. The improved package also made government to increase the monthly wages of the traditional Rulers to 150 thousand naira while the President-General wages was increased from 20 thousand naira to 80 thousand naira only in 2017. The ministry of Local Government Affairs was subsequently changed to become Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Community Affairs, with additional office known as Office of Special Adviser to Governor on Community and Town Union Affairs.

With this model of governance, Anambra State government under the administration of Gov. Willie Mmaduaburochukwu Obiano, turn the Community and Town Unions as its arm of government and force all the communities in the state to become APGA political party communities. Though it helps to deepen APGA party in the state, but it allows the government to interfere in the affairs of the town union and the community with scale of impunity never seen in the state before. The government interference becomes unbearable as the government through the ministry of Local government, Chieftaincy and Community Affairs, ensured that all the Igwe and President-General Position are occupied by APGA Political party faithful. The Community Unions and Town Unions of PDP party strong based where dissolved to set up Caretaker Committees to run the affairs of the Community Town Union. The success recorded in turning the PDP party strong based to APGA party Community, ensured that government through the ministry turn the office of the Community President General to political appointment as it dissolved over 50 community elected President generals and appointed their stooge as Caretaker Chairmen of the various communities on any slightest misunderstanding or internal crisis, that ordinary is common within the community administration. These explain why at the end of the tenure of Gov Obiano, over 60 percent of the Communities town Union were headed by Caretaker Committee Chairmen. The Anambra State Traditional Council were not also spared in the politicization of the Community affairs, as any Igwe or traditional Ruler that is not APGA party supporter were disposed and new one appointed. However, it is important to note that some of the issues and crisis that brought about setting of caretaker committee in some communities are internal induced. Some President-general became so powerful and began discriminate sales of community land, hence the community wrote a petition for removal of such President-general, (Amali, 2023).

To give effect to this politicization of the community town unions following the historical Abuja visit of 10 Anambra Traditional rulers to declare support to APC led federal government, government of Willie Obiano, in year 2020, amended the state Traditional ruler's law, to empower the governor to withdraw the certificate of any traditional ruler without recourse to the state legislature. The early law required that the governor to obtain the support of 2/3 of the members of the state Assembly to dispose any traditional ruler, but the amended law now empowered the Governor to dispose a traditional ruler without approval of the state Assembly (Anambra State Traditional ruler amended law 2020).

Now the only extant law of the state that empowers the government to interfere in the administration of the Community town union is the Anambra State Rural development fund edict that was promulgated during the military era. The edict clearly stated that it is

only the Commissioner of Local Government Affairs can sign the letter of removal of the old elected President General and the appointment of new caretaker Committee chairman. But during the administration of Willie Obiano, the Special Adviser to Governor on Community and Town Union Affairs has been the person signing the letters of removal and appointment of the caretaker committee chairmen. The government dissolution of Alor People Assembly elected town union in 2017 prompted Alor Community to sue the state government and obtained judgment in Appeal Court that set aside the dissolution of the Alor People's Assembly elected executive's council. The court held among other things that, Alor Peoples Assembly is an independent body registered with CAC and not an arm of community or a tier of government and therefore, that Anambra State government lack the power to dissolve it elected executives and cannot replace it with a caretaker Committee. In another similar development, the traditional ruler of Enugu-Ukwu Community and the Government of Anambra State connived to remove the elected President-General of Enugu-Ukwu Development Union (EUDU). The EUDU which had been registered with Njikoka LGA council since 1970s went to court to challenge the removal of the town union of the community. The High Court in its ruling held that, the state government cannot dissolve the town union because it is an independent registered association with right to choose its executive members. The court further held that a party which is not a member of the association cannot partake in the selection of the association leaders, hence the caretaker committee was set aside and the elected ones returned to office.

Following the successes of Alor Peoples Assembly and Enugu-Ukwu Development Union in this matter, the Anambra State Association of Town Union (ASATU) lobbied the state government to send executive bill to the state house of Assembly to enact law establishing the Community town Union as a fourth tier of government with all rights and privileges without success during tenure of Chief Alex Onukwube as ASATU National President 2014-2019. The current National President of ASATU Bar Titus Akpudo made effort to give community town union legal backing through its National Legal Adviser Hon Bar Oliver Okonkwo the current President General of Ifite-Ogwari Community, the PG of the home Community of the current Speaker of Anambra State House of Assembly Rt Hon Uche Okafor. During the key informant interview with the National Legal Adviser of ASATU Hon Bar Oliver Okonkwo, he was optimistic in saying that Anambra State government does not have political will to transform the community town unions as fourth tier of government. He argued that when he assumed office as the ASATU national legal adviser, he approached the Chief Clerk of the state Assembly to discuss his intension to bring a private bill to the house for legislation of the town union as a fourth tier of government in the state. He told the Clerk that the law will spell out duties and functions of the traditional rulers and that of the President-generals and set up proper government in local communities. As the governor Obiano had pronounced the Community Town Unions as a fourth tier of government in the state. In his response, Hon Bar Okonkwo reported that the Chief Clerk advised him to approach a house member to bring up the bill rather than private bill. He informed him that during the Mr. Peter Obi Administration (2006-2014), two state house members of ACN Party in the persons of Hon. Tony One-Week Muoanago from Idemili north and Hon Bar Ebere Obi of Idemili south brought such bill but it could not succeed as the house could not pass it. It dies before the second reading. Hon Bar Oliver Okonkwo also reported that his discussion with the Speaker of the state house of Assembly Rt Hon Uche Okafor shows that indeed Government was not ready to legalized the community government. Responding to the question why government did

not want a law to establish town union as a fourth tier of government, Bar Okonkwo said that the government does not want to take up the responsibility of providing another government in the state. It uses town union to siphon government resources and interfere in the affairs of the community. Bar Okonkwo came to conclusion that town unions and communities are centers of development as far as the N20 million community choose your project initiative was concern. He however agreed that it helped to deepen APGA political party in the state and helped to bring minimal infrastructural development in the communities of the state.

In their separate response during our oral face to face interview, both Rt Hon Uche Episine Okafor (The State Speaker) and Chief Clark of the State House of Assembly added that the reason why government and the state house cannot pass such bill now is that it will increase the cost of governance in the mist of the poor revenue generation and collection. They were however hopeful that in no distance time, the state will transform the town union governance to government with enabling laws to galvanize local development of the state. In a further, key informant interview with the Hon Commissioner of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Community Affairs Hon Collins Nwabunwanne and Hon Special Adviser to Governor on Community and Town Union Affairs Hon Bar Vera-Queen Okonkwo in their separate response that the government have powers to transform the community and town union to a tier of government as local government affairs are in the concurrent and residual list provided in the 1999 Nigeria constitution. However, they opined that the poor revenue of the state was a great impediment to the actualization of that objective. When reminded that Gov. Willie Obiano, had argued that community and town union where now fourth tier of government in Anambra State during the 2017 budget presentation, Hon Vera-Queen Okonkwo averred that, at that time, the government had intension to pass a law to recognize the town and communities as fourth tier of government but regretted that the recession and low financial income of the state during the period could not help the matter. She was however hopeful that the model of Anambra State community governance shall eventually become fourth tier in the future. In his response to our oral face to face interview, the National President of ASATU, Hon Bar Titus Akpudo of Eziowe community in Anambra central argued that the continued government inability to pass law of community governance, has continued to breed crisis and conflict in the communities between the traditional rulers and the President generals of the communities. He was optimistic in saying that the benefit of such law shall be more that its demerit as it will clearly have spelt out the duties and functions of all the principal leaders of the community. Bar Akpudo therefore appeal on the government to send an executive bill to state government in that regard. Therefore, the Community Town Unions are not fourth tier of government in Anambra state! It is not a tier of government because there is no legal law recognizing it to be a tier of government. This lack of law with a clear set out duties and functions for the President General and Traditional rulers bring crisis and power tussle between the two community leaders. The President Generals often sees themselves as the executive arm and the head of the community government arguing that the Traditional rulers are only in charge of culture and tradition of the community. The traditional rulers on the other hand argued that they are the head of both the government and tradition of the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion it is important to posit here that this paper uphold the need to recognize the 68 autonomous communities currently in Supreme Court because of its sociopolitical and

economic values it will add to the state. If that is done it will bring the total number of the communities of the state to 247 which is still reasonable compare to the numbers in other state of the southeast zone, considering the fact that the state is more populated than other states of the zone. The paper also confirms that town and communities in Anambra state are not fourth tier of government as Gov Obiano opined in 2017 but a development centers aimed at bringing development to the grassroots. The autonomous community creation in Southeast Zone, therefore is an alternative to Local Government creation that has become problematic due to constitutional lapses in 1999 constitution.

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