

## **Nigerian State and the Dialectics of Self-Determination Agitation: A Study of Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, 2012 -2024**

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### **Abstract**

*This interrogates the clamour by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for self-determination which started with the emergence of the organisation in 2012 as founded by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The IPOB group believes that the Igbo has suffered great injustice and marginalisation which none of the past and present government administrations ever made any deliberate attempt to address. As a result, the group agitates for the independence of the Igbo ethnic nationality and demands that referendum be administered to that effect. The Nigerian government has refused to discuss the self-determination demand of the IPOB group. The only government response to the self-determination agitation of the IPOB group has been force or repression. This article investigated how the inherited colonial legacies characterise the state behaviour in post-colonial Nigeria, and how the repressive state behaviour to separatist agitation has continued to shape and reshape the self-determination agitation of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group in Nigeria. The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The instruments of primary data collection were Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD), while secondary data sources include text books, newspapers, official publications, journal publications and internet sources. The data collected were textually analyzed. The article found out that the Igbo people has suffered marginalisation, political exclusion and injustice. The IPOB group has lost total trust in Nigerian government and wants the Igbo to have a separate state from Nigeria. The article recommends that the political class should shun selfish interests and eliminate the vices that keep the country underdeveloped; the government should address the complaint of marginalisation against the South-East and organise the administration of referendum just as British Government did for the Scottish people.*

**Key words:** Agitation, Biafra, character, self-determination, state.

### **Introduction**

Self-determination moves have been part of Nigeria's experiences over the years which has exposed the shallowness of the Nigerian state. The demand for self-determination by ethnic nationalities in Nigeria has intensified in recent decades. To understand why and its current drivers, one has to go back in time and look at how the Nigeria state emerged. The Nigerian state is a colonial contraption. The amalgamation brought the various ethnic groups into one political entity called Nigeria. But it was done without consultation or dialogue and consensus by the ethnic groups it joined together under one sovereign political authority. It has been argued that the amalgamation was driven mainly by the economic interest of the colonial power (Britain) and the need for administrative convenience (Rodney, 1972; Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2005). Since the amalgamation, Nigeria

has existed as one country only on paper, but the Nigerian people do not show any willingness to be one people.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group has been involved in a series of agitations for the restoration of the Republic of Biafra. The recent clamour for self-determination or independence Biafra started in 1999 about four decades after the Nigerian-Biafran civil war (1967 – 1970). The Igbo (Eastern Region of Nigeria in 1967 seceded from the rest of Nigerian state to form a new state known as the Republic of Biafra. The Igbo who claim to be Biafrans and not Nigerians regrouped into neo-Biafra movements with the two principal organisations being the Movement for the Actualisation of State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). However, the self-determination of Indigenous People of Biafra kicked off in 2012 with Mazi Nnamdi Kanu as the founder (Okeke, 2016).

This article is ignited by the fact that even though the Nigerian people are different in ethnicity, religion, beliefs and customs without the willingness to unite and the IPOB having the right to self-determination has agitated several times for independence of Biafra yet the Nigerian government is adamant to discuss it or organise referendum to that effect. Instead, there have been several attempts by the Nigerian state to quench the self-determination agitation with the state apparatuses of force as indicated by the military crackdown on IPOB group members which have led to the deaths of many IPOB protesters. The report of Amnesty International investigation published on November 24, 2016, stated that “the Nigerian security forces, led by the military embarked on a chilling campaign of extrajudicial executions and violence resulting in the deaths of at least 150 peaceful pro-Biafra protesters in the south east of the country”. Furthermore, in September 2017, the Nigerian military announced Operation Python Dance 1 and 11 against the pro-Biafra agitators (Daily Post Newspaper September 8, 2017). The agitation of the IPOB group is a response to the behaviour of the Nigerian state and the IPOB self-determination agitation has also been exacerbated by the aggressive state behaviour of Nigerian government. The military crackdown on the IPOB self-determination agitators confirms the submission of Ake (1996) that the post-colonial state like the colonial state remains as much in the same character parasitic, arbitrary and absolute, always relying on violence to maintain even obedience.

This article examines how state behaviour accounts for the self-determination agitation of the IPOB and how the repressive government’s response to the self-determination has turned the IPOB group from a non-violent to a violent organization

### **The Character of Post-Colonial Nigerian State**

The term "State" was first used in scientific discussion by Niccolo Machiavelli (Biereenu-Nnabugwu 2005, P. 45), and has been defined by different scholars in different ways. Anifowose, (1999, P. 85) defines state as "the basic political unit, a grouping of individuals who are organised in a defined territory for the pursuit of secular common welfare, the maintenance of law and order and the carrying out of external relations with other groups similarly organised". He explained further that a state has “a constitution, a code of laws, a way of setting up its government and a body of citizens”. For Almond (2004, P. 11) "a state is a political system that has sovereignty - independent legal authority over a population in a particular territory, based on recognised right to self-determination". In line with the foregoing, Kegley (2007, P. 7) posits a state is "an independent, territorially defined community in the global system administered by a sovereign government". In Europe, state was created to solve the problem in West Europe, while state was created in

Africa by the colonialists for easy administration and exploitation of their colonies. Thus, the colonial state bastardised the precolonial state formations or societies in Nigeria. For example, the Igbo age-grade which was a structure of political order and social control was weakened (Biereenu-Nnabugwu 2012, P. 2).

The conditions in the postcolonial Nigerian are colonial legacies. The origin of weak and corruption-ridden economy (Chikendu, 2003), the use of ethnicity by the political class as a tool for achievement of political interests (Nnoli, 1980; Ake, 1981), the use of state power as an instrument of wealth acquisition (Fanon, 1961; Ake, 1981), the absoluteness and arbitrariness of state power or state violence (Ake, 1996), et cetera could be traced to colonial period. In other words, the character of the post-colonial state in Nigeria was inherited from the colonial state. This section focuses on the behaviour of state in post-colonial Nigeria.

The character of corruption has been a prevalent social phenomenon in Nigeria right from the colonial era to the present post-colonial Nigeria. Colonialism set the pace for corruption in Nigerian public and private institutions (Chikendu 2003, P. 58; Oddih 2003, P. 330). In the pre-colonial Africa, people were honest, humble and disciplined with a high sense of love, justice and equity (Kouassi, 2008; Tangie, 2004).

Nnoli (1980) posited that ethnicity had no place in the pre-colonial societies. He explained that the colonial powers concentrated at the urban centres to enable them harness the natural resources. This made the colonized people to look for greener pastures which the life in the village could not offer them. As the people interacted in the city-centres, they developed the ethnic consciousness which was never in existence in the pre-colonial societies. He further explained that the colonialists separated linguistic groups from one another in the residential areas. Thus, ethnicity as a tool of domination was first used by the colonialists to divide the people along communal lines in order to maintain the superiority over them.

The political class in Nigeria inherited the colonialist accumulation system. Fanon in Okeke (2012, P. 196) emphasized that the greed of the native or African bourgeoisie (the political class in the post-colonial African countries) makes them to loot their countries and also allow the foreign capitalists to loot. In line with the foregoing, Fadakinte avers that the period of nationalist movement was a period of intense struggle between the dominant indigenous social class struggle and the metropolitan bourgeoisie in which they engaged in was battle for the control of state apparatus. Then, soon after the independence, the nationalist leaders assumed the positions of authority and were not bothered about the poor conditions of their people and the inherent injustice and oppression on the Nigerian masses. State power became ultimate and turned most useful instrument in the society to acquire and wield control (Fadakinte, 2013).

Marginalisation is one of the vices which characterise the Nigerian state. According to Onimisi, Samsu, Ismail and Nor (2018), "one of the major problems confronting Nigeria as a country is the high level of inequality and marginalisation across Nigeria. Therefore, the federal government of Nigeria established the Federal Character Principle as a policy measure to check the problem of inequality and marginalisation that have led to the lopsidedness in the country". Adangor (2017) explained that "the problem with Nigeria is not necessarily ethno-cultural heterogeneity or divisive colonial experience but one of an unjust and discriminatory federal system that has been manipulated to favour one ethnic group at the expense of the others".

Marginalisation has been defined by various scholars. In Oshewolo (2011), Ojukwu defined marginalisation as "a state of relative deprivation, a deliberate disempowerment

of people by group or groups that during a relevant time frame, wields political power and control the allocation of material and resources at the centre". Obianyo (2007) defines it as "neglect, non-involvement or inequity in the distribution of the socio-economic and political resources of the state or indices of development". The ethnic group that suffers marginalisation most in Nigeria has been the Igbo ethnic nationality.

In his book *Democracy and Development in Africa*, Ake asserted that absolutism and its arbitrariness are the two features which framed colonial politics". He explained that the two features remained the character of the post-colonial state. Thus, he stated that "although political independence brought some change to the composition of the state managers, the character of the state remained much as it was in the colonial era. It continued to be totalistic in scope, constituting a static economy. It presented itself as an apparatus of violence, had a narrow social base, and relied for compliance on coercion rather than authority" (Ake 1996, P. 3). Ake described the post-colonial state as an apparatus of violence. In other words, the postcolonial state is characterised by state violence or repression. He explained that the state relies on the use of force (coercion), instead of authority to get compliance from its citizens. State violence is defined as "the deployment of state security forces such as the military, police, intelligence and paramilitary agencies, among others to monitor, suppress or clampdown real threat capable of causing instability within a country through the use of monopoly of force in state disposal" (Onuoha and Okafor, 2020) .

### **Theoretical Framework: Theory of Overdeveloped State**

Theory of overdeveloped state is Hamza Alavi's theory that explains the underdevelopment conditions in post-colonial societies. In other words, the theory of overdeveloped state is a theory Hamza Alavi used to explain underdevelopment in post-colonial societies. Alavi's argument is that the underdevelopment in postcolonial societies was structured by the colonial historical experience where the state superstructure is overdeveloped vis-à-vis the substructure. According to Alavi, "the essential problem about the state in post-colonial societies stems from the fact that it is not established by an ascendant native bourgeoisie but instead by a foreign imperialist bourgeoisie. At independence, however, the direct command of the latter over the colonial state is ended. But, by the same token, its influence over it is by no means brought to an end. The metropolitan bourgeoisie, now joined by other neo-colonialist bourgeoisie, is present in the postcolonial society. Together they constitute a powerful element in its class structure. The relationship between neo-colonialist bourgeoisies and the post-colonial state is clearly of a different order from that which existed between the imperialist bourgeoisie and the colonial state. The class basis of the postcolonial state is therefore complex" (Alavi, 1972).

Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2021) explained that theory of overdeveloped state "characterises state in postcolonial social formations and posits that postcolonial state have powers that are far beyond what is necessary for their functioning. This is because postcolonial states inherited overdeveloped apparatus of state and its institutionalized practices through which the operations of indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled". The political class in postcolonial state wields power more than is necessary and this suppresses the economic sphere.

The concept of overdeveloped state as thought by Hamza Alavi does not mean that Nigeria and other postcolonial societies are developed, rather the superstructure (political sphere) of the state apparatus is overdeveloped vis-à-vis the substructure (economy). The political sphere of postcolonial state is overdeveloped above the economy, which is the

basis for development. The substructure (foundation of development) cannot carry the superstructure (upper structure). The superstructure suppresses the substructure. This was initially as a result of the imposition of foreign rule and its capitalist mode of production but sustained by the native bourgeoisie and their neo-imperialist counterparts. The suppression of the economy by the political sphere causes underdevelopment in postcolonial societies which reflects in poverty, unemployment, crises, et cetera. The idea of relative autonomy was proposed as a solution to the independent economic base of the propertied classes that exists within the state.

### **IPOB's Self-Determination Agitation: A Response to the Character of the Nigerian State**

Among the vices which led to the agitation for self-determination was perceived as injustice and marginalisation. Amanambu (2017) asserts that the suppression, injustice and marginalisation against the Igbo ethnic group was structured by British administration. He gave example of the experience of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe during the colonial period, who lamented the economic cum political persecution against the Igbo on a Saturday in June, 1949, during his speech at the Igbo State Assembly (ISA) meeting at Aba (in the present day Abia state). In consonance with Amanambu's assertion, Obianyo (2007) avers that the attack and marginalisation of the Igbo pre-dates the independence of Nigeria. She explained that it started with the exclusion of Nnamdi Azikiwe from the legislature by the Western House of Assembly in 1951; the massacre of the Igbo in the northern part of the country (1966-67 pogrom) which led to secessionist policy of the Eastern Region, and the immediate post war policies embarked by the federal military government geared towards economic strangulation of the Igbo. The post war policies include: (1) The seizure of landed properties owned by the Igbo in the old Rivers State, the policy known as Abandoned Property Policy. (2) The 20 pounds (£20) flat exchange for all cash deposit by the Igbo into any Nigerian bank. (3) The indigenization of all foreign industries in Nigeria at a time Igbo could not afford such property. (4) The non-absorption of the Igbo military officers back into Nigerian Army. (5) The non-absorption of Igbo civil servants back into national service. (6) The non-implementation of the Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation (the three Rs) policy. The Igbo rehabilitated themselves and bounced back so well because of the hardworking nature of the Igbo.

The exclusion of Igbo person in the first and second batches of federal appointments of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration hatred against the Igbo ethnic nationality in a federal state, and this fuels self-determination agitation of the IPOB group. Not even one out of the twenty-six (26) appointments and two (2) replacements was given to an Igbo person. This is injustice cum marginalisation and contrary to the provisions of the federal character principle. Amanambu (2017) thus stated that "this is the first time nobody from the South-East geo-political zone is represented in the national security meeting". The refusal of the federal government to create additional one core Igbo state which will make the South-East state equal with other four geo-political zones that has six states each is an act of injustice cum marginalisation. The following are the six geo-political zones that made-up Nigeria and the number of state each has: North-West zone (seven states), North-Central zone (six states), North-East zone (six states), South-West zone (six states), South-South zone (six states) and South-East zone (five states) (Onu, Chimaogu, Chimaogu, 2022).

The major reason for the continued demands for the secession of Igbo from Nigeria, as championed by the IPOB is the deliberate marginalisation of the people of the southeast from the political and economic affairs of the country. The group believes that the only

way out of the oppression of Igbo in the Nigerian society is the independence of the Igbo through the administration of referendum and the implementation of the choice of the majority of the Igbo. The Nigerian government's response to IPOB separatist agitations has been aggression. The results of the aggressive government response is often casualties, ethnic cum political tensions which harden the separatist agitators and fuel their agitation. The government's use of state apparatuses of force to quell separatist agitations has continued to exacerbate separatist agitation in the country. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has been in existence since 2012, while Goodluck Jonathan was still on seat as Nigerian president. On May 29, 2015, Goodluck Jonathan completed his tenure of office. This means that he ruled the country three years of IPOB's existence. During his tenure, there was no news of military crackdown on IPOB members, neither was any member of the group nor the leader arrested and detained. Meanwhile, IPOB group has been having rallies, marches, gatherings and radio broadcast via Radio Biafra Channel. In as much as Goodluck Jonathan did not address the IPOB grievances, he did not send security agencies against protesters. He ignored the group and their activities thereby relative peace was enjoyed in the country with respect to separatist agitation in Nigeria. The new wave of IPOB separatist agitation kicked off with the arrest and detention of the leader of the group, Nnamdi Kanu, on October 17, 2015, few months after the May 29, 2015 swearing in ceremony of President Muhammad Buhari. Amamkpa and Mbakwe (2015) averred that Kanu's arrest aggravated the self-determination agitation, turning the agitation to a more violent form of protests and demonstrations in South-East and some South-South states. These led to pro-Biafra protesters and Joint Task Force clashes, resulting in the deaths of many protesters, police officers and some members of the Joint Task Force team.

The attempt by the Nigerian government to quench IPOB separatist agitation has made the group more aggressive in their approach, rather than relent in their struggle or demands. In 2019, IPOB attacked Senator Ike Ekweremadu when he attended the Second Cultural Festival and Convention in Germany. The group gave their reason for the attack to be in keeping with the directive from the leader to hound all instigators of Operation Python Dance (Chukwudi, Gberevbie, Abasilim and Imhonopi, 2019).

In a statement issued by the IPOB Media and Publicity Secretary, Emma Powerful, stated that "the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has declared every Monday a sit-at-home day starting from August 9, until its leader Nnamdi Kanu is released from prison. He explained that the Monday sit-at-home orders was designed to show the world that the group is serious and determined in their freedom fight (*This Day Live* July 30, 2021). The IPOB Monday sit-at-home order has lasted from August 9, 2021, to date because the group's leader has not been released from the Federal Government detention. The sit-at-home order has negatively impacted, not only the economic activities cum economy of the southeast states but the whole federation as well. Southeast states have businesses, markets and companies that provide goods and services across the country.

Table 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW (KII) QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES PART A

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<p>QUESTION 1: What do you think are the causes of IPOB self-determination agitation?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Non-implementation of the 3Rs after the Biafran war which birthed a feeling of neglect in the Igbo</li> <li>3 Marginalisation of the South-East people</li> <li>4 Inequalities in the distribution of social amenities and infrastructural facilities</li> <li>5 Political exclusion of the Igbo at the apex leadership of the country</li> <li>6 leadership failure at the federal level</li> <li>7 Federal government's injustice against the Igbo</li> <li>8 Socio-economic hardship in the country</li> <li>9 Undue detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu</li> </ol>
<p>QUESTION 2: How would you describe the Nigerian state behaviour towards the IPOB self-determination agitation and agitators?</p>	<p>The state behaviour to IPOB self-determination agitation and agitators is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aggressive</li> <li>2. Repressive</li> <li>3. Suppressive</li> <li>4. Unjust</li> </ol>
<p>QUESTION 3: The government's aggressive response to IPOB separatist group instead of quenching the agitation has exacerbated the struggle for independence. Do you think that the government's aggressive and repressive responses to IPOB group will eventually quench the self-determination struggle?</p>	<p>The government's aggressive response to IPOB group will not quench the self-determination agitation rather it makes the agitators employ violent strategies.</p>

The causes of the IPOB self-determination struggle as outlined by the respondents are: one, non-implementation of the 3Rs after the Biafran war which birthed a feeling of neglect in the Igbo. Two, the marginalisation of the South-East people. Three, inequalities in the distribution of social amenities and infrastructural facilities. Four, political exclusion of the Igbo at the apex leadership. Five leadership failure at the federal level of government. Six, federal government injustice against the Igbo ethnic nationality. Seven, the socio-economic hardship in the country. And eight, undue detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the group leader.

The state behaviour to IPOB self-determination agitation and agitators is believed to be aggressive, repressive, suppressive and unjust. The respondents are of the opinion that the aggressive government response to IPOB self-determination agitation cannot stop the self-determination struggle. Instead, it exacerbates the struggle for the restoration of the Republic of Biafra.

Table 2: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES PART A

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
QUESTION 1: What do you think are the causes of IPOB self-determination agitation?	.Lack of good governance .Marginalisation of the Igbo .Feelings of frustration with the Nigerian system .Personal interest/aggrandisement .Lack of forgiveness of the wrongs done to the Igbo from the time of independence to events of civil war and post-war policies .Sponsorship of the agitation from foreign partners
QUESTION 2: How would you describe the Nigerian state behaviour towards the IPOB self-determination agitation and agitators?	.Unfriendly .I unconcerned attitude to issues .The Nigerian state is apathetic towards the agitation .High handedness .The Nigerian state behaviour to the agitators is intolerant and unaccommodating .The behaviour could be interpreted as indisposed to any form of peaceful resolution
QUESTION 3: The government's aggressive response to IPOB separatist group instead of quenching the agitation has exacerbated the struggle for independence. Do you think that the government's aggressive and repressive responses to IPOB group will eventually quench the self-determination struggle?	.I don't think aggressive will quench the self-determination struggle. .It will not bring a permanent solution to IPOB agitation. .It can only suppress the group momentarily and will never quench the agitation .Aggression from Nigerian government cannot quench the self-determination struggle because agitation has become the means of livelihood for some agitators. .Aggression may bring temporary result, but as long as the issues that caused the agitation is not handled, the agitators would be provoked to agitate.

The causes of the IPOB self-determination agitation as shared by participants of the FGD include lack of good governance, marginalisation of the Igbo; feelings of frustration with the Nigerian political system; personal interest/aggrandisement; lack of forgiveness of the wrongs done to the Igbo from the time of civil war and post-war issues; sponsorship of the agitation from foreign partners. FGD participants described state behaviour to the IPOB agitation and agitators as unfriendly; reflection of unconcerned attitude to issues; apathetic towards the agitation; high handedness; intolerant and unaccommodating. Also, the behaviour could be interpreted as being indisposed to any form of peaceful resolution. The participants of FGD shared that the government's aggressive and repressive response to IPOB group will not offer a permanent solution to their agitation. It can only suppress them momentarily and turning the agitators to be more violent because violence breeds violence. More so, some of the agitators make money from the agitation and would not like to stop agitation.

### **IPOB'S Self-Determination Agitation and the Future of the Nigerian State**

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has been persistent in the agitation for Igbo nationalism and it has political connotations. There are possibilities that IPOB demand for the restoration of the Republic of Biafra will come true someday because some countries like South Sudan, Bangladesh, East Timor and Eritrea agitated for statehoods and are now

independent countries. Other countries that were once together, but no longer together include USSR and British India.

Many Nigerians advocate for restructuring of the Nigerian political system to reflect true federalism. The advocates of restructuring are of the believe that if the Nigerian system of government reflects true that is based on Federal Character Principle, the problem of marginalisation will be addressed and every ethnic nationality will be satisfied. However, the IPOB group through its spokesman, Emma Powerful, insists that the only solution to the IPOB self-determination agitation is a peaceful separation of Biafra from Nigeria. He averred that Biafra and Nigeria are two different nations which events from 1948-2023 have shown that it is impossible for Biafra and Nigeria to co-exist as one nation. This means that they have no option in their demand for the Republic of Biafra.

Table 3: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW (KII) QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES PART B

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
QUESTION 1: Many IPOB agitators have been beaten, injured and detained while some have been killed in the self-determination struggle, yet the group has remained steadfast. What do you think about the persistence of IPOB separatist agitators?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*It will continue to result to political instability in the country.</li> <li>*It could lead to the emergence of separatist groups in the other regions of the country</li> <li>*It may lead to restructuring of the Nigerian political system in the direction of true federalism.</li> <li>*It could result to disintegration of the country into new states.</li> </ul>
QUESTION 2: What do you suggest federal government should do about IPOB self-determination struggle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*The government should stop being repressive to the separatist agitators.</li> <li>*The government should obey the court order on the immediate release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu.</li> <li>*The government should adopt equity/fairness/equal treatment in administration</li> <li>*The government should restructure the Nigerian system of government to reflect true federalism</li> <li>*The government should invite the agitators for dialogue and negotiation.</li> <li>*The government should organise the administration of referendum to South-East people.</li> </ul>
QUESTION 3: What advice would you give in the Biafra separatist agitators?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*The IPOB group should not let go of the self-determination struggle.</li> <li>*They should not turn self-determination struggle to armed struggle</li> <li>*They should be peaceful in the agitation and protests.</li> <li>*IPOB group should be more organised and sanitised of bad eggs who commit crimes like kidnapping, stealing, killings, et cetera in the name of IPOB. When this is done, Igbo people will love the group more.</li> <li>*They should persistently seek the United Nations Organisation’s intervention until they succeed.</li> </ul>

The KII respondents believe that the outcomes from the persistent independence demand of the IPOB group are that: One, the IPOB self-determination struggle will continue to result to political instability in the country. Two, it could lead to the emergence of separatist groups from other regions of the country. Three, it may lead to restructuring

of the Nigerian political system in the direction of true federalism. Four, it could result to disintegration of the country into new states. And five, it could cause second Nigerian-Biafra civil war.

The following are the suggestions made by the interviewees to the federal government on how to handle the IPOB self-determination struggle. One, the government should stop being repressive to the separatist agitators. Two, the government should obey the court order on the immediate release of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Three, the government should adopt equity/fairness/equal treatment in administration. Four, the government should restructure the Nigerian system of government to reflect true federalism. Five, the government should invite the agitators for dialogue and negotiation. And six, the government should organise the administration of referendum to South-East people.

The interviewees' advice to the Biafra agitators are as follows. One, the IPOB group should not let go of the self-determination struggle. Two, they should not turn self-determination struggle into an armed struggle. Three, they should be peaceful in the protests and agitation. Four, IPOB group should be more organised and sanitised of bad eggs who commit crimes like kidnapping, stealing, killings, et cetera in the name of IPOB. When this is done, Igbo people will love the group more. And five, they should persistently seek the United Nations Organisation's intervention until they succeed.

Table 4: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) QUESTIONS PART B

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
QUESTION 1: Many IPOB agitators have been beaten, injured and detained while some have been killed in the self-determination struggle, yet the group has remained steadfast. What do you think about the persistence of IPOB separatist agitators?	.It shows that they are convinced about the ideals projected by the group leader. .Agitation will continue even if they suffer physical harm. .It shows their loyalty and willingness to die for Biafran course. .It shows that the agitation was not created for political benefits but a true revelation of the marginalisation against the Igbo.
QUESTION 2: What do you suggest federal government should do about IPOB self-determination struggle?	.The government should invite the agitators for dialogue and address the issue of marginalisation. .The government should pursue good governance. .The government should adopt equality, equity, justice and accountability in administration. .The FG should release Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, have a table discussion with him and make him an offer to address the stated issues that caused the agitation.
QUESTION 3: What advice would you give in the Biafra separatist agitators?	.The group should agitate with strategies like the media and international coalition, rather than violence. .The group should employ strategies devoid of violence and threat to security of lives and properties in Igboland. .The group should embrace peace and give room for discussion and dialogue with the federal government.

The persistence of the IPOB group, according to the opinion of FGD participants, shows that they are convinced about the ideals projected by the group leader. The agitation for self-determination will continue even if they suffer physical harm. It shows their loyalty and their willingness to die for the freedom of Biafra. It shows that the agitation was not

created for political benefits but a true revelation of the marginalisation against the Igbo. It reveals that the IPOB agitation has become an ideology. They have been brainwashed and indoctrinated to accept the propaganda of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The agitators is on a revenge mission for the harm security forces inflict on the agitators.

The FGD participants suggest that government should call the agitators for dialogue to address the issue of marginalisation. The government should loosen up, call the agitators for a truth and reconciliation discussion in which all issues raised would be heard and discussed. The government should pursue good governance and provide the citizens dividends of good governance. The government should adopt equality, equity, justice and accountability in administration. The FG should release Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, invite him together with his group to a table discussion and make him an offer to address the stated issues that caused the agitation.

The FGD participants' advice is that IPOB group should agitate with strategies like the media and international coalition, rather than violence. The group should employ a strategy that is devoid of violence and threat to security of lives and properties in Igboland. Also, the group should embrace peace and give room for discussion and dialogue with the federal government.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, the study attests Igbo ethnic nationality has suffered great hatred, injustice and marginalisation in Nigeria, right from the colonial period. Worse still, none of the past and present administrations have made any substantial attempt to address the marginalisation complaint of the Igbo. In practice, appointments and sharing of natural cum economic resources is not based on Federal Character Principle. Some ethnic identities and groups appear to be treated better than Igbo in the distribution of government appointments, social amenities and welfare packages or services. The Igbo ethnic nationality have been marginalised even before Buhari administration but the obvious hatred of his administration and the arrest of the IPOB leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, escalated the agitation for self-determination of Biafra under his administration. Hence, it appears some groups turned violent in their approach to self-determination agitation and apparent counter measures thereby igniting insecurity in the South-East states.

This article makes the following the recommendations. Firstly, the political class in Nigeria should shun every selfishness and rise to the task of elimination of the vices the country inherited from its colonial past which have kept Nigeria underdeveloped and conflict-ridden. The country cannot progress if colonialism is still blamed for the ugly situation in the country over six decades after its independence.

Secondly, the government should endeavour to address the complaint of injustice and marginalisation against the Igbo ethnic nationality and adopt the principle of equity and fairness in its administration and activities. This calls for right implementation of the federal character principles in government appointments. When every ethnic group is treated fairly as provided by the federal character principle, ethnic tensions will be minimised to the barest minimum.

Lastly, the government should organise the administration of independence referendum for South-East people like the British government did for Scottish people. Administration of independence referendum to South-East people does not mean automatic independence to the Igbo people.

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