

Agitations for Self-Determination in Southeast, Nigeria: Causes, Impact and Response

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ABSTRACT

People of the southeast, Nigeria had cordial relationship with the rest of the country prior to January 15, 1966 coup which was misconstrued as Igbo agenda together with General Aguiyi Ironsi's (the then Head of State) failure to execute the coup plotters who lopsidedly killed Northern leaders. This resulted in the July 29, 1966 counter coup which led to radical turn of events for the Southeasterners following an eventual pogrom against them. Over two hundred people of southeast origin were killed in one night in Lagos. Women and children were also killed in the North. The high incidence of massacre made Southeasterners to seek self-determination as their lives and properties appeared unprotected by the Federal government, hence the Nigerian civil war. After the war, government formulated policies that impoverished Southeasterners, ranging from abandoned property to twenty pounds policy and indigenization decree. These policies fueled some feelings of exclusion and marginalization amongst them and have continued to form the basis of their suspicion coupled with herdsmen's nefarious activities which have contributed to renewed agitations for self-determination. Using secondary data derived from scholarly publications, the study adopted social contract theory as the theoretical thrust of the paper to ascertain the causes of continuous agitations for self-determination in southeast, Nigeria. The remote and immediate causes of the agitations were descriptively discussed and analyzed. It was objectively deduced that people of the Southeast are marginalized and excluded in certain critical areas of governance. The study recommended all-inclusiveness among others as panaceas to halt further escalation of agitations.

Keywords: Abandoned property, Agitations, Indigenization decree, Pogrom, Self-determination

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria gained her independence from Britain on October 1, 1960 and immediately after independence, the political elites could not manage the emerging democracy, corruption and ineptitude became the order of the day. Elections were massively rigged which led to political crisis in various parts of Nigeria. The political crisis that erupted in Western region in 1962 and Tiv upheavals of 1965 were unprecedented in the evolution history of Nigeria where a group of young Majors in the military overthrew the government on January 15, 1966 with genuine plans of repositioning the country (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016). However, Britain and some political elites saw the coup as Igbo agenda to dominate the country due to certain actions and inactions of the coup plotters, hence the counter coup of July, 29 1966 in which many Igbos were massacred (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016; Mbazulike, 2019).

The events that led to the thirty months civil war (1967-1970) marked the origin of agitations for self-determination in Southeast Nigeria. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu declared Republic of

Biafra on May 30 1967 sequel to the aftermath of July 29, 1966 counter coup in Nigeria. Prior to this counter coup, the people of Southeast were at the pinnacle of Nigeria's socio-economic institutions (MicCain, 2018). The coup led to radical turn of fortunes for Southerners as there was a deliberate pogrom against them, both civilians and those in the military. Over two hundred Igbo military officers and civilians were killed in one night in Lagos, women and children were massacred in the North (Chima, 2013). This high incidence of massacre led people of southeast, Nigeria to begin to seek self-determination for the first time as their lives and properties were no longer protected by the Federal Government of Nigeria (Omotere, 2011; Chima, 2013; MicCain, 2018; Muonagorom, 2019).

The war that claimed over three million lives of Southerners would have been avoided if Colonel Ojukwu had consulted Igbo leaders who in turn would have consulted their counterparts from the North and West (Mbazulike, 2019). The war ended in 1970 with "NO Victor and No Vanquished" slogan as General Gowon immediately commenced the process of reconciliation and reintegration of the people of defunct Biafra. After the war, there were deliberate plans to impoverish the people of Southeast, some of these plans included demotion in the military and civil service, retrenchment, abandoned property and twenty pounds policies, no matter how much one had in the bank account. After giving Southerners only twenty Pounds after the war, the next policy was indigenization decree and the people of Southeast had no money to acquire those companies that were sold off to Nigerians (Igwebuikwe, 2020; Ejemheare, 2021; Mbazulike, 2021).

Since the end of the civil war, the people of Southeast Nigeria have been crying of being marginalized in all facets of life, leading to various groups agitating for their self-determination (Igwebuikwe, 2020). These current agitations have negative impact on the socio-economic well-being of the people of Southeast, security challenges and sit-at-home orders have crippled the economy of the region (Ekechukwu, Nwogu, Ugwukwu & Emerho, 2022). Previous studies in this area focused on the causes of agitations for self-determination (Omotere, 2011; Chima, 2013; MicCain, 2018; Chukwudi, Gbervbie, Abasilim & Imohomop, 2019; Muonagorom, 2019; Igwebuikwe, 2020; Omilus, 2020; Ejemheare, 2021; Mbazulike, 2021). However, a negligible attention has been given to its impact and response. This study examined the causes, impact and response to the agitations for self-determination in Southeast, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Remote and immediate causes of agitations in Southeast

As soon as Nigeria attained independence on October 1, 1960, the political class mismanaged the nascent democracy through electoral frauds, violence and corruption which led to political crisis in various parts of the country. Some few vibrant Majors in the Nigerian Army staged a coup with good intentions to reposition the country. The coup was identified as Igbo agenda to dominate the country, hence the counter coup of July 29, 1966 where Igbos were massacred in thousands (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016).

How could the January 15 coup be an Igbo coup since Colonel Chukwemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu advised General Aguiyi Ironsi to foil the coup plot? Ojukwu on his own part foiled the coup in the North. If Igbos actually carried out the coup with the aim of dominating other Nigerians, how come it was Igbo officers that crushed the coup? Awoyokun quoted a Northern governor for describing Major Nzeogwu as a great nationalist who had the interest of the country at heart (Obi-Ani & Obi-Ani, 2016). According to Ademoyega, one of the Majors that carried out January 15, 1966 coup, their initial plan was to free Chief Obafemi Awolowo from Calabar prison and make him the Prime Minister. If actually it was an Igbo coup, the young Majors would have planned making an Igbo man the Prime Minister and not Awolowo, a Yoruba man.

Some scholars have continuously advanced the argument that Britain has never been comfortable with

power shift to Southeast. Thus, British imperialists came up with propaganda that General Ironsi had a list of seventy persons of Northern origin mapped out for execution. This was heightened on January 23, 1966 when Sunday Times London editorial reads, “Can Ironsi Hold Nigeria”. The editorial opined thus:

According to reliable evidence, Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi, Head of the Military Government, has a list of seventy northern notables mapped out for execution (apart from the Sarduna of Sokoto and the Prime Minister) who have disappeared, largely Northern leaders. Again, Ramadan, the Muslim fast, closes at the end of the month with religious celebrations, which could easily lead to violence. And the Northerners would have plenty of Igbo targets (Sunday Times London, January 23, 1966).

The notion that General Ironsi had seventy northerners mapped out for execution was inaccurate and it served as imperialists’ ploy to spark off social upheavals in Nigeria which later worked out for them. This was part of their divide and rule mechanism geared towards achieving their selfish aim of neo-colonialism.

A study by Anele (2021) clearly points to the gross marginalization the Igbos have been experiencing under president Buhari’s administration as a result of 5% votes he got from them in 2015 and 2019 presidential election. Herders’ attacks have tremendously aggravated the renewed activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and their self-determination agenda in Southeast Nigeria. General Theophilus Danjuma (Rtd) recently cried out over what he called ethnic cleansing of indigenous communities as herders killed and destroyed many communities in the Middle belt (Danjuma, 2018).

Premised on the foregoing, it appears the cardinal policy of President Buhari’s administration has been the marginalization of Igbos as shown in the civil service, public appointments, appointments of security personnel, political appointments, and developmental projects such as rail lines. The people of Southeast have been marginalized since the end of civil war, they were given only twenty Pounds to start life all over again after the war. As if that was not enough, President Buhari’s government has appeared indifferent in the reconstruction of railway lines from Rivers to Kaduna, through Enugu and Benue and throughout the rest of Igbo land (Mbazulike, 2021). Quite recently, members of the National Assembly committee on land and marine transport also expressed their dissatisfaction as they accused the Transport Minister of discriminating against the Southeast and Northeast zones in the area of rail projects. The Federal Government had planned a narrow gauge for the proposed Southeast rail corridor while a standard gauge rail line is being constructed from Kano to Maradi in Niger Republic (Asadu, 2021).

Nigerian government has failed to expedite action on empowerment of and investing on the youths through education, skills acquisition and implementation of policies that will eliminate various forms of agitation through enthronement of good governance. President Buhari administration’s incompetence in handling Nigeria’s diversity had greatly increased agitations for self-determination (Anele, 2021). Marginalization is the central focus of IPOB’s agitations for self-determination, southeastern region has the least number of States and Local Governments in Nigeria. The region also has the least number of Senate and House of Representative seats at the National Assembly. These have paved way for the least allocation of resources in the federal budget and least distribution of constituency projects to Southeast region (Ogbonnia, 2021).

The present state of affairs in which people of Fulani extraction whose region contributes less than fifteen percent of national income dominate all critical levels of governance and national security is unjust and unsustainable. The people of South South who were misled by their leaders that Igbos would dominate them in Biafra have come to the realization that the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy was merely interested in exploiting the oil and gas resources in their land for their vested interest. Although the Yoruba people in the Southwest region of Nigeria benefited immensely from the indigenization Decree of 1972 as many of them filled up vacant positions left people of the southeast as a result of the outbreak of the civil war. However, Gowon reneged on his promise of making Awolowo the Prime Minister by shifting his proposed handover to democratically elected government before he was overthrown in 1975 (Anele, 2021).

Kukah (2021) maintained that President Buhari has been intentionally appointing people of the same faith and ethnic stock with him into key positions in Government as envisaged in the appointment of security chiefs. The current agitation led by Nnamdi Kanu's Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), has gained momentum to the extent that large segments of Igbo youths felt victimized and alienated in the current political arrangements in the country. This led to a renewed desire to break away from Nigeria (Omilus, 2020).

Government's response to agitations in Southeast

Security forces in Nigeria have committed series of human rights violations and crimes under international law in their efforts to control violence in Southeast Nigeria. They have been carrying out repressive operations since January 2021. These attacks include mass arrests, use of excessive and unlawful force, torture, mass killings and other forms of maltreatment (Amnesty International, 2021).

Chukwudi *et al* (2019) maintained that government's strategy in dealing with agitations has been very coercive with police force and full militarization. They argued that these agitations have serious political and economic implications. They recommended affirmative action on the part of government through massive government developmental projects and all-inclusiveness in governance. However, government seems to be mild where excessive show of force is required. Bandits operating in the Northwest shot down Alpha military jet that claimed the life of a serving Chief of Army Staff on July 19, 2021. They also attacked Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), killing two middle level officers and abducted another (Vanguard Editorial, 2021). Boko Haram has set up instrumentalities of tax collection in communities where they hold sway. They provide securities in some of these villages in Maiduguri and also collect taxes in exchange, thereby providing some semblance of alternative government (Maza, Koldas, & Aksit, 2020).

In the face of all these provocations, a serving government official maintained that repentant terrorists stand the chance of being great in the society and even becoming the President of Nigeria (Abdulmalik, 2019). Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) programme was established in 2015 for the purpose of rehabilitating and reintegrating repentant Boko Haram members into the society. The concerns of local communities over the policy and implementation of Operation Safe Corridor and reintegration of the ex-Boko Haram members pose a big threat to the success of the programme (Ugwueze, Ngwu & Onuoha, 2021).

Nigeria and agitations for self-determination

Something is fundamentally wrong with the foundation of Nigeria's nationhood sequel to agitations for self-determination in various parts of Nigeria today. Aside from agitations for Biafra, there are agitations for Oduduwa Republic, Arewa Republic, Niger Delta Republic while others that still have hope in Nigeria project call for restructuring of the country. Most of these groups feel alienated and often institutionalize perceived sense of injustice (Adibe, 2017). The current agitations for actualization of Biafra started with Raph Uwazurike's Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and it gained momentum in 2015 through Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) when president Buhari gave an address at the United State Institute for Peace (USIP) on July 22, 2015. In his speech, he said that those that gave him 5% votes should not expect much from him when compared with those that gave him 97% votes. The people of Southeast are being marginalized, the government should as a matter of urgency constitute constitutional debate on restructuring so as to address the injustice and imbalance in order to restore hope and confidence in the polity (Gowon, 2020).

Herdsmen have been killing, maiming and raping women in Southeast without being prosecuted. Even when the villagers arrest and hand them over to the police, they are allowed to go free. IPOB was not involved in the ongoing killings in Southeast, Police and Army were chasing an unknown gunman, they killed the

unknown gunman in the process and it turned out that the unknown gunman was a staff of Department of State Services (DSS) (Mbazulike, 2021). The Fulani herders have been terrorizing the Southeastern States, killing and maiming with AK47, raping Igbo women and kidnapping their men. Yet in the face of all these provocations, none of the herders is facing trial in any Nigerian court. All the aforementioned marginalization led to grass root support IPOB is receiving today in Igbo land. Other areas of marginalization include non-representation in the security architecture of Nigeria, non-representation in grade “A” category of ministers, general unemployment of Igbo youths and conspiracy against Igbos in every sector of the polity, Igbo presidency inclusive (Ogbonnia, 2021). The failure in governance brought back the agitation for Biafra. Those that claimed that it was against Islamic ethos to call a failure, failure, where were they when former President Jonathan was criticized by Muslim clerics? The problem of Nigeria is extremism which may likely consume everybody if not checked (Nuru, 2021).

Theoretical orientation

The theory of social contract as propounded by Thomas Hobbes in 1651 was adopted as the theoretical orientation for this paper. Social order has become a central focus of sociological theorizing sequel to the epistemic extrapolation of Hobbesian problematique. Thomas Hobbes postulated what social scientists christened Hobbesian problematique. Hobbes in his 1651 book “Leviathan” postulated the concept of social order in line with what he conceived as the nature of human (Mc Clelland, 1996). In his inference about the state of nature, Thomas Hobbes described man with apathetic concepts, the state of nature being an era human lived preceding the setting up of organized society. In that state of nature, there were no laws, no authority, no morality, no sense of justice and injustice, no security, no progress and development. Hobbes holds that this state of nature would lead to state of anarchy. Consequently, life would be solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short (Omoregbe, 1993). As a means of evading this position of nature, man keenly determined to a common supremacy in form of a state to domesticate this state of anomie so as to fashion out some semblance of orderliness (Ninalowo, 2004).

Intrinsic in the configuration of the state is the concept of social contract, it is mandatory for the citizens to tender their allegiance to constituted power while the state in return provides procedures for the betterment of mankind. And non-fulfillment of these reciprocated obligations within the expectations of social contract shall lead to social upheaval occasioned by crisis of lawlessness and insecurity (Ninalowo, 2010). John Locke in response to Hobbesian problematique maintained that Hobbes assertion of man being naturally wicked is questionable. According to him, a consideration of the birth process showed that man was born with a clean mind. For him, behaviour is learnt, man is wicked as a result of his socialization in the society. The perception of social contract was to bestow all the people’s power and rights to the use of force against one another, upon one man or upon a congress of men (Ekiran, 2005).

Ninalowo (2007) holds that social contract implies that the people give in their sovereignty to a constituted authority in order to maintain social order through the rule of law. Since the penchant on the part of man has been egocentric, bloodthirsty and destruction. How is social order possible? It is this pertinent question that makes the Hobbesian Problematique a central issue to sociological theorizing. Kindersley (1990) also maintained that as a result of insecurity of lives and properties, men decided to come together to form a structured society in order to proffer order and security of lives. Consequently, men decided to relinquish their distinctive rights and invested it in a supreme ruler for the sake of fortification, and any exploitation of power by this authority is to be acknowledged as the cost of harmony. The extent to which a given political state is able to fulfill this global chronological mandate of enhancing the quality of life of the citizens is an essential measure as to the level to which that political state elected is seen to be legitimate, if not, the society will be in a state of anarchy (Ninalowo, 1999).

In the tenets of social contract theory, it is obligatory for the people of Southeast to submit their sovereignty to the Nigerian government through payment of taxes and other civil obligations in exchange for provision

of infrastructures and security of lives and properties. And non-fulfillment of these mutual obligations within the limits and expectations of social contract shall lead to a state of social upheavals, insecurity and agitations for self-determination.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive design. This design enabled authors to give an in-depth analysis of both remote and immediate causes of the renewed agitations for self-determination in South-East, Nigeria. The study also employed social contract theory. This theory helped to unravel the causes of social upheavals, insecurity and agitations for self-determination in South-East, sequel to government's failure to provide infrastructures and safeguard lives and properties in the area. Finally, the study utilized secondary data derived from journal articles, newspapers and scholarly publications.

DISCUSSION

It is an acceptable truism that agitations for self-determination in Southeast Nigeria have impacted negatively to the socio-economic well-being of the people of the area (Ekechukwu *et al.*, 2022). The sit-at-home order imposed by IPOB every Monday because of their detained leader has weakened their economy. Schools and other social institutions are not left out, students missed their external examinations as a result of sit-at-home order. Hospitals and transport services were all affected as a result of this. The memories of the civil war where over three million people of southeast origin lost their lives including women and children who were starved to death as a result of Federal government's food blockade policy also contributed to the renewed agitations. Studies by Igwebuike (2020), Ejemheare (2021) and Mbazulike (2021) corroborated this fact. Aside from the memories of the civil war, the current marginalization of the people of Southeast Nigeria also contributed to the renewed agitations for self-determination. After the war, the policy of "No Victor no vanquished was a mere smokescreen as Southerners were given only twenty Pounds to begin a new life irrespective of millions of Biafra Pounds they had in their bank accounts. To worsen their situation, indigenization policy was promulgated and other Nigerians excluding Southerners bought over all the companies that were sold to members of the public. As this was going on, houses owned by people of the southeast were declared "Abandoned Property". These corroborate studies by Ejemheare (2021) and Mbazulike (2021).

The killings perpetrated by some Fulani herdsmen in Southeastern States also contributed to the renewed agitations for self-determination. Some Fulani herdsmen have killed, raped and maimed in various parts of Ebonyi, Anambra, Enugu, Abia, Imo and other States of South South region. And in all these attacks with AK 47 and other deadly weapons, nobody was arrested and prosecuted. This is in alignment with studies by (Anele, 2021; Mbazulike, 2021; Ogonnia 2021). The nefarious activities of some Fulani herdsmen led to the formation of Eastern Security Network (ESN) by IPOB to safeguard lives and properties of Southerners. The Federal government has failed them in this historic mandate of safeguarding lives and property of her citizens as enshrined in social contract theory. However, hoodlums have hijacked the activities of IPOB and ESN just as they did during the End-Sars protest in 2020. Cultists, kidnapers, ritualists and political assassins are now hiding under the umbrella of IPOB and ESN to commit crimes while enforcing sit at home order. IPOB has lost control of the struggle, they have cancelled the Monday sit-at-home-order, but hoodlums are still enforcing it, they are now using it as a medium to steal and commit various forms of crimes. The recent assassination and organ mutilation of military couples in Imo State is still fresh in the psyche of the people.

However, the idea of declaring IPOB a terrorist organization at a time they were not carrying arms speak volumes, and yet Bandits and Boko Haram that have killed thousands of Nigerians were not seen as

terrorist groups, instead government negotiated with them, paid cash to them and reintegrated them into the Nigerian Army, Customs and other government agencies. These corroborate studies by (Ugwueze, Ngwu & Onuoha, 2021). Boko Haram and Bandits are collecting taxes in local government areas in Maiduguri where they have hoisted their flags. This is in corroboration with studies by (Maza, Koldas & Aksit 2020). Bandits recently shot down a military aircraft that claimed the life of a serving Chief of Army Staff, and they also attacked Nigeria Defence Academy (NDA) in Kaduna where they abducted and killed some military officers of Southeast and Middle Belt origin. Vanguard editorial (2021) corroborates this fact, yet government remained mute in the face of all these atrocities and also failed to declare them as terrorists, instead a serving government official claimed that repentant Boko Haram can aspire to become the president of Nigeria. Abdulmalik (2019) corroborates this fact. All these contributed to what IPOB described as 'Fulanization and Islamization' of Nigeria by President Buhari led government, hence the agitations for a sovereign state of Biafra.

Marginalization of the people of Southeast is another reason for agitations for self-determination by IPOB and other secessionist groups. Southeasterners were deliberately excluded in almost all facets of governance, non-construction of rail lines and non-appointment of Service Chiefs among others. No Igbo man has governed Nigeria since independence aside from General Aguiyi Ironsi who ruled from January 1966 and was assassinated on July 1966. These corroborate studies by (Adike, 2017; Gowon, 2020; Omilu, 2020; Anele, 2021; Kukah, 2021; Ogbonnia, 2021). Some Southeast elites have said it in different fora that they would join forces with Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and demand for a sovereign State of Biafra if presidency eludes them in 2023 presidential election in Nigeria.

Agitations for self-determination in Southeast have great consequences on the innocent citizens of the area. Federal government has been using force to quench the agitations. If forces applied in stopping IPOB have been channeled in stopping Boko Haram and Bandits, Nigeria would have been free from insurgency. There were military operations in Southeast code named 'Operation Python Dance I, 11 and Operation Golden Down', where most Igbo youths were killed and dehumanized. Also, there was military air strike in Orlu Imo State. This is in corroboration with studies by (Chukwudi *et al.*, 2019), who revealed that the military have been ruthless in handling security challenges in South-East, Nigeria.

Unknown Gunmen (UGM) also emerged within the period, killing and attacking police stations and government facilities. Each time UGM attack police facilities, the military and police would be bold enough to attack and kill innocent citizens of Igbo origin. In some cases, they would force them to make confessional statements that they were IPOB members in order to justify their killings and arrest. In 2021 alone, the military and police have killed thousands of Igbo youths all in the name of searching for IPOB members. This corroborates studies by (Anele, 2021; Mbazulike, 2021), whose studies showed that the military have killed and abused the fundamental rights of the people of South-East.

Nigerian government has ruthlessly responded to violence and killings broadly attributed to Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of IPOB. Government accused ESN of killing dozens of security operatives and at the same time attacked more than ten public buildings, correctional centres, police stations inclusive. Between January and June 2021, a combined team of security forces comprising Police, Military and Department of State Services (DSS) have killed many civilians and gunmen in places where attacks were recorded. Security forces have been engaging in excessive use of force, secret detentions, physical abuse, extortions, burning of houses, theft and extrajudicial executions of suspects. The death tolls in southeast States run into hundreds, more than 115 persons were killed by security forces between March and June 2021. The victims were deposited in government hospitals in Imo and Abia States. Amnesty International concurred with these facts in her 2021 Reports. Just recently, Federal Medical Centre Owerri and Aladinma Mortuary Owerri published on Nigerian daily newspapers of their plans to bury unclaimed corpses of people killed by federal government forces in mass grave. Yet government is expecting the

people to be happy and loyal. As at today, the people of Southeast have lost confidence in their State governors as envisaged in the manner the people obey IPOB directives as regards “sit at home” orders.

The southeast governors were accused of hijacking Ebubeagu security outfit in conjunction with the federal government to suppress opposition political parties in Southeast and at the same time fight against agitators of self-determination. Oko (2022) concurred with this fact. IPOB claimed that Unknown Gunmen activities sparked off as a result of British government’s promise of given political asylum to IPOB members, hence the State sponsored killings in order to paint IPOB black before Britain and at the same time justify their earlier stance of declaring them as terrorist organization. Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) also claimed that politicians and security agents were responsible for the killings, abductions and burning of properties in Southeast Nigeria. The current Imo State governor (Senator Hope Uzodimma) equally stated in most of his press conferences on the security situation in Imo State that politicians were behind the crisis in the State. I concur with this position following the abduction and killing of a gubernatorial candidate in the Anambra State gubernatorial election of November 6, 2021. This view is in alignment with that of (Obianeri, 2022), who maintained that most of the killings in Southeast were sponsored.

If actually IPOB were the Unknown Gunmen operating in Southeast, why killing Igbos, the same people they are struggling to liberate from marginalization? This corroborates the views of Mbazulike, (2021). IPOB argued that the activities of Unknown Gunmen and Federal forces increased in Southeast because IPOB through her Eastern Security Network (ESN) put up a strong resistance against Fulani herdsmen incursions. But Security agents on the other hand claimed to have arrested some members of IPOB who were involved in the ongoing killings in Southeast. Like we said earlier, hoodlums, political assassins, kidnappers, cultists and ritualists have taken over the agitations struggle and IPOB have no control over these bandits as they are now hiding under IPOB as a vehicle to achieve their nefarious objectives.

Although President Muhammadu Buhari has tried in the construction of second Niger bridge, appointments of Igbo men and women in positions of authority, rehabilitation of Akanu Ibiam International airport and rehabilitation of Enugu-Port Harcourt expressway, but Igbos are still marginalized in all facets of governance.

From the forgoing, one can objectively deduce that the people of Southeast were being marginalized and the political elites in Nigeria have failed woefully in their historic bestowed mandate of protecting lives and properties of her citizens through instrumentalities of good governance and provisions of safety nets geared towards advancement of citizens’ standards of living, thereby creating room for crisis of insecurity and agitations for self-determination. This finding is in corroboration with the tenets of social contract theory. The people of Southeast surrendered their sovereignty to the Nigerian government through payment of taxes and other civil obligations in exchange for good governance. However, instead of good governance, Southerners were rather experiencing marginalization and nepotism, hence the crisis of insecurity and agitations for self-determination by IPOB.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria is blessed with rich human and natural resources that can make her compete favourably with Western countries if properly harnessed. However, corruption, marginalization, nepotism, ethnicity and bad leadership have hindered her socio-economic development over the years, thereby given rise to agitations for self-determination in various parts of the country.

Finally, this study has made some recommendations which if fully implemented will make Nigeria a force to reckon with in the comity of nations and a place where justice, equity, unity and progress shall be guaranteed to all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study made the following recommendations:

- All-inclusiveness: Government should carry the people of Southeast along in the running of the affairs of this great nation Nigeria. The idea of marginalization should be discouraged in order to inculcate the spirit of oneness in the psyche of the people. Efforts should be made by Federal government to appoint men and women of Southeast origin into positions of authority as a means of mitigating the effects of marginalization on the people of the area. This can be done through strict implementation of federal character principles.
- Massive developmental projects: The government should intensify efforts towards carrying out massive developmental projects in Southeast like other regions without bias. Rail line projects sited in other parts of the country should also be sited in Southeastern States. Efforts should also be made to open up the highly politicized Onitsha Sea Ports so as to open up economic activities in the area. Good road networks and rural-urban electrification of Southeast should also be put in place. Southeast Development Commission should be established in the region in order to engage the restive youths of the area economically.
- Rotational presidency: Rotational presidency is another factor that can quench agitations for self-determination in Nigeria. This will go a long way in creating equal opportunities for all, heal old wounds and at the same time inculcate the spirit of oneness in the minds of the people.

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