

Contradictions of Nigeria's Federalism; Investigating the Implications of Geographical Imbalance on Secessionist Agitations and Tensions in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria's federalism has been contending with severe working and constitutional/institutional challenges. These challenges which range from political to economic and social has resulted in the vociferation for the political restructuring and rearrangement of the country. The inability of the country to espouse and practice federalism effectively which is indicated in the over-centralization of powers/functions on the central government has brought ethnic conflicts, political turmoil, marginalization of some ethnic groups, corruption, lack of good governance instead of peace, development and administrative ease. This study, therefore, investigates if the failure to address the geographical imbalance in representation accounts for the rise in secessionist agitations and tension in Nigeria, with its focus on the separatist agitations amongst the Igbo indigenous group in south-eastern Nigeria. The modern classic theory of federalism was adopted as our theoretical framework. The documentary method of data collecting and the qualitative descriptive approach of data analysis were both used in the study. This study revealed that although Nigeria federalism was purposely adopted by the foundational policymakers to purportedly eradicate ethnic dominance and inspire the component units to progress and advance at a different speed, The establishment of an unjust, imbalanced, and hyper-centralized federal structure during the previous military administration did countless harms to the foundational elements of Nigeria's federal system by promoting ethnic dominance and submitting the constituent units to the financial hegemony of the center. The Igbos of the South-East region of Nigeria has been the victim of this hyper-centralized federal structure and ethnic subjugation over the years, hence, the incessant rise in the emergence and activities of separatist and pro-independence movements in the region. Consequently, the study recommended an all-inclusive restructuring and reorganization of the political system of Nigeria by adopting a firm, even and appropriate Federal composition that will encompass state or regional independence and autonomy when it concerns governmental powers and fiscal resources.

Keywords: Federalism, Political Restructuring, Secessionist Agitation, Separatism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's federalism evolved out of a series of historical accidents engineered by the British government. It is traceable to the colonial period. The British established control over the various regions of modern-day Nigeria during the 19th century (Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). The colonists further split these regions into protectorates for the North and the South, which were again combined in 1914 for administrative purposes. Nigeria was created as a result of this union (Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). As British colonial rule continued, tension for self-government resulted from the long-term alienation and repression of the indigenous people. This demonstrates that Nigeria's political history has been marked by struggles for freedom, especially between 1922 and 1959. Due to these conflicts and battles, British colonialists yielded, which led to a series of constitutions being created in order to placate the native population. The constitutions comprised the Clifford constitution, 1922, Richards's constitutions of 1946 (which laid the foundation of Nigeria's federalism by dividing the country into three unequal constituents of North, West and East.), Macpherson constitution, 1951 and the

Lyttleton's constitution of 1954 that birthed the Nigeria's federal design. With the approach of independence in 1960, indigenous Nigerian citizens were granted control of the areas, and regional law-making organizations were established. Nigeria had become a federation of three regions by the time it declared itself a republic in 1963 and replaced the Governor-post General's with that of the President. A countrywide bicameral legislature had also been established. In June 1963, Lagos, the capital, was effectively administrated as an informal fourth part independent from the limits of the western region, and the mid-western area was formed from the western region. (Nwabueze, 1983).

A federal arrangement is one out of many political arrangement that is usually embraced by heterogeneous states (Babalola, 2016; Alsamee et al, 2016; Chukwuemeka & Amobi, 2011; Ewetan, 2012; Elekwa, Mathew & Akume, 2011; Ezeji-Okoye, 2009). Hence, Nigeria's adoption and practice of a federal arrangement as a political system of governance is dependent on its heterogeneous nature, for the central government and the component entities to share definite political, administrative, and economic powers and roles according to the constitution (Ezeji- Okoye, 2009, Elekwa et al, 2011; Ewetan, Chukwuemeka & Amobi, 2011; Babalola, 2016; 2012). No wonder Tamuno (1983), a classical scholar, defines Nigeria's federal system as a method of governance in which the constituent divisions of the country's political system work together to share some functions and authorities, despite the pressures of traditional diversity and tribal diversity, amongst others, that keep them apart. Although a series of colonial constitutions played significant roles in the evolution of Nigeria federalism, cultural, historical, social and political reasons equally influenced Nigeria's decision to embrace federalization (Babalola, 2016). Most obvious of these factors are multiplicities in ethnicities, customs, creed/religion, resources, and dread of dominance amongst the numerous units. Drawing from the foregoing, a federal arrangement is therefore seen as an arrangement which given its decentralized powers, offers units great authority and independence in the internal government of their people (Alsamee et al, 2016).

Despite Nigeria's long history of federalism, the desire for restructuring and rearrangement to realize resource control, or what certain analysts refer to as "true federalism," including secession, is not a novel concept in the nation's political history (Agwanwo, 2014; Anugwam, 2005). Therefore, agitations by some constituent sections of Nigeria are not unexpected given current events. The vociferation for the political reorganization and rearrangement of the republic is a result of the many problems that bother Nigeria as a country. These problems range from social to economic, and political. These problems arise from the inability of the country to practice federalism effectively. Instead of federalism bringing the needed peace, development and administrative ease, it has brought conflicts, political turmoil, marginalization of some ethnic groups, corruption, unemployment, poverty, too much political interference on state matters by the Federal government and lack of good governance on the part of our leaders. In present-day Nigeria, multi-various factors militate against the successful practice of federalism, hence the continued outcry and need for restructuring to nip these challenges in the bud.

Federalism in Nigeria has met stiff trials over the years, from calls for a confederal arrangement on the one hand, and calls for a unitary form of government, on the other. Several indices of over-centralization of powers abound, thus negating federalism and heightening the call for restructuring. Adebayo (2001), queried the rationale behind the federal government's exclusive right on 68 items contained in the exclusive legislative list and concurrent powers on 24 others as delimited in the concurrent list. Why does the federal government have overriding power to legislate for any part of the federation for peace, order and good governance? Other issues raised include those of revenue allocation which is skewed to favour of the federal government, the police force, judiciary, education, electoral body, among others, all federally controlled.

Regrettably, the current basis and values on which the constitution of Nigeria has been operating over the years predominantly since the dawn of democratic system has in no manner reflected ideal federal system in its applied sense. The connection among the federal and state governments (the component units) still mirrors the military command arrangement, an undesirable bequest of the previous military governments. The component units in Nigeria's federalism are so feeble that none of them enjoys economic independence from the centre, usually penurious that they have no capability even to negotiate evocatively with the central government. Hence the persistent call for restructuring. To restructure is to change to a large extent what is currently in place.

Notwithstanding the depth of literature on political restructuring, a lot of studies have interrogated the rate of demarginalization and over-centralization of power at the centre in Nigeria from theoretical and empirical perspectives. However, this study interrogates if the failure to address the geopolitical imbalance in representation accounts for the rise in secessionist agitations in Nigeria. This study focuses on the separatist agitations amongst the Igbo indigenous group in South-eastern Nigeria.

2. METHODOLOGY

The documentary approach of data collecting was advocated in this study. It primarily entails close inspection of records that provide pertinent data regarding the subject event. It is mostly used by academics in the social sciences and humanities to examine a collection of papers for historic or sociological reasons or to build a bigger description through the examination of numerous documents pertaining to an occasion or a specific person (McCulloch, 2004).

The documentary method of data collection in this study was useful in identifying knowledge gaps that needed to be filled, formulating the research problem, and outlining the research approach. It offered the chance to investigate in-depth studies on Nigeria's federalism and secessionist movements in Nigeria. As a result, extensive intellectual discourse and literature were gleaned from a variety of sources, such as journal articles, books, newspapers, magazines, book chapters, and official publications from civil society organizations.

In order to analyze these data, a content analysis technique was used. Data were analyzed with the help of this analytical tool to enable comprehension of the information's both obscured and clear intent. The capacity to find consistencies and designs in them was greatly aided by this. To further explain key study factors, such as the regional imbalance in representation and the secessionist agitations in Nigeria, we employed tables and figures. Due to the study's requirement for data that is already in the public domain, this strategy is appropriate. Hence, the need to methodically refine, interpret, evaluate and analyse them.

3. NIGERIA FEDERALISM, SECESSIONIST ATTEMPTS AND CALLS FOR STATES CREATION

Biafra's bid to secede from Nigeria in 1967 was not the first of its sort in Nigeria. The endeavor itself was the pinnacle of the Nigerian state's inconsistencies. Several constitutions had been prepared and endorsed before 1966, but none of them resolved the central social variances, political strains, economic rivalry, and ethnic inequities that the state of Nigeria had been writhed with ever since its merger. Prior to the Eastern region secession effort that sparked the war, the Hausa/Fulani, of the North, and the Yoruba of the West, had all considered and occasionally portended separatism. The agitations and tension for secession could be traced to 1914 according to Tamuno (1970). He denoted that according to Ahmadu Bello's narrative, the Northerners would have favoured a completely distinct existence than being entwined with the South in what the Saruana dubbed "the mistake of 1914."

Throughout the political history of Nigeria, pressures on the ethnic groups to follow their own paths have recurred. The federation's early days saw the start of these conflicts, which have continued ever since. Leaders of numerous ethnic groups have occasionally used calls for and pushes for separation as a political negotiation tool to compel reasonable concessions from other ethnic groups. For instance, discussions between representatives of various ethnic groups almost came to a stop during the legislative consultations held by the British colonial office because more delegations voiced a desire to secede. The North's delegation had taken a strong and irremediable locus throughout the General Conference on the Review of the 1946 Constitution, held in Ibadan in 1950 that the North would pursue "independence from the rest of Nigeria on the arrangements in effect before 1914" if it didn't receive 50% of the seats in the proposed House of Representatives (equivalent to the number of representatives for the Western and Eastern regions put together) (Secretary of the State Colonies, 1957). The South's delegation initially objected to this suggestion until members of the Eastern Region's Lawmaking Council agreed to preserve the country from collapse (Ezera, 1964).

The Yorubas had also at a time made a threat not to participate in the forth put federation of Nigeria if the British colonialists do not reverse their decision to designate Lagos as Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory. The Colonial Office, on the other hand, swiftly dismissed this warning, interpreting it as a threat to use violence (Secretary of the State Colonies, 1957). The Igbos, who had pressed for the

reorganization and restructuring of the federation following the 1966 persecution and massacre, completed the round of separatism by Nigeria's three major ethnic groups. Recognizing that their demand for rearrangement the federation would be rejected, but resolute to end the apparent Hausa/Fulani dominance, the Igbo attempted an unsuccessful secessionist announcement of a sovereign Republic of Biafra in July 1967, dipping the Nigeria federal state into the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War of 1967-70, the country's first secessionist conflict. Prior to the end of Nigeria's first republic, smaller ethnic groups in the Niger-Delta region in south-south Nigeria joined the majority ethnic groupings in chasing separatist objectives.

To this day, attempts by different ethnic components of Nigeria to secede is yet to stop. Renewed calls for political restructuring in Nigeria is on the high side. Obvious of these calls for political restructuring is the perturbation for the establishment of more component states. Researchers of diverse inspirations, particularly those of history and political science appear to have given extra devotion than others to the discourse.

Nnoli (1978) asserts that the dominant driving motivation of those who advance for the establishment of more states is the quest to diminish, or entirely eradicate inter-ethnic strain that weakens federal union. However, even with the establishment of numerous components states, demands for the more rearrangement and restructuring of the Nigerian state have persisted as segments of the nation that are yet to profit from the munificence continue to perturb.

Suberu (1994), contributing to the discussion above, suggested that the establishment of new states has become a persistent, vociferous, and ineluctable topic of Nigerian politics due to their distributive advantages and benefits as well as the complete variety and exhaustibility of ethnic and sub-ethnic grounds for claiming legitimate statehood claims or entitlements. To this point, the establishment of states in the state's political growth has turn out to be susceptible to the influence of the elites at the central (persons who are at advantage by organizing), state and local (persons who are at advantage by being reorganized) levels. In Nigeria, indications have revealed that national stakeholders, the civilian and military together, utilise creation of states as a tactic for rule acceptability, galvanize and restore regional and native support, penalize, or dwindle antagonisms/hostilities, utilize and recompense associates and patrons. The act is likewise engaged in waning the prevailing political components at the fringe by dividing them along sub-ethnic lines, thus plummeting their income and causing them to be powerless. Indifferently, state restructuring and reorganization has also been used to preserve government, realize harmony and stable government through stage-managing rivalry, competitiveness and reciprocated mistrust and doubt amongst groups in the country.

Alapiki (2005), demonstrates how the factious inclinations evident in Nigeria make the strategy of utilising creation of states to attain nationwide unity a futile approach. He posits that the consequences of creating more states in Nigeria have been unsuccessful in mitigating the very factors that incite the request for new states. He, however, insists that the potential for nationwide unity and native self-sufficiency hinge on the development of a focused, objective central governance and suitable geopolitical reorganization and rearrangement of the federal union projected to engender a nationwide appearance with more acceptance when compared to the regions.

According to Ayoade (1997), the South has become weary of the North despite efforts to address regional inequality between the North and South. He asserted that the resulting North-South lopsided power balance provided the foundation for a number of tactics for furthering a sense of belonging in the country, notably by eradicating or lessening domination brought on by unequal appointment distribution. Nevertheless, historical developments have suggested that the national and provincial/regional leaders may have collaborated, particularly in the area of resource allocation. The elites, notwithstanding this, leave their tribal groups disunited and equipped for use as a tool of bargaining for benefaction and appointments or how do we describe the unity that subsists between the numerous community groups in the arena where the forces of demand and supply define relationships; where the Naira has no tribal proclivity and where purchasers and vendors execute commerce without alternative to primal injunctions? Thus, though the stakeholders in Nigeria federal union profess unity, their sentiments express separation and disintegration as a tactic for contending emulously for nation's resources.

The position that multiple of states might fetch unity might not be correct after all, as the multiplying of states can upshot fragmentation rather than unification. It can likely result to ethnic

particularization, as more establishment of states, precisely founded on ethnic sentiments, can provoke more calls for state creation. As far as states creation is induced by ethnic sentimentalities, attachment to primal feeling will be persistently considered and strengthened with hazardous indications for the integration and unity of the country.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the modern classic theory of federalism. The theory was propounded by K.C Where in 1946. He expounded federal standard as the process of apportioning powers and authorities accordingly that the central and regional/provincial powers are each within a sphere coordinated and autonomous. The modern classic on federalism by K. C. Where is mostly concerned with the constitutional distribution of political power and control between the tiers of government. Hence, he stated thus:

The constitution established an association of states so organized that powers are divided between general Governments, which in certain matters is independent of the governments of the associated states, and on the other hand, state governments, which in certain matters are, in their turn, independent of the general government (K.C. Wheare 1946).

5. TENETS OF THE THEORY

According to K.C. Where, the basic tenets of federalism include:

- There must be at least two levels of government, with a constitutional distribution of powers between them.
- Every level of government must be fiscally autonomous. According to Wheare, this will afford every of the level the opportunity of executing its tasks without relying on others for fiscal support.
- The existence of a supreme court of an independent judiciary is requisite. He contended that conflict is bound to occur in power sharing, therefore, an independent judiciary is very essential to resolve conflicts in the federating units as they occur.
- Every level of government is co-ordinate, hence, no level ought to have unjustified power over the amendment process.

Drawing from the above, it is undeniable that the increased separatist agitation and calls for political restructuring of Nigeria is centered on the issue of resource control. The Biafra movement is brought on by a decline in faith in the nation's political system and economic segregation from Nigeria's shared prosperity. The South West of the country has also expressed these similar exclusionary sentiments through calls for restructuring that are thought to have sprung from a sense of marginalization and exclusion from the political, social, and economic prosperity of the country. The Biafra struggle for their own nation has been fueled by Macridis' (1964) contention that the Igbo people's general and shared interests have been ignored (Ojiako, 1981).

The struggle for resource control is directly related to the politics and contradictions of power-sharing between the central government and the components units in Nigeria. The abrupt military incursion into politics initiated a process that eroded the powers of the regions unlike it was during the first republic, with the transfer of several items hitherto in concurrent lists to the exclusive list. The 1979 and 1999 constitutions increased progressively the exclusive legislative lists from their initial 49 to 66 and 68 respectively, deepening the structural power disequilibrium and the relation between the centre and regions. This caused tension, resentment, and political agitation in the majority of the country, which was especially evident in the Biafra movement, which was primarily caused by people of Igbo descent, as well as various other agitations across the country. According to Olomjobi (2015), this perception of suffering among a group causes dissatisfaction and alienation among its members and may be the root cause of animosity, feelings of neglect or abandonment, and violent confrontation. This claim is supported by the Biafra course, where various tribes in the Nigerian state have expressed their displeasure and feeling of dominance.

The current agitation for resource control, equitable revenue sharing formula, true federalism, youth restiveness, ethnic clashes and even sharia issues are responses from various societies to the imbalanced power relations between the centre and the units. This is an effort to find political, economic, and social importance in order to survive in Nigerian polity.

6. GEOGRAPHICAL IMBALANCE IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON SECESSIONIST/SEPARATIST AGITATIONS IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

The present make-up of Nigeria today has made it difficult for it to put up with divergent interests, conditions and multiplicities of component groups. Thus, maintenance of harmony and stability of the country, and its existence despite the pressures and tensions of separatism is very difficult. The current version of 'federalism' fits into Mill's law of federalism which denotes that "a federation is morbid if one part is bigger than the sum of the other parts". For analytical simplicity, the Northern Region has 71 percent, the Western Region 8.5 percent, the Eastern Region 8.3 percent, and the Mid-Western Region 4.6 percent in terms of land mass. The number of states, local governments, Senators, House of Representatives, and nationally allotted income in Nigeria's governmental system are all tilted to benefit the North, even though the South Region provides 86 percent of the funds necessary to run the current political system. Harmony, stability and sustainable growth cannot be certain because of this structural mismatch. The Northern Region, for example, obtains an equivalent of 56 percent of nationally allotted income despite producing just 14 percent of total revenues, compared to 44 percent for the South Region, which produces an equivalent of 86 percent of total revenues. The grounds for the South Region's persistent separatist and other ethnic tension are not hard to find, as the section feels it has been tremendously neglected by Nigeria's existing structure, which has probably slowed the country's growth process. Aside from the financial evaluation, the current structural imbalance has given the North the unique power to run the federation or decide those that governs it at any particular period. Considering the ethno-regional politics of the country, the inequity amongst the North and South has made it almost difficult for the South to control political authority at the center without power concessions from the North.

The above situation is implicated in today's Nigeria, where the country's six geopolitical areas are home to a myriad of separatist and pro-independence groups, with varied goals and objectives. The partition of the nation into six uneven geopolitical zones (though not constitutionally acknowledged) appears to have intensified the propagation of separatist and pro-independence groups. It has simplified ethnic conscription for specific ethnic groups living in distinct geopolitical zones. It is in line with this background that we trace separatist and pro-independence tensions and agitations among the Igbo ethnic group in the Southeast Nigeria. The existence of separatist and pro-independence groups such as Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are pointers to the apparent feeling of bigotry, prejudice and sidelining of the Igbos. These challenging circumstances, which were a contributing factor in the issues that led to the Nigeria-Biafra civil war from 1967 to 1970, are still present today. The Igbos appear to have been purposefully denied the top political posts in Nigerian politics as an after-war feature, which has not improved the situation. Ibeanu, Orji, and Iwuamadi (2016) stressed that any genuine attempt to understand the resurgence of separatist tension and agitation in the South-east of Nigeria must take into account the sense of communal persecution that unites all separatist and pro-independence organizations together.

State and local governments, which make up Nigeria's component units, serve as the basic units for allocating federal grants. Unfortunately, the Federal Government used the establishment of the 12-state structure in 1967 as a civil war plan to divide, land-lock, and instigate the Igbo ethnic group against their neighbors, obstructing their drive for independence (Barrett, 2017). The table below shows how states and local governments are distributed across the six geopolitical zones, demonstrating how Nigeria's subsequent processes for forming states and local governments have largely followed a similar pattern.

Table1. Nigeria's state and local government areas are distributed across the country

S/N	Zones	Number of states	Number of local governments
1.	North- Central	6 (16.67%)	116 (15.19%)
2.	North -East	6 (16.67%)	110 (14.36%)
3.	North- West	7 (1.44%)	181 (23.69%)
4.	South- West	6 (16.67%)	138 (18.01%)
5.	South-South	6 (16.67%)	127 (16.58%)
6.	South- East	5 (13.89%)	94 (12.27%)
	Total	36	774

Source: Adapted from Ohaneze (2002)

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The table above makes it very evident that, among Nigeria's six geopolitical zones, the Southeast has the fewest states and local government units. A large part of the rising Biafra separatist is driven by a sense of oppression and egregious unfairness caused by state and local government constructions since states and local governments are used as criteria for allocating federal funding.

The progression of the Igbos political annihilation also exhibits conspicuously in the careful politics of marginalization obvious in the early appointments by President Buhari in which the Igbos were absolutely left out. The tables below indicate, evidently, the regional persona of President Buhari's early appointments

Table2. *President Buhari's Initial Service Chiefs and their States of Origin*

S/N	Name	Position	State
1	Major-General Abayomi Gabriel Olonishakin	Chief of Defense Staff	Ekiti
2	Major-General T.Y. Buratai	Chief of Army Staff	Borno
3	Rear Admiral Ibok-EteEkwelbas	Chief of Naval Staff	Cross River
4	Air Vice Marshal SadiqueAbubakar	Chief of Air Staff	Bauchi
5	Air Vice-Marshal Monday Riku Morgan	Chief of Defense Intelligence	Benue
6	Major-General BabaganaMonguno (rtd.)	National Security Adviser	Borno

Source: Premium Times, Tuesday, January 13, 2015.

Table3. *The First Appointments of President MuhammaduBuhari*

S/N	Name	Position	State/Geopolitical Zone
1	Lt. Col AbubakarLawal	Aide de Camp to President	Kano state/ Northwest
2	Femi Adesina	Special Adviser, Media and Publicity to President	Osun state/ Southwest
3	GarbaShehu	Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity	Kano state/ Northwest
4	LawalAbdullahi	State Chief of Protocol/Special Assistant (Presidential matters)	Jigawa state/ Northwest
5	AlmedIdris	Accountant General of the Federation	Kano state/ Northwest
6	LawalDaura	Director-General, State Security Services, SSS	Katsina state/ Northwest
7	Amina Zakari	Acting Chairperson, Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC	Jigawa state/ Northwest
8	HabibuAbdulai	Managing Director, Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA	Kano state/ Northwest
9	Paul Boroh	Special Adviser, Niger Delta Amnesty Office	Bayelsa state/ South-south
10	Baba HarunaJauro	Acting Director-General, Nigerian Maritime Administration, Safety and Security Agency, NMASA	Yobe state/ Northeast
11	UmaruDanmbatta	Executive Vice Chairman/ Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Communications Commission	Kano state/ Northwest
12	Babatunde Fowler	Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS	Lagos State, South-West
13	AliyuGusau	Director-General, Budget Office of the Federation	Zamfara State, North-West
14	Emmanuel Kachikwu	Group Managing Director, Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC	Delta State, South-South
15	Babachir David Lawal	Secretary to Government of the Federation	Adamawa, North-East
16	Abba Kyari	Chief of Staff to the President	Borno, North-East
17	Hameed Ibrahim Ali	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service	Kaduna State, North-Central
18	Kure Martin Abeshi	Comptroller-General, Nigerian Immigration Service (Senate)	Nasarawa State, North-Central
19	ItaManang	Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives)	Akwabom State, South-South
20	Suleiman Kawu	Senior Special Assistant on National Assembly Matters (House of Representatives)	Kano State, North-West
21	Mordecai Baba	Director, Department of Petroleum Resource, DPR	Kano State, North-West
22	Mohammed Kari	Commissioner for Insurance and Chief Executive of the National Insurance Commission	North-West

Source: Premium Times, Tuesday, January 13, 2015.

Tables 2 and 3 above unquestionably show how the central government's systematic dehumanization of the Igbos of the South-East and efforts to exclude them from full participation in federal governance have fueled tenacious separatist pressures and agitations in the area. No wonder Osaretin (2019), posited that the current wave of The Buhari administration's treatment of the Igbo people, especially in political appointments, was a contributing factor in the Biafra agitation. His government disregarded constitutional provisions requiring equal representation for all different ethnic groups and a federal structure to promote national cohesion, justice, and a sense of belonging to the Nigerian project. Therefore, ignoring this fundamental requirement would allow for anarchy and disorder in the political system. Worsening material situations of the people, based on the nature of Nigeria's federalism, the Nigerian government's actions and inactions, are unfavourable to the Igbos; they have also created sense of communal oppression among the Igbos. Hence, the rise and tenacity of separatist and pro-independence movements in the South-East region.

7. CONCLUSION

This study investigated if the failure to address the geopolitical imbalance in representation accounts for the rise in secessionist agitations in Nigeria. It focused on separatist pressures and agitations amongst the Igbo ethnic group in South-east, Nigeria. This study revealed that although Nigeria federalism was purposely adopted by the foundational policy makers to purportedly eradicate ethnic dominance and inspire the component units to progress and advance at different speed, past years of military government had done innumerable injury to the mainstays of Nigeria's federal system by establishing an unfair, unbalanced and hyper-centralised federal arrangement that enables ethnic dominance and subdues the component units to the financial domination of the centre. In this sense, a sole ethnic group's ownership of political power at the central level confers supremacy over other ethnic groups, effectively converting the federal arrangement into a tool of ethnic/tribal dominance. The Igbos of the South-East region of Nigeria has been the victim of this unbalanced, hyper-centralized federal structure and ethnic subjugation over the years, hence, the incessant rise in the emergence and activities of separatist and pro-independence movements in the region.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Arising from the above, therefore, the study puts forward the following recommendation

All-inclusive restructuring and reorganization of the political system of Nigeria by adopting a firm, even and appropriate Federal composition that will encompass state or regional independence and autonomy when it concerns governmental powers and fiscal resources. This would liquidate separatist and pro-independence activities and reinstate healthy competition and political stability which are drivers to economic and national growth.

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