

Igbo Political Elites And Movement For The Actualization Of Sovereign State Of Biafra (MASSOB), 1999-2012

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Abstract

The study is entitled Igbo Political Elites and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Bier (MASSOB). The purpose of this study is to critically interrogate the role political elites of Nigeria play in the resurgence of separatist agitations in the political system of Nigeria. In this regard, the study specially probed the role of the interests of Igbo political elites in the resurgence of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The study adopted qualitative research technique. Using this reset, technique, the researcher applied content analysis. Content analysis analyzed the contents of written documents. As an analysis study, the researcher carried out an analysis of the documentary data, sourced from second-sources of data. An eclectic theoretical approach, using elite theory and theory of instrumentalism adopted. The two theories complement the apparent inadequacies of each in explaining MASSOB as a separatist agitation phenomenon. The researcher discussed and analyzed the critical components of the research objective through which we tested the research hypothesis and provided reliable findings, among the research find include: (1) The resurgence of separatist agitation by members of the Movement for the Actualization. Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is significantly linked to the interests of the Igbo political elites Persistent lack of unity among Nigerian political elites based on the absence of strategic elites and dominance of segmental elites has made Nigeria a violent state that allows separatist agitations to thrive (3) Separatist agitation serves as a ready instrument in the hands of Nigerian elites who always turn to this ethnicity phenomenon when they are disadvantaged in the contestation of national power and resources (4) The apparent lack of consensus among Igbo elites leads to the discordant voices on national issues thereby creating fertile ground for the emergence of the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB Igbo have no unified platform with credible agenda that would counter the demands and activities MASSOB. The researcher recommended among other things that (1) Igbo political elites should avoid using their selfish personal interests into wooing Igbos to embark on separatist agitation,(2) Nigerian govern and stakeholders in the electoral process should make the democratic space more open so that more credible strategic elites be elected into positions of governance (3) Nigerian governments at all levels should empower the Nigerian citizens by making education more qualitative, accessible and affordable (4) There is a need to consciously create and empower the middle class that can rise to counter the existing segmental elites : country (5) There is a need for the Igbo elites to rise up to the challenge of MASSOB by providing Igbo public with alternative agenda that would address squarely Igbo multifaceted problems in Nigeria.

Keywords: Igbo; Political Elites; MASSOB; Biafra; Sovereign

Introduction

Separatist agitations in Nigeria are a phenomenon that is as old as Nigeria. Nigeria as a country came into formal existence in 1914 when Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria were amalgamated. These agitations cannot be divorced from the role the colonial government played in the formation and governance of the Nigerian State. Before the incursion of the British colonialists into the areas that constitute the present Nigeria, the various ethnic and cultural groups that make up the country existed as autonomous political entities. These entities had their own political, economic, social religious systems distinct from one another (Duruji, 2010; Onu, 2001:1; Coleman, 1958:48; Onuoha and Okpoko 2004:1). The above scholars were unanimous that the aim of the colonial government in bunching together different entities was purely for exploitation of capital. To achieve this mission, they employed rules and tactics that granted the colonial government stronghold, with little or no interest in the social, economic and political development that would promote nation-building, sufficient unity and stability of the country. Obumelu (2003:13) asserts that “the foundations of Nigeria contained the seeds of her own destruction”.

Imperatively, British policies and governance were not designed ab initio to foster unity among the disparate groups that constitute Nigeria: they exploited the already existing various ethnic differences. These prevailing circumstances continue, to create hatred, distrusts, suspicions and cleavages among the ethnic groups. The entrenched differences have always resulted to the contest for national power and resources that follow ethnic lines. The contests have also led to several violent and antagonistic behaviours among them and have culminated to the emergence of separatist movements in Nigeria.

As a result, Nigeria colonial state witnessed six separatist agitations that predated Nigerian independence. First, prior to the act of unification, Barr Safer Williams took British colonial Government to court that the Yorubas should not be part of the amalgamation of Nigeria (Baimdele, 2009:24). Secondly, in 1947, Tafewa Belewa, the former Prime Minister of Nigeria made a call that they (Northerners) did not want their Southern neighbours to interfere in the development of the North. Thirdly, during Ibadan General Conference of 1950, the Emirs of Zaria and Katsina insisted that the North would ask for a separation from the rest of Nigeria on the arrangement existing before 1914, if the North were not allotted fifty percent of seats in the Central Legislature (Forsyth, 1972:21). Fourthly, the motion for self rule of 21st March 1953 for Nigeria by Anthony Enahoro and the counter motion for self-rule by Sarduna of Sokoto, Alhaji Ahmed Belo, resulted into insults to the Northern Representatives. A follow up trip to the Northern Region by some southern political class, sparked off the Kano riots of 1953. The Northern Representatives in reaction to this development prepared eight point programme of secession (Obiajulu and Obi, 2003: 105). Fifthly, one of the decisions reached during the London Conference of 1953 in which Lagos would become a Federal Capital Territory and to be made a “no man’s land” and separated from the Western Region. The Western Delegate led by late Chief Obafemi Awolowo threatened that the region would opt out of the federation if Lagos is eventually separated from the Region (Obiajulu & Obi, 2003:108). Sixthly, the Ibibio State Union at its Seventh Annual Conference of 1954 demanded for a separate state for Ibibio people and the peoples of Calabar, Ogoja and Rivers Provinces before 1956. They resolved that if the demand was not granted, they would declare themselves a Sovereign State (Udoma: 1987:351; Njoku 2004:63). The above identified six ethnic separatist agitations that occurred under the colonial Nigeria means that the country gained independence on a fragile balance constructed by Nigerian political elites.

The post colonial regimes, driven by Nigerian indigenous political elites that succeeded the colonialists instead of forging a robust and comprehensive nation building reforms of Nigerian state so as to reduce tensions such as ethnic separatists agitations had largely continued the pattern of the receded colonialists (Adejumobi, 2002:200). These successive post independence regimes failed to initiate far reaching nation building measures that would coalesce ethnic differences into rallying and integrative icons that could engender sense of pride amongst Nigerian citizens irrespective of tribe, sex, age, religion and create a pan- Nigerian state. Instead, most of the attitudes shown and actions undertaken by the political elites were rather aimed at suppressing each other ethnic consciousness and privileges. The above political scenario had resulted into the following eight other separatists agitations in the post Independence Nigeria. First, the revolt of Isaac Adaka Boro, who on 23rd February 1966, declared the southern parts of the country of the present Rivers, Balyelsa, and Delta States “the Nigeria Delta Peoples ‘Republic (Boro, 1982:12). Second, the counter coup of 29th July, 1966 was code named “Arabia”. (Arabia means secession in Hausa (Ikimi 2002:63). Third, on 27th May, 1967, the Consultative Assembly announced its decision to establish an independent state called the “Republic of Biafra (Osaghae, 1998:62 Nwobashi2010:77). On 30th May, 1967 Ojukwu the then military administrator of Eastern region declared the “defunct Republic of Biafra”. Fourth, the Biafra secession had a reassurance of Chief Awolowo who had threatened that should the East secede, the west will follow suit (Dudley, 1965:28). Fifth, the Orkar failed coup of 22, 1990 attempted to excise five states namely Sokoto, Bomo, Katsina, Kano and Bauchi. (<http://www.dawodu.com/omoigui8.htm>). Sixth, on 13th September, 1999, barely three months after the present democratic dispensation came into existence, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra was founded by Chief Ralph Uwazuruike. Seventh, Ogoni declared independence and hosted flag on Thursday August 2, 2012 (<http://www.kemmyokpaka:blog>). Eight, Bakassi under the platform of Bakassi Self Determination Front (BSDF) declared Bakassi the “Democratic Republic of Bakassi on 9th August 2012, barely a week after Ogoni declaration.

Among the separatist movements, this study focuses on the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). This movement is a resurrection of Biafran struggle that is expected to have ended with the end of civil war in 1970. MASSOB activities have attracted local, national and international attention. MASSOB has exploited widespread sentiments of non-integration of the Igbos into the mainstream of Nigeria politics and government, expressed over the years by Igbo political elites. The group utilized these sentiments to drive for membership and support. Uwazunke, the leader of the organization had outlined 25 stages to the actualization of Biafra (Duruji, 2010:117). The group had already undertaken 16 activities as articulated by Ohinanyo (cited in Duniji, 2010:168). Some of the activities contradict the laws of the Nigerian state which pitched the members against security opera-lives.

MASSOB has made tremendous progress in sensitizing Igbo publics. According to the state security service, the group commands a membership of about four million while the former Police Assistant Inspector General that was in charge of Zone 9, Mr. Adewole Ajakaiye noted also that the group numbered 1:20 for Onitsha residents (Duruji, 2010:110). The group has organization format akin to shadow government with a structure that operates on four tier system. Uwazuruike and members of the organization have been severally arrested and detained. Others have been arraigned in courts and the allegation that some members have been killed by security operatives (Duruji, 2010:110). MASSOB also embarked on strategies of internationalizing the struggle and soliciting for the international support. Based on this, MASSOB has achieved the support of the Igbo in Diaspora as manifested in the various organizations supporting to actualize Biafra. The group was also granted the status of one of the UN represented nations of the world at the United Nations in 2000. The

group has established office abroad which the organization regards as Biafra embassy like the Biafra House in Washington D.C. The strategies of MASSOB include:

- The major strategy of the group was ensure the mobilization of people of south East through persuasion and education hinged on its philosophy of non-violence. The belief of the group according to a study by Onu (2001) was that the group claimed that if the first attempt of establishing Biafra through violence failed, non violence is likely to succeed. Uwaizue, leader of the group had outlined 25 stages to the actualization of Biafra. The initial strategy of membership hunting involved house to house enlistment through persuasion and education (Durnji, 2010:107).
- Another strategy that opens the channels for clashes with security operative was the rallies, demonstrations and processions. The rally of May 22nd, 2000 tagged “Redeclaration of Biafra” at Aba stunned the Government authorities. The unexpected turnout massive crowd for the event made the government to adopt closer monitoring.
- The group has also a very powerful propaganda machine. Several publications that contain sensational reports about the organization and unfair attitudes of Nigerians against the Igbos abound in stands across the country. Several websites and short wave radio station that broadcast from Washington D.C and London every Saturday from concrete chain that stirs and sustains people’s interest in the group activities and the issue they represent.
- Also part of the strategy of MASSOB is hoisting the flag of the defunct Biafran Republic in South East and part South states.
- Mass circulation of souvenirs and insignia with MASSOB and Biafra inscription as a way of concretizing and creating awareness of people in the organization and its activities intensified.

Therefore, the study strives how the resurgence of separatist agitations in Nigeria is a direct consequence of the interests of the political elites with particular reference to Movement for the Actualization Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

Statement of the Problem

One of the challenges facing Nigerian state since colonial period to date has been how to save the country from the brink of disintegration. This is because the unity and stability of Nigeria has always been threatened by several separatist agitations championed by different separatist movements. These separatist agitations mount undue pressure on the corporate existence of the polity. It is puzzling to note that six separatist agitations occurred in the pre-independence Nigeria (Bamidele, 2009:24; Forsyth 1972:21; Obiajulu and Obi, 2004:105& 108; Udoma, 1987:351; Njoku, 2004:63) while eight separatist agitations occurred in the post independence Nigeria (Boro, 1982:12; Osaghae 1998:62, Nwobashi 2010:77; Ikimi 2002:63).

It is worrisome to note that Chief Ralph Uwazurike who founded MASSOB was an enthusiastic participant as a member Obasanjo Campaign Committee. For him to form a separatist agitation movement barely three months the democratic transition he struggled for its realization came into existence was a contradictory behavior on his part. He supported Obasanjo even when Chief Alex Ekwueme of Igbo extraction contested the PDP primaries. He founded MASSOB not minding that Igbos including Uwazurike championed the democratic transition. The extant studies on separatist agitations in Nigeria had attempted to explain this phenomenon from three analytical perspectives.

The first is the colonization thesis which explains the phenomenon from the colonial legacies resulting from the colonization of the country by Britain (Agbaje, 2002:26-27; Witaker, 1998:5-8; Joseph, Taylor and Agbaje, 1999:272; Diamond and Lippit 1995:420). According to this perspective, colonialists sowed seeds of discord that endured into independence Nigeria. This perspective becomes inadequate as an explanatory framework at understanding the reason(s) why separatist agitations occur in Nigeria. Its adequacy as the explanatory framework to this phenomenon is against the backdrop that Nigeria is not the only country that experienced colonization with the same attendant features. Evidence reveals that some other countries such as USA, India, South Africa, Australia, Canada, Switzerland were colonized yet they have little or zero tolerance for separatist agitations (Appadorai, 1925:325-379).

The second is the ethnicity thesis. This perspective attempts to explain that separatist agitations occur in Nigeria as a result of ethnicity. The scholars in this regard believe that the resurgence of separatist agitations is a direct response to the political environment that is ethnically, socially, religiously, linguistically and culturally heterogeneous and diverse (Biran, 1984:24; Horowitz 1972:235; Nnoli, 1978:20, Achebe, 1983:10). The researcher, after critical analysis of this framework of analysis, maintains also that it is inadequate at explaining and understanding the reason(s) why separatist agitations occur constantly in Nigeria. This is because ethnic plurality as well as ethnic consciousness is not inherently anti-ethnic to nation building. There is strength in ethnic diversity provided the strengths of the constituent units are plugged into mainstreaming national development. The ethnic configurations of the United States of America and Indian nation state are more pronounced than Nigeria yet the peoples of these two great nation states manifest peaceful co-existence (Mohapatra, 2003:116).

The third is the marginalization thesis. This perspective seeks to explain that the frequent occurrence of separatist agitations in Nigeria is a direct result of the deprivations and exclusions of some ethnic groups by various successive administrations in Nigeria. The scholars of this school of thought argue that separatist agitations occur because of the failure of the successive governments of Nigeria to equitably distribute the national resources and positions of governance among the ethnic nationalities in the country (Abbott, 2002:311-314; Ihunna, 2002, 326-341; Uwalaka, 2002; 19-27; Mbaugwu, 2004; 210-211; Opat, 2004, 219-224). These scholars argue along the same line with the separatist agitations entrepreneurs. The weakness of this argument is that it is a circular logic since all sections of this country contend that they are marginalized.

In all, these theses fall short of explaining and improving our understanding of the problem under study because they have not considered the central variable that is at play which has always been the interests of the political elites. The constant variable has remained the elites who move in and out of political power both in pre-independence and post Independence Nigeria. The failure to acknowledge the centrality of the interests of the political elites in the emergence and sustenance of separatist agitations in Nigeria poses a serious concern to the researcher. Therefore, there is a need to seek for a new way of thinking that will crystallize into an emerging thesis which will adequately explain the reason(s) why separatist agitations have a recurring occurrence in Nigeria. This has given rise to new perspective which challenges the interests of the Nigeria political elites as the driving force behind the incessant resurgence of separatist agitations in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop that this phenomenon has not emerged as a result of spontaneous outbreaks of popular dissatisfaction through mass based and mass revolt outcome. It is this lacuna that this present study intends to fill.

Research Question

Based on the foregoing, the research will address this research question.

(1) Why do Igbo political elites promote the resurgence of the separatist agitations by members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)?

Objective of the Study

The research will be guided by this specific objective.

(1) To find out the reason(s) why Igbo political elites promote the resurgence of separatist agitations by members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

Research Hypothesis

This proposition is deduced to form the research hypothesis.

(1) The resurgence of separatist agitations by members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is significantly linked to the interests of Igbo political elites.

Elite and Separatist Agitations Conceptualized

The literatures on the concept of elite maintain animity on the position of elite in the political system. The New Websters' Dictionary of the English language, International Edition (1995:306) defines elite as the few who are considered socially, intellectually or professionally superior to the rest in a group or society. Corroborating the above lexical meaning of elite, Mahajan (1988:820) refers to elite as "the successful element in the population. In his view, Keller (quoted in Mahajan 1988:820) asserts that the elites are those minorities which are set apart from the rest of society by their pre-eminence in one or more of occupational distributions. The fewness or minority position of the elites notwithstanding, they dominate and influence the population they belong. Elite group can be effective if they possess group consciousness, coherence and conspiracy. Elites, according to Mahajan (1988-820) are divided into two broad categories-strategic elites and segmental elites. Elites also fall into another two categories-governing elite governing elite (Agena, 2010:139, Ball and Peters, 2000:299). The strategic elites are those who claim or exercise wide influence over spectrum of social set up-while the elites are those who have influence or responsibilities only in a sub domain. The absence of the former and the presence of the later in Nigerian politics is the crux and has remained the greatest challenge to elite unity in Nigeria. The governing elite in Nigeria are a collection of segmental elites imbued with chauvinistic ethnic sentiments and emotion devoid of nationalistic and patriotic zeal for nation-building. The two elite categories draw their elite status from either or combination of heredity, excellence in professionalism, position in the ruling class or party or bureaucratic hierarchy, material influence or physical prowess. Out of two categories of strategic and segmental elites, Mahajan (1988:820) maintains that the strategic elites are more beneficial to the sustences and stability of political systems especially the management of diversity. The unity of elites underlies stability. That is why Plato's word, (quoted in Balls and Peters, 2003)

are supportive: “revolution always starts from the internal dissension in the ruling constitution cannot be upset so long as that class is of one mind however small it may be”. The studies of British and American political systems also underscore these claims. British political history-shows that since eighteenth century, elite unity has been an important and consistent feature of the British political system. A similar unity of elites characterized the United State of America since 1789 with the civil war exception (Ball & Peter 2000:299). Even with the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, the American elites collectively demonstrated unity and combined efforts in the fight against the terrorists suspected in the attack, former Soviet Union had witnessed collapse of elites consensus leading to collapse of French third Republic in 1940, the rise of Hitler during the collapse of Weimar Republic and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 are good examples of elites disunity. Chinese Communist had done effectively well in Tianmen Square in 1989, utilizing collective resolution on the part of the ruling elites (Ball & Peter’s 2000:299).

Separatist agitation is an ethnic phenomenon. For fuller comprehension of ethnic separatists agitations, it is imperative to treat ethnic and separatists agitation differently first before defining the broad theme. Ogban (2004:24) defines ethnic in a number of senses:

- (1) A social group within a cultural and social system that claims or accorded special status on the basis of complex, often complex traits including religions, linguistic, ancestral or characteristic.
- (2) A religions, racial, national or cultural group
- (3) A people not Christians or Jewish, threatened pagans
- (4) An informed sense that means a member of ethnic group.

In the same manner, Nnoli (1978:5) states that:

Ethnic groups are social formations distinguished by communal character of their boundaries. The relevant common fact may be languages or culture or both. In Africa, language has clearly been the most crucial variable...minor linguistic or cultural difference often exist within the group forming the basis for delineation of sub ethnic system. More important is still the possibility of occupation and class differentiation.

From the above definitions and clarifications, it can be deduced that ethnic separatist agitation refers to a condition where members of an ethnic group demonstrate an attempt or a threat to achieve a separation from the existing state. Ethnic groups in separatists agitation are bodies in struggle for secession (Nwobashi, 2010:70) separatist agitations entrepreneurs base their struggle on principle of national self determination. Secessionists’ position and activities always intertwine with the principal goal of self determination (Onu, 2003:9) So this principle implies that every nation should be organized as an independent political entity (Johari, 2009:467). This raises a critical question whether nationality has the right to be self governing or sovereign state. The recognition of this principle in the Covenants of the defunct League of Nations and the Charter of United Nations gives those agitating for separate existence the impetus to do so, the motivating idea behind the affirmation of the principle by these bodies is that to group together people of different nationalities into a single

state will always lead to lack of patriotic feeling and internal dissension. It is further argued that a nationality spread over several states can never be happy, contended and stable like a dismembered social organism. To exponents of national self determination, it is politically expedient that boundary lines should be drawn where national lines exist. A great exponent of this principle J.S Mills says:

It is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundary of government should coincide in the main with nationalities where the sentiment of nationality exists in any form, there is a prime facial case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government and a governed one hardly knows what any division of the human race should be free to do, if not determine with which of the various collective bodies of human beings they choose to associate themselves (quoted in Johari, 2009:467-468).

Based on this principle, most people who constitute a nationality existing in a multinational nation state aspire either to be independent or to live under a political arrangement of their own choice or be allowed a larger measure of political autonomy. It calls as a national right of the people of a particular nationality to chart their political destiny which many constitutions of many nation states do not permit.

Marxists also align themselves to the same point, giving impetus to the Lenin constitution of 1924 in which he frankly recognized the right of a nationality to secede from the Soviet Union. Stalin said that:

It is equally good and may under certain circumstances be better if nations come together willingly and organize themselves in a multinational state on the basis of complete national equality consistent with democracy and non discrimination (Appadorai, 1975:480, Florsky 1939:91, Johari, 2009:468).

But several objective questions have been raised from this principle. If the people of all nationalities would be allowed the rights to demand self determination and achieve their own states, they would be chaos and anarchy in many states considering the uncontrollable number that would be acting in a theatre of world politics. In a swift reaction, Garner in his words (1952:35):

If the right of every group however small which may happen to be ethnically and linguistically distinct from the rest of the population, to separate and organize itself into a state, were admitted and exercised in practice, it would lead to chaos and anarchy.

Again, the problem of viability of these very small states will call to questions because of uneven endowment of national resources be it human or natural. Allowing this principle in practice would make French Quebec in Canada, the Scots in Britain, the Red Indians in United state of America, the kurdis in Iraq, the Rashats in Pakistani, the Yoruba in Dahomy, the Tamils in Surlanka, and all the ethnic groups in Nigeria to demand same. John EE Dalbeing-Action lord action cautioned that the principle of national self determination was a retrograde step in human history (Lord Action quoted in Johari, 2009:466) He further says:

Where political and national boundaries coincide, society ceases to advance and nations relapse into a condition corresponding to that of a man who remains in intercourse with his fellow men.

It is imperative to examine the conditions for a successful secession. Pearson (1977) formulated an analytical framework for assessing the chances of the success of a separatists struggle based on the concept of resources. According to him, this concept embraces the consideration of the cost and risk of attempting to separate from an existing state. Its elements are: (1) socially mature environment or mobilized population through mass literacy and communication, industrialization and urbanization, (2) empowered counter elite; (3) international support including that of the emigrant Diaspora and the support of the great power; (4) location within in a declining host state in which the expresses its declining strength (5) War; failure of the Caribbean, the Middle East African states indicates the difficulties successfully seceding from an established (Gur, 1993:294-295).”

Theoretical Framework

As a result of the nature of this stud eclectic theoretical approach, using elite theory and theory of instrumentalism is adopted, two theories complement the apparent inadequacies of each in explaining the role of the Nigerian political elites in the resurgence separatists agitations in Nigeria, focusing c Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

The elite theory is associated with works of Vilfredo Pareto (1935), Gaetano h (1939), Robert Michels (1958), James Burnham (1941), Wright Mills (1956), JosepSchumpeter (1947), Raymond Aron (1906), Giovanni Sartori (1965), KerlManiheimHarold Caswli (1953), GassetOtega (1932 Mahagan (1988) J.C, Johari 2009, Garar, 1969). The central theme of this theon there is in every society a minority population which takes the major decisions in the society. As those decisions have political implications, the elite exercise considerable influence. The elites are set apart from the rest of the society by their pre eminence in one of the societal professional distributions, to be truly effective, an elite group possesses three qualities viz: group consciousness, coherence and conspiracy (Mahagan, 1988:820) Elites are divided into strategic elites and segmental elites or governing or non-governing elites (Mahagan, 1988:820, Agena, 2003:129) the strategic elites are those who exercise wide influence over the entire spectrum of the social set up while the segmental elites are those exercise influence only in a sub domain of some society. It becomes baneful for a country to possess dominance of segmental government. Mosca (1939) opines that the larger the proportion community the smaller will be the proportion of the governing elite to the governed and the more difficult it will be for the vast masses to organize for reaction against the elites. The elites have position of advantage over the non-elite. Thus, the empirists (Duverger, 1972, 425, 2009:386) would say that “all people governed by elite or by a chosen element of population. In the justification of elite theory to the understanding of the role of elites in the resurgence of separatists agitations in Nigeria, the theory explains apparent lack of strategic elites who are suppose to be nationalists or nation builders and preponderance of segmental elites who in their self-serving interests are ethnic entrepreneurs or chauvinists. This theory explains further that Nigeria being the most seventh populous country in the world with about 250 ethnic groups, is having fewer elites in proportion to its population, making it difficult for the Nigerian masses to react against lack of unity among Nigerian elites on national issues leading to the marginalization of the masses by the Nigerian elites. A section of elites turns against the Nigerian state when they are disadvantaged in the game of political equation:

Theory of instrumentalism is associated with the works of Joireman 2003, Cohen 1969, Glazer and Moyihan, 1963, Esman (1977) Brass (1971) Earth (1998) Promer (1955), Elstain (1993) Haas (1977) Billa 1995 and Heater! (2000) (Duruji, 2010). The central message of this theory is that ethnicity is

the means to some specific ends. It emphasizes on the goals of the ethnic group and identity is circumstantially played up to advance the parochial interests of the elites of the ethnic group rather than general interests of the ethnic group. Instrumentalists are of the views that malleability using ethnic sentiments affect, the choice of the individuals.

They emphasize ways in which ethnicity is manipulated and used by the elites to achieve political mobilization: The elites manipulate ethnic identity and that they disappear once their utilities are no long required. Instrumentalists see ethnicity as a tool that elite can use for their personal aggrandizement. They also see the motivation for ethnic identification as self-serving interest. The benefits of ethnic identification can be social, political and economic and individuals make the choice only when the perceived benefits out weight the cost. Apart from the manipulation of ethnic sentiments by sub-national elite to advance parochial interest, the state can also manipulation the same ethnic sentiments to further its objectives (Duruji, 2010:53).

Theory of instrumentalism explains why ethnic separatists agitations being an ethnic phenomenon as defined in ethnic organizations are always emerging in Nigeria. This theory explains that the political conditions constructed by Nigerian political elites that have given room for the general outcry of marginalization of the Igbos in Nigeria, made it easy for MASSOB leadership to mobilize sufficient Igbo membership. The instrumentalists believe that, elites who desire some roles that have eluded them in a heterogeneous political system manipulate ethnicity to achieve mobilization for the personal aggrandizement (Cohen 1969 Brass 1991, Hecter, 2000). For the elites, the struggles cease when they are no longer political expedient. The dividing lines between peoples on the basis of ethnicity become blurred when there is no opportunity for advancing parochial elite interests as a group cause. These opportunities abound in Nigeria. This theory explains sufficiently the role of the founder of the MASSOB, Chief Uwazuruike who was a major and enthusiastic participant in the 1999 political process but become frustrated when he was not taken into cognizance in the fall out of power equation (Obi, 2007:7). Therefore the formation of MASSOB by Chief Uwazuruike could be explained by theory as a personal frustration.

Discussion And Analysis

MASSOB and Separatists Agitations in Nigeria: An overview

The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was founded on 13th September, 1999 by Chief Ralph Uwazunike, an Indian trained lawyer based in Lagos. Chief Uwazunike adopted principle and practice of non violence and non-exodus to the political struggle. The motto of the organization is therefore non-violence and non-exodus created out of the experience of the failed attempt in the 1967 to actualize Biafra which took violent dimension. The emergence of MASSOB is an attempt to resurrect the struggle for self-determination waged by the Igbo dominated former Eastern Region of Nigeria that led to the gruesome three and half year civil war that claimed the lives of about one million people and displaced several others. The remote cause of the war could be traced to the five years preceding the war which witnessed intense political uprisings and spate of violence across the country. Most of the victims of the political violence were Igbos (Fearon, 2006:5). These growing grievances that propelled MASSOB were itemized by Obinoyo, (2007) to include:

The conspiracy never to allow an Igbo lead the Nigerian state as president. For instance, it is believed that Obasanjo usurped the rights of the Igbo when he refused to step down in 2003 and instead ran for second term. The trends of events prior to the PDF primaries at eagle square lent credence as Ekwueme was abandoned;

The non establishment of federal institutions namely parastatals, international airports, industries, seaports in Igbo states. The dredging of the River Niger to serve as a seaport for the south east has been a subject of negative politicking;

The dilapidated nature of federal roads in the south east, which have turned out to become death traps for the teeming mass of Easterners plying these roads. Those constructed were not awarded to reputable companies like “Julius Bergen known for building durable and quality roads in Nigeria;

- The under representation of the Igbos in top positions of the Nigeria state structure like the army, customs, federal civil services and key political positions; South East has the least of number of states and local government in Nigeria, five states in all while other zones have six and North West has seven; Exclusion of the oil producing states in the south east from benefiting from the federal government development programmes for oil producing states. The use of quota system to slowdown the pace of educational attainment of the Igbo;
- The ban on importation of foreign goods to frustrate the Igbos whose main occupation is trading on all forms of merchandise;
- The killing of Igbos and looting of their property in other parts of the country especially in the North at the slightest provocation even the issue is not caused by the Igbos. For instance in 2006, riot was triggered by Denmark cartoon in which many Igbo people were attacked and killed by angry Moslem youths of the North comes to mind;

It is important to do critical analysis of these grievances

- Government was run by NPC-NCNC coalition, NPC was an Hausa/Fulani dominated party while NCNC was an Igbo dominated party. In 1979-83, Nigerian National Government was by NPN-NPP accord. NPN was Hausa/Fulani dominated party while NPP was Igbo dominated party. In 1993 annulled presidential General elections, 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, Igbos voted massively for the candidates that these elections (Anifowose and Enemiw, 1999, 246-259).
- On the non establishment of federal institutions, international airports, seaports and failure to dredge the River Niger, the federal government has commenced the dredging of the River and works have also commenced to provide seaports of Onitsha and Owerri respectively. Akanu Ibiam airport Enugu is now an international airport in which reconstruction works have reached advanced stage it to met with informational standard. Every state in the South East has a Federal University Nigerian government has privatized most of its public Enterprises which into private sectors to make them more profitable (BPE, 2000:33).
- On the alleged dilapidated nature of roads in the South East, most of the roads in the South East like Enugu-Onitsha, Onitsha-Aba, Enugu-Port Harcourt, Owerri-Abakaliki-Enugu roads are undergoing reconstruction.
- On the alleged underrepresentation of the Igbos in top positions of the Nigeria state structure.

- On the alleged least numbers of states compared in the South Northern to address this abnormally. On the alleged exclusion of the South East from benefiting as oil producing, Abia and Imo states are already oil producing states and oil has just been discovered in Anambra state. On the alleged of quota system to shut down the pace of the educational attainment of the Igbo, found character principles and quota system are adopted to avoid deprivations and exclusion of groups in Nigerian federal system.
- On the alleged importation of foreign goods to frustrate the Igbos whose main occupation is trading in all forms of merchandise. The Igbos whose technological breakthrough during the civil war marveled should engage more in productive economy instead importation of goods that will not bring about economic growth of the national economy.
- On the alleged killing of Igbos and looting of their properties, the representatives of the Igbos in both National and states government have started engaging the federal governments and representatives of the North on the matter. The Boko Harm is being combated by federal government to allow for peaceful co-existence. In all, these efforts of government have not made the MASSOB leadership to relapse its agitations.

MASSOB leadership has effectively exploited these widespread sentiments in their drive for membership and support. It was only at the twilight of Obasanjo's eight years in 2007 that Air Marshal Paul Dike, an Igbo man from the Delta state in the south south geopolitical zone was appointed Chief of Air staff. That has been followed by the appointment of Mike Okiro from Rivers state and Ogonnaya Onovo from Enugu state is Inspectors General of Nigeria police. The ones that elicited most reactions was the recent appointments of major General Azubuike Ihejiruka from Imo state as Chief of Army staff in September 2010, and Senator Anyim Pius Anyim as the secretary of the federal Government of Nigeria. These appointments make them the first Igbo men to occupy such positions since the end of the war.

Political Elites and Resurgence of Separatists Agitations

This area reviews relevant literature that attempt to examine the elites' interests in relation to separatist agitations entrepreneurs and some scholars who adopt the arguments of the separatists agitations thereby concealing the imperatives of the personal political and economic goals of elites that champion secession. Sambanis (2000) in Onu (2004:36) identifies elites as being instrumental to leading the masses to violence. To him, it is the elites that bear the organizational cost of violence and the elites also determine the scope and timing of violence activities. These elites arise when there is ample grievance and opportunity. All societies have groups who have grievances but not all are willing to resort to violence, noting that what differentiates peaceful from conflict ridden societies is not the incidence of grievance but the capacity of the rebel groups elites to finance escalated violence.

To provide further insights on the role of elites in separatist agitations, some scholars have attempted to establish a theoretical explanation for this phenomenon. However, this body of literature attempts to explain it from three analytical perspectives. One strand, postulates that the decision to join and participate in the activities of rebel militia group occurs when there is convergence of leaders and preferences. Scholar in this group see this from economics of war rationale angle (Beckier, 1968, Calvo Armengoe and zenon, 2004, Silverman, 2004, Verdier and Zenon, 2004). Another strand sees

it that hierarchical rebellious groups exist where the lower rank members actively participate in risky activities do so as a result of two exclusive variables; greed of leaders and ideological motives of followers (Krueger and Maleckora, 2003, Sanni Bollier 2004). The third strand postulates, a combination of material and non-material factors as playing roles in the motive to join political organizations (Humphreys and Illaistein2004).

The first strand was premised on the Beckerian tradition in the understanding of criminal behaviours which is situated on economic causes of conflict (Beck, 1968). This position was further supported by the works of Collier and Hoeffler (1988, 2000) that argued that poverty, poor education and lack of sanction by the immediate social environments are good predictors of enlistment into mafia like movements. This phenomenon has manifested in Gulf Region where nomadic groups of fighters engaged in diverse rebellious activities in exchanges for immediate material benefits with the probability of changing allegiance if better opportunities are presented to them (Human Right Wald 2005). Seeing from the same lens, Krueger and Maleckova gave a corroborated view in their study of Hezbollah fighters and suicide bombers in Lebanon and Gaza strip which concluded that poverty is inversely related with the likelihood that someone become a Hezbollah fighters and that education is positively related with the likelihood that someone becomes a Hezbollah fighter. It implies a response to political conditions and long standing of indignity and frustration. Still along this view point, Sanni (2004) in his study of Fuzzy's Armadas Revolutionaries de Columbia (FARC) concluded that people enlist in guerrilla organization as a result of a mélange, fear, hatred and even excitement. In their separate works of Ganbetta (2000) and Williams (2000) they argue that the mechanism that motivates cooperation in any form of human endeavor are coercion, interest, values and personal bonds. The people may cooperate because of (1) fear of sanction (2) enhancement of material economic interests (3) general reasons like cultural, moral or ties in spite of sanction or reward (4) relational bond of kin and friendship. Therefore, the greater the fear of being suppressed as a group, the less necessary it is to resort to material incentives, making followers when oriented to this realization blind to their leaders intentions. This is anchored on the two behavioural assumptions of perfect intentionality and rational caucus of the leaders (elites) and obedience of the followers brainwashed by primordial rhetoric and ideology (Duruji, 2010:28)

Summary Of Findings, Recommendations And Conclusion

This section concludes the study by providing the summary of findings, recommendations and conclusions.

Summary of Research Findings

A critical analysis of the role of political elites in the resurgence of separatist agitations in Nigeria reveals that:

1. The resurgence of separatist agitations by members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra is significantly linked to the interests of Igbo political elites.
2. Persistent lack of unity among Nigerian political elites and the absence of strategic elites and the dominance of segmental elites have made Nigeria a violent state since colonial times. These elites have trod the paths of divisiveness. The result

of the quagmire is the separatist agitations that had dotted the political landscape of Nigeria since colonial till date.

3. Separatist agitations serve as a ready instrument in the hands of a section of Nigerian elites who always turn to this ethnicity phenomenon when, they are disadvantaged in the contestation for national power and resources. It is the elites that have marginalized the Nigerian masses making a very section to be crying marginalization at the moment their elites exit from national power. The ethnic group members only feed from the crucible of leaders that were accommodated in the national power game equation.
4. Nigerian state lacks the needed middle class with necessary empowerment to always counter the existing segmental elites in the country.
5. Igbo elites were in unity and solidarity in critical national issues before the outbreak of civil war as a result of Biafran declaration in 1967, but there is apparent collapse of consensus among Igbo elites leading to discordant voices on national issue that affect Igbos. This condition created a fertile ground for the emergence of the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra and its intensification.
6. Igbos have no unified platform with credible agenda that would counter the activities and demands of MASSOB.
7. There is high degree of centralization of powers in the hands of federal government of Nigeria.
8. Nigeria state and politics serve as arena and means of accumulation of wealth by Nigerian political elites.
9. Nigeria has high level of unemployment and illiteracy.

Recommendations

In view of the above findings, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The Igbo political elites should avoid using separatist agitations as an instrument in their hands to achieve their selfish personal political interests.
2. That Nigerian government and stakeholders in the electoral process should make the democratic space more open with robust internal democracy reforms so that more credible and strategic elites would be elected into national positions of governance.
3. There is the necessity on the part of government to empower Nigerian citizens by making education more qualitative and affordable in order to raise more enlightened population that we be interested in the public affairs of the country.
4. There is a need to consciously create and empower the middle class that can rise to counter the existing segmented elites that have ruined the country due to personal self-serving interests.
5. It is necessary for the federal government to commence the process of truly ethnic reconciliation in Nigeria as a way of correcting the past injustices meted against the ethnic groups of Nigeria especially the Igbos in the aftermath of the civil war.
6. There is a need for the Igbo elites to rise up to the challenge of MASSOB by providing Igbo publics with alternative agenda that would address Igbo problems in Nigeria instead of attempting individually to bemoan the activities and demands of MASSOB.
7. There is need to assess the powers at the national level of government and make them less attractive and competitive for our gullible elite and provide more powers to the other two tiers in order to achieve even development.

8. There is need to checkmate Nigeria state and politics as arena for accumulation of wealth through a more programmatic and independent agencies that will be more proactive in the prevention of corruption rather than hunting for those who have committed the acts.
9. There is need to tackle the weak and distorted political economy that breeds continually a large army of vulnerable unemployed and disillusioned population in order to remove the conditions that make joining ethnically militant organization impossible.
10. There is a need to chart out ways the Nigerian government can protect Nigerian citizens resident in other states to avoid the loss of lives and property of our citizens in other states other than theirs that has remained a perennial problem in our political history.

Conclusion

Examination of the role of Nigerian political elite in the separatists agitations reveals apparent lack of strong commitment of Nigeria political class to nation building as they continue to demonstrate lack of unity. More to it is that what existed since colonial era to date was the preponderance of segmental elites instead of strategic elites. These crops of political elites use all various forms of ethnicity which separatists agitation is. a variant form as a tool to achieve their political ends. The disagreements among the elites tend to follow ethnic lines that produce violent and anachronistic issues that tend to divide the Nigerian nation further in all national matters. These lingering issues constitute the national question which makes it easier for elites excluded or marginalized from equation of power, to see no other choice but to recline into mobilizing along ethnic lines as a means of reintegrating back into the arena of power. And when this power is controlled by sectional ruling elite, these privilege elites use machinery of the state and its vast resources with which to suppress its competitors from other sections in Nigeria. It makes the formation of a separatist's organization in the mould of MASSOB the only viable option for these marginalized elites. MASSOB is a development that emerged from the dynamics of the Nigeria political processes rooted in the contest and control of the national power. That it was the contradictions of the Nigerian political system where Nigerian political elites have defined politics in the line ethnic connotation thus constituting the breeding ground for victors and vanquished, hence the rhetoric of sub nationalism to drive.

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