

Philosophy, Self-Determination, Peace and Intercultural Co-Existence in Nigeria: An Igwebuiké Perspective

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Abstract

This paper has studied the issue of agitations for self-determination in Nigeria from an African philosophical point of view. It studied these agitations in the light of the amalgamation treaty of 1914, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and most importantly, extant international laws. The beauty of this piece is that it focused on major issues which constitute the basis for the agitations for self-determination in Nigeria namely religious marginalization, ethnic marginalization, economic marginalization and political marginalization. The burden of this piece is the issue of the problem of co-existence in Nigeria. This paper articulated its position based on Igwebuiké philosophy as a theoretical framework, which emphasizes dialogue, justice and inclusive leadership as indispensable pathways to integration and national unity. For the purpose of this study, the historical and analytical methods of inquiry were patronized given that historical events were studied and the outcome of such events analysed. It submits that, rather than using force to quell the agitation for self-determination, the path of justice, dialogue and inclusive leadership should be explored as most cases of cessation are responses to the absence of these state ideals.

Keywords: Philosophy, Peace, Self-Determination, Secession, Igwebuiké, Intercultural, Nigeria, Coexistence.

Introduction

It was Woodrow Wilson, a United States President who in 1918 averred in his Fourteen Points that the right to self-termination is not a mere phrase but an imperative principle of action that statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril. This confirms the reality that human beings, since the dawn of civilization are no longer able to endure oppression for so long. He placed self-determination within the parameters of a right and a responsibility that a people owe themselves. No wonder, the quest for self-determination has become a global phenomenon, especially in places where marginalization of particular peoples has become manifest.

A cursory glance at history reveals that Quebec under Canada agitated for self-determination, and the court ruled in its favour because it observed that the Constitution of Canada is not a straightjacket as long as the majority of the people of Quebec voted in favour of secession. The court considered self-determination as a right that belongs to the people of Quebec to freely make political choices and pursue economic, social and cultural development. More so, in the case of Crimea and Ukraine, Crimea unilaterally declared her independence from Ukraine in spite of the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine which states that: “The autonomous Republic of Crimea is an inseparable constituent part of Ukraine and decides on the issues ascribed to its competence within the limits of the authority determined by the Constitution of Ukraine” (Art. 134). This, notwithstanding, the support from Russia for Crimea was very visible and of course, a determining factor during Crimea’s struggle for self-determination.

In the case of the Kosovo and Serbia, in spite of the absence of a Constitutional backing, the military actions against the Kosovar Albanians expressed in varied atrocities prompted the attention of the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO), an intergovernmental military alliance between 28 European nations. In 1999, the United Nations placed Kosovo under a transition administration. In 2008 Kosovo

unilaterally declared independence from Serbia which in 2010, the International Court of Justice did not rule that it contravened international law. In the case of South Sudan and Sudan, it was possible due to the consequences of the civil war between the Central Government of Khartoum and Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement. The Central Government of Khartoum promoted regional marginalization and ethnic clashes by giving support to the Arabic herdsmen to destroy the communities of the Dinka and Nuer. This made the option for secession not only unavoidable but acceptable by the international community.

This notwithstanding, the paper investigates issues of the agitation for self-determination and intercultural co-existence in Nigeria. This study is weaved around *Igwebuiké* philosophy theoretical framework which will form the basis for the interpretation of documents and historical experiences regarding the quests for self-determination in Nigeria. It is also on the basis of this philosophy that solutions to the present agitations for self-determination will be generated. The historical and analytical approaches will be employed during the course of this study as historical events will be studied and the outcome of such events analysed. Since the concepts: philosophy, self-determination and peace are fundamental to this work, the researcher will begin with clarifying them so as to set the conceptual framework necessary for this lecture.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are formulated to explain, predict and understand phenomena. In many ways, they challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical boundary assumptions. The theory that will be employed for the purpose of this work is *Igwebuiké*. The expression, *Igwebuiké* is a combination of three Igbo words. Literally, *Igwe* is a noun which means number or multitude. The number or population in perspective are entities with ontological identities and significances.

However, part of an existential order in which every entity is in relation to the other. *Bu* is a verb, which means *is*. *Ike* is a noun, which means *strength* or *power* (Kanu 2016a&b). *Igwe*, *bu* and *Ike* put together, means ‘number is strength’ or ‘number is power’ (Kanu 2017a-d). However, beyond the literal sense of *Igwebuike*, it means *otu obi* (one heart and one soul) – *cor unum et anima una*. It concatenates Igbo forms, symbolism, signs, media, meaning, anthropologies, universal cosmic truths, functions, semantic powers, physics, phenomena, faculties, and Igbo environ-mentalities.

Igwebuike is employed as a unifying concept because it concerns the conception of the human person as both a spiritual and material being who lives in the universe. It is an explanatory theory or principle that interprets the puzzle of our complex relationship with the non-corporal world and human social life (Kanu 2018a-c). *Igwebuike* captures a transcendent complementary comprehensive systematic quest to penetrate the structure and dynamics of reality ultimately for the purpose of giving honest answers to fundamental questions, to questions that arise within the arena of asking questions and questioning answers.

In this search for truth, *Igwebuike*, strives beyond all forms of particularities, peculiarities, paradoxes and contradictions and espouses the path of complementation, therefore, showing how being can relate to one another in a mutually harmonized non-absolutistic mode. *Igwebuike*, therefore, explores methods and principles for the mediation, coalescing and comprehension of the different units of reality: ideal and real, universal and particular, progressive and conservative, necessary and contingent, transcendent and immanent, essential and inessential and other units of reality within the same framework. It treats all units, components of reality, no matter how minute combinations, or missing links that are necessary for a comprehensive conceptualization of reality (Kanu 2019a-c).

The mutual relations and complementarity that *Igwebuikwe* conceptualizes is anchored on the following basic human conditions, that:

- a. The world in which we live is one in which we encounter several needs, however, with very little resources to take care of the needs. This limitation calls for the mobilization of other forces outside of the self, a social fellowship for the satisfaction of particular needs;
- b. Nature has placed in us the alikeness for fellowship. This is based on the fact that we were created by God in His own image and likeness;
- c. Although we are equal essentially, we have different gifts and abilities. What I may be able to do another may not be able to do, meaning that my relationship with the other completes what is lacking in me;
- d. Collaboration with the other is ground for becoming, as everything takes a bit of another to make itself. It is a ground for staying alive and transforming the universe (Njoku, 2015).

Human fellowship and cooperation is a reality that is rooted in the human nature and to keep away from relating is to place a limitation on our being. It is, therefore, a unit of order inscribed in the human nature for survival. The more a person relates, the more he or she lives out his or her being to the full. Mutual cooperation and fellowship in the society increases protection, assistance, etc. Being in the company of the other reduces the burden that nature imposes on a person as an individual.

Conceptual Framework

The research will attempt at articulating the major concepts that will be used during the course of this research. An understanding of these concepts will be instrumental to the articulation of the final thesis of this paper.

Philosophy: Meaning and Nature

Philosophy is from two Greek words: *φιλο* (*philo*) meaning *love* and *σοφία* (*sophia*) meaning *wisdom*. Brought together, it means ‘the love of wisdom.’ The concept is a neologism attributed to Pythagoras. Thus, he presents philosophy as a high and supreme achievement of the human person, and philosophers as aspirants to or proponents of wisdom. According to Maziarz (1987), in this relatively strict sense, philosophy implies both the process of questioning and the results of this interrogation as embodied in a personal or public enterprise of value to mankind. As an academic discipline, it exercises the principles of reason and logic in an attempt to understand reality and answer fundamental questions about knowledge, life, morality and human nature. Thus, Teichmann and Katherine (1999) define Philosophy as: “... a study of problems which are ultimate, abstract and very general. These problems are concerned with the nature of existence, knowledge, morality, reason and human purpose”. (p. 1). Quinton (1995) corroborates with Teichmann and Katherine (1999) when he avers that:

Philosophy is rationally critical thinking, of a more or less systematic kind about the general nature of the world (metaphysics or theory of existence), the justification of belief (epistemology or theory of knowledge), and the conduct of life (ethics or theory of value). (p. 666).

To the Ionian school, philosophy is about asking questions and offering rational explanations of the universe. For the Sophists, it is about questioning the foundations of traditional religion, morality and the gods from a subjective perspective. In Socrates, philosophy is acquiring knowledge through asking questions and questioning answers until answers are unquestionable and questions unanswerable. For the Cynics and Cyreniacs, who exaggerated, philosophy is a path to self-knowledge and, thus, self-sufficiency. Patristic and early Medieval philosophers will understand philosophy as the handmaid of theology. Descartes understands philosophy as a search for the

certainty of knowledge (Kanu 2015a&b). This notwithstanding, the primary purpose for enquiry in philosophy, according to Grayling (1998) is for insight into reality.

It is within this understanding of philosophy that this paper intends to go deeper during the discourse on self-determination and intercultural co-existence in Nigeria. It will, therefore, study the present issue beyond ethnic, legal, religious, etc., interests to the consideration of the general or national interest. It is at this level of understanding and interpreting this political reality that *Igwebuike* philosophy takes its place.

Self-Determination

The concept self-determination is complex (Lugard, 2015) and has meant different things to different people and at different times in history (Daka, 2019; Jaffrey & Tripathy, 2013). At some time, it was an instrument for challenging imperialism and ushering in radical social and political transformation (Danspeckgruber & Gardner, 2014); at some other time, it becomes a principle of positive international law and a part of customary international law (ICJ Report 1975). It, however, covers actions by political, racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc., groups. The variables it covers makes it more complicated, but at the political level there is the question of the extent of this right, that is, if it includes the idea of secession. This notwithstanding, it is obvious that international law most times favours moderate self-determination which does not include secession (Harris 2004; Agarwal, 2020).

Until recently, the concept of self-determination was limited to circumstances around people under colonial occupation or who are under non-self-governing territories aimed at achieving independence from colonial rule or foreign occupation (Harris, 2004). The purpose was to protect the territorial integrity of new independent states and save them from being re-colonized by colonial powers (Cornell

University Law School, 2015). This explains why there is hardly a reference to secession in constitutions of nations that have struggled out of colonial rule (Kreptul, 2004). However, in recent discourses in international law, there is a growing sympathy that is beginning to give room for secession within the framework of already existing sovereign states or non-colonial and post-colonial contexts, but within carefully defined circumstances and extreme cases (Shaw, 2008), like depriving a people of participation in the political, social and cultural affairs of their country. It is also within this context that self-determination has been understood as exercisable through confederation, asymmetric federalism, unitarism, self-government, association, autonomy, minority rights, etc. Going beyond the boundaries of colonialism as a determining factor, Umozurike (2004) argues that self-determination can override sovereignty when a country commits international crime on her minority groups or group. At this point, those who have been oppressed, grossly abused or violated can seek secession.

This notwithstanding, self-determination simply means the right of a people to choose their own government and political system (Hornby, 2006). Very important to self-determination is that it is a process that involves territorial considerations. And as a process, it might or might not be achieved immediately (Ozei, 2014). Lugard (2015) defines it as:

A right granted to peoples or groups to determine their political, economic, social and cultural rights, exercised through various ways within the context of a state entity, with an option of secession in exceptional cases of egregious violations of rights. (p. 131).

From the foregoing, self-determination involves the possibility of secession, which is the separation, withdrawal, dissociation or dismemberment of one entity from another. The general conditions for seeking self-determination include that:

- a. those seeking self-determination constitute a people;

- b. they have been systematically oppressed;
- c. they have been denied self-determination within the state;
- d. they freely chose to seek self-determination;
- e. they respect the rights of to self-determination of other minorities.

Under the Nigerian law, precisely the 1999 Constitution, it proclaims the collective resolve of the people of Nigeria in the preamble of the document thus: '[t]o live in unity and harmony as one indivisible indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God...' Section 2(1) fortifies this position when it provides in unequivocal terms that 'Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign State to be known by the name of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.' In an earlier section, the Constitution proclaims its supremacy to the effect that '[t]his Constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria'. As a result of this supremacy, '[i]f any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail and that other law shall to the extent of the inconsistency be void' (Constitution 1. 1. n .48). From the foregoing, it is obvious that the constitution has no room for any form of self-determination that will lead to secession. This notwithstanding, there is the question of: who wrote the constitution? These questions among other grave questions bordering on the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates have remained landmines.

The foregoing, however, Nigeria is a party to many international instruments, like the UN Charter that provides for the right to self-determination; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which contains provisions that clearly allow the exercise of the right to self-determination by peoples. It provides that:

All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their

economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen. (Art. 20. 1).

It states further in paragraph (2) of article 20 that “colonized or oppressed peoples shall have the right to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community” with all its varied connotations. The Declaration of Friendly Relations 1970, the United Nations Charter 1945, International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights 1966 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 recognize the principle of self-determination. However, the African Charter and other instruments are domesticated on the basis of the provisions of the constitution of Nigeria, and thus do not override the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Going by this, therefore, it will be unconstitutional to assert self-determination in a manner that suggests secession. Interestingly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 provides that: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of the government” and in article 12 provides for people to determine their political status.

Philosophy of Peace

One of the concepts that thinkers have had to battle with is the idea of peace. However, in articulating a philosophy of peace within the context of the present difficulty of intercultural co-existence in Nigeria, it is good that we arrive at a concept of peace that will guide this discourse. Within the circle of religion, peace is viewed as the ultimate goal of human existence; sometimes eschatological and at others as an aesthetic state of being (Page, 2021). In Judaism, while the Law (Torah) presents it as the ultimate goal and gift from God, and the Prophetic Literature connects it to the messianic future; the Wisdom Literature speaks of the possibility of an inner peace in the face of adversity. In Hinduism, going by Karma, good deeds bring peace while evil deeds bring the opposite. Buddhism emphasizes Ahimsa, the ethic

of doing no harm to others as the way towards peace. Christianity has a nonviolent founder who preached forgiveness and reconciliation. In Islam, the Quran extols forgiveness and reconciliation, and is referred to as the religion of peace.

The classical sources of the philosophy of peace include Plato whose works (*Republic*, *Laws* and *Symposium*) were based on the teachings of Socrates. He placed great importance on justice and love in any serious consideration of peace. In Plato's city-state, peace becomes the highest duty of both the citizens and legislators. Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics* listed virtues (courage, fortitude, Justice, etc.) as fundamental to peace. During the Medieval era, Saint Augustine in his *The City of God*, following the neo-platonic tradition of privation, understood peace in a negative sense as the absence of war. In his *Summa*, Saint Thomas Aquinas understands peace as the work of charity (love) and justice.

The Renaissance era made contributions to the philosophy of peace through the works of humanists like Erasmus of Rotterdam who wrote *De Libero Arbitrio Diatribe sive Collatio* in which he emphasizes that compromise and arbitration are the paths to peace. Unlike the religious perspectives, he argues that peace is a method or means and not a goal. Thomas More, a humanist of the Renaissance period, in his book on *Utopia* questions if peace was attainable.

In the Modern period, Thomas Hobbes in his *The Citizen* and *Leviathan* presents a human nature that is selfish and in a state of chaos. The only way to introduce peace into the human society is to put in place an overarching law enforcing external authority. Baruch Spinoza in his *Tractatus Politicus* understands peace as a virtue that springs from force of character. For John Locke in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* and *Two Treatises of Government* speaks of peace as a human right. Jean-Jacques Rousseau speaks of peace as coming from being respectful and one with nature. Immanuel Kant argues that we have a duty to peace and acting in a peaceful manner.

Contemporary sources of philosophy of peace include Mohandas Gandhi. He sees peace not as a set of conditions, but as an inner state of a person based on the commitment to truth. Martin Buber emphasizes the importance of authentic dialogue and the recognition of the other as persons rather than entities as a way to peace. Martin Luther King Jr., emphasized the need for loving one's enemies, nonconformity, universal altruism, inner transformation, interrelatedness, etc., as paths to peace.

The definition of peace employed in this piece is not in the negative sense of the absence of war, but the *Igwebuike* positive sense of peace which borders on the presence of justice and harmonious relations. Justice and harmonious relations is achieved through a better understanding of who the other person is to you - that is, a part of you. A part of 'you' that is fundamental to the survival of the 'you.' Thus, when a person succeeds in making peace with the other, he or she has actually succeeded in making peace with himself or herself. The responsibility to pursue peace according to the *igwebuike* perspective is perpetual, given that the continuous relation of humanity is not possible without conflict, and also given the limited nature of the human person who must relate with the other for his or her own survival. The limitedness of the human person is at the base of the perennial nature of peace in discourses in philosophy, and the reason why absolute peace has consistently eluded the grasp of the human person. Peace is, therefore, not absolute but attainable. In this *Igwebuike* perspective, there is a connection between truth and peace; peace is possible when we come to terms with the truth about our limitedness and the need for the other. It is this truth (that we are weak and that we need to be at peace with one another) that keeps us on the path of constant pursuit of peace.

Quests for Self-Determination in Nigeria

In Zik's study of the Nigerian nation, he describes Nigeria as having evolved from tribe to nation; tribe, in the sense of an endogamous group descended from the same ancestor, occupying a particular territory and possessing cultural, religious and linguistic homogeneity. He observes that there are about 400 tribes in Nigeria who have united and formed a political union in the form of a federation. From this, Zik envisages a threat to national unity (Azikiwe, 1961, 1978; Nzimiro, 1978). It is, therefore, not surprising that since post-independence, Nigeria has struggled with several manifestations of the quest for self-determination with all its expressions. Among these are:

a. Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

The Biafran struggle aimed at seceding from the Nigerian state began as far back as 30th May 1967; seven years after independence with the intention of establishing the independent Republic of Biafra. This was due to the economic, ethnic, cultural and religious tensions among the ethnic groups. This ended in the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War which lasted from 1967 to 1970. Today, after 52 years of the end of the war, the clamour for secession has remained unabated. Obviously, the reasons that led to the war are not in any way scarce. The religious, cultural and ethnic tensions are still with us. This has led to the emergence of a new group called the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2012 led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The reason put forward for their reinvigoration of the quest for the realisation of Biafra is the marginalization of the Igbo people.

b. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)

MEND launched itself into the international stage in January 2006 when she claimed responsibility for the kidnap of four oil workers. It is a movement that claims to expose the exploitation and oppression of

the people of the Niger-Delta, the promotion of massive economic inequalities, fraud, and environmental degradation as a result of public-private partnerships between the Federal Government of Nigeria and international corporations involved in the production of oil in the Niger Delta. Their activities have been seen in the knocking down of oil production in the region; kidnap-for-ransom of oil workers, staging armed assaults on production sites, pipeline destruction, murder of Nigerian police officers, and draining off of oil and selling it to the black market. A larger part of this group includes the Ijaw. MEND's other goals include localizing control of Nigeria's oil and securing reparations from the Federal Government for pollution caused by the oil industry (Hanson, 2007; Howden 2006).

c. Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP)

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, also known as (MOSOP) was founded in 1994 by Ken Saro-Wiwa. After the Ogoni Chiefs initiated the Ogoni Bill of Rights (Ogoni Bill of Rights 2014; Saro-Wiwa 1994). It is a mass based movement of the Ogoni people and serves as the umbrella organization of currently 11 member groups representing more than 700,000 indigenous Ogoni in campaigning for social, economic and environmental justice in the Niger Delta region. Their main mission is to ensure that the Ogoni people attain the right of self-realization in environmental issues in the Niger Delta region.

d. Yoruba Self-Determination Groups (Ooduwa Nation Agitators)

Self-determination groups among the Yoruba emerged after the annulment of the 12th June 1993 presidential election won by the late Chief MKO Abiola. These groups include: Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Oodua Youth Movement (OYM), Oodua Liberation Movement (OLM), Oodua Republic Front (ORF), Federation for Yoruba Culture and Consciousness (FYCC) in 2001 and the Coalition of Oodua Self-

Determination Groups (COSEG) in 2002, an umbrella body for all the Yoruba self-determination groups. This current body is working towards the creation of an independent state from the current Nigerian state to be called Oduduwa Republic. The leader of this group is Sunday Igboho who has held rallies in different parts of western Nigeria. The major offshoot of this movement is the killing of Yoruba people by the Northern Fulani herdsmen who have been alleged to be supported by the incumbent government to continue to create havoc in the Southern part of the country. They, therefore, seek jurisdiction over their space and resources and to be the master planners of their own security and destiny.

Factors Responsible for the Quests for Self-Determination in Nigeria

The quest for self-determination does not arise without some prompting factors. Some of these factors in relation to Nigeria include the economic, political, religious and ethnic marginalization of peoples:

a. Economic Marginalization

At the heart of discourses on national issues is the issue of economic marginalization. This discussion has become unavoidable as states and the different tiers of government depend on the centralized nature of revenue generation and distribution. The major income is generated from oil producing states, and every month, the states and Federal Government meet to share this money. The ownership of all mineral resources in the federal government and 13% derivation revenue to states from which the resources are gotten (National Conference 2014; Constitution 1999), explains why concepts like derivation formula, revenue sharing, fiscal federalism, among others have become very recurrent in newspaper publications and on television programmes

(Berg, 1991; Thomas, 2010; Okojie, 2013; Thisday, 2015; Vanguard, 2015).

This method of revenue allocation, sometimes majorly decided by people from states that do not generate revenue enough to take care of their states let alone contribute to the national purse has since the 1970s been the cause of political agitation in the South-South (Okeke, 2015). Even though the federal government has tried to calm the tension among the people of the South-South through the creation of palliative policies and declarations like the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB), Oil Mineral Area Producing Commission (OMPADEC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), etc., the grievances and agitations have not yet died down.

b. Political Marginalization

The Federal Character clause of the Constitution states as follows:

The composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that Government or in any of its agencies. (Section 14, 3).

Although the agitation for self-determination has continued to emerge in virtually every era, it is observed that during administrations that respect the federal character, the quest for self-determination becomes minimal. However, whenever it is breached, the agitation becomes louder and more forceful. For instance, from 2015, the Southeast and South-South have felt that they are marginally represented in the present government, while the North takes majority appointments; this has led to the intensification of agitation drives. The present agitations are based on the perception that the present composition of the government of the federation, and most of its agencies especially the

composition of the security and quasi-security architecture do not reflect the Federal Character of Nigeria but rather there is a predominance of persons from a few states and sectional groups dominating the opportunities and threatening national unity and integration. There is a strong believe among those from the south that the Military governments led by northerners favored the north with more states and introduced the constitutional ambiguities such as that regarding the Sharia law in force in Northern Nigeria.

c. Religious and Ethnic Marginalization

Nigeria is a nation of amalgamated nationalities. It is, therefore, pluralistic and multifaceted in terms of religion and ethnicity. It has a population of about 200 million with about 450 ethnic nationalities. Notwithstanding the 450 ethnic groups, there are three major ethnic groups in Nigeria: Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba: this was reflected in the 1946 Richard Constitution which divided Nigeria into three regions associated with these three major ethnic groups. The consistent spirit that has permeated political moves, right from the pre-independence times through the First Republic, is the alignment of political parties with the political interests of regions as it is evident in the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) formed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, predominantly Igbo; Northern People's Congress (NPC), predominantly Hausa/Fulani formed by Northern leading politicians like Sir Amadu Bello and Tafawa Balewa, and the Action Congress (AC), predominantly Yoruba and led by Obafemi Awolowo, Samuel Akintola and Anthony Enahoro (Olakunle 2015).

As regional as the political parties were, so regional were the elections into political positions (Donald, 1985). During the Second Republic, ethno-religious political parties succeeded one another, even though the 1979 Constitution stipulated that political parties must have a national outlook. The National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was Northern based, the Nigerian Peoples Party was based in the East, while the

Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) was dominant in the South-West. During the Third Republic, there was a slightly different outlook, because the two political parties were formed and funded by the government. However, it was obvious that while NRC was a party for the Hausa/Fulani, SDP favored the Southerners. This has continued till date.

Alongside ethnicity is the issue of religion. Political aspirants use religious sentiments as propaganda in order to appeal to the consciousness of Nigerians and thus advance their political ambitions. Heating up to the 2015 election were the unpatriotic events that surrounded the 2011 election. After the death of Yar'Adua and Jonathan showed interest in running for the Presidency under the Peoples Democratic Party, some northern politicians, including Adamu Ciroma, Iyorchia Ayu, Lawal Kaita, Bello Kirfi, Yahaya Kwande and Bashir Yusuf Ibrahim wrote a letter on 17th September 2010 to the PDP National Chairman requesting that the party leadership should stop Jonathan from going for the Presidency under the platform of the party, arguing that it was the turn of the North. This led to inflammatory statements and religious sentiments were brought in to serve political purposes. The result of the 2015 election showed how religion and ethnicity condition elections and the political appointments that follow. These religious alignments have consequences for post-election era. It generates fear and a feeling of marginalization among peoples who were not of the same group or religion. The result is agitation for self-determination.

d. Perceived Invalidity of the 1914 Amalgamation Treaty

The Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria continued as colonies until 9th May 1913 when Lord Lugard submitted his proposal to Britain for the unification of the two protectorates. This was realized on 1 January 1914, and the two protectorates became one. The two protectorates were quite different from each other in terms of religion, customs,

philosophies of life, colonial personnel, land tenure system, educational policies and systems of governance. In fact, the inhabitants of the Northern protectorate were called the Black-Faced Mohammedan Arabs and the Southern protectorate's inhabitants, the Coast Negroes. The alleged reasons for the amalgamation include: making the wealth and sea port facilities of the south available to the north and to eliminate the administrative cost of running the Northern protectorate from the British. In this way, the revenue from the South was used to run both protectorates.

Knowing well that a treaty is an international agreement, questions begin to arise: is the amalgamation treaty worth the name? If it did not satisfy the conditions of a treaty, is it binding on both parties? If it was Lord Lugard that submitted a proposal for approval and it was approved and imposed without the approval of the representatives of the divergent groups in the North and the South, it raises questions regarding the legality of such a document. At the signing of such an important document, the following were present: HRH Maiturare Sarkin Mussulumi and Sultan of Sokoto; Usman Dan Maje, later Emir of Kano, Abubakar Shehu of Borno, Sir Kitoyi Ajasa, a lawyer, HRH Oladugbulu Alaafin of Oyo and HRH R. Henshaw, the Obong of Calabar. There was no representative from the core South East. The treaty was to last for 100 years after which the parties will decide on whether to continue as a union. 31 December 2013 was the date the life span of the treaty elapsed, and since there was no discussion, should it be taken that the so-called treaty ceases to exist?

***Igwebuike* Philosophy and the Question of Self-Determination**

Beyond the constitutionality of separation and being victims of clashes and destruction of lives and property, what other path can be negotiated by the Nigerian government? It is at this point that *Igwebuike* philosophy comes into the discussion.

a. *Igwebuike* requires Authentic Dialogue for Intercultural Co-existence

Nigerians need to sit down together, talk, dialogue and reach consensus on how to live together and be governed. Sovereignty is all about the freedom of the people to take decisions. Nigeria is not yet a nation, as we have different nations within the Nigerian project. And yet, to sit down and talk and listen to one another since independence is the most difficult thing for Nigeria.

The Olusegun Obasanjo led government was put under pressure to convene a Sovereign National Conference. Instead of convoking a Sovereign National Conference, it convoked a National Political Reform Conference in February 2005 to discuss issues bordering on federal structure, fiscal federalism (resource control), form of government, citizenship, accountability and ethics in government, the electoral system and political parties, the economy, foreign policy and the environment. There were areas that were not discussable, such as the unity of the country, federal character, religion, separation of powers and the fundamental objectives and directives principles of state policy enshrined in Chapter II of the Constitution (Ajayi 2006). The elimination of important issues for discussion from the agenda of the conference did cast doubts on the sincerity of the conference. This got confirmation when the National Political Reform Conference became an instrument for the pursuit of the third term agenda of the incumbent president.

With the rejection of the outcome of the conference by the Pro-Sovereign National Conference body, the Goodluck Jonathan led administration convened the National Conference in 2014. Their terms of reference included devolution of powers, fiscal federalism, inclusive and participatory democracy, political parties and electoral system, socio-economic challenges, etc. With the careful selection of members of the conference, there was the suspicion that it was all geared towards his second term agenda rather than the good of the nation. Since the

conference ended, its proceedings have not received the attention that it deserves. The results are several faces of agitations for self-determination.

IWA (2021) holds that there is a need for a negotiation that allows Nigerians to express their will and discuss their peaceful co-existence based on equity, respect and fairness, and this should involve all the ethnic nationalities. Resorting to the use of force and coercion to stop Nigerian Indigenous Ethnic Groups from agitation for self-determination has not succeeded in arresting the people's will and agitation.

b. *Igwebuikwe* requires Justice for Intercultural Co-existence

The issue of resource control has so much to do with the failure of leadership in the country. Successive Nigerian leaders ignored or failed to resolve substantive national issues. Each time they were confronted with a serious political issue, they would push it aside or threaten to use force to stop the matter from being discussed or resolved amicably. When groundnut, cocoa, palm oil, etc., were the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, the principle of derivation based on 50/50% was employed for allocating revenue. The regions were able to use the money accruing from these resources to develop their infrastructure. There was no argument about groundnut, cocoa, palm oil, etc., being the properties of all Nigerians.

The citizens of the Niger Delta cannot understand why oil is not allowed to operate under the same principle of derivation. They are convinced that the derivation formula was changed in order to transfer wealth from the oil-producing region to the non-oil producing regions since Nigerian leaders have generally originated from the non-oil producing regions. However, they have asked for an increase in Oil revenue allocation. Without dialogue, this has determined undemocratically and arbitrarily by the Federal Government who has set it variously at 13%, 2%, 1%, and 13%. The oil producing states

believe that the Petroleum Act, the Land Use decrees and other laws instituted by the Federal Government are innately unjust, against their natural rights and should be repealed.

Unfortunately, those in the Niger delta region cannot even make decisions concerning the use of their own lands. They feel constantly violated that the Federal Government would grant permission to foreign oil companies to come into their territories and violate their rights at will. The oil companies have for more than forty years inflicted massive environmental destruction on their lands and waters, thereby, destroying their traditional means of economic livelihood, such as farming and fishing. They, therefore, want the laws to be abrogated as they want to take proper care of their lands given that the Federal Government does not have an environmental program to clean up polluted areas.

The Niger Delta region believes that the Federal Government is trying to annihilate them through biochemical poisoning. Even employment in the oil companies seem to be reserved mostly for Nigerians from the non-oil producing states. The indigenes of the Niger Delta cannot even gain employment in the oil companies that operate in their backyards. Most of the contracts relating to oil operations are given to contractors from the non-oil producing regions. Most oil blocks are given or awarded to Nigerians from the non-oil producing states.

c. *Igwebuike* requires Inclusive Leader for Intercultural Co-existence

The biggest problem the Giant of Africa is undoubtedly that of leadership. Nigeria is a country blessed with diverse human and natural resources, and what she needs is competent, effective and purposeful leadership that is capable of turning its highly chorused great potentials into real economic and political power. The leaders of Nigeria over the years have failed to identify the essential values that sustain the various

societies now constituting the modern Nigerian society and infuse such values into our social system. This leadership challenge in Nigeria has degenerated into a crisis situation, which is now a clog on its wheel of her development.

Igwebuiké understands leadership as the uniting point of every society with the temperament and skills to navigate the ship of State in an inclusive and result-oriented manner. Such leadership must be pan-Nigerian who can relate with all and be able to reach across social, class and political aisles to create a national conversation of inclusion.

Conclusion

The presence of agitations for self-determination in Nigerian history, especially from independence, is an indication that there are myriads of legal and political issues that require the attention of the Nigeria as a country, and the manner in which it is managed will go a long way in moderating or escalating these agitations for self-determination. The ability of the government to manage or address these political and legal issues is a capacity that the Nigerian government has consistently failed to manifest. There is, therefore, the need to address issues that require attention for the sake of the future of the country. More so, the fact that these agitations have all come from the same part of the country, that is, the old Southern protectorate further points to the reality that there are many issues or questions bordering on marginalization and the amalgamation treaty that are yet to be attended to.

Some scholars argue that since the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has no provisions for secession, that the agitations for self-determination by these ethnic nationalities are pointless. This might not be entirely true as the cases of Quebec and Southern Sudan remind us that there are exceptional cases where and when the constitution might not be enough to provide for an issue of this kind, especially when it becomes more complex than was prepared for. As have been observed there are international laws that provide for

secession in extreme or peculiar cases. But why do Nigeria as a nation have to wait until situations get more complex than it should be?

In the case of Nigeria, the questions that have begun to arise regarding the amalgamation of 1914 raises further questions about the binding power of the constitution itself. First of all, if the amalgamation was a treaty and as has been observed does not meet the requirement of a treaty, it raises questions about the validity of the unity of the country in the first place. If it is established that the amalgamation was faulty, it raises more questions bordering on independence and the emergence of the various Constitutions that have provided guidance for Nigeria over the years.

The beauty of this piece is that it does not base its position on the constitution or on international laws. It also does not base its position on the validity of the amalgamation treaty of 1914. It rather focuses on the major issues that constituted the basis for the agitations for self-determination such as religious marginalization, ethnic marginalization, economic marginalization and political marginalization. These are the experiences that have raised questions regarding the validity of the 1914 amalgamation. Basing its position on *Igwebuike* philosophy it holds that dialogue, justice and inclusive leadership is the path towards national unity and integration.

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