



Identity Politics and Separatist Movement in Post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of the Nigeria State (2015-2021)

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Abstract. The Nigeria State had fought a gruesome war to keep the country one from a separatist movement in the 1960s shortly after its independence. In Over sixty (60) years of post-independence, the separatist movement demanding for an independent state of Biafra has not faded with the passing of time, rather, it re-emerged in a new cast called the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with membership in diaspora and at home. Even when the Nigerian government had proscribed the group and labeled it as a terrorist organization, the group may have employed the nuances of globalization and social media in registering their presence and attacking the government of the day. This study seeks to interrogate the socio-political dynamic of identity politics that has shaped and sustained the agitation for an independent Biafran state from the sovereign Nigerian state for over five decades. The study employed ethnography, qualitative data and content analysis in its methodology. This work argues that identity politics along religious and ethnic lines has sustained the call for the Biafran nation in the post-colonial Nigerian state. The study concludes that the Nigerian state is politically bifurcated along ethnic and religious lines and these have sustained the perennial call for a sovereign Biafran State. The study suggests that structural imbalances within the Nigerian state should be properly addressed to reflect equity, justice and fairness among the components units that constitutes the Nigerian state

Keywords: Identity Politics, Biafra, Agitation, Separatist Movement and Post-Colonial Africa.

1. Introduction

Post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa is one region in the world that has been strained by multifarious secessionist groups especially in the West African sub-region. According to the West African Insight,

Centre for Democracy and Development (2017), from the late 1960s to the late 1990s, many countries in West Africa experienced a growing demand for autonomy, right to self-determination and secession, which threatened the territorial integrity of some nation-states. Currently, the region is witnessing a resurgence of these separatist movements; from the Biafra agitation in Nigeria, separatist movements in Northern Niger and Mali and the Cassamance in Senegal and Gambia. These have received divergent responses from host governments in these countries but little has been done to lessen the tension. These separatist movements are mainly caused by inequalities, failure of state development policies, ethnic chauvinism, problems with leadership, and a lack of respect for resolutions of peace accords. This is further exacerbated by the growth of a criminal economy that affects these countries. Outside of West Africa, we have the Ambazonian movement in southern Cameroon. Nigeria is peculiar in terms of its ethnic and religious diversity which has led to many internal conflicts, including the resurfacing of the separatist movement for the sovereign state of Biafra. While causes of the re-emergence of a call for Biafra are divergent and controversial, it may be attributed to continuous neglect and marginalisation of Igbos in Nigeria, unsettled group grievances, and weak democratic structures (West African Insight, Centre for Democracy and Development, 2017). The government's militarist approach to preventing the agitation, in the guise of protecting continuous existence of the Nigerian State, has further aggravated the tension. Amid the quest for national unity, it is important that the government adopts practical strategies to address the problem. Power sharing, healing of memories and development of the South East could be among several options the government may consider in bringing about lasting peace in the Southeast.

2. Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of theoretical underpinnings, this study shall harvest and use two relevant theories which are the theories of Nationalism and Invented Identity and the Relative Deprivation Theories.

Definitions of the concepts and theoretical debates surrounding nationalism have long dominated political science. Studying the concept of nationalism contributes to the understanding of ethno-national conflicts and its causes.

According to Benedict Anderson (1991, 6-7), nations are a political project of identity creation, employed to create a nation and to achieve a coherent collective identity, and in the mobilisation of people within a certain territory. He contends that the nation 'is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings' Charles Tilly(1994: 133) also calls such nationalism 'state-led Nationalism' or 'state-building nationalism'. According to Anthony Smith (2002: 135) "the state is a territorial entity with a jurisdiction that, although sovereign, is also strictly bounded; and the sense of boundness, of inclusion and exclusion, is vital to the definition of the community of citizens". He, identifies historic territory, legal-political community, equality among citizens, common culture, and common ideology as main component of the modern nation. (Smith, 1991:11) Similarly, Ernest Gellner (2006: 1) states: Nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state- a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation-should not separate the powerholders from the rest. Gellner adds that, 'nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (1964: 169). Elsewhere he maintains 'Nationalism is a political principle which maintains that similarity of culture is the basic social bond' (1997: 3). A nation, thus, is imaginary, invented by historical and political processes and socially constructed. Political identity is employed to merge people, based on the sense of common identity within a given territorial entity. Hans Cohn (Kohn, 1944: 6-10) asserts that nationalism is 'a state of mind' 'an act of consciousness' and maintains that, 'nationalism is not a natural phenomenon, not a

product of "eternal" or "natural" laws; it is a product of the growth of social and intellectual factors at a certain stage of history'. In so doing, the role of elites, the media, publications, law, regulations, and the education system in portraying other nations negatively and mistakenly glorifying the self is crucial (Anderson, 1991: 33-36). These naturally explains ethnic based conflict, secessionist movement and sometimes, ultimately ethnic war.

On the other hand, Ted Robert Gurr (1971: 23) refers to Relative Deprivation (RD) as 'the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to (resentment and) violence'. According to the definition provided by Gurr, Relative Deprivation is the discrepancies between what people want, their value expectations, and what they actually gain, their value accruing capabilities. Gurr states that: 'the intensity of relative deprivation varies strongly in terms of the average degree of perceived discrepancy between value expectation and value capabilities'. He contends that people are more likely to revolt when they lose hope of attaining their societal values, and the intensity of discontent/frustration '[varies] with the severity of depression and inflation' (1971: 87). Ethnicity, Gurr asserts, 'is the obvious basis for mobilizing oppositions' against the state. Gurr states that, the higher the degree of frustration, the greater the political instability. In short, the intensification of RD with regard to political participation, prosperity, collective/communal values and societal status can lead to a 'decline in ideational coherence' which consequently leads to a breakdown in the social order and to violence. Migdal asserts that 'the state's centrality in people's lives, its relationship to ongoing conflicts in society, people's expressive relationship to it, all depend on its cohesion' (2001: 150). Katzenstein (1996: 15), speaking of how people perceive themselves, states that: 'the answer lies in the issue of identity, in variations in the degree of expansiveness and restrictiveness, with which people and organizations relate to one another'. Gurr, speaking of societal security dilemmas, maintains that in such cases 'the benefit of one group is an automatic loss for all the others. Life is an inelastic pie' (1971: 125). The failure of the state to meet people's value expectations which they believe they are rightfully entitled to can eventually lead to disorientation amongst the citizenry and discontentment on the part of the people towards the state. (Saleh, 2011: 236) Gurr holds that: 'Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities increase the intensity of discontent' (1971: 125).

Identity is dynamic and changeable over the course of time; ‘People change and adapt’ (Roy, 2004: 9). Buzan points out that societal security as a concept is concerned with states when they are ‘undermined or destabilized by “their” societies, becoming threatened or weakened in terms of social cohesion and identity’ (1993: 24). Societal insecurity occurs when people within a certain geographically defined state assume that their identity is threatened. This perceived threat could be triggered and bolstered by a collective feeling of relative deprivation, be it social, economic, political or cultural. The result manifests itself in societal insecurity. Moaddel, for instance, points out that intensive economic and political insufficiency leads to insecurity within the state. (1993: 5) The discrepancy between people’s expectations and what they can actually attain consequently leads to frustration. Gurr suggests that, ‘the existence of frustration always leads to some form of violence’, secessionism, and other forms of nationalistic agitations.

3. Background to the Resurgence of the Biafran Agitation in Nigeria

The history of Nigeria is faced with several issues bordering unsettled national questions which centres within sensitive national issues like ethnic militancy, politicization of religion, terrorism, revenue allocation, ethnic or group marginalization, corruption, etc. But, one major externalisation of some of these unresolved challenges is the surfacing of groups demanding for self-determination and political independence such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), in the South-East (Abada, 2020.). Awofeso (2017), opines that the threat of separatist agitations and secessionist movements are not entirely new to the Nigerian political landscape. According to him, this phenomenon has always been with the Nigerian state, but the dimension of the movement today is rather unprecedented. Hence, this has continued to be a weapon in the hands of agitators in demanding political accommodation ((Alumona, *et al.*, 2017).

Historically, it was Tamuno (1970), who first attributed the origin of separatist movement in Nigeria to the 1914 Amalgamation when he quoted the then Sardunana of Sokoto to have called the 1914 merger of the North and South as “the mistake of 1914”. Tamuno cited Sir Ahmadu Bello’s account who had averred that the North would rather go their separate ways than be joined to the South. Apart from this, there was a call for a separate Yoruba nation in the 1950s within the Action Group socio-political organization resulting from the contentions surrounding the status of Lagos (Awofeso, 2017).

The primary and focal point of this study stems from the Eastern region’s secessionist and indeed the first active separatist movement in Nigeria backed up by both political will and military action. It in 1967 when the then Premier of Eastern Region under the leadership of Lt. Col. Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, launched a massive attempt to break away from Nigeria. This was heavily attributed to the killing of Nigerians of the Igbo extract in the Northern Region of the country in a bloody counter coup of July, 1966 (six month after the January 15, 1966 coup that saw military personnel of Northern extracts as primary victims) (Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016). The wanton killing of the Igbos and the perceived “I don’t care” attitude of the Nigerian state made the Igbos see themselves as a threatened species, hence, the need to create an independent Biafran state where they would be safe and their property protected. The call for a separate Biafran state culminated to a civil war where over 1.8 million civilian of Igbo ethnic group died ((Ezemenaka and Prouza, 2016; Awofeso, 2017).

This notwithstanding, the Nigerian state has been accused of doing little or nothing to correct the anomalies that resulted in the call for a separate Biafran state. Instead, the Igbo ethnic group has constantly suffered socio-political and economic marginalization within the Nigerian state. Like all people who lost in a war, the thought of Biafra evokes a strong feeling of common victimhood in an average Igbo man. This becomes a rallying point for the resurgence of the Biafran separatist agitation especially with the continued sense and feeling of marginalization from the successive Nigerian government.

The resurgence of separatist movement started with the Ralph Uwazurike organization which he called the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). This group emerged in the Fourth Republic Nigeria in 1999 and declared a non-violent agitation. However, the group and its leader were accused of back patting by the Nigerian government and this led to the fractionalization of the group into other movements such as the Ben Onwuka led Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) and the Nnamdi Kanu led Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), (Amanambu, 2017). However, it was the IPOB that became more popular after it succeeded in mobilizing millions of Igbo youths’ world over.

Consequently, Nnamdi Kanu was able to renew the agitation for Biafra by revamping the defunct Radio Biafra and using it as a platform to educate and sensitize Igbos both at home and in diaspora on the need for an independent Biafran state. His approach

in the new call for a Biafran state, protest, hoisting of flags in designate areas in Eastern Nigeria and the use of incisive and inflammatory statements that appeals to the Igbos but derogates the Nigerian government. Consequent upon the above, the renewed separatist agitation has continued to raise national eyebrows particularly as it pertains the indivisibility of the country. The activities of IPOB have made separatism an open movement in Nigeria. Before then, it was covert cum verbal threat. IPOB approach and modus operandi had divergent implications on the Nigerian state and this was attributed to a number of factors such as the country's heterogeneous ethnic composition, religious intolerance, cultural diversity, controversial policies, constitutional imbalances and most importantly, identity politics. This is in line with the view of Adangor (2017), who opines that separatist propensities in Nigeria are caused by the country's heterogeneous ethnic composition, cultural diversity, vast size, varied administrative practices, etc. Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016) highlight the way in which feeling of collective victimization that connects all secessionist movements together cannot be overlooked in a sincere attempt to understand the resurgence of separatist agitation in the South-east, Nigeria. Thus, it is against this backdrop that this study seeks to situate the resurgence of Biafran separatist movement within the context of identity politics within the Nigerian state in the Fourth Republic.

4. Extant Literature Review

Jega (2000), opines that the previous secretary of the United Nations avers that Negative types of identity politics are a powerful and possibly dangerous phenomena. In this way, that Great consideration should be taken to perceive, confront and control them otherwise they might annihilate the potential for peace, harmony and progress that the new era holds in store. The word "identity" is a household concept in social anthropology and psychology, especially by structuralists and post-structuralists, and it has acquired uncommon acknowledgment in the post-modernist writing. As a socio-political concept, "identity" has both an individualist and a collective significance. Regardless, it can just be defined as "a person's sense of belonging to a group if (it) influences his political behaviour" (Erickson, 1968). It is believed to be "always anchored both in physiological 'givens' and in social roles..." The people who share an interest share an identity; the interest of each requires the cooperation of all (Pye, 1962). In this manner, conventionally, identities functions as revitalizing and arranging standards of social activity inside the common society, and in

state-civil society relations. They illuminate and guide political conduct, and they add dynamism to political conduct with regards to plural society (Parry and Moran, 1994). Consequently, Parry and Moran have seen that in cutting edge social orders. what is however critical as superseding national identities may be the various identities which go to make up plural societies. Identity is not just about individuality and self-awareness, but additionally and particularly about identification with, and obligation to, shared values and convictions, in a social collectivity into which an individual has a place of belonging. At some random time, an individual might have numerous identities, every one of which may consistently make them bear on their political role and social conduct in the society. Subsequently, as Adesina noted, where identities are concerned, an individual is Janus-confronted. This implies that identity politics is an instrument of interest articulations and aggregate in the society. Identity politics issues, as such, is essentially legislative issues either beginning from or focusing on guaranteed identity of their heroes (Calhoun, 1994) in national political battles over access to the state and a means of resource allocation. It includes the mobilisation of identity awareness to make a mass base of support for the decision-making classes, and the elites generally, in their factional battles in the resource control process. Likewise, identity politics suggests a somewhat serious level of the emotions going into political and legislative issues. Tamuno (1970) highlight bad leadership, administration and absence of a philosophy with mass appeal.

From the religious dimension of collective identity and how this influences political outcome, Thomson (2007), states that "...religious mobilization can often be found at the heart of political competition. As with all social cleavages; fault lines within societies form along these identities, creating opposing interests. These differences of interest, in turn, offer themselves to potential or occasionally violent, conflict." Religious contentions in the perspectives on Jega (2002) can be similar to a situation in which the relationship between individuals from one ethnic gathering and another, or for the most part among ethnic groups, in a multicultural nation like Nigeria, is described by an absence of sincerity, by increased common suspicion and fears, by animosity and by an inclination towards vengeful showdowns. A community encountering ethno-religious strain is, in a real sense, is sitting on a keg of gun powder, and perpetually insecure and unstable. Any minor misunderstanding involving individuals from at least two diverse ethno-religious group could have a catastrophic impact and push things past the cliff.

Within the Nigerian political space, Jega (2000) observes that the Northern region took advantage of the fears of domination by the Southerners, considering their region's economic and educational disadvantages, to mobilise a Northern identity to ensure control of political power with which they hoped to check-mate the perceived threat of Southern domination. Then again, the Southern elites despised the utilization of numbers for never-ending control of political power by the Northern elites in spite of the economic and educational backwardness of the Northern region, and felt bothered by the inverse connection between political power and economic advantage. Henceforth, they additionally mobilised a Southern identity to go against and battle against an apparent treachery and injustice in the matrix of national power. In any case, the assembly of a Southern identity appeared to be ineffectual contrasted with that of a Northern character to a great extent as a result of the distinctive contending ethnic groups in the western and eastern regions of Southern Nigeria. very recently, a similar manifestation of identity politics played out within the country's political space in view of the 2023 presidential candidature and the ensuing election.

Adeyemi, *et al* (2021), maintains that two months after their May 11 meeting in Delta State tagged the 'Asaba Accord', the Southern Governors Forum, met in Lagos State wherein it declared that Nigeria's next president have to be from the southern a part of the United States. Adeyemi states that other long-way accomplishing decisions arrived at as contained in the communiqué released, which was signed with the aid of the convener, Ondo State Governor and Chairman, Southern Governors' Forum, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu (SAN), include a rejection of the proposed allocation of as a minimum 30% earnings generated through the proposed Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited for the exploration of oil in 'frontier basins' as recognized via Section nine of the recently passed Petroleum Industry Bill(PIB); placing a timeline of September 1, 2021 for promulgation of the anti-open grazing law in all 17 member states; and asking that security agencies should notify them as Security Chiefs in their states before they perform any operation inside their states. On the PIB these days exceeded by the Senate and the House of Representatives, the governors commended the "National Assembly for the development made within the passage of the PIB, however rejected the proposed 3% and insist on the 5% of the oil revenue to the host community as encouraged by the House of Representatives." Reacting to the decisions of the Southern Governors, Akinkuotu (2021) says that apex Igbo socio-cultural organisation, Ohanaeze

Ndigbo, applauded the decision of the Southern governors for the strength of demanding the presidency slot for 2023 and entreated them to move further and allow the Southeast geo-political zone to provide the next president. Ohanaeze also gave complete backing for the promulgation of the anti-open grazing regulation within the 17 states of the vicinity by using September 1.National Publicity Secretary of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Chief Alex Chiedozie Ogbonna, insisted that political energy at the centre of the Nigerian state had always turned around between the North and South, stressing that for justice, equity, equity and team spirit, the region that had not tasted the presidency position ought to be allowed to provide President Buhari's successor. These literatures are very rich and quite revealing on the interplay of group and identity politics in Nigeria as the relate to resource control and political power. However, they have not stressed the impact of identity politics in spurring and budding of separatist agitations in Nigeria and this is the gap this work seeks to address. It is against this background that this work seeks to examine Identity Politics and Separatist Movement in Post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa: the case of Biafra in Nigeria. The remainder of the paper is structured along the following discursive themes: Conceptual clarification, Theoretical Framework, Political Prebendalism, Ethnic, Socio-Economic Exclusivity in Separatist Movement in Nigeria Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations The study adopted the qualitative research design; it is also analytical. Documentary method was used to generate secondary data from books, journal articles, official publications and conference papers. The data generated were analysed using logical induction and content analysis.

5. Conceptual Clarification

5.1 Identity and Identity Politics

According to Wonah (2017), the terms "identity politics" and "politics" are a mash up of one another. Identity in this context refers to the quality of being distinct from others based on a set of standards or traits. It follows that a group of people could have specific tendencies, traits, cultural realities, financial popularity, etc. that bind them together and set them apart from others. These characteristics set a group apart from other groups and determine their place in society based on how they come together to defend their identity. The declaration of the group's identity may not be wishful thinking; it finds expression in the framework of the group's discernible interest and is concretized and actualized not only by the group's members but also by other members of the group.

Politics, on the other hand, is the distribution of resources through formalized channels for the balancing and protection of the many interests within a polity. Thus, in order to protect its interests and establish its identity, each group competes for the resources that are accessible. Identity politics are therefore the deliberate actions taken by a group of people to defend their interests and claim their identity. Additionally, it meant that political debates that consider the self-interest and viewpoints of social minorities or self-identified social interest groups, as well as the ways in which group politics are shaped through positive aspects of their identity, such as race, elegance, faith, sexual orientation, or traditional dominance, are embodied in the identities of interest groups. When there is an oppressive mechanism in the form of a governmental framework intended to enslave, oppress, exploit, and consign a group of people to the past, it appears more obvious that this group has a predisposition to assert its identity. Young (1990) eloquently expressed this viewpoint when he claimed that identity politics is inextricably linked to the idea that a select group of social companies is repressed. As a result, it can be viewed as a politics of group identification movement that claims to advocate for the interests and identity of a specific group rather than community-wide policy problems. Combining the two ideas, Hayward and Watson (2010) describe identity politics as the type of politics in which individuals participate after mobilizing on the basis of a shared identity and after defining their experiences, political issues, and objectives in terms of the interests of their identity group. Identity politics originated historically from the experience of identity-based oppression, or the disparities in opportunities and resources that people encountered as members of particular identity groups.

In the social sciences and humanities, identity politics is widely used to explain a variety of phenomena, including multiculturalism, the women's movement, civil rights, lesbian and gay movements, separatist movements in Canada and Spain, violent ethnic and nationalist conflict in postcolonial Africa and Asia, as well as in the formerly communist nations of Eastern Europe. In addition to the term "identity politics" being used to refer to any political, social, or cultural mobilization, sociological analyses of the relationship between identity and politics and normative political evaluations of identity politics as a political practice have frequently been combined in scholarly analyses. According to Brubaker and Cooper (2000), there are too many protagonists and not enough analysts in the literature on identity politics. Identity politics has been referred to as "a slippery phrase" by Lichterman (1999), and according to Bickford (1997), the

concept has developed more as a critique of specific political behaviors than as a cohesive field of social and political study. The phrase "identity politics" is increasingly being used as a disparaging term for feminism, anti-racism, and anti-heterosexism, according to Fraser (1997). What may be called identity politics is one of the notable features of modern politics worldwide. In fact, the politics of identities may be experiencing a rebirth around the globe, with Africa in particular. Personal, "given," shared, and chosen identities are increasingly serving as rallying points for group action in the crisis-ridden post-colonial state of Africa (Jega, 2000). Additionally, he claims that traditional forms of identity, which have been denigrated as primitive and long trivialized, have shown to be durable and are rapidly gaining popularity and political relevance in the contemporary political economy, with all kinds of outcomes and repercussions. Even new identity styles have developed and proven to be highly significant. All of them are successfully competing with and frequently outperforming post-colonial ideas of national identity. These 3 conditioning elements explain for the alleged patrimonial and prebendal man or woman of Nigeria (Diamond, 1988; Joseph, 1987; Graf, 1988). A domestic elite that is divided along racial and ethnic lines fights for political influence. These are also essential to the faction's ability to establish hegemony and maintain control over state power. In this way, identity-based politics have traditionally played a significant role in conflicts over political dominance and governmental control of the country. Evidently, this resulted in fractious and crisis-ridden politics.

5.2 Political prebendalism, ethnic exclusivity, and socioeconomic exclusion in the Nigerian separatist movement

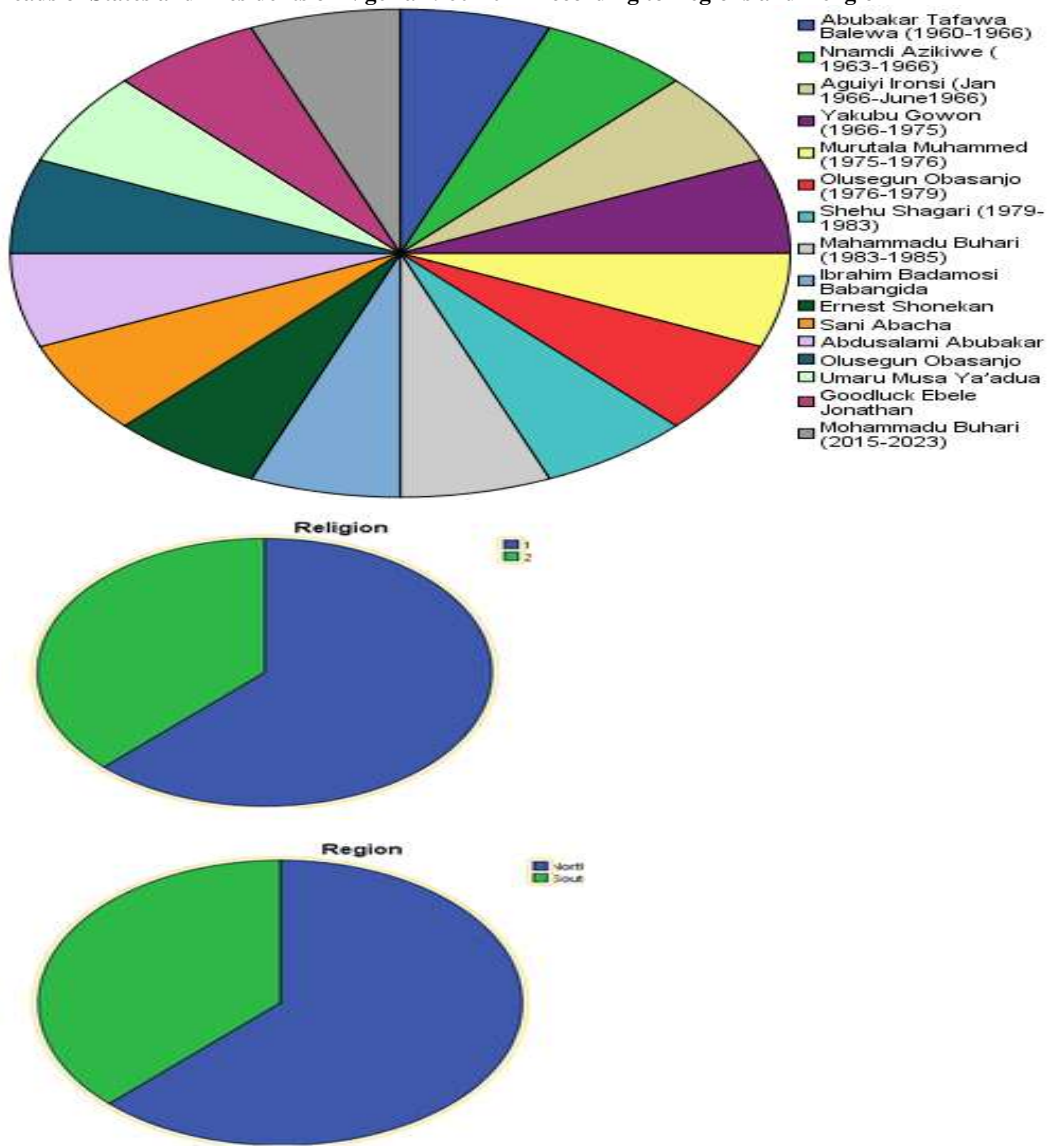
Nigeria is widely acknowledged to be deeply divided along religious, ethnic, political, party, and geopolitical emotions, cleavages, and boundaries. Nigeria's socio-political and economic matrices have been continually molded by them. Nigeria may be categorized along eight primary cleavages, according to Mustapha (2007). In his opinion Eight key cleavages in Nigerian political life have resulted from the interaction of this tripod ethnic structure with administrative divides and communal identities, the most significant of which are the differences between the three majority ethnic groups, between the three majority ethnic groups and the 350 or so minority ethnic groups, between the north and south, and between the 36 states of the federation and the rest of the country. The southeast zone and Igbo ethnicity and religious affiliation overlap, whereas the north-

central zone and northern ethnic minorities overlap. These are only two examples of how these cleavages coexist. The systematic and overlapping patterns of disparities that correlate to the ethnic, regional, and religious divisions in Nigerian society make them more problematic (Mustapha, 2007). According to Adeleke and Charles (2015), ethnic politics, gang politics, and political parties with ethnic affinity are all used in Nigerian politics.

These many ethnic, religious, and political factions' constant quest for dominance has a profound effect on the corporate life of the country and has recently taken the shape of a separatist movement. Prebendal

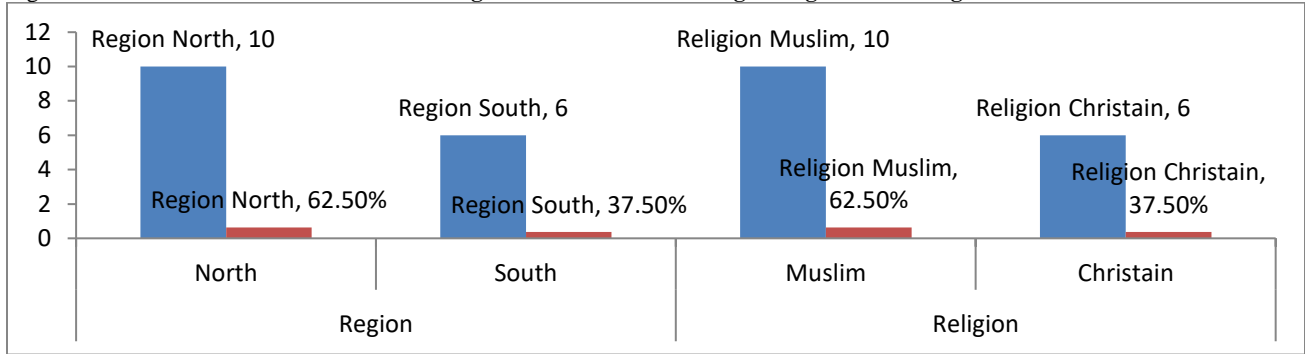
politics have inevitably arisen as a result of this. This report provides confirmed data on the skewed nature of national appointments into federal ministries and parastatals, security agencies, leaders of paramilitary agencies, enrollment requirements into Unity Schools, and state allocations in the part that follows. The article also questions the justification for Nigeria's port operations and the building of a "sea port" in the north while those in the south are shut down. Nigerian border crossings are also questioned using data and figure presentation and interpretation. The goal is to justify or explain the persistent growth of the separatist movement in a politically, religiously, and ethnically divided Nigeria.

Figure 1
Heads of States and Presidents of Nigeria 1960-2022 According to Regions and Religion



Source: Author's computation, 2022.

Figure 2: Heads of States and Presidents of Nigeria 1960-2022 According to Regions and Religion



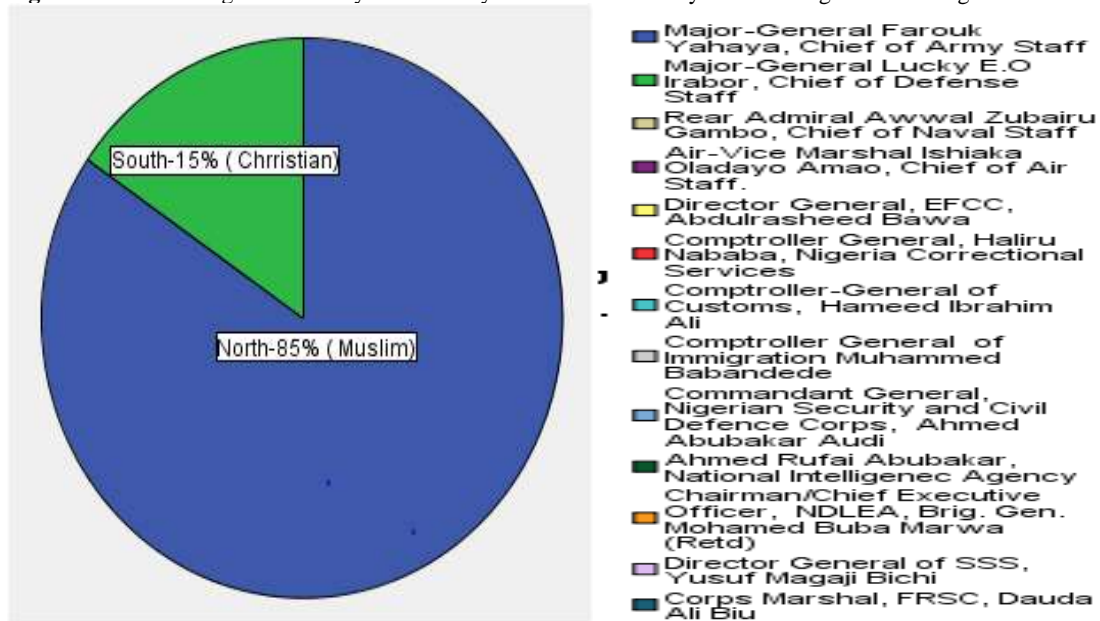
Source: Author's computation, 2022

Table 1: Top National Positions of Government in Nigeria from 2015-2021, According to Regions and Religion

S/N	Position	Region	Religion
1	President	North	Muslim
2	Vice President	South	Christian
3	Senate President	North	Muslim
4	Deputy Senate President	South	Christian
5	Speaker, House of Rep	South	Muslim
6	Deputy Speaker, House of Rep	North	Muslim
7	Attorney General of the federation	North	Muslim
8	Secretary to the government of the Federation	North	Muslim
9	Chief of Staff to the President	North	Muslim
10	National Security Adviser to the president	North	Muslim
11	Chief Justice of the federation	North	Muslim
#	Total	8	3
#	Percentage	73%	27%

Source: Author's compilation

Figure 3: Heads of Nigerian Military and Security Outfits as Headed by Different regions and Religions

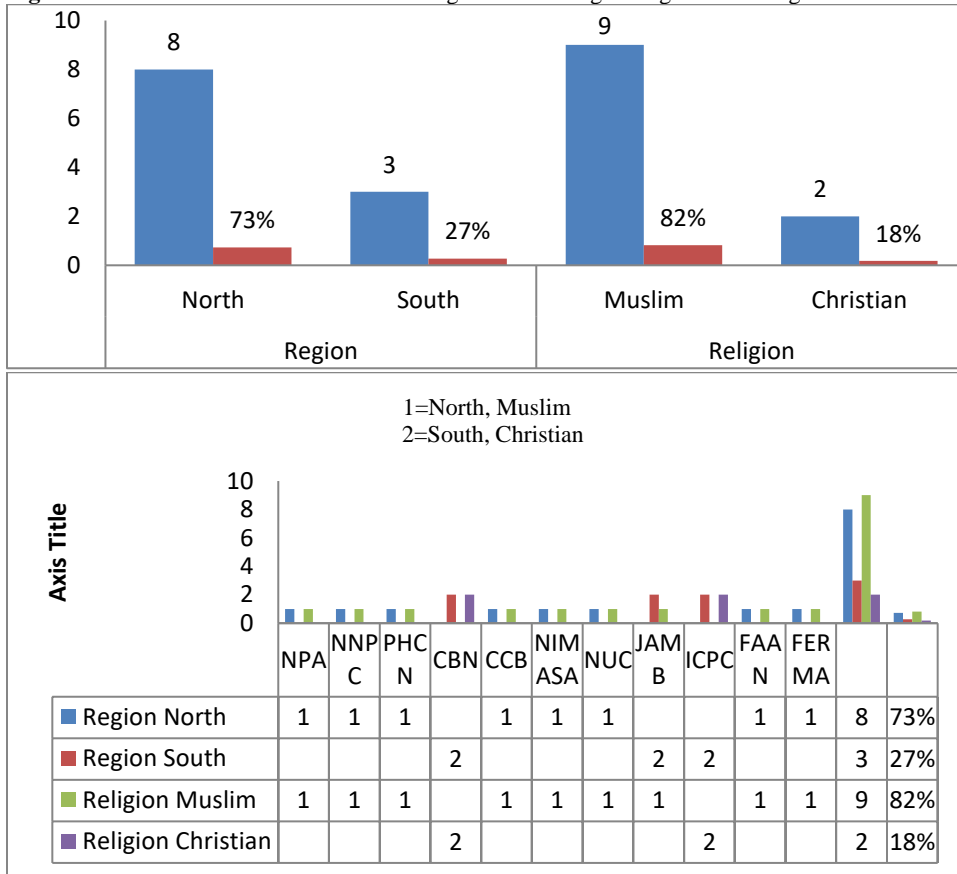


Religion

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Muslims-85%	11	84.6	84.6	84.6
Valid Christian-15%	2	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	13	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's computation, 2022

Figure 4 Heads of Units and Parastatals in Nigeria According to Region and Religion



Region

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid North	9	81.8	81.8	81.8
Valid South	2	18.2	18.2	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

Religion

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Muslim	10	90.9	90.9	90.9
Valid Christian	1	9.1	9.1	100.0
Total	11	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's computation, 2022

Table 2: Number of states According to Geopolitical Zone

S/N	Geopolitical Zone	No. of state	Geopolitical Zone	No. of states
1	North East:	5	South East	5
2	North West	7	South South	6
3	North Central Plus FCT	7	South West	6
	Total	19		17
5	Percentage	53%		47%

Source: Author's compilation

Table 3: Cut off Points of Unity Schools for selected States in Northern and Southern Nigeria

S/N	State	Southern States' cut off point		State	Northern States' Cut Off Points	
		Male	female		Male	Female
1	Osun	127	127	Yobe	2	27
2	Oyo	127	127	Taraba	3	11
3	Abia	130	130	Zamfara	4	2
4	Edo	130	130	Sokoto	9	13
5	Delta	131	131	Kebbi	9	20
6	Ogun	131	131	Bauchi	35	35
7	Lagos	133	133	Jigawa	44	44
8	Enugu	134	134	Borno	45	45
9	Imo	138	138	Gombe	58	58
10	Anambra	139	139	Nasarawa	58	58

Source: Compiled from Business Day, July 22, 2022

Table 4: Top Ten Positions in NNPC 2022

S/N	Position	Name	Region		Religion	
1	Group Managing Director (GMD)	Mele Kyari	North		Muslim	
2	CFO Finance & Accounts	Umar Ajiya	North		Muslim	
3	CFO, Gas and Power	Yusuf Usman	North		Muslim	
4	CFO, Corporate Services	Farouk Garba Sa'id	North		Muslim	
5	CFO, Refining & Petrochem	Mustapha Yakubu	North		Muslim	
6	Corporate Secretary/Legal Adviser	Hadiza Coomassie	North		Muslim	
7	GGM, Int,l Energy Relations, IER	Omar Ibrahim	North		Muslim	
8	GGM, Renewable Energy	Kallamu Abdullahi	North		Muslim	
9	GGM, Governance Risk & Compliance	Ibrahim Birma	North		Muslim	
10	GGM, NAPIMS	Bala Wunti	North		Muslim	
#	Total	10	10	0	10	0
#	Percentage	100%	100%	0	100%	0

Source: Author's compilation

Table 5: Top Eight Positions in FAAN

S/N	Position	Name	Region		Religion	
1	Managing Director & CE	Capt. Rabi Hamisu Yadudu	North		Muslim	
2	Director Commercial and Business Development	Sadiku Abdulkadir Rafindadi	North		Muslim	
3	Director of Engineering Services	Engr. Ali, Ali Maina	North		Muslim	
4	Director of Finance and Accounts	Nike Aboderin		South		Christian
5	Director of Security Services	Group Capt. Usman Abubakar Sadiq (Rtd)	North		Muslim	
6	Director of Human Resource & Administrations	Norris Anozie		South		Christian
7	Company Secretary/Legal Adviser	Bridget Iwinose Gold		South		Christian
8	Director of Airport Operations	Capt. Mukhtar Yusuf Muye	North		Muslim	
#	Total		5	3	5	3
#	Percentage		62.5%	37.5%	62.5%	37.5%

Source: Author's compilation

6. Discussion

From figure 1 and figure 2, showing the regions and religion that have ruled Nigeria from independence to date, it is clear that the North has ruled the country for an average of 10 times amounting to 62.5% average compared to all other ethnic nationalities and the entire southern region that has ruled Nigeria for an average of 6 times amounting to 37.5% on the average. It means that in a multiethnic country like Nigeria, The North and in particular, the Hausa/Fulani has ruled the country 4 times more than any other ethnic group amounting to 25% on the

average. It shows the North has so far dominated the political landscape of Nigeria. This analysis suggests that there is a dominance of Nigeria's political landscape by a given region and religion in the country.

Table 1 shows the top national positions of government in Nigeria from 2015-2021, according to the identities of regions and religion. According to this analysis Northerners and also Muslims occupies 8 of the 11 top government positions in Nigeria amounting to an average of 73% as against 3 slots amounting to 27% of the positions occupied by

southern Christians. In the same table, Muslims occupy 9 of the 11 top national positions amounting to 82% of national government positions while Christians occupy only 2 national positions amounting to 18% of the same making a particular religion have an overwhelming representation in a highly diversified, multiethnic and religion conscious state like Nigeria.

Figure 3 shows heads of Nigerian military, paramilitary and security outfits as headed by different regions and religions under the period in review. This analysis tells that 11 of the 13 security outfits are headed by the Northerners and Muslims amounting to 85% as opposed to 2 security positions heads by southern Christians amounting to 15% of all the national security and paramilitary outfits being headed by the south. This analysis tells that regional and religious factors play a vital role in determining security chiefs in Nigeria

Figure 4 shows heads of units and parastatals in Nigeria according to region and religion. They are basically either government appointees or civil servants who grew through the ranks and files of the selected units and parastatals under review. This table shows that 8 of the 11 units and parastatals are headed by northern Muslim amounting to 73% of the heads of units and parastatals in Nigeria. In the same table, 9 of the 11 positions are occupied by Muslims amounting to 82%. While the south and Christians occupy 3 and 2 respectively, of the 11 units under review amounting to 27% and 18% respectively.

Table 2 attempts to show the relative number of states according to geopolitical zones. From the table, it is clear that the entire northern states have 19 states altogether amounting to 53% of the states in Nigeria while the southern states accounts for 17 states amounting to 47% of the states in Nigeria.

Table 3 presents the cut off points of Unity Schools for selected States in Northern and Southern Nigeria. From the table above, the least cut off point in the northern region is 2 for male and 27 for female for Yobe state. However, the least cutoff point in southern Nigeria is 127 for both male and female for Osun state. On the other hand, the highest cutoff point in the country is in the southern region, which is 139 for Anambra. However, the highest cutoff point in the north is 58 for Nasarawa. This is showing a relative an absolute advantage of northern students to gain admission into unity schools for easily than their southern counterpart. The difference between the least cutoff point in the South and the north is 125 which is more than two times the highest cutoff

points in the north plus 9 extra points which is exactly the cutoff point for Sokoto and Kebbi states. On the other hands, the difference between the highest cutoff point in the south and the north is 81 points which is far more than the highest cutoff point in the North which is 58 for Nasarawa state.

Table 4 presents to us the ten top positions in NNPC. From the table above, the ten top positions in NNPC are all occupied by the North and Muslims in particular, making it a 100% dominance over other regions and religion in a multi ethnic and secular state as Nigeria. The implication of this is that the south has 0 representation the top ten positions of a company situated in southern Nigeria and from where over 100% of Nigerian crude oil is drilled.

Tables 5 shows the 8 top positions in Federal Aviation Agency of Nigeria (FAAN). From the table the north and Muslims occupy 5 positions, representing 62.5% of all the eight top positions in FAAN. While the south and Christians occupy 3 positions representing 37% of top eight positions in FAAN.

7. Conclusions

From the various figures and tables shown above, In all the indicators for regional and religious representation in socio-economic, security and political structure in Nigeria, the variable indicators shows that the current political, security and economic positions in Nigeria is extremely skewed to the north and this could be a veritable recipe for all forms of fears, suspicion, misgivings, misunderstandings, misrepresentations and ultimately, the rise of separatist movement like we have seen in southern Nigeria both east and west. Nigeria is a multiethnic, multi-religious, and of course a secular state as provided by the 1999 constitution of Nigeria as amended 2011. However, from the table above, it suggests that the north is now synonymous with Islam which is not a true picture of reality on ground. Though Muslims might be majority in the North, but there are also many Christians across all the states of the north. Hence, are there no qualify Christian northerners who could also occupy all the positions allotted to the northern region?

This study therefore submits that religious and ethnic politics which are all forms of prebendal and identity politics are basically responsible for the rise of suspicion and ethno-national movements in Nigeria like the Biafran movement and Ilana Omo Oodua separatist movement.

8. Recommendations

- To douse the tension of interethnic and interreligious suspicion in the country, the government must intentionally correct the skewed structurally imbalances in the country's security architecture allowing regional, ethnic and religious balance in the composition of the country's chief securities and other paramilitary outfits.
- The federal character principle should be upheld in the appointment of key positions in the country.
- Other northern ethnic and religious groups in the north other than Islam should not be marginalized as this would breed fear, suspicion and irritation against the Northern Hausa/Fulani ethnic group in the believe that they want to dominate other over 350 ethnic groups in county. This is so, because according to Badru (2010), this would generate two logics of conflictual interactions, which is: the logic of 'I' Superiority (logic of domination) and the logic of Self- Affirmation (self- assertion). The first logic motivates any given X group to attempt to dominate any given Y group, relative to accessing some social income, wealth, and opportunities, and the second logic also motivates the Y group to resist the attempt, relative to accessing the noted social income, wealth and opportunities. Now, the interaction of the two logics cannot but occasion social conflict between the X and Y groups. This can degenerate into secessionist movements and inter-religious/ethnic intolerance as we see today in Nigeria.
- They should be amendment to reflects these concerns as a matter of urgency to save the Nigerian state from unnecessary tensions and rhetorics of disintegration.
- The restructuring of the country should be considered a necessary thing to be done.

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