
BIAFRA RENAISSANCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT DILEMMA IN SOUTHEAST, NIGERIA**Scholastica N. Atata**

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Abstract

The transition to democratic system of government in Nigeria has witnessed an increase in the emergence of ethnic movement groups. Such ethnic movement groups are the pro-Biafra groups in reaction to perceived socio-political and economic exclusion of the Igbo and reflect the extent of development the people benefit in Nigeria. This study examined the possible effect of Biafra renaissance on the underlying dimensions of development in South-East, Nigeria. Using relative deprivation theory, this study presented the sense of marginalization expressed by Igbo people and two dimensions of development in South-East, Nigeria. Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were adopted, these include: in-depth interview, focus group discussion and case study. The data collected in two cities—Aba and Onitsha— were analysed using ethnographic and content analysis. It argued that Biafra holds a value that projects the needs and expectations of Igbo people and suggested the need for peaceful dialogue for socio-political and developmental changes.

Keywords: Biafra renaissance, Development, Igbo, Nigeria civil war, southeast Nigeria

Introduction

Biafra renaissance demonstrates the reawakening of Biafra consciousness among the Igbo after the Nigerian/Biafra Civil War. Biafra activities operate intensively within the five Igbo states of the South-East, Nigeria. The underlying Biafra activities accentuate the emergence of pro-Biafra groups. Contemporary Biafra renaissance in Nigeria has its roots in the Nigerian Civil War which was fought between 1967 and 1970 (Onuoha, 2011; Diamond, 2007, Okonta & Meagher, 2009). There were two main probable causes of the Civil War. On the one hand, literature posits that the Civil War was as a result of the inter-ethnic and political strife, mutual distrust and the killing of the people of Igbo origin in the northern part of Nigeria, especially in the years 1945, 1953 and 1966 (Plotincov, 1971; Chinda, 2004; Omobowale, 2009). On the other hand, literature attributes it to the domineering tendencies of the Igbo in pre and post-independence Nigeria (see, Esedebe, 1980; Jibrin, 1999; Oluwole, 2014). The 1966 conflict in particular, which resulted in the mass killing of Igbo people, gave an immediate impetus to the declaration of the Sovereign State of Biafra in the year 1967 (Madiebo 1980; Gbuile, 1989; Effiong, 2000; Achebe, 2012). The Nigerian Civil War, often termed the Biafran War in lay parlance, has been variously documented by actors on both sides of the divide (see for example, Madiebo 1980; Obasanjo, 1980; Ademoyega, 1981, Ojukwu, 1989; Achuzia, 1986; Effiong, 2000; Achebe, 2012; Alabi-Isama; 2013).

More than five decades after the defeat of the defunct Republic of Biafra and cessation of hostilities, there has been a resurgence of the Biafra consciousness among the people of South-East, Nigeria. Thus, while the Nigeria Civil War which ended in 1970 only signalled a long silence for the Biafrans-‘secessionist-activists’, it did not put an end to the main appeal of the Biafra idea to the succeeding generations. With the re-introduction of multi-party democracy in 1999 and the emergence of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the year 2000, and other pro-Biafra groups such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in 2012, the hitherto comatose Biafra consciousness was once again reactivated (Uwalaka, 2003; Duruji, 2009; Onuoha, 2011). MASSOB, led by Ralph Uwazurike, draws a renewed collective sense of consciousness among those of the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria for the Biafra cause (Onuoha, 2011). At inception, it projected the advancement of the Igbo identity and self-determination to actualize the Sovereign State of Biafra as its principal objectives

(Uwalaka, 2003; Ukiwo, 2009). This renewed contest, therefore, points to renewed Biafran consciousness for the Igbo people in South-East Nigeria. 'Biafra' has, over the years, assumed a contextual Igbo value within which Biafra identity consciousness is expressed in southeast, Nigeria (Atata & Omobowale, 2022; Harnischfger, 2003; Omeje, 2005; Ikelegbe, 2005; Onuoha, 2011, 2013). Biafra renaissance Beyond MASSOB and IPOB activism has been captured by literature (see for example: Omeje, 2005; Duruji, 2009; Ojukwu, 2009, Ukiwo, 2009; Onuoha, 2012). This study examines the context of Biafra renaissance and its effect on development in southeast, Nigeria.

Self-determination, secession and development

There is a distinct variation in the explanation of secession, self-determination and on issues of development in any society. However, increasing attention has been given to the problems of secession and self-determination such that both instances have become common in the socio-political and, developmental spaces (Fox, 1995). Indeed, secession and self-determination have become prevalent in contemporary times, such that they have constituted not only the greatest source of social identification but also the majority in the consistent ethnic, race, boundary and group disintegration (Heraclides, 1992, Silva, 2015). Self-determination describes, group, race or people under agreement to be one to exercise the quest for a sovereign right to become an autonomous state and make decision on the form of system of government they choose to operate while secession presents the breaking away from a state and creating another state for a group of people to be governed by the state rules. It shows that secession is a disparity of self-determination, though the right to secede by any given state is also regarded as part of the right for self-determination.

Secession and self-determination is the primary and evident source of ethnic, racial and groups divides that result in national sovereignty. The instances on self-determination and secession have been experienced around the world especially in America, Europe, Asia and Africa (Islam, 1985). The concept of national independence is under siege in many parts of the world as states lose power to smaller groups which are challenged by regions, race, religious boundaries, tribal minorities and ethnic groups. Such instances are particularly evident in Europe with the disintegration of the Soviet Union Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and with the ceding of power of majority nation to minority states. Hence, these regions assert and rediscover new identities in names and boundaries.

The Soviet Union also known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) existed from 1922 and got dissolved in 1991. This facilitated the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1991 (Islam, 1985, Connor, 1989). The USSR was a federation of union republics and was not of unitary states or federal states, with founding republics known as Ukraine, Byelorussia, Russia and Transcaucasia (Connor, 1989). The dissolution of USSR gave rise to the quest for self-determination by the republics that made up the Soviet Union, such as Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Estonia, Belarus, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Latvia, Tajikistan, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Lithuania. Connor (1989) points out that Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes, Albanians, and Serbians were not accorded the right to self-determination but to secede, while Montenegrins were given the right for self-rule. Within Czechoslovakia, Czechs and Slovaks were accorded the right for a republic and any form of autonomous government, which is self-rule. Move for self-determination and succession, involves the separation of countries from their parent countries.

This according to Islam (1985) is as a result of struggle for identity and independent governance that is, reconstruction of identity for the well-being of the group. The struggle for identity creation in most of these countries has availed the strategies for self-rule and creation of separate political spaces. It is important to note that the self-determination discourse also presents Nigeria as a country concerned with series of dynamic political changes that have been subjected to quest for secession and self-determination by the Biafra group in 1967. The Nigeria experience which resulted in Civil War between the parent country- Nigeria and the seceding region- Biafra brought about identity construction in the region even when the seceding attempt was not realised.

These identity constructions across the globe have its effects majorly on development to the seceding countries. Development involves the need for social action, social change used to reduce inequality, exclusion and deprivation, by which individuals in society attempt to improve their well-being and means of livelihood (Todaro, 1981, Ayua, 1986). Though Rodney (1972) argues that Africa was on its path to development before the advent of their colonial masters (First World nations), hence development is described as the First World description for a way of living and expectations. This projects the ideas of the First World nations to be superior, thereby generating competition and struggle to imitate and meet the expectation. This shows the initial ideas, culture, of developing nations which are influenced by the ideas of the developed nation. Although development did not extricate the Third World nations from their root, it allowed them opportunity to be like the developed nation. Though development has facilitated changes in societies and nations across, it has also created inequality among nations. Todaro (1981), posited that development is attributed to change in the society and can be applied to any number of social issues.. Development is often seen as growth, but sociologically, it presents growth as part of development and not development itself and as means to optimal utilization of resources for the benefit of the people in the society

According to Ake (1996), development rose from exogenous influence and conditions from diffusion, international influence or what would be referred to as globalization today. Hoogvelt (1977) explains development from three points as: a process, interaction and an action, while post-development theorists argue that, the idea of development is just a 'mental structure', which resulted in a hierarchy of the terms developed and underdeveloped nations, of which the underdeveloped nations desire to be like developed nations and that the process is very ethnocentric (Nnoli, 1995).

Presenting the sociological concept that explains development as the ways in which the well-being of individuals is improved in the society, some factors like wars, secession attempts and struggle for self-determination in developing countries hinder the developmental process and indirectly leaving them underdeveloped (Islam, 1985). Such is the devastating political conflict in Syria while the Eritrea self-determination moves and Biafra self-determination and secession experience in Nigeria and the identity conflict in Namibia, and Sudan, robbed these nations of their developmental gains. It therefore attests that the process of development is not always significant, it has ups and downs. These countries change over time, and generally experience improvement in socio-political and development change for the interest of the people in the society.

Development has a direction determined by the reason or purposes of the society. It also carries connotations of lasting change and improvement in well-being of the people (Barder, 2012). If the direction of development is positive, then it is associated to progress, if negative, it is attributed to regression or degradation. In other words, the nature of development in relation to self-determination and secession involves several goals of the continent and countries involved. These development narratives describe the dilemma of the quest for Biafra and development in southeast Nigeria. This study tends to present the sides of development in the cause of Biafra resurgence using relative deprivation theory.

Relative Deprivation Theory

This study adopts Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT) to explain the Biafra agitations and the effect on development in southeast, Nigeria. This theory presents the collective or group strategy(ies) used in achieving a certain goal(s) based on the expectations of the people. The expectations are often linked to a sense of deprivation that people experience in any given group or society in terms of socio-economic resources, in the political and developmental space. Using the relative deprivation theory as it relates to Biafra movement, it shows the expectations the Biafra-Igbo people have in Nigeria. The RDT is related to Robert K. Merton's idea on group supposition (Smith and Huo, 2014) and Runciman (1966) construction on relative deprivation theory on the difference between individual and group deprivation in the society. For this theory, Runciman posits that group deprivation is generated based on unfair treatment of a group in the society when compared to other groups which generate sense of marginalization, exclusion and alienation.

With this narration, it shows that people derive their expectations from comparing their involvement in the socio-political, economic space with what they think they should have in relation to what other groups have or possess, compared with their in-group achievements and expectations (Smith & Huo, 2014 and Pettigrew, 2015). Hence, Kumar (1991) and (Abrams & Grant 2012) point that people tend to feel excluded or/and marginalized when they compare themselves and their developmental achievements to certain standards in the society and the drive for social change.

This comparison enhances the construction of sense of alienation, neglect, marginalization, social exclusion and inequality that sustains Biafra resurgence in South-East, Nigeria. This then, gives room for individuals or group of people to express their sense of exclusion/denial and unequal participation in activities such as economic, social, political and developmental processes in the society as they deem fit. Hence, this enhances the essence of agitation among the people and portrays the motive for constant Biafra agitation and the development dilemma that has marred and attracted development in South-East Nigeria.

Methodology

Using qualitative approach in data collection and analysis, data were collected using In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and case study. Data were collected in two cities in South-Eastern Nigeria; they include Aba in Abia State, and Onitsha in Anambra State. Though the Biafra activities were proscribed in the year 2017 in Nigeria, there are silent and covert Biafra activisms, which are especially demonstrated by the enforcement of sit-at-home protest on every Monday of the week in South-East Nigeria. The cities selected for this study were purposively selected because of the prevalence of Biafra activism in the areas.

Non-probability methods (purposive and snowballing) were adopted in selecting twenty people for interviews (IDI and FGD) for this study. The interviews were conducted with, youth leaders, Biafra leaders, Biafra activists and political officers in the two selected cities. A case study was conducted with one Biafra activist. The selection was based on the hierarchy of leadership in the groups to give account on Biafra relating to the development and the incessant agitation in Nigeria. Data collected were transcribed, sorted, and further subjected to interpretive content analysis. This study adopted ethnographic and content methods of data analysis. The ethnographic analysis of the findings of this study presents the value attached to Biafra resurgence and the effect on development in southeast Nigeria as narrated with the sub-headings below.

Dimensions of development and Biafra renaissance in Nigeria

In connection with the socio-economic needs and ethno-regional interest, ethnic schisms have been a sort of constraint to development in Nigeria (Adekson, 2004, Lawan, 2011). In the context of development, group and ethnic identities are mostly constructed to compete for scarce national resources and opportunities (Olzak 1983, Adams, 1995, Nnoli, 1995, Oluwole, 2014). The ethnic groups/identities promote competition that often degenerates and constructs social identity consciousness that forms in-group cohesion and sometimes results to violent actions in the bid to achieve equality. This competition for equal distribution of resources and opportunities shows that, when ethnic identification is upheld and valued, socio-economic and political resources become basis for collective social struggle (Ikelegbe, 2005; Adeyeri and Adejuwon, 2012). Thus, social struggle mostly gears towards the quest for ethnic recognition and development, which Biafra renaissance tends to project.

The ideas of Biafra renaissance and development are complementary in two ways. While Biafra renaissance shows the destructive stance on development, it is also adopted as the present constructive strategy used to improve the well-being of the people in the southeast region. To present an index for the understanding of Biafra renaissance and development, development is thus described as strategies adopted to ensure the improvement of the socio-economic standard for the purpose of improving the quality and well-being of people, such that, their needs are met in the society. The 20 years of contemporary Biafra agitation present the Igbo society with different accounts of its effect on the well-being of people in South-

East Nigeria. The account of Biafra and development is drawn from the Nigerian civil war, the proceeding Biafra renaissance and Biafra activists. These accounts present the Biafra activism and somewhat, do not show the effect on development. Thus, there is need to examine the possible effects of Biafra renaissance on development in South-East Nigeria.

The Nigerian civil war and the immediate post-civil war experiences were characterized as periods of annihilation in Eastern Nigeria. This experience brought about the social construction on the issues of underdevelopment and neglect among Igbo people, thus, giving opportunity for the resurgence of Biafra agitation in South-East, Nigeria. The post-civil war experience and plans to implement the '3Rs' (reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation) agenda in the then East-Central State were not effectively implemented (Duruji, 2009, Johnson and Olanyian, 2017). The 3Rs were adopted as an intended strategy to rebuild, develop the region and reintegrate Igbo people in Nigeria's socio-economic and political mainstream. Inadequate implementation of the post-civil war 3Rs plans facilitated the return of Biafra activism in the year 2000 to further address the perceived neglect and exclusion (Uwalaka, 2003). The return of Biafra activism and the social identity construction among the Igbo present the effects Biafra activism on the well-being of Igbo people. The divergent effects of Biafra renaissance on development are here presented below.

The effect of Biafra renaissance on development is evident in two dimensions. The first dimension presents the narratives on the constructive effects, while the second elucidates the destructive effects of Biafra agitation on development in Igbo states. These dimensions are presented to explain the militating factors and views on the effect of the prolonged Biafra agitation on development in the southeast, by the pro-Biafra groups to reinstate the defunct Biafra state. The constructive narratives on the effects of Biafra agitation on the well-being of the people show that Biafra is used as an identity capital, such that Biafra is adopted as a tool for constructive development.

Constructive Dimension of Biafra Renaissance and Development

Developmental plans undertaken by the Nigeria Federal Government to address the seeming intractable socio-economic problems in southeast have intensified the contradictions on perceived neglect in the region. The constructive dimension explains the underlining effects of Biafra renaissance on development and describes the contributions and roles the contemporary Biafra agitation play in improving the well-being of the people in South-East, Nigeria. The constructive dimension presents how Biafra agitations have facilitated the plans taken by the Nigeria Federal Government to initiate developmental projects such as, the ongoing construction of second Niger Bridge and federal roads in the South-East region.

Biafra and the construction of second Niger Bridge

It is noteworthy to state that before the construction of the ongoing second Niger Bridge, the first Niger Bridge (also known as the Onitsha Bridge) was constructed and launched in 1966, (though the bridge was reconstructed in 1970 after the Nigerian civil war) and played a significant role on improving the social and economic activities of Igbo people before, during and immediately after the civil war (Morning Post newspaper, 1966). It served as a gateway that linked the South-East states (defunct Biafra) to other parts of Nigeria especially from Onitsha to parts of South-South (Delta and Edo States) and South-West. Located in Onitsha, Anambra state, along Oko-Asaba axis in Delta state, the Onitsha Bridge is an important landmark for socio-economic activities of Igbo people.

The Niger Bridge greatly served as a point of interaction between the Igbo people in the South-East and other ethnic groups and facilitated the socio-economic upturn in the region. Moving by road from South-East to other parts of Nigeria such as Delta, Edo (Benin) all through the South-West region, the bridge serves as the only link to all other ethnic groups around the Igbo states and beyond the region for academic, nation-building, social, economic and political debates. However, the bridge has been in use in the past five decades, and served effectively as the link from parts of southeast until the appeal for the construction of a second bridge. The construction of a second bridge is intended to decongest the first

bridge (Onitsha Bridge) and help improve the social and trading activities of people around Onitsha and beyond. The request for the construction of a second bridge in southeast region remained unattended until the year 2016.

Awarded out for construction in October 2016 by the Government of President Muhamadu Buhari, the construction of second Niger Bridge is still ongoing till date and tends to appeal to the Biafra loyalists who have constantly demanded for the second Niger Bridge (Amaize, Okoli, Nwaiwu, 2017). Funded by the Nigeria Federal Government project under the Presidential Infrastructure Development Plan (PIDP), it is aimed at attending to perceived neglect and quest for Igbo recognition and development (Amaize, Okoli, Nwaiwu, 2017). The second Niger Bridge is part of developmental plans at the national and regional levels. The bridge is supposedly meant to create job opportunities for the residents in and round the region (such as temporary job at the construction site), improve the commercial viability of the immediate area and regenerate the socio-economic activities in the region. The construction of the second bridge was notably awarded at a time when the Biafra activism was prevalent and a threat to national unity in order to aid development even in the midst of the incessant Biafra agitation. With the second bridge in progress, there is new outlook that South-East region is gradually being recognised and included in the developmental plans in Nigeria against the seeming view on marginalization. Thus, it is appropriate to claim that Biafra resurgence has yielded a positive contribution in improving the well-being of the people in South-East region, vis-à-vis the second Niger Bridge. To further buttress this, a respondent states:

The Federal Government has promised us (Igbo people) a second bridge, it is a good idea. At least *ndigbo* (Igbo people) are now included in their (Federal government) agenda. We will travel across the bridge with ease, because the Onitsha Bridge we have is weak. *Umuigbo ga ere ahia ha* (Igbo people will transact their business) while other ethnic groups and investors can come down to *ala Igbo* (Igbo land) and this place (southeast) will gradually become a 'small London' ... (IDI/respondent 1)

Another respondent adds:

Since we started this MASSOB and IPOB thing (agitation), the President has remembered this second Niger bridge project. The new bridge is a long term development, we appreciate it, at least we can travel out of South-East without experiencing the long hours of traffic as we have on this present bridge, it will be an alternative for us to do our business. Those travelling for other reasons can also do so, it is a welcome project (IDI/respondent 2).

The responses above show the endorsement of the development plan, recognition and inclusion which pro-Biafra loyalists tend to demand. The construction of second bridge serves as means of achieving sustainable development in southeast which invariably, if completed will further improve the socio-economic activities and well-being of Igbo people. At the completion of the second bridge, it would positively enhance the economic and social life of the people in southeast and encourage inter-state trading activities, especially around/within Onitsha hinterlands. Facilitated by the emergence of the pro-Biafra groups (MASSOB and IPOB) and their projection on Igbo marginalization, the construction of second Niger Bridge serves as an indication that the 'Igbo-inclusion' ideology is implemented, thus, will improve and sustain the socio-economic activities in the region. The second bridge is designed to promote nation-building and national cohesion, ease movement and to negate the sense of neglect and marginalization among the Igbo people. Uwalaka (2003), Adekson, (2005) and Onuoha, (2011) argue that the sense of marginalization will persist in any society unless the aggrieved group(s) is (are) recognised and included in the social, political and economic plans. This suggests that the construction of the second Niger Bridge will bring to an end the supposed sense of marginalization among Igbo people and integrate them with other ethnic groups- socio-economic and political inclusion in Nigeria.

This, supposedly, negates the sense of neglect and promotes the sense of inclusion. It also shows the intensity of the role of social identity in a society. Social identity is used to project the need to achieve

goals among an in-group (Thoits, Virshup, 1997, Hornesy, 2008), in line with the expectations of the group. Biafra identity is used as a means by which developmental plans are encouraged in South-East, Nigeria. Thus, this presents utilization of Biafra agitation as identity-capital and the expression of relative deprivation to draw the attention of the Federal Government to the expectations of the people when compared to other regions. The sense of deprivation/marginalization is used to promote the in-group (Biafra) allegiance against the out-group identification (Nigerian Government) (see Ashforth and Mael, 1989; McNanara, 1997; Stets and Burke, 2000). Thus, this proves the allegiance of the Biafra loyalists to the Biafra cause and the likelihood to sustain Biafra agitation, until the Biafra goals are attained. That is, utilizing the Biafra identity to achieve developmental goals in the southeast region. Niger Bridge tends to present perceptible benefit of the 16 years of Biafra agitation in Nigeria. If and when completed, it will generate distinctive effects and enhance socio-economic development. Just like the construction of the second Niger Bridge, some Federal highway networks are also awarded for repairs to encourage development in southeast, Nigeria.

Construction of Federal highways in southeast, Nigeria

The narratives of Biafra agitation show the construction and the utilization of social identity in achieving a goal. Biafra is constructed as a symbol that aids the propagation of perceived neglect and need for socio-political and economic inclusion in Nigeria. Having achieved the bargain for the construction of the second Niger Bridge, award/ongoing construction of Federal highways in the southeast is also instant proclamation of the constructive effects of Biafra renaissance on development in the southeast, Nigeria. The construction of Federal road networks in the southeast shows the evidence of planned development that Biafra agitation yields. That is the roads across the five states, were awarded for construction during the periods of Biafra agitation (see, Agency report, 2018). To buttress this further, a respondent adds:

It is the agitation for Biafra that prompted the Federal Government to award the construction of southeast roads. ...the road construction is basically because of our agitation, if not, they (Federal Government) will not remember us. They (Federal Government) should better complete the roads construction; it will surely improve the economy of the Igbo states. (IDI/ respondent 3)

This affirms the information on the Agency Report (2018). The report shows that the roads were awarded for construction from year 2007 and continued till 2018 at the time when Biafra agitation was intensive. As earlier noted, Biafra renaissance lays emphasis on neglect, socio-economic and political exclusion, the construction of the Second Niger Bridge and highway roads and presents the effectiveness of Biafra activism in developmental goal in southeast Nigeria. Thus, this shows that the re-introduction of Biafra agitation has been constructively adopted to project the interest of Igbo people in Nigeria. Having mentioned the constructive effects of Biafra renaissance on development, Biafra renaissance also has destructive effects on development in South-East, Nigeria.

Destructive Dimension of Biafra Renaissance and Development

The second dimension of Biafra renaissance on development points to the destructive effects of Biafra resurgence on development in South-East, Nigeria. The quest and agitation to reinstate defunct Biafra state had adverse effects on development, such that, they constantly affect the socio-economic activities of people in the region. Though Biafra renaissance is directed at the utilization of the Biafra identity to achieve Biafra goal, some of the goals set to be achieved are directed towards the destruction of development in the southeast, Nigeria. This is based on the various forms in which Biafra activism is conducted, which have resulted to uneven distribution of national allocation, as a result of Biafra activism. These forms of Biafra activism, such as sit-at-home and street protests, have undue effect on improving the well-being of Igbo people in South-Eastern Nigeria. Other factors that point to the destructive effects of Biafra renaissance on development are instances such as, the call to boycott/partial participation in the national census in southeast, Nigeria (order from MASSOB leadership to Igbo people not to participate in the year 2006 census) (Odunsi, 2017, Ujumadu, 2017), passive participation of the Igbo people in election processes such as voting (as they often rebuff the Nigeria identity) and protest on the presences of Nigerian

security Forces in the South-East region. These aforementioned factors have destructive consequences on development in South-East, Nigeria.

Biafra protests and socio-economic development in South-East, Nigeria

The Biafra protests which are projected in two forms such as, sit-at-home and street protests are used as tools to project Biafra ideas. Having gained prominence among the Biafra loyalists, prominent pro-Biafra movement leaders (Mr. Ralph Uwazurike, Mr Uche Madu, and Mazi Nnamdi Kanu) use Biafra protests to promote Biafra consciousness which have ripple effects on well-being of people in the South-East, Nigeria. The Biafra protests, though have generated the recognition of the Igbo in Nigeria, also have adverse effect on the well-being of the majority in the southeast as the protests tend to slowdown social and economic activities. Thus, protests lead to downturn in socio-economic activities, such as restriction of movement in the region, clampdown on any form economic activities, shutting down of schools, market places, offices and brutal killing of the protesters by Nigeria security forces. To buttress this, a respondent states:

Whenever there is a protest, the people close their shops and offices. When the shops and offices are closed for two or more days during street protest or sit-at-home order, the people lose revenue and income for those days (IDI/ respondent 4)

Another respondent adds:

No, No, there cannot be development here with these protests going on here. You see, people may be scared to come to Biafra to invest, because they hear that Biafra is volatile. The development you see in Biafra is 'self-help' effort. Maybe when we get it we will start developing but now this struggle is not yielding anything, (IDI/ respondent 5).

These responses show the resolute affirmation on the destructive consequences of Biafra activism on development in southeast region. It reveals that, street protests and sit-at-home orders affect the well-being of people, that is, lack of investors and socio-economic restriction especially on the trade activities of the people. It describes the adverse effect of the Biafra renaissance on the people. Protests restrict the movement of people and socio-economic activities, which are essential for development in the society. Lawan (2011) notes that individuals should engage in socio-economic activities to improve their well-being. Thus, when restricted can deprive them the essentials for living. It is a good presentation of communal ties that encourages Igbo entrepreneurial development (Agozino and Ayanike, 2007). Vaughan (1995) argues that communal ties harness the ability of the people to improve their development. Notably, Igbo people have a higher number of traders and artisans and engage in skilled labour (non-governmental jobs) (Olutayo, 1999, Vaughan, 1995, Uwalaka, 2003) thus the people will not be able to attend to their formal and informal, private or public businesses during the days of sit-at-home orders. To this, a respondent adds:

They (pro-Biafra leaders) ask *ndigbo* (Igbo people) to stay at home during Biafra protest, we close up our shops, our children do not go to school, most offices do not open and every activity is held at standstill. It really affects the development here (South-East region). *Anagi agba aka ari osisi nkwu* (one is not expected to climb a palm tree without a rope). We cannot survive it with the constant protests. Even external investor will not be encouraged to come down here (southeast Nigeria) though the protest and call for Biafra may make *ndigbo* to be known or popular in Nigeria and even across the foreign countries, Biafra people (protesters) should mellow down in this Biafra agitation. (FGD/ respondent 6)

This response describes the need for Biafra leaders who call for protest to concentrate more on improving the well-being of the people than the strenuous hardship they cause the people during protests. The adage, *anagi agba aka ari osisi nkwu* (one is expected to climb a palm tree with a rope) demonstrates

the need for the Igbo people to be financially equipped to help them to adequately fight the Biafra cause. That is to say that, the people should not be deprived and restricted from partaking in activities that improve development in the region. Though the Igbo people claim that they are marginalized, the protests and Biafra activism make the region volatile for investors and this could also discourage local and international investors (Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi, 2016). Consequently, this shows that the inability of external investors to invest in the region could also mean, 'self-marginalization', that is, Igbo people deprive themselves of the socio-economic and political revenues and block avenues that attract development in the South-East. This presents Biafra renaissance as a destructive tool and strategy that slows down developmental processes. Thus, Biafra agitation tends to have negative consequences on development and it perverts profitable use of in-group identity to facilitate development among the Biafra loyalists. This is also expressed in the inactive participation of Igbo people in socio-political activities while promoting Biafra identity against Nigeria identity.

Passive participation in socio-political activities

Less in active participation in national election, call to boycott election in Nigeria (voting processes), and call for non-participation in census, especially the year 2006 census (Odunsi, 2017, Ujumadu, 2017), on the supposition that the Igbo states were not part of Nigeria, have great effect on the well-being of the people, especially in regards to revenue allocation. Ikelegbe (2005) and Lawan (2011) opine that revenue allocation is an essential component in development. These anti-citizenship activities negate inclusion of the south-eastern region, in developmental policies. More appropriate explanation of Biafra identity with the Biafra renaissance is that, it encourages cohesion and collective confrontation by people with common purpose. However, while the Biafra activists continue to struggle to reinstate defunct Biafra values and project their in-group categorization (Biafra identity) against the out-group identity (Nigeria identity) the development of the region continues to dwindle and thus affect the well-being of the people. Considering this assertion, a respondent states that:

We did not participate in the census, the census is for Nigerians, I am a Biafran, and how can I think of being counted in Nigeria population. ...I know they (Nigeria Government) will not include us (Biafra) in their development plans if we are not counted. They should go with their plans (IDI/ respondent7)

Another respondent counters:

These Biafra agitators reject the Nigerian identity. They said we (Igbo people) are not Nigerians that we cannot and should not vote during election. We should get involved in Nigeria. This will not help *ndigbo*. *Kedu ka anyi si eyere oweanyi aka ma anyi eso gi na ihe ana eme?* (How do we improve our well-being if we are inactive?) We are still in Nigeria (IDI/ interviewee 8).

These responses show the determination by Igbo Biafra activists to uphold Biafra identity against development of South-East region. The statement, *kedu ka anyi si eyere oweanyi aka ma anyi eso gi na ihe ana eme?* (How do we improve our well-being if we are inactive?) demonstrates a questionable approach to the benefits of holding onto Biafra identity when apparently Biafra struggle is still going on. Silva (2015) projects that playing down government and passive participation in politics does not yield much for substantive change. Having to reject the Nigerian identity even when Biafra is not actualized, presents their unflinching allegiance to continue to project Biafra. However, this shows the trajectory and consequences of Biafra renaissance while the Nigerian security forces continue to clampdown on Biafra activism and Biafra activists.

Presence of the Nigerian Security Forces

The transition from military government to democratic government in the year 1999 did not stop the militarization of some parts of the country. The 1999 democracy brought about the formation of ethnic militia and social movement groups in South-East Nigeria. This created an enabling social opportunity for

ethnic movement groups such as MASSOB and IPOB to emerge to promote Biafra activism. The Biafra activism though most times is usually violent, brings about the confrontation of the Biafra activists with the Nigeria security forces such as the army, police, and other security agencies; *ewgwu eke* (Python dance force) and the Mobile Police (MOPOL). Ugwuanyi (2016) reports the attack of army on Biafra activists during protests. The Federal Government of Nigeria views the Biafran agitation as treasonable activity. This legal-rational disposition alienates Biafra cause, loyalists and protesters. This explains the reason why the Nigerian security forces are deployed to clampdown the Biafra agitation (Ugwuanyi, 2016).

With the security agents monitoring the Biafra activism, the Biafra agitators/protesters usually move in fear within the South-East region. Due to the confrontation between the Biafra loyalists and Nigerian security forces, the presence of Nigeria security forces has been on the increase in parts of South-East Nigeria to crackdown on Biafra activism. Incessant presence of the Nigerian security forces such as the military, Police Force, Army and the *egwu eke* (operation python dance) in the South-East creates fear and hinders the active social and economic activities in the region. Based on this, the activities of the Igbo people are controlled by the presence of the security forces and Biafra activism tends to be covert. This is attributed to the construction of many military check points, movement of police patrol teams and the *egwu eke* group in ensuring that the Biafra activism is cracked down in the South-East region. To explain this, one of the respondents' states:

You see that it is only in the South-East that we have the largest number of the police and military on the roads and streets.... this is really affecting us (the Igbo) we cannot go out to carry out our daily activities without the fear of being arrested. ...Which society develops in such fear? (IDI/ respondent 9)

A group of discussants concur that:

...the region is rather militarized. There are more military check points in the region than any other part of the country. This breeds the feeling of resentment, which has affected businesses in the region as people are no longer comfortable doing business here (South-East) (FGD/ respondent 10)

Another respondent adds:

Ndi eke (Military forces) are too much in this region, they are really dealing with people, there is so much fear in everybody, even people do not come to the South-East again because of fear of arrest. We cannot even carry-out our business and other formal activities without fear. *Ujo di na obodo anyi* (there is fear in our land). (IDI/ respondent 11)

Biafra activism has taken a toll on security in the southeast, hence, the increase in the number security forces in the region. The responses above show that the presence of the Nigerian security forces in the South-East has adverse effect on the socio-economic activities. As Agbese (1990) states that the intervention of security forces intensifies the problem of underdevelopment. The presence of Nigerian security forces such as, the Nigerian Police Force, Military and Army, the *egwu eke* (Python dance) group tend to ignite fear and have negative consequences on social-economic activities in South-East, such that the movement of the people is restricted and timed especially at times of Biafra agitations. These forms of security groups tend to guard against Biafra activism and suppress the Biafra loyalists from advancing Biafra and preventing Biafra activities. This hinders socio-economic developmental process in the southeast region. Okonkwo and Alaribe (2016) report that Biafra loyalists especially members of the pro-Biafra groups (MASSOB and IPOB) are attacked by the security forces, in order to put an end to Biafra activities that tend to disrupt cohesion in the country. The heavy presence of security forces has invariably infused fear in the residents of the region who indirectly feel over-policed by the Nigeria government (Kalu, 1996). To this, they allege that Federal Government should concentrate on developing the region instead of policing the region. To buttress this further is a case study on one of the Biafran activists:

A Biafran activist: I am a member of this Biafra activist group. Apart from Mazi Nnamdi Kanu who is the general leader, we also have people who lead this Biafra group, locally and internationally. I have participated in the Biafra activism, agalam na ihu ugu Biafra (I have been in the forefront of the Biafra activism). We do not need ndi eke a (these policing). The presence of the uniform men (security forces) has brought about so much fear, because they have taken over ala Biafra (Biafra land). Instead of sending the Police and Army to South-East, the Federal Government should channel their efforts to sending developmental plans to Biafra. The presence of these security forces does not encourage development in our states (South-East states).

I have monitored the activities of these security forces, the way they treat the Biafra activists, how they put fear in the people and we (IPOB) loss human resources daily because of these 'uniform people, how will we development with the kind of treatment they give to us. The uniformed people should leave Biafraland alone, ndigbo achogiha (Igbo people do not need them). (Case Study report 1: on Biafra activism in South-East, Nigeria).

This report shows that Biafra activism has resulted in brutal policing by security forces with negative consequences on South-east economy. The case study shows that the presence of the security forces exacerbates grievances and fears expressed by the people. According to Agbese (1990) the presence of Nigeria armed forces creates a sense of violence and crisis that lead to underdevelopment. Thus, instead of providing the expected security for the people, against banditry, the security forces in South-East Nigeria tends restrain the socio-economic activities of people, especially after Biafra activism and protests and acts as threat to development in region. The sense of fear provoked by the security forces, especially the *egwu-eke dance*, tends to hinder formal activities such as trading, movement in and around commercial cities, Aba and Onitsha, where individuals are assumed as suspects. However, Biafra activism, is categorised as a social disorder that requires the arrest of deviants (Biafra loyalists) in the southeast. This distorts the movement of people going into Igbo states especially the youths. Just as the intervention of security forces and the impunity they enjoyed in violating human rights in Niger Delta region (Amnesty international, 2005), Igbo people tend to project similar concern in the invasion of security forces in southeast sates. By and large, confrontation between Biafra activists and the Nigerian state and reprisals from the security forces, have resulted in the inadequate development in the South-East, Nigeria.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

The transition to democratic system of government witnessed the emergence of Igbo ethnic movement groups, that is, pro-Biafra groups (MASSOB) and (IPOB) in reaction to the perceived political and economic exclusion and neglect of the Igbo in Nigeria. This reaction produced the reintroduction of Biafra advancement and agitation among the Igbo people. The effects of Biafra advancement have two dimensions to development in South-East Nigeria. This study presents these underlying dimensions as constructive and deconstructive, stating that the construction of the second Niger Bridge is a benefit of the Biafra agitation while reduction in allocation of socio-political space and economic resources is the destructive effect of Biafra renaissance on development in South-East, Nigeria.

Due to the fact that Biafra renaissance is adopted as a strategy to achieve a purpose, it is logical to say that it facilitates developmental processes in South-East Nigeria. Using Biafra as an identity capital, Biafra renaissance though has a diminutive constructive effect on development but has higher destructive effects on improving the lives of people in South-Eastern Nigeria. While the Federal Government builds the second Niger Bridge to help improve the socio-economic activities of the Igbo with other parts of the country, the Igbo-Biafra activists tend to slow down the socio-economic activities in the region by staging protests, giving sit-at-home orders, abstaining from national census and expressing an indifferent attitude in participating in election processes. Biafra agitation will continue if the activists continue to confront the Federal Government and promote Biafra.

This study suggests that there is need for dialogue between the Nigerian Federal Government, South-East Governors and the Biafra representatives to ensure that resources that will improve the lives of the people are adequately provided. Also, national cohesion policy should be enacted to see that the issues of neglect as presented by the Igbo ethnic movements as the reason for Biafra resurgence should be checked and Igbo people are adequately represented in socio-political and developmental processes.

This study also states the following as suggestion to evaluate and curb violence and contemporary Biafra activism in South-East Nigeria, negotiation, peaceful dialogue and agreement, should be reached between the pro-Biafra movement groups (*Ohanaeze ndi Igbo*) and the Federal Government to help address the incessant Biafra agitation in southeast, Nigeria. There should be mass education of the orientation for national integration in politics and development, such that the narratives of marginalisation be deemphasised and deconstructed among the Igbos.

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