



# Politics of Marginalisation of Igbo Nation in Nigerian Public Administration and Insecurity: A Blessing or a Curse?

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## ABSTRACT

The Igbo nation is an important constituent part in the Nigerian political constituency. Yet they remain politically marginalized and enslaved and consequently treated as a second class citizen in the Nigerian project. According to the nature of this research, a desk research with great reliance on the secondary method of data collection and observation was used in: assessing the extent of the marginalisation of Igbo nation; establishing the relationship between marginalisation and insecurity in Nigeria; and examining whether the marginalisation is a blessing or curse. The paper discovered that the current tide of marginalisation is a blessing to the marginalised and a curse to the unity and sustainable development of Nigeria as a sovereign state. It is herein recommended that the principle of inclusivism should be manifestly practiced. In this regard, the Igbo man should not be merely tolerated in his own home. He must be allowed to be a stakeholder in matters that concern him as a part of the general system. It concluded that, for public administration to serve the need of the people, it must be devoid of marginalisation and allied factors such as: divide and rule, corruption, nepotism, tribal sentiments and other associated ills that make public administration unworkable. The implication of the study for practice is that if we continue to approach marginalisation separately from the issue of insecurity in which indices like human right abuses, inequality, unemployment and social exclusion on the basis of tribal and religious classifications are not tackled with utmost seriousness, insecurity will remain a nagging challenge in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a correlation between marginalisation and insecurity.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Marginalisation, Public Administration

## 1 Introduction

This paper discusses matters relating to the ongoing marginalisation of the Igbo nation in the Nigerian political permutations. Generally, Ndi Igbo literally means the Igbo people and they represent the Igbo nation. Igbo is an ethnic nationality in Nigeria. The territory of the old Eastern region made up of the current Southeast geopolitical zone and Southsouth geopolitical zone is the ancestral domain of the Igbo ethnic group. They are identified with a common vehicle of transmission of ideas, values and thoughts known as *asusu Igbo* (Igbo language). Meanwhile, "...communication as the entire process of sending whether important or non-important views from one person to another (Chioke, 2012:70)" in Igbo nation is very unique and the different dialects quickly identifiable among the Igbo nation are quite sophisticated and intriguing. At the inception of the Buhari's Administration, there was ominous silence (delay) in federal appointments and omnibus display that demonstrated sheer hatred for the people with this unique system of sending views (Igbo language). In fact, from the covert and overt actions of the government, one is not mincing words to opine that the name, '*Igbo*' provokes anger, jealousy and hatred in the lives of the current political gladiators at the federal level. They hate anything called Igbo, but failed to hate their abundant mineral wealth. That is the paradox of underdevelopment in the region. If the government had hated the mineral resources which the Igbo nation is replete with; the people would have been ten times more developed than the developed nations of the world. Given this tide, the Southeast geopolitical zone has



been out rightly neglected and displaced in the politics and cake sharing equation of the federal Republic of Nigeria.

From several indications, the truism that, “Igbo land has been marginalised. Perhaps that is retribution — the inescapable fate of the vanquished. Perhaps it is residual Igbophobia — a consequence of the victor’s paranoia. Perhaps it’s an exaggeration, a misconception — an artefact of an incurable sense of victimhood. Whatever may be the cause, local mitigation has been so absent that it has become the real demon. The local leadership is exonerated by the abiding illusion that Abuja is the witch (Egbujo, 2021).” Unequivocally, it is not just an illusion, Abuja (federal government) has remained a source of worry to many who believe in one Nigeria as it has continued to fan the embers of marginalisation based on the philosophy of the winner takes it all and born to rule mentality of the Northern oligarchy. Rev. Pattey Obassey in his song echoed this truism:

...The undoing of Nigeria is born to rule mentality, I am born to rule, you are born to serve. That idea must have come from hell, not from God. Born to rule mentality is so dangerous, *na him dey* kill Africa. It is the cause of tribal war... To think it is funny, to believe it is a crime... You better talk of equal right, equal justice, equal chance. We are born with equal opportunities, to end up unequal.

Having relayed the basis, we observe that, “...born to rule mentality relegates the principles of equal right, equal justice, equity and fairness (Chioke, 2020:284).” To further demonstrate the issue at hand; we add that the system through several sectors like the education, security and so on has been fashioned in such a way as to champion the marginalisation of the conquered not minding the no victor and no vanquished stance of the federal government under General Yakubu Gowon at the end of the three year pogrom meted out to Igbo nation by the ethnic jingoist of the Hausa/Fulani extraction in charge of the existing marriage of inconvenience. Educators in the Nigeria education system abhor the use of vernacular in classroom teaching and learning, thereby forcing ndị Igbo via one form or the other to accept defeat and resultantly jettison the use of *asụsụ* Igbo in public speaking and communication, all in the name of civilization under the guise of the country’s borrowed axe – British English (Nigeria’s official language). Again, Nigerian government at the apex level has carefreely allowed the citizens here (SouthEast) and there to die of hunger and thirst; their young are seen roaming the streets of the said giant of Africa while begging in futility for food that no one is neither ready to give nor serve them. In utter humiliation, those once raised in luxury before the civil war are constantly pawing through garbage for bread and water (food) to douse the excruciating pain of hunger caused by irresponsible and irresponsive leadership in Africa’s acclaimed giant of Africa – another paradox ever said and/or heard. This is the height of social inequality, injustice, bad governance and social irredentism that underscore underdevelopment in underdeveloped democracies/societies of the globe, especially in Africa. The Igbo people (*Ndị Igbo*) have been forcefully socialized with these ugly variables in their own land. What a stupendous height of marginalisation! Based on these premises, the paper mournfully aligns with Ossai & Babalola (2020) when they stated that, “It is difficult to predict how Nigeria’s political significance and power relations will develop over the next decade.” It is pitiable that the country has been consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index, which therefore signifies a worsened state of insecurity for her citizens and foreigners domiciled in Nigeria.

As a corollary to the already pointed out issues; we add that Onah (2009) rightly captured the truth as it concerns power and democratic society thus, “absolute power belongs to the people and a truly democratic society should be founded on the people’s priority and the pre-eminence of the people’s interest.” What is the state of people’s interest in Nigeria, especially the Igbo ethnic nationality? Truly, the failure to make the South-East geopolitical zone in Nigeria to have and enjoy the existing equitable number of States – six States per each zone is in itself marginalisation. In fact, the states and grassroots in Igbo land beckon for immediate attention and gratification. Therefore, we have to: “...rebuild the broken walls of

our local government; reorganize and coordinate the system for the purpose of unifying and developing the grassroots, the pre-eminence of the entirety of the people's interest and *local politics* via *political participation* are indeed paramount and overtly indispensable (Chioke, Umeokafor & Mbamalu, 2020:15155).” This is one of the subtle lines we must cross in Nigeria for us to usher in liberty and development for all irrespective of ethnic consanguinity or affiliation.

Several studies have been carried out in and outside Nigeria regarding marginalisation. Be that as it may, no such study on this overbearing issue seems to have indicted the political/state actors at the federal level for the politics of marginalisation of the Igbo nation. *Ipsa facto*, this paper is geared towards presenting the: relationship between marginalisation and insecurity in Nigeria; obnoxious factors and underlying implications of the marginalisation of Igbo nation in Nigeria's public administration; areas/extent of the marginalisation of Ndị Igbo in the public administration of Nigeria; and examination of whether the marginalisation is a blessing or curse.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Conceptualisation of Marginalisation

The marginalisation as we hear from daily use means different things to different people. When asked to define it, one may begin such a herculean enterprise by defining it according to his/her life experience. Then having said these, we revisit the question – What is marginalisation? Marginalisation means to take and keep somebody or group away from the centre of power and attention. The term, ‘marginalisation’ can as well be called, social exclusion. By marginalisation, we mean a situation where one is intentionally kept or forced to remain in an unwanted social economic and political position. Thus, it is a partial or complete denial of right to fair play.

#### 2.1.1 Forms of Marginalisation

In this sense, marginalisation usually includes the allocation of limited right in social, economic and political positions of a group being debased to a group being preferred, loved and treated as a sacred cow. Resultantly, the effect of an individual or group being marginalized could be viewed from economic, political and social angles. The reason is that these are the three major areas, which any form of marginalisation of people usually manifest.

**A). Political marginalisation** – This type of marginalisation takes place when a set of people or group of people who are by virtue of their family, tribe, geographical placement, political affiliation and so on are considered to be the subject and ought to remain in servitude are thus denied the right to take part in politics by voting, being voted and holding any political appointment despite their qualification for such position. For example, when a person or a group of sane people that have fulfilled necessary statutory obligations are denied right to contest in a presidential election, it is a replica of political marginalisation. To buttress this point, the current status of the Igbo youths calls for emphasis. It is unfortunate that, “Many young Igbos taking to the streets of the South-East do so convinced that their woes are caused by the Federal Government and an entrenched Northern bias against Igbo prosperity, a belief they consider validated by the absence of an Igbo President. Prejudice, it seems, lies at the very centre of the Igbo narrative in modern day Nigeria (Timeyin, 2017).” For insecurity to be treated; there must be conscious but collective efforts at addressing the gerontocratic nature of Nigerian leadership from the local-state-federal government. It is time for the marginalised youth to truly become the promised leaders of tomorrow.

**B). Economic marginalisation** – When one or a group of people are denied right to own properties or import certain goods, it is simply economic marginalisation. It also occurs when stringent rules are placed against a particular person or group in an economy using rent-seeking approach. Imperatively, rent-seeking is a tool used in seeking to gain larger amount of profit from the existing wealth through the manipulation of existing economic conditions and policies without creating new ones. With this tool, a group of people can be economically marginalised and exploited by the ruling and non-ruling elites of the bourgeois class.

**C). Social marginalisation** – When one, family or group is not allowed to enter or partake in a social gathering, it is social marginalisation. Social marginalisation arises when individuals are denied unlimited access to resources that are usually available to members of another group. More often, these opportunities are necessities to social integration and observance of human rights. Clearly, “the outcome of social exclusion is that affected individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live (Young, 2000).” This may result in resistance in the form of demonstrations, protests or lobbying from the excluded people (Walsh, 2006).

It is clearer now that any act of debasement/marginalisation could be categorized into any of the above forms of marginalisation. Having said this, we turn attention to the conceptualisation of public administration.

## 2.2 The Meaning of Public Administration

Public Administration is primarily concerned with the strict implementation of the resolutions of government through its ministries, department and agencies (MDA) or any other proxy acting in its stead. Having said this, the author hastens to add that, “. . .it can be understood that public administration has two definitions (that is, defining it from the field of study point of view and activity point of view). Public administration, as an activity is a discipline studied in schools of higher learning. Public Administration as a field means the study for a better insight on administrative actions. In short, this is more of theory than practice. Public Administration as an activity is the implementation of the gained knowledge of the discipline (Chioke, 2012:20-21).” In view of this, “one is not mistaken to say that public administration is a field of study or that public administration is an activity (Ibid).”

From another angle, “Public Administration is the machinery for implementing government policies (Adebayo, 1984:4).” In the views of Okigbo & Nsiegbunam (2000:7), “Public Administration is the management of scarce resources to accomplish the goals of public policy. It is concerned with the art and science of practical management of government affairs such as enforcing law and order and implementing public policies within established institutional machinery and process of the state.” It should thus be borne in mind that, in the management of scarce resources or implementation of policies of the government, “the duties and functions of these administrative pillars (bureaucrats) vary greatly from establishment (public sector) to another due to the onerous task given to those public sectors by the constitution (Chioke, 2012:19).” It follows then that organizational functions are not the same, but must be necessarily geared toward attaining the heights (goals) that the interplay of politics and administration accorded such organization. Then again, Okigbo & Nsiegbunam (2000:7) must have provided us with the scope of public administration when they submitted that, “Public Administration covers all processes, organisations and individuals associated with carrying out laws, rules and regulations passed by legislatures, executives and other individuals.” In this sense, administration itself is primarily concerned with getting things done either at the micro or macro level of the society.

## 3 Historical Overview of Public Administration in the Traditional Society of Ndị Igbo

As stated earlier, ndị Igbo are domiciled in the East geopolitical zone in Nigeria. In keeping with this, Ezenwaji (2002:190) stated that, “Igbo people occupy South-East central region of Nigeria. Their territorial distribution covers the area between Cross River, east of the Niger (with the Ibibio people to the east) extending to Benin (Edo speaking people) west of River Niger, between Igala/Idoma people to the north and the city-states of Niger Delta to the south.” Of a truth, the Igbo pre-colonial history stands out with varied/complex sophistication that proves, calls to mind, unveils, and relays useful insights as regards to the fact that pre-colonial politics and political organization of tribal/ethnic groups were outstanding and classical in Nigeria and beyond, prior to the coming of the Europeans (Chioke, n.d).

From a historical perspective, one could as a matter of fact argue that Ndị Igbo inhabited their present territorial location before 9th century A.D. Archeology as opined by Ezenwaji (2002:192) yielded more meaningful information for the writing, understanding and studying of Igbo’s historical past.

Meanwhile, she had earlier submitted that, “It is now established that the Ibo people of Nigeria started living in their present site earlier than ninth century A.D. This is as a result of recent archaeological discoveries.” Also, we are aware that from time immemorial, ndị Igbo live in the tropical rain forest even before the birth of the name Nigeria, which culminated into today’s marriage of inconvenience. Odoemene (1993:40) in Ezenwaji (supra) posits that, “...the tropical equatorial forests in the eastern part of Nigeria where the Igbos settled...served as a natural protection where one makes a little clearing and builds a hut, one can therefore say that the forests attracted the Igbos settlement not only for agricultural purposes but also for defense against men, animals and the climate.” Reacting to the foregoing, Ezenwaji (2002:191) observed that, “The geographical setting of Iboland shielded it from outside influence. As a result it was not affected by the wave of changes that went on in neighbouring groups.” Perhaps, this may have given fillip to why, “The Igbo are a very democratic people. The Igbo people expressed a strong antimonarchy sentiment – *Ezebuilo*, which literally means, a King is an enemy (Achebe, 2012:246).”

Regarding the public administration of the traditional Igbo society, the inherent characteristics are nostalgic, as they are replete with matters that often provoke joy from one angle and sadness from the other angle. Public administration (i.e. governance in its practical term) is faced with the task of delivering a wide range of effective and efficient services to Ndị Igbo and to meet the challenges of modern living as they evolve. To this end, we have seen that Igbo communities were organized as independent sociopolitical and economic entities along copious and classical democratic doctrines but battered by the principle of *Igbo e nwe eze* – the egalitarian nature of Igbo communities. Prior to the pre-colonial era and till date, men in Igbo communities gather at the village square to discuss important matters that pertain to the villagers, village and the neighbouring village(s) with a view to strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties. This system of public administration is done with a view to ensuring the security of lives and properties of all and sundry. In this regard, we agree with the fact that, “Public administration is at the vanguard of creating social harmony and maintaining peace and stability in the society (Okpata & Ejem, 2020:56).” This is apparently the case of public administration in the traditional society of Igbo land, because through the village assembly, social harmony was sought and peace maintained.

#### **4 Theoretical Framework**

The paper was guided by the Systems Theory. Traditionally, “The systems theory sees policy as an output of the political system (Ikelegbe, 1996).” The policy of marginalisation used against the Igbo nation emanated from the government. Therefore, the hegemonic rulership and control of one or two ethnic nationalities against the other ethnic group(s) is ensured through government actions or inactions. Meanwhile, Sapru (2013) stated that, “In the systems approach, a system is defined as a set of inter-related and interdependent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole.” Looking at the Nigeria’s political space that is hegemonic and seriously tossed about by the wind of ‘*marginalisation*,’ we agree that this equally affects other parts of Nigeria on the positive or negative angle. In lieu of this perspective, the paper uses this tool to examine how marginalisation as an input affects the general system. That is, whether it is a curse or not to the central government of Nigeria.

In the current analysis, the Von Bertalanffy tool is important as, “it captures the peculiarities of Nigeria as a federation that is made of many regions and as well, elucidates the unbaiting disharmony, nepotism, and lopsided pattern of federal appointments of personnel into Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of the federal government of Nigeria (Okpata & Ejem, 2020:55).” It is therefore certain that, “The consequences of the aforementioned, are the growing agitation for secession encumbering the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria (Ibid).” The imbalances in the structure inhibit good governance and quality public administration. These imbalances erupted from the forceful takeover of a group’s resources without room/equal opportunity for the group to manifestly take part in the decision making processes of the matters that concern it. So, it is regrettable that though Nigeria is replete with man and material resources, it has remained poorly harnessed and used for the good of the entire system. Obviously, Onwe, Salifu & Onwe (2020:51) aptly concluded that, “the richness of a country in terms of

human and material resources are only necessary, but not sufficient conditions for the progress and development of the rural areas or the entire country.” While marginalisation is the input, insecurity is the output with varied outcomes in the system.

## 5 The Relationship Between Marginalisation and Insecurity in Nigeria

Over the years, Sub-Saharan African countries especially Nigeria have experienced huge security challenges and the expectation of sustainable development of the entire polity has been critically challenged by reoccurring security threats. Nevertheless, it is believed that there is a direct association between the reoccurring security threats and marginalisation of the people with huge stake in the economy. The relationship between marginalisation and insecurity is basically causative (promotional). The causal nexus is about the promotion of the causative factors that generate insecurity in an organization. The notable aftermath of this is that the effectiveness of public administration ill practices particularly marginalisation in recruitment and selection processes and sharing of national cake more often than not have a direct bearing and influence on the state of insecurity. To forestall this, the establishment of the conditions that address the structural imbalances in the economic cum political realms must be tackled without hesitation.

It is clear that marginalisation breeds organisational problems like unproductivity and poor service delivery to the country and perhaps the world at large. The reason is that, “...it is basically the active participation of people with the know-how in the human capital development process and the consequent need to have higher institutions that permit and indeed encourage that participation can guarantee the availability of quality human capital that could meet the need of the global labour market (Igbokwe-Ibeto, Chukwuemeka & Okechukwu, 2014:130).” Suffice it to say that the neglect and sidelining of the federal principle as seen in the federal appointments from 2015 till date was done in a bid to fanning the embers of marginalisation. This has resulted into a decline in the quality of services rendered by those who stole the commonwealth (quack employees from other parts of Nigeria who were corruptly favored and given appointment in the civil/public service) of this country. However, the political elites especially the non-ruling elites have a comparative advantage in dealing with the troubles presented by the ill practices in public administration, because they contribute in determining the political will of the state. Thus, understanding and adapting to the trend, particularly in the production processes and service delivery of the leadership does not pose any strategy problem to them as they remain part and parcel of the game.

Bureaucratic institution has a well-designed mechanism within which all the component parts work efficiently without distraction, towards clearly defined goals (Weber, 1947). Within the framework of relativism, we can see that the component parts in Nigeria do not work efficiently let alone working without distraction. Hence, marginalisation is a serious distraction to efficient use of resources in a marginalised economy. Then again, “the current state of insecurity is a manifestation of deep-rooted and structurally entrenched crisis of development that creates the environment for the emergence of conditions of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the country. These, in turn, lead to frustration, alienation and, ultimately, social discontent that spark violence and insecurity (Katsina, 2012:107).” Thus, we agree that, “an organization is technically efficient if it is adequate to the demand on it.” Spreight in Arhuidese (2003:4). Sadly, Nigeria is not such an organization. This is because in Nigeria, you see the antithesis of the following emphasis of good governance: “Good governance lays emphasis on efficient and effective government to enhance speedy development of a nation and its citizens (Izueke, 2017).” Commenting on good governance, Onwe, Salifu & Onwe (2020:43-44) posited that, “it aims at creating a just society based on the principles of inclusiveness, liberty, equality and cooperation.” Where this is lacking, insecurity has no choice than to emerge, due to the presence of high proportion of already frayed nerves in the society where security enhancers and indices like: inclusiveness, responsiveness, liberty, equality, fairness and cooperation have gone into oblivion. But to avert the resultant emergence of insecurity, the system must be re-engineered toward becoming a just and egalitarian enclave.

## **6 The Extent of Marginalisation of Ndị Igbo in the Public Administration of Nigeria: A Sustainable Development Perspective**

Different areas abound that duly show the level or extent of marginalisation of the Igbo nation in Nigeria. In respect of this, we highlight but a few of the manifest areas as follows:

**Political marginalisation** – Previously, the policy making processes in Nigeria was deeply synergic as all the stakeholders (the major ethnic groups) were duly involved and more especially, the Igbo people were active participants in the politics of decision-making. Indeed, "...it was unthinkable to make plans about the future of Nigeria without the participation of Ndigbo in such activities (Udenta, 2017:9). Furthermore, "This continued to hold true to the extent that eight years after Nigeria-Biafra civil war, among the major political parties of the Second Republic of Nigeria, Ndigbo were represented in a robust manner: His Excellency, Chief Alex Ekwueme was Vice President to His Excellency, Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Ndigbo had men of worth in the Cabinet. His Excellency, Rt. Hon, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was Leader and Presidential candidate of Nigeria people's Party (NPP), Chief (Mrs) Oyibo Odinammadu – an Igbo woman was Vice Presidential candidate to Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Senator Uche Chukwumerije was Executive Secretary of People's Redemption Party (PRP) and so forth (Udenta, 2017:9). But now, the once glorified and recognized stakeholder (Ndigbo) have utterly been estranged from other stakeholders and even dislodged and sidelined in the scheme of things. To corroborate this, it has been observed that, "Today, on the contrary, we are not only ghosts, but are running scared (Ibid)."

**Infrastructural Developments** – To capture the point we glean as follows: "The pride of any government is the attainment of higher value level of development in such a way that its citizens would derive natural attachment to governance (Tolu & Abe, 2011)." Gov. Ugwuanyi of Enugu in the spirit of this debate stated that the South East geopolitical zone is disadvantaged in terms of infrastructure (see Vanguard Newspaper, October 11, 2021). The true picture aground at the local level in the land of Ndị Igbo has exposed the fact that the Igbo nation has been maniacally abused, debased and marginalized by those behind the scene and to engineer a positive change, the Igbo nation must reawaken her consciousness in that regard.

**Human Rights** – Ndị Igbo has been marginalized in this very area. To start with, you may recall that, "The late President Mandela had called for Nigeria's expulsion from the Commonwealth after the execution of political activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, arguing that the disregard of human rights during the late Sani Abacha's regime (1993-1998) was sufficient grounds for removal (Ossai & Babalola, 2020)." In recent times, we have seen the cases of Igbo sons being humiliated and marginalized for being an Igbo man with their respective divergent political cultures, views, beliefs, stance and ideological positions with respect to their freedom, loyalty and allied matters. Examples of these Igbo sons are: Chief Ralph Uwazurike, the erstwhile leader of Movement for the emancipation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the wrongly proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Their inalienable rights as human beings were in countless occasions abused and tampered with by the leadership of Nigeria.

**Federal Appointments** – The level of negligence and unfairness meted out to the Igbo people in Nigeria is quite disheartening. To demonstrate the ugly side of the same coin, we harvest from the following:

Igbos are immensely proud and dynamic people who do not like and cannot stand being treated as second-class citizens in a country they consider as theirs. There would be no limitations to their contributive capacity, if only they could be appreciated and honoured for their contribution. *They should have the right to aspire to the country's highest position.* What they feel and say today is that the speed of total reintegration is slow (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1989:171).

In the context of this paper, "*They should have the right to aspire to the country's highest position*" as stated above is the marginalisation of Ndigbo in the area of federal appointment (position). Thus, there is apparent dissatisfaction and regret amongst the core indigenes of South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria – the

ancestral home of the Igbo ethnic group. Udentia (2017:7) demonstrates this regret as follows: “For me being an Igbo is simultaneously uplifting and heartbreaking. Uplifting because, it is great to be Igbo. Heartbreaking because we are not where we ought to be.” And where are we ought to be as part of this union called, Nigeria? The point is centred on being an equal partaker in the comity of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Ultimately, the Buhari’s led federal government right from its inception in year 2015 till date has sidelined the Igbos (Igbo people) in the scheme of things at the central level.

## **7 Obnoxious Factors and Their Underlying Implications on the Marginalisation of Igbo Nation in Nigeria’s Public Administration**

Truly, it is largely difficult if not impossible for one to fight an unknown ailment unless such ailment is correctly diagnosed and identified. Instead of patiently seeking a detailed diagnosis of the perennial concern with its superficial symptoms that apparently evades investigation of the hidden root of the disease suffered; the sick may be tempted to dodge being diagnosed and treated due to the monetary cost, rigours involved and the pain such attempt may cause. Not minding the rigours involved in the present analysis, the paper shortly considers the factors that have contributed to the marginalisation of the Igbo nation in the public administration of Nigeria as a nation-state. They include but not limited to the following:

**Procedural deficiency and violation-** Okigbo & Nsiegbunam (2000:26) espoused that, “Public officials must act according to laid-down rules and procedures and in the event of violation, the court has right to question the legality of their action.” How many procedural violations committed by the present Administration led by President Buhari have been questioned and manifestly annulled through court processes? It is an undisputable truism that, “Performance of tasks must not violate existing enabling laws and the constitution of the land (Chioke & Mbamalu, 2020:393).” Albeit; the administrative duties of the State must be carried out effectively using material resources and efficiently using available and affordable manpower, the leadership must ensure strict observance of processes in the course of public administration. Thus, “Legality would help to ensure that the actions of organisations are not rendered nullity and declared ultra vires by a court of competent jurisdiction (Chioke & Mbamalu, 2020:393).”

**Imposition of candidate-** This is an offshoot of procedural violation. In other words, electoral manipulation is a form of marginalisation that the Igbo nation has suffered under the President Buhari’s led administration. There is a pointer to alleged superimposition of candidates and political interferences within the enclave of the Igbo nationality. Do you think that the incidence of the incumbent becoming the governor despite being announced by the INEC to have taken 4th position in the last general election, a sign of marginalisation? Reacting to this interview question, an interviewee said: objectively speaking, this is not marginalisation. It is more of a high-tech politicking aided by the judiciary and government political interest. It was an unwavering resolve of the APC government to have a hand in Southeast at all cost.” Again, the issue of Imo State politics is one enveloped in controversy and violation of electioneering principles. Another interviewee held a different opinion: Gov. Hope Uzodinmma by all indication is not the peoples’ choice. And as such, the winner of that election has been robbed and marginalised by the political gladiators at the federal level. He came through federal government might and we simply do not want him.” Perhaps, that is why Imo state citizens and other Nigerians call him, Supreme Court governor.

Therefore, whatever we do, we should bear in mind that, “The electoral systems applied in a country are important in orienting the voter’s will and affecting his electoral options towards the candidates and then forming the government that is desired (Hamzah, 2021:271).” This has constituted a point of procedural deficiency and violation in Nigeria, because our system repels such practice.

**Failure of the legal system** – If a public official uses his position to victimise or harm anyone, the person has right to go to court. And the court has right to intervene and punish the culprit if found guilty of using his authority to take a private revenge (Okigbo & Nsiegbunam, 2000:26). It is illegality for a public person



to use his authority as a public officer in any of the arms of government or any government parastatal, and ministry, departments and agencies (MDA) to take a private revenge. In the case of any recorded abuse, the judiciary is duty bound to manifestly mete out adequate punishment to the one convicted of a culpable offence. But with the overt manifestations of marginalisation of the Igbo ethnic nationality in Nigeria, one is right to aver that all is not well with Nigeria's legal jurisprudence and a rethink is on the side of urgency. Why is it that no court has set a judicial precedence on the violation of the federal character principle by the Buhari's Administration? Perchance, your thought on this may align with mine. Considering the marginalisation of the Igbos, do you think that the Nigerian judiciary has failed? Reacting to this, an interviewed said: My dear brother, all arms of government have failed... The Igbos are the most hated tribe on earth. We are hated for no just cause other than our God's given talents. I feel so ashamed of Nigeria, because it has done terrible things against the Igbos." Perhaps, this opinion is useful in answering the question supra. Therefore, this rethink should incorporate social justice, which is based on equitable distribution of economic, political and other opportunities in a country for the purpose of promoting the optimal development all and sundry.

**Negligence**— Today, there are many indicators that point to the reality aground that the South-East geopolitical zone, the abode of the Igbo man has suffered negligence. Udentia (2017:60) was right to say that, "Ndigbo have not only been marginalised, but remain utterly neglected." Therefore, to say that in recent time, negligence has been the unexpected lot the people South-East, especially an Igbo man is not an understatement. He lives, yet thrives within the vicious circle of negligence – an indicator of marginalisation anywhere and in our own case, the Igbo nation.

## **8 Marginalisation of Ndị Igbo in the Public Administration Processes: A Blessing or Curse?**

In order to ascertain whether marginalisation is a blessing or a curse, the paper examines the plus and minus as regards Southeast and Nigeria at large. Then the query is, if it is blessing who are those blessed by it and if it be curse, who are those affected such injustice. Notably, from the cumulative observation of the author, the paper holds that marginalisation has become a blessing to the Igbo nation (Southeast, Nigeria) in the following fronts:

**Global recognition** – Although it is on record that the Igbo people are everywhere in the world and thus they have not been without global notice. But then, it is crystal clear that without the recent wave of marginalisation of the Igbo nation by incumbent leadership of Nigeria, Igbo nation would have remained merely noticed without high level global awareness. In other words, marginalisation had reawakened the nation's almost doused quest for self-preservation. Hence, Odumegwu-Ojukwu (1989) rightly said, "Biafra was not a separatist movement as propaganda made it appears it was a reflex for self-preservation." Today, people from different climes and colours know about Southeast's separationist struggle going on in Nigeria under the leadership of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu as a corollary to the political and economic marginalisation of the entire territorial landscape belonging to Biafra. Thus, many people see the current travesty as a blessing to the Biafra exit.

**Self-reliant posture** – Udentia (2017:44) aptly stated that, "Biafra demonstrates our innate abilities to surmount difficulties and be technologically self-reliant." Since the Igbo nation is disdainfully marginalized against all pleas to the reverse; the Igbo nation has witnessed advancement in their quest for self-reliance, as they have been forced to seek for alternative means of solving their problems. Considering the marginalisation of the Igbo people, do you think that it has metamorphosed into self-reliance and technological advancement? If yes, what are the specific areas the Igbos have advanced technologically since the inception of the present Administration? Commenting on these, an interviewee stated that, "For self-reliance, I know the Igbos from inception believe in themselves because they are nurtured from birth to become independent. But for technological advancement, I don't think there will be advancement in technology without capital inducement from the government. That is with respect to the present

administration.” The truth is that the Igbo ethnic group has for long learnt the act of resilience in the improvisation of materials needed for certain aspect of their day-to-day activities.

**Self-determination awareness:** The rate of awareness as per the premises that necessitated the calls for the emancipation/independence of the sovereign state of Biafra has recently been fueled by the marginalisation of the Biafrans (Igbo nation) and her teeming supporters. Self-determination struggles have been a serious issue in Nigeria for donkey years now. It is so clear that, “Since Nigeria’s amalgamation in 1914, some regions continuously fuel the drive for a return to ethnic groups. At its most extreme, some believe that the only true identity is tribal identity, and therefore grievances against the state are manifested by calls for national identities built along ethnic lines (Timeyin, 2017).” Based on the skyrocketed level of marginalisation since the inception of President Buhari’s Administration, we align with the adage that says, there is no smoke without fire. Hence, marginalisation has been the last stroke that broke the camel’s back – self-determination awareness and consciousness.

Regrettably, marginalisation has become a curse to the general system (Nigeria) in the following fronts:

***Nigerian project*** – Nigeria project is herein regarded as a quest for the continued existence of all stakeholders in this British configuration. Nigerian project is all about the unity and sustainable development of the country. Notably, this project has suffered heavy dwindling since the marginalisation of the Igbo nation was injected into the Nigeria’s political setting. The centre cannot hold again, thereby paving the way for disintegrating forces and dissenting voices from the Southern part of the country. With this, there are several agitations for the self-determination of the Southern part of Nigeria with Maazi Nnamdi Kanu leading the struggle for Biafra exit and Sunday Igboho leading the secessionist struggle of Oduduwa nation. The logic is simple! And that is – if not for marginalisation, there will not be secessionist struggles here and there. The truth remains what Arthur Miller said, “*It is wrong to remain in a situation you know is a mismatch for you.*” Therefore, there is no need staying in a place where you are merely being tolerated than loved. To get it right, political gladiators in the Nigerian project must know that fairness and equal opportunity is germane to the continued patronage and loyalty to key points espoused in the national anthem and national pledge. Again it is believed that, “public administration thrives in a clime where meritocracy, equity and fairness in deployment of both material and human resources is done without fear or favour (Okpata & Ejem, 2020:61).”

***Underdevelopment of the country*** – Unfortunately, the tragedy of the war was compounded by another of an almost equal dimension when post war 3Rs pronounced by the victor became the 3Ds experienced by the vanquished – demolition, dismantling and devitalization. In carrying out this short-sighted policy, *Nigeria lost an opportunity of developing the so much needed indigenous technology* (emphases mine) (Odumegwu-Ojukwu, 1989:64). On whether marginalisation of the Igbos has led to the underdevelopment of the country, an interviewee held the following view: “To some extent yes. In Nigeria, best brains, which are majorly Igbos are systematically discriminated upon at the expense of national development.”

***Loss of lives and properties*** – The wave of marginalisation in Nigeria has given fillip to the security challenges in some parts of the country. Some miscreants and criminal elements have taken over the struggle for self-determination in the East to foment troubles. Stealing, maiming and kinds of inhumane practices have increased since the re-injection of the Biafra struggle in Southeast. Again, the same ugly scenario has been with in the Southwest geopolitical zone of the country where there are series of agitations for Oduduwa nation.

Scores of lives and properties have been lost in the Southeast geopolitical zone. Although, viewed from ethnic lines, this directly affects the Igbo nation, but it has a far reaching implication. Thus, the dastardly acts of killings and genocidal attempts in the ancestral domain of the Igbo extraction of Nigeria spell doom for the country at large in terms of the availability human capital. In this regard, a lot of quality

human resources have migrated from the southeast and some have left the country, thereby causing an increase in brain drain.

**Poor income generation:** The security challenges witnessed in the Southeast sequel to the marginalisation of the people have undermined the economy of the country. Loss of lives has affected the GDP and net income of the country since the security threats in the marginalised geopolitical zone begun. On whether there is any link between marginalisation and poor income generation for the federal government, an interviewee intoned as follows: “Of course there is. When people or a tribe is marginalised, their intellectual capacity and capability, competence and brilliance, which are drivers and lubricants of income generation, are equally marginalised. This means that when they are marginalised, it will result to income deprivation”

**Disunity** – Peace is an indicator of unity and security. Therefore, to measure the level of security in country/society, you talk about peace. Marginalisation has relegated peace and thus, we have a system that has engineered disunity and ethnic chauvinism to the detriment of what Nnamdi Azikiwe stands for in Nigerian politics. If Nigeria must be salvaged, a rethink is inevitable on the side of the ongoing resentment against the Igbo nation. In short, “Nigerians of all other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the Igbo (Achebe, 1983).” The attitudes of most of the executive office holders in Nigeria particularly the central or federal government over time; demonstrate disunity and imbalances in both public and civil service which negates the thinking of federal character principle. The disaffection that destroyed Nigeria today, arises from the exclusion of some ethnic groups from holding some offices in both the public and civil service and when providence makes it possible for such nationality or nationalities to take up such positions, the manner they are usually treated, calls for proper application of the federal character principles as already enshrined in the constitution of Nigeria (Okpata & Ejem, 2020:60).”

**Weak security system** – Operationally, weak security system means security system that performs below the expectations of the public. Importantly, “this results from inadequate equipment for the security arm of government, both in weaponry and training (nsacc.org.ng, 2021).” The inadequacy of the country’s equipment for her security agencies has recently snowballed given the series of attacks on the offices of the Nigerian Police Force and Nigeria Army here and there. Viewed from another angle, the marginalisation of the Southeast which led to their exclusion from key security positions in the country’s security outfits has further weakened the security system as the country has been denied the inputs from security personnel from Igbo extraction. At this point, we ask: Does marginalisation cause weak security system? Commenting on this, an interviewee submitted that: “It is possible, because there is a limit to which people can take marginalisation. Some persons might decide to become violent since they believe that there is no future or hope for them in the country. Many graduates without means of livelihood may start waging war against the state.” Hence, weak security system is guaranteed by excessive marginalisation of severely hated ethnic nationalities in a country, and in Nigeria’s case, the Igbo nation.

## 9 Conclusion

The marginalisation of the Igbo nation is a pointer that Nigeria is sick and needs urgent treatment in that regard. We must say with utmost levity that the current tide of marginalisation is a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing to the southeast, because it fashions and positions the Igbo nation to master the art of being independent and to seek alternatives that would enable the Igbo land to developing at its own pace; but a curse to the unity and sustainable development of Nigeria as a sovereign state. For public administration to serve the need of the people, it must be devoid of marginalisation and allied factors such as: divide and rule, corruption, nepotism, tribal sentiments and other associated ills that make public administration unworkable.

The implication of this paper for practice is that if we continue to approach marginalisation separately from the issue of insecurity in which indices like human right abuses, inequality, unemployment

and social exclusion on the basis of tribal and religious classifications are not tackled with utmost seriousness, insecurity will remain a persistent challenge in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a correlation between marginalisation and insecurity.

Apart from mediators, those who choose to remain neutral in times of crisis/conflicts are indirectly fueling the crisis which would sooner than later engulf everybody. They are liars full of deceits in their hearts. There is no neutrality anywhere in times of crisis. It is either you are for group A or you are for group B. Hence, as a panacea to the marginalisation – a weapon of the North against the East, other stakeholders within and outside the country must collectively say NO through a massive war against this trend and not merely sit down and claim neutrality. In this dimension, Edmund Burke was right when he noted that, the only necessary condition for the continuance of evil is for good men to keep quiet and do nothing.

With regard to the marginalisation of the Igbo people in political appointments and offices, it is herein submitted that the principle of inclusivism should be manifestly practiced. In this regard, the Igbo man should not be merely tolerated in his own home. He must be allowed to be a stakeholder in matters that concern him as a part of the general system. Yet another aspect of this recommendation is for a change in the political permutations that will ensure that there is political equation – that is, both sides being equal in Nigerian politics through termly zoning of political offices and the sustenance of such policy through legislation from the National Assembly.

On infrastructural decay and deficits; human rights and allied matters, the roadmap will be – RESTRUCTURING. Within the context of this paper, this stands for: R- Resilience; E – Expertise and Economic Emancipation through Education; S-Service Delivery; T-Time management; R-Respect for all; U-Unity in diversity; C-Courage in tackling corruption; T- Transformation of the untransformed; U-Unity of purpose; R-Right of all to fair play; I-Integrity; N-Negotiation; G-Good governance. Thus, restructuring of Nigeria is not a kind that will just be achieved from the top. We must allow restructuring to begin from our respective homes, offices, local government, states and national government. Above all, let that restructuring of Nigeria that you so desire start from you as an individual. In doing this, one needs to restructure his/her thinking, views, ideologies, desires, characters and attitude. It is then that Nigeria will be a better home for all and sundry.

## 10 Declarations

### 10.1 Competing Interests

The author has no competing interest in publishing this paper.

### 10.2 Publisher's Note

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