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THE INDIGENOUS ALIENS: THE CASE OF THE IGBO IN NIGERIA, 1953 – 2013

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ABSTRACT

There exist copious studies on the Igbo especially since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra War in 1970. Since the end of the war, Ndigbo (Igbo people) have continued to be seen and treated as indigenous-foreigners in various parts of the Northern Nigeria. They used ethno-religious crises to dispossess the Igbo of their property and investments because they are 'citizens' without right to justice. The paper submits that it is all about elite construct to divert attention away from their ineptitude and self-centeredness. It also affirms that the Igbo are soft targets of vicious attacks because they are not protected by the law.

INTRODUCTION

Many scholars have concerned themselves with the thorny issue of settler-indigene relations in Nigeria. Some canvass the view that the 'definition' of who is a Nigerian is somewhat ambiguous by arguing that everyone born in the country is practically a citizen of the country, but not everyone given birth to in a state (the second tier of government in Nigerian federation) is truly regarded as a *bona fide* Nigerian in that state. This phenomenon birthed settler-indigene lexicon in the political vocabulary of Nigeria. Thus, settler-indigene question

has been one of the greatest challenges confronting Nigerian federalism (Olusola and Akuma, 2017: 365-378). What is obvious is that the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria under Section 147 (3b) recognizes indigenship as opposed to citizenship.

The way the Nigerian State has handled the interaction between ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’ is part of the problem. Section 25(1) of the Constitution promises a single Nigerian citizenship, while Section 42 expressly forbids discrimination against other Nigerians based on the circumstances of their birth. However, when it comes to defining membership of one of Nigeria’s 36 states, Section 318 (1) of the 2011 Constitution (As Amended) promotes the special interests of those ‘born of the soil’. Place of birth of a Nigerian does not necessarily define ethnic identity or *jus domicilium* but parental descent or *patrilineal jus sanguinis*. This specific promotion of natives’ rights started with the 1979 Constitution. The latter presents a dichotomy of a broken federation. It is a shameful reality that most of the ethnic conflicts in certain parts of the country can be traced to this dilemma. The Tiv/Junkun crisis in the Taraba; the Zangon-Kataf conflict in Kaduna State; Ife/Modakeke conflict in Osun State; the Aguleri/Umuleri riots in Anambra State, and many others are all offshoots of agitations between “indigenes” and the so-called “settlers”.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted interdisciplinary approach having distilled enormous evidence from cognate social sciences as well as other disciplines because of their interconnectedness. Furthermore, it made use of written and unwritten sources for a balanced opinion on its subject matter. Both sources proved useful in augmenting the evidence generated from each other. Self-report technique or protocol and observation methods were also valuable in establishing a reliable position in the study. This effort is much more than mere chronicling the various incidents of unwholesome attacks on the Igbo and their business outfits as there are attempts to analyze, interrogate and re-interpret events and circumstances behind them. In other words, both descriptive and analytical approaches were put in place in order to present a fairly symmetrically elegant and accurate account of Igbo experiences in the geographical entity called Nigeria. However, in a study of this nature, it is a bit difficult to present quantitative figures of casualties in the attacks so as not to fan the embers of confusion and conflagration.

Theoretical Framework

Previously, historians were believed to have no business with theories. However, given the interdisciplinary approach to historical research, it has become worthwhile that bits of theory are employed to explain some historical processes. As a result of this fact, this study has been anchored on the Frustration-Aggression theory propounded by John Dollard and his associates in 1939. This theory can be used to explain why some irate youths, especially in the Northern Nigeria, have quite often unleashed mayhem on their Igbo brothers. In the context of this, it can be said that frustration causes aggression and when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target (Mbah, 2014: 102-133). The inability of some

youths in Northern Nigeria to attain their expectations has always been given vent in misguided aggression against the Igbo people who had no hand in the 'expected need satisfaction' and 'actual need satisfaction' syndrome. Frustration, it has to be noted, has instigated quite a number of hostile actions against the Igbo in the Northern part of the country.

The Igbo in The Pre-Independence Nigeria

Historically, Nigeria is an amalgam of multi-ethnic nationalities with Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo as the three largest ones. It can, therefore, be said that the Igbo ethnic nationality provided one of the tripod stands upon which the Nigerian federation rested. As a people, they have demonstrated a remarkable confidence in a common nationhood hence they have played frontal role in the nation-building drive. It must be appreciated that the Igbo not only made enormous sacrifices and contributions to the socio-economic development of their host communities but also enfolded themselves in the culture and language of their hosts through personal names of their children such as Angulu, Kaduna, Bamedele and so on to depict their adaptability. As pointed out above, what determines ethnic identity of Nigerians has never been place of birth or name but ancestral descent.

Surprisingly, a people who had shoehorned themselves into their new-found homes as the Igbo did were still referred to as non-indigenes. Indeed, no society has ever lacked the actual or potential presence of foreigners by means of which the group identity of its members can be formed and sharpened (See Faleti, 2012:35-60). In spite of the fact that the Igbo established some kind of bond and also nurtured the idea of common citizenship with all the people among whom they lived (Kim, 2000: 9) there was sustained division between 'we' and 'they'; a development which remains at the core of human perception of self. The concept of 'we' and 'they' has imbued the elite of their host community with a sense of *Igbophobia* hence the unwarranted attacks on the Igbo.

The unfounded fear of domination of the Northerners by their Southern brothers has been at the bottom-line of the frosty relationship between *Ndigbo* and their Northern host communities. The May 14, 1953 attack on the Igbo resident in Kano can best be understood in the context of this fear. This was against the backdrop of the fact that in 1953, a motion was introduced in the Central Legislature, (by Anthony Enahoro, a non-Igbo) advocating self-government by 1956 (Isichei, 1978: 286). The attack was likely to have been inspired by the colonial officials not only to undermine the unity of purpose of Nigerians but also to delay the nation's march towards independence. In order to perpetuate their rule over and exploitation of Nigeria, the colonial officials overtly impressed on the Northerners that the presence of Southerners especially the Igbo people in the North was an impediment to their overall welfare and development. In the spirit of this, any opportunity was taken up to demonstrate to the Igbo their alien status in Northern Nigeria. This notion has continued to play out in the relationship between these two sections of Nigeria up until now. The argument of Mudi Sipikin, that the actual target were the Yorubas (sic) that had derided the Hausa/Fulani in the Media as cattle rearing-legislators, leading to the boeing of Hausa/Fulani law makers in Lagos (See Ukaogo, 2012: 311)

can hardly justify this. This is because in legal and administrative context, the State owed a reciprocal duty of protection to all law-abiding and loyal subjects their ethnic origin notwithstanding. In other words, all Nigerians, without consideration of ethnic nationality, were equal and entitled to the protection of the law (Kondo, 2001: 10). Furthermore, while the Yoruba's right remained inviolate the same was not extended the Igbo who were denied access to justice and fair play. Given the seeming tacit support the anti-Igbo feelings received from the leaders of the region, the Igbo were made to shoulder many disabilities ranging from social, political or electoral and economic deprivations.

The Igbo and The Aftermath of the 1966 Coup in Nigeria

The immediate and remote causes of the 1966 coup such as the Tiv and Yoruba riots of 1964 and 1965, respectively, had no direct link with the Igbo people. Although the coup was planned and executed by some officers of Igbo extraction, it is also permissible to observe that those who foiled it such as J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi, Hillary Njoku and E. Ojukwu, with the exception of Yakubu Gowon, were all Igbo. However, the fact that no Igbo politician was killed (probably as a result of implementation failure) gave the putsch an unintended image of an Igbo agenda. In other words, since no Igboman was killed in the coup belied the sanitization claim by the coup plotters and created phobia in the minds of the Hausa/Fulani in the North. In addition, that Aguiyi Ironsi became (by merit) the new Head of State exacerbated this misconception and misinterpretation. This development would appear to have confirmed the northerners' suspicion and fear of domination by the Igbo and therefore provided them an *alibi* to embark on a pogrom against the Igbo.

In a counter-coup of July 1966, Aguiyi Ironsi was killed along with his host the then Governor of Western Region – Col. Adekunle Fajuyi. R. A. Adebayo believed that the counter-coup was absolutely unnecessary as the process of national reconciliation was already in place (See Ukaogo, 2009: 102). There is no doubt that while the first coup was considered an aberration and illegal, the second was a welcome development in so far as it was against those citizens without rights. Both were forceful change of government which negated the inalienable right of the people to choose their leaders. All told, the July coup was but a manifestation of frustration-aggression theory because that of January was believed to have thwarted the expected need satisfaction of the Northern elites. The seemingly frustrated Northern political leaders therefore instigated military officers to revenge in order to reclaim the political power believed to be the exclusive preserve of the North.

As a result of the coup, Gowon became the new Head of State; a development considered a wrong step at a wrong time and for a wrong reason. This is because the concept of seniority as practiced in the military did not favour Gowon's new position except for his region of origin. What was more, the massive pogrom in the North which produced over 80,000 casualties (both the dead and the wounded) and displaced about 1,800,000 Igbo people (Odoemene, 2011: 95) without any condemnation from both Regional and Federal governments showed graphically their anti-Igbo posture. Surprisingly, Gowon refused to face up to the stark facts of the scale of brutalities in the North, and the extent of the

Army's positive responsibilities for them (See Uche, 2008: 111-135) While the first coup was targeted against political and military leaders who were compromised by the former, the second was ostensibly against both military officers and civilians of Igbo extraction. By implication, this was probably to drive the hard lesson home to the Igbo never to challenge the *status quo ante* again.

The utterances of some political leaders of that region such as Sir Ahmadu Bello create the impression that they, like the colonial rulers, did not actually believe in one united Nigeria. In his words, "it is my most earnest desire that every post in the region, however small it is, to be filled by a Northerner (See Ezeonu and Korie, 2010: 5-6). There is no doubt that Ahmadu Bello was not alone in this view as it represented that of later leaders from the North. For instance, the submission of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) to the Justice C. Oputa Panel is instructive here. The ACF opined that they (Igbo) are unduly aggressive, and ethnocentric.... they are perceived as ruthless and intensely inward-looking, living everywhere without making adjustments to any local conditions (Ukaogo, 2013: 10). A close look at this shows that the A. C. F. was economical with truth. Rather, it can be said that the Igbo were (still are) more adaptable than most other ethnic groups in Nigeria. It is only in sphere of religion that the separateness and differences have perhaps persisted.

The explanation rather lies in the fact that the Igbo were not regarded as indigenes but aliens without right to acquiring property elsewhere than Igboland. It is not difficult to see the phobia and frustration generated by the January 15, 1966 hence the pogrom on those who had played no role in the coup. One can safely say that it is mischievous and inherently contradictory to confuse their (Igbo) readiness to become Nigerian with a 'tribalistic' (sic) desire to dominate Nigeria (See Ezeani, 2013: 166). In point of fact, the January coup was seen by the Northern elites to be a dangerous attempt to skew both political and economic powers in favour of the Igbo and thereby alter the balance against them. Hitherto, the three major ethnic groups-the Igbo, the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani had maintained the lead in economic, civil services and political spheres, respectively. According to a Fulani informant, if the coup was not challenged it would have created an opportunity for the Igbo to dominate the entire country (Mohammed, 2019: Oral). The pogrom against *Ndigbo* in the North in which they lost their lives and property steeled their resolve to experiment on the Biafran Republic.

The Biafran experiment and the subsequent war were a pointer to the fact that the Igbo people were not allowed to exercise a right to self-determination. The argument by G. Parker that the ethnic or ethical community of citizens plays a strong part in determining their 'citizenship' in terms of day-to-day visible community politics (Parker, 2002:6) did not apply to the Igbo people in Nigeria. Their rights to life were subverted by the belligerent Nigerian State even in the Biafran enclave; a development that sharpened the Igbo identity all the more. The justification for this war remains rather dubious. There was no legal restriction of movement and /or acquisition of property in the country, yet the events preceding the war did not support that provision. The frustration of the

Igbo people occasioned by misguided aggression against them had nearly de-amalgamated Nigeria.

The Igbo Experience in The Post-War Years

On January 12, 1970, the Biafran Republic collapsed as her leaders capitulated to the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Biafran experiment was much more than a narrow historiographical account of the struggle between Gowon and Ojukwu. It was a struggle to change the alien status of the Igbo in the Nigerian project. The post-war policies of the government clearly showed the differences between those ‘within and those deemed to be ‘without’ the jurisdiction of the law. The manner in which the policy of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction –the three (3) Rs were implemented, suggested that the Federal Government was everything but sincere. Furthermore, the policy of giving an *ex-gratia* award of twenty pounds (£20) to every adult Igbo, irrespective of his deposits in the bank, was far from assuaging them. The intention was not only to weaken their economic base but also to imbue the Igbo with the ‘expected need satisfaction’ and ‘actual need satisfaction’ syndrome.

In a similar way, the indigenization policy of the administration was regarded as a ploy to keep the Igbo people and businessmen economically incapacitated. Against this backdrop, C.S.A. Ogbuagu has argued that there was an internal conspiracy to exclude Igbo business people from playing a meaningful role in the process of taking over from foreign nationals the ‘commanding height’ of the Nigerian economy (Ogbuagu, 1983: 241-266). The façade indifference of the Federal Government to the forceful confiscation of landed property owned by *Ndigbo* in the North and Port Harcourt was a further demonstration of the above intention. Reacting to this, Philip Effiong, observed that another issue that soured post-war relationships between the victor and the vanquished was the maliciously orchestrated issue of abandoned property.... In any case, how does one abandon his property in a country to which he belongs? (Quoted in Ijoma, 2010: 56-57). The Abandoned Properties Implementation Committee headed by David Mark treated the Igbo as erstwhile resident aliens without citizenship rights to acquire property in Nigeria. Even if the seizure was a war-time sequestration of enemy assets (Kim, 2000: 14) the 3R policy was believed by the Igbo to re-validate their citizenship rights.

The Gowonian 3Rs stopped short of re-integrating and reconciling the ex-Biafrans with their fellow citizens. With respect to ex-Biafran soldiers, they were treated as traitors or stragglers thereby casting doubt on the genuineness of the entire post-war policies of the government. It has been noted that:

...many key actors (on the side of Biafra) were detained for up to ten years without trial. Well known ones like Col. Achuzie (Hannibal) and the Late Major Ademoyega, the only survivor among the five Majors, suffered that fate. And, of course, General Ojukwu became a pawn for politicians pardoned by ex-President Shehu Shagari in 1982 for enhanced political interests of the ruling National Party of Nigeria in Anambra State for the 1983 elections (Quoted in Ukaogo, 2013: 9)

This treatment was clearly at variance with the spirit and pronouncement of reconciliation of the Gowonian regime. The interpretation of these actions is that the Igbo remained at the mercy of the Nigerian State that was still biased against them.

The expectation of many soldiers of Igbo extraction to be reabsorbed at the end of the war was never to be. They were either detained for their complicity during the war or were relieved of their services in the Nigerian Army. Chris Alli seems to affirm that the injustice meted out to the Igbo after the war was deliberately contrived to hold them down for their Biafran experiment. In his words, unfortunately for the Igbos, (sic) the Yoruba and the Hausa/Fulani contrived at the end of the war to consign them (Igbo) to neglect... The nation indeed, has been dishonest to judgments on the cause of the reconciliation tenets of the post-war philosophy (Quoted in Ukaogo, 2013: 3). It is within the ambit logic to state that the injustices and discrimination unleashed on the Igbo must have fostered their survival instinct and also their group identity. The Igbo experiences are in agreement with K. Kim's observation that any war fought at any time has the potential to sharpen the group identity of the parties involved (Kim, 2000: 16).

In the post-war period, the Igbo man was only required to discharge the biddings of the power brokers. For instance, they (Igbo) were a veritable tool in the hands of the military to thwart popular opinion. During the heyday of military dictatorship, information portfolio appeared ostensibly reserved for the Igbo to use their power of oratory to (mis)inform Nigerians and the world. In fact, the Igbo constituted propaganda machinery of the military government especially during the epileptic and unending transitional Programme of the I.B. Babangida's regime. Pursuant to this, the Arthur Nzeribe-led Association for Better Nigeria (ABN) was readily and easily used to scuttle the June 12, 1993 Presidential Elections. Such activities did not in any way change the mindset of the Northern elites nor that of the generality of the masses from that section of the country about the Igbo people. Their success in trade was seen to be a threat to the privileged position of the elites and therefore steered them along a collision course with some people with various grievances.

In the words of Jibril Aminu they spread all over the country and even the occasional elite manipulated ethnic clashes did not deter them from spreading in the pursuit of enterprise (See Ukaogo, 2013: 3). This type attitude was aptly exemplified in the case of the Akalukas who were murdered in cold blood by irate youths for abusing a leaflet of the Qu'ran in Kano in 1996. The picture presented here is that rights of citizenship are not absolute, nor are they necessarily moral... (Onabule, 2013: 23) as the person who tore the Qu'ran went scot-free but not the Akalukas. The murder of these Igbo men can also be analyzed from religious perspective. As Musa Aliyu (a Muslim from Bauchi State) observed, the Igbo where the only people Islam had not found favour with in Nigeria (Aliyu, 2019: Oral). The attempt to weave frustration with emotive issue of religion tended to develop new exclusivities capable of engendering new conflicts between indigenes and non-indigenes in urban centers.

The aborted Alex Ekwueme's presidential ambition under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 1999 appears instructive here. Some Igbo men were used to scuttle this ambition by abandoning the Igbo spirit of *onye aghana nwa nneya*- a sense of shared destiny- to exhibit the 'I before others' (Ibo) philosophy; a group-destructive instinct. The Igbo presidency was believed to be an added advantage to them given their control of the Nigerian economy through sheer skillful enterprise. According to S. E. Ogbu the Yoruba being more flexible appear to have connived with the Hausa/Fulani to dislodge the Igbo from the Nigerian project (Ogbu, 2019: Oral). This anti-Igbo conspiracy has also been corroborated by Sanusi L. Sanusi (Emir of Kano) when he observed amongst other things that:

The Northern Bourgeoisie and the Yoruba Bourgeoisie have conspired to keep the Igbo out of the scheme of things. In the recent transition when the Igbo supported the PDP in the hope of an Ekwueme presidency, the North and (the) South West treated this as a Biafra agenda. Every rule set for the primaries, every gentleman's agreement was set aside to ensure that Obasanjo, not Ekwueme emerged as the candidate (Ukaogo, 2010: 126).

This was in spite of Ekwueme's powerful credentials and pedigree as a one-time Vice President of Nigeria (1979-1983); and a frontline member of the G34 that formed the PDP. This was a clear case of the proverbial vulture whose feathers could be used to administer oral drugs but its carcass was abominable meat. This was to ensure that Igbo continued to play their shadow role in Nigerian politics.

The Unchanging Continuity of The Alien Status of The Igbo

The restoration of civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999 did not seem to have restored the citizenship rights of all Nigerians to life and worship in a secular State. The 1999 Constitution upon which the new civilian regime was grafted stipulates in Chapter IV section 33(1) that every person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in the execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria. This section of the Constitution is more honored in breach than observance in so far as the Igbo were concerned. By implication, the Igbo were still seen to remain outside the law hence their rights were violated with impunity. Under spurious reasons the Igbo have often been attacked occasioning harm, injuries, death and denial of right to justice with a clever subterfuge. This is at variance with T. H. Marshall's argument that the civil rights were necessary for individual freedom, liberty of the person and right to justice (Quoted in Kondo, 2001: 57).

Non-observance of this Constitutional provision has imbued fanatical Muslim fundamentalists with the impetus to unleash unbridled attacks on southern Christian (dominated by the Igbo) in their places of worship in the north. The various crises experienced in Northern Nigeria were either to flush out or dislocate the Igbo and probably create another abandoned property scenario. In reaction to the tempo and tenor of gang violent attacks against the people of Igbo extraction, General Philip Effiong observes that outside Igboland, their (Igbo) market stalls, houses and churches have been destroyed with endless

excuses and subterfuges (Quoted in Ukaogo, 2010: 126). What is implied here is that the Igbo were excluded from the right of thought, faith and acquisition of property in their own country. It has also been observed by Taminu Alkali that the Igbo had national associations which bound them together in virtually all the parts of Nigeria. Psychologically, this instilled apprehension in the minds of their host communities of a possible dispossession and dislodgement of the latter (Alkali, 2019: Oral).

Since the Igbo were (and still are) predominantly Christian, any attack on Christian worship centers was directly or indirectly targeted at them. Generally speaking, Christianity was (and still is) associated with Western civilization and colonialism hence the Igbo are seen as another sect of colonizers. Given the fact that colonialism never went without resistance, the Igbo, as ‘agents of colonization’, had to be treated with utmost resistance (Ogbodo. 2019: Oral). This was to show them that they were not in *terra nullius*- no-man’s land. It is against this backdrop that the Boko Haram attack on worshippers at St. Theresa’s Catholic Church in Madalla, Niger State on December 25, 2011 can be justified. Out of the 88 identified casualty list, as many as 72 were of Igbo extraction (See Daily Sun 2011: 1-2). The South East caucus in the House of Representatives through its Chairman, Ogbuefi Ozomgbachi in a reaction to the development, has noted that:

The recent shift in focus from random shoot-and-run and bomb attacks by suspected Boko Haram, to selected and targeted hits against the Igbo is a trend difficult to fathom, thereby provoking reasonable grounds for growing suspicion and speculation among many Nigerians that the attacks could be construed as a smokescreen for ethnic cleansing (Quoted in Daka, 2012: 6).

By implication, the Igbo were seen to remain outside the law hence their rights were violated with impunity. This was an open and complete denial of personal liberty and freedom of worship in a supposedly secular state.

In less than a month after the Madalla experience, the brawls were to return to Kano where on January 20, 2012, the hit-and-run Boko Haram sect killed Chris Precious Anyanwu and his uncle Chimaobi Anyanwu in cold blood (See Ogugbuaja, 2012: 12). The spate of selected and targeted hits spread from Kano to other states like Gombe, Yobe and Borno where many people of Igbo extraction were mowed down in a staggering number. For instance, on November 9, 2012, Innocent Eze and five other Igbo men were murdered in their residence in Gaidam Village of Yobe State in a circumstance that defies explanation (Ugwu, 2013: Oral). The Boko Haram’s violence is believed to be embedded in the ethnic and religious cleavages between the oil-rich Christian south and the Islamic north of Nigeria...which have grown stronger with time (See Adamo, 2020:1-21). In the wake of these vicious attacks on the Igbo people and their business outfits, all the sect gets from the region’s indulgent elite is a mild rebuke, more out of a public relations consideration and appeasement of the South than a determined effort to deter a senseless agitation (Isiekwene, 2012: 57).

On Monday, March 18, 2013, there was yet another bomb blast at a Luxury Bus Park mostly used by *Ndigbo* in Kano. Officially, the Police announced the number of casualties to be twenty-two (22) while the wounded numbered sixty-five (65). On the obverse side, an eyewitness account suggested a higher number of casualties than that. In the opinion of Chief Michael Tobias Idika, the President, Ohaneze Ndigbo (a pan-Igbo national association) in the State, the death toll was no less than 60 as any figure short of that was an under-estimation. Put after him, the Igbo race is facing its worst situation in Kano State presently (Quoted in Daily Sun, 2013: 5-6). It is instructive to observe that these attacks were carried out because the Igbo sense of group identity, unity and solidarity epitomized in their slogan *Igbo Kwenu* was believed to be a threat to their host communities. Because of the technological know-how of the Igbo given their manufacture of *Ogbunigwe* or *Ojukwu bucket* (a mass killer during the war), the gathering of the Igbo anywhere in the North was always treated with suspect and apprehension.

At the initial stage, it seemed as the Igbo Christians were the soft targets of the Boko Haram insurgency (Tade and Onwuanaegbule, 2020:1-9). In the city of Maiduguri, a commercial entrepôt, the Igbo, including other ethnic nationalities were easily dislocated. It has been observed that the insurgency in Maiduguri led to the mass dislocation of migrant groups from southern and middle belt regions to more secure cities in the south (Iweze, 2020:1-9). This lends credence to the allegation that the Igbo have often been treated as aliens in their country; an accentuation of their vanquished status in the war of 1967-1970. The forced return of these victims of insurgency in the Northern part of Nigeria without sufficient resource mobilization exposed them to the war-time hardships. Undoubtedly, life after involuntary return is characterized by social isolation, marginalization and periods of living from hand to mouth (See Tade and Onwuanaegbule, 2020: 1-9)

Of importance in the alien status of the Igbo in Northern Nigeria is the issue of principle of space whereby the first occupant of a place regarded later arrivals as invaders or intruders. The Northerners had never seen the Igbo as belonging to the North but the East. On the account of this, the Northerners had frowned at the Igbo coming to share the space with them (Hassan, 2019: Oral). Added to this, is the industry of the Igbo people which had most often turned a hitherto remote village into a metropolitan city dotted with shops and business outfits. These feats had been a subject of envy and aggression against the Igbo given the pervasive poverty in the land. It is evident that the causes of conflict were embedded in identity construction of ‘we’ (indigene/host) versus ‘they’ (aliens/settlers) (Tade and Onwuanaegbule, 2020: 1-9). Some Northern elites have tended to blame the aggression on unemployment, hardship and bad governance which, of course, were not occasioned by *Ndigbo* who were also victims of politics of exclusion at the national level. The table below graphically represents some but not all the cases of anti-Igbo attacks as the list is not exhaustive.

Date	14/5/53	July 1966	1967-70	1996	25/12/12	20/1/12	9/11/12	18/3/13
Place	Kano	Northern Region	Igboland	Kano	Madalla	Kano	Gaidem	Kano
No. of casualties	36	214 officers & 80,000 others	Over 3m	Akalukas & others	72	02	06	60

Compiled By the Authors

As Nigeria's political and economic crises became increasingly acute so have human rights abuses and violations by security agents also become incessant. With these experiences by the Igbo people, some youths referred to as the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) have embarked on a separatist agitation; a development followed with the incarceration of their leader-Mazi Nnamdi Kanu by the Department of Security Services (DSS) on charges of felony. Peaceful demonstrations in support of a Biafran state were, predictably, broken up by the army by simply opening fire in a planned and coordinated attack on the demonstrators killing not less than 300 people. In the face of glaring evidence from hundreds of witnesses, the army still claimed that they were attacked first (Hansen, 2020: 1-19). The character of the Nigerian politics has gone a long way to re-define who is a Nigerian with the right to life and access to common patrimony. The Biafran separatist agitators believe that the Southeast (Igboland) is the most affected in terms of structural imbalances, skewed distribution of resources and appointments since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra war in 1970.

CONCLUSION

This study submits that the violent gang attacks on the Igbo in 1953 in Kano reeled off to other major towns in the North. It has also argued that the January 15, 1966 coup planned and executed by military officers mostly of Igbo origin as well as the war added a new dimension to the frosty relationship between the Igbo and other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria especially those from the North. Because of the number of casualties from that region, the coup came to be regarded as an Igbo ploy to take over the central government so to dominate the entire country. The war was regarded as that between the Igbo and the entire country. The memories of the war have dictated the Igbo fate in the Nigerian project. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria which recognized indigeneship over citizenship has deepened the gulf between the Igbo and their host communities. Bad governance which characterized all Nigerian governments both military and civilian deepened frustration of the citizens and the victimization of the Igbo in the various parts of Northern Nigeria.

The study further avers that modern Nigerian nation-state is imbued with separatist agitations and interest groups clamoring for restructuring of the federation so that every group would have equal opportunities and stakes in the Nigerian project. This is to allow for equal citizenship with all the rights and privileges that attend to that status. The injustices and discrimination against the Igbo have fanned the embers of separatism in their psyche. It is against this

backdrop that some Igbo youths have formed the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASOB) and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) as a way of attaining self-actualization, respect and integrity of the Igboman. What this portends is that the alien status of the Igbo people has indirectly strengthened the bonds among them as a thorn in the political flesh of Nigeria. If the policy of indigene-settlers phenomenon is not re-visited by the Federal Government, the task of nation-building is likely to remain a tantalizing mirage. It is hardly practicable that a people with similar experiences as the Igbo would remain loyal and obedient to such an institution that is partial, unfair and one-sided in its treatment of its subjects.

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