THE ROLE OF STATE AND NON-STATE ACTORS IN GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract
The South Eastern part of Nigeria in recent times has been under the command and control of state and non-state actors, especially in the areas of security and governance. The Federal, State, and Local Governments, and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) – a self-determination group, declared a terrorist organization and proscribed by the Federal government – have been calling the shots from the better part of 2021. Consequently, there have been clashes between the official government security agencies and the IPOB-established Eastern Security Network (ESN). At the governance level, the issuance of directives and counter directives like public holidays, and sit-at-home, among others has become commonplace. What is obvious from the unfolding situation in the South East is that the people are at a crossroads as to whose lead they should follow. In view of the foregoing, this paper interrogates the role of state and non-state actors in the governance of South East Nigeria. The methodology of the paper was based on content analysis, utilizing data from secondary sources like journals, newspaper publications, and security reports among others. The paper was anchored on the theory of Two Publics by Peter Ekeh (1975) and the major argument in the paper is that the failures of the state actors have endeared the people to the non-state alternative. From the analysis in this paper, we conclude that the Indigenous People of Biafra enjoys informal legitimacy because they appeal to the primordial sensibilities of the indigenous populace and recommend among others, that the federal government should embrace dialogue in the interest of peace and political stability.

Key words: *State, Security, Governance, Terrorism, Organization, Biafra, Nigeria,*

Introduction

In the last five years, governance in the South East have become a shared responsibility between the government and several nonstate actors – acting individually and/or collectively where necessary. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is leading a horde of other secessionist groups – the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafran Liberation Movement (BLM), among

others – to demand the breakaway of the South East region from the Nigerian federation. The nature and character of the secessionist agitations in the southeast – especially from the better part of 2021 - have assumed a violent and worrisome dimension, leading to clashes between the Nigerian security agencies and the secessionist forces. The menace of unknown gunmen and their activities have created major security concerns leading to loss of lives and properties, and the casualties have so far been spread across the board including the death of prominent Igbo personalities, and security agencies, among other innocent indigenes and residents in the southeast region. Also, the incessant declaration of public holidays - in the form of sit-at-home – has raised a huge question mark on who is actually in charge in the region.

To address these issues, the rest of the paper was divided into three parts. The next segment of the paper will focus on a discussion of the key concepts in the paper. That will be followed by a detailed analysis of the agitations in the southeast region, vis-à-vis the rise of non-state actors in the governance of the region. This will also be followed by the theoretical framework. The last segment will conclude the paper and proffer possible solutions as recommendations.

Conceptual Review and Clarifications

The discussions in this paper are woven around various concepts, which are state, security, and governance.

State: The state as a concept in Political Science means different things to different individuals and scholars. The study of Political Science basically, is a study of the life of individuals within an organized community or state. This is because issues of power, authority, legitimacy, democracy, and elections among other aspects of political concepts and behaviors exist within a state. According to Anifowose and Enemuo (2000), a state is the most inclusive organization with formal institutions for regulating and controlling the internal and external relationships among its institutions, people, neighbors, and the global community. These internal and external relationships are geared towards the maintenance of law and order, and security, promoting communal welfare, and preventing internal and external aggressions, among other objectives.

It can also be defined as a group of people within a clearly defined geographical setting with a legitimate government (Suberu, 2013). The above definition outlined the important features of a state. First is the people; the state cannot exist in a vacuum. There must be individuals or groups that are citizens, residents, or inhabitants who organize themselves to pursue and promote their common interests. Thus, one of the foremost characteristics of a state is its population or people. Another important characteristic is a clearly defined territory. The people exist and occupy a geographical

space on the surface of the earth. The territories are clearly defined to distinguish one state from another. This is why almost all countries of the world have institutions like Customs and Immigration to control the movement of people and goods in and out of their territories.

A third characteristic feature of a state is the government. The government is an institution through which the collective will of the state is pursued and promoted. Government within the context of the state is the custodian of the political authority of the state both within the state and in its relationship with the external environment. The government in a state is the legal agent of the state and – in ideal situations – should have the monopoly of the instrument of coercion. The legitimate use of force is a characteristic feature of government in a state. Force is needed to ensure compliance and promote social order and cohesion, without which life will become like Thomas Hobbes' state of nature; nasty, brutish, and short (Anifowose and Enemuo, 2000). A final characteristic is the feature of sovereignty that bestows the ultimate power of the state on its institution (government). This power provides a final legal authority to the state over its citizens and grants them freedom from external interference in their local affairs.

With power comes responsibility. Having been bestowed with sovereignty. The individuals within the state have surrendered their rights to the government in exchange for social services like security, social amenities, and infrastructural facilities, among others. In situations of insecurity, the first port of call for the citizens is the state and its agencies – police, army, navy, air force, and the like. Where state actors continually prove themselves incompetent in this regard, they resort to non-state actors. This will be further elaborated in our subsequent discussions in this paper.

Security: The idea of security connotes the absence of danger, a threat to danger, or physical harm. According to Adebayo (2011), security can be said to be a measure put in place to ensure peaceful co-existence and eliminate, as much as possible, all forms of danger. Security for an individual can be physical, social, economic, or emotional. Also, there are other aspects of security like environmental security, energy security, cyber security, food security, and national security, among others. The nature and character of security are, however, interwoven in the sense that a security challenge in one area seems to affect other areas. For instance, economic or financial insecurity has emotional effects on an individual. A man who cannot provide for his basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter will surely go through emotional stress and is also physically exposed to hunger and danger. This births the saying that a hungry man is an angry man.

For this paper however, our emphasis is on physical security, which when aggregated

among individuals and households lead to national security – whose other component include the protection of the territorial integrity of the country, the large-scale preservation of the sanctity of human lives, and the wholesale elimination of every form of fear from the hearts and minds of the citizens. Physical security involves the provision of protection and restriction of all forms of unauthorized access to an individual or his personal effects. It involves protection from physical harm, assault, battery, death, physical freedom, etc. Physical security is essential because where available, it enhances freedom of movement; expression; thought, conscience, and religion; and freedom to pursue one's economic interest and potential. Governments all over the world invest heavily in the security of the lives and properties of their citizens as a baseline approach towards the attainment of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous society.

In the 2018 budget, for instance, data from the Budget of the Federation as obtained by BudgIT indicates that security gulped N1.323tn out of a total budget figure of over N9.1tn. This represents an increase of almost a hundred billion naira as the figure for 2017 was N1.142tn out of a total budget figure of about N7.3tn, representing 14.5 percent and 15.6 percent respectively. Going further memory lane, the security sector, in 2016, 2015, and 2014, got N1.063tn, N969bn, and N932bn respectively. The latitude and coverage of government expenditure on security in this sense, include all financial allocation directed at the protection of Nigeria's borders against foreign threats, and also, all expenses incurred about security-related activities within Nigeria.

The heavy financial expenditure of government – all over the world – on security shows how important it is for a society to be rid of all forms of insecurity. Insecurity exists where all the aspects of physical security highlighted above are absent. In the views of Ndubuisi-Okolo, and Anigbuogu (2019), insecurity connotes the state of palpable anxiety, fear, and uncertainty that envelops the citizens as a result of several factors, which could be a failure of the state security apparatus, proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the hands of unauthorized persons, increase in crime and criminality, terrorism, banditry, among others.

Governance: Governance as a concept has different connotations. According to Ozigbo, (as cited in Odo, 2015), governance denotes how people are ruled and how the affairs of the state are administered and regulated. Governance can therefore be said to refer to how the people in a nation or society administer their affairs for the common good of every segment of the society. In the task of governance, public institutions are crucial as they play important roles in providing the needed institutional and legal framework for the implementation of public policies and programs. On this premise, Ansah, (cited in Odo, 2015) viewed governance as encompassing a state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making process and implementation capacity, and the relationship between government officials and the public. Also, governance, in

active terms, is the exercise of administrative and political authority of a country to achieve economic, political, and social objectives. The economic objectives include poverty reduction, income redistribution, and wealth creation, economic growth, and development. Governance also exists to achieve political objectives in the areas of national integration, political stability, the rule of law, and credible, free, and fair elections, among others. Also, the social objectives of governance have to do with social inclusiveness, especially in the decision-making process, conflict resolution, upholding the fundamental rights of citizens, efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery, etc.

The United Nations Development Programme cited in Guga (2014) defines governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs, or the complex mechanisms, institutions, and processes through which individual citizens and groups communicate their preferences and interests, perform their legal obligations and exercise their rights as well as settle their differences. The governance process includes every state and non-state institution in a nation or country, beginning from the family, religious institutions, and socio-cultural organizations, among others. Governance also embraces every practicable method that enhances the equitable distribution of power and efficient management of public resources.

Governance according to Uddin (2009) can either be viewed in positive or negative terms which could be good governance or bad governance. Good governance is a model of governing structure that is necessary for the economic, political, and sociocultural progress of the country. It is the ideal value system of a state that works best to achieve sustainable development, self-reliance, and social justice. On the other hand, a bad governance system is neither socially inclusive nor responsive to the complexities of a society. Certainly, bad governance is economically wasteful, politically repressive, and has little or no respect for the fundamental rights of individuals and groups. In the views of Kolade (2012), governance is a participatory process that involves both the governor and the governed. The governor in this case involves the leaders at various levels, while the governed are the people and all other non-state actors in the polity. According to Kolade (2012), the participatory nature of governance highlights the collective role of all individuals and groups in ensuring quality leadership that is accountable and restraining public officeholders from arbitrary use of power.

Agitation for Secession and the Rise of Non-State Actors in the South East Region of Nigeria

Agitation for secession is not a recent phenomenon. According to Abada, Omeh, and Okoye (2020), separatist agitations are always spurred whenever a region or group collectively feels marginalized, politically shortchanged, or economically subjugated within a given polity. Since the amalgamation of 1914, different ethnic nationalities had at one time or another threatened to secede from the Nigerian Union. Tamuno (cited in Abada, Omeh, and Okoye, 2020), traced the agitations for secession in the entity called Nigeria today to 1914. He noted that from Ahmadu Bello's account, the North would have preferred a separate political future, instead of being yoked with the South in what the Sardauna of Sokoto termed "*the mistake of 1914*". Then, the North, displeased with the amalgamation, threatened to secede from the union. That was the first secessionist attempt in the Nigerian formation.

In the year 1953, Anthony Enahoro – a federal parliamentarian from the southern parts of the country - moved a motion for the independence of Nigeria. The motion was resisted by parliamentarians from the north who staged a walkout in protest and threatened to secede from the rest of the country. After independence, an attempt by Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu led the Eastern region to secede and was resisted by the rest of the country, leading to a thirty-month civil war. Close to three decades after the civil war that ended in 1970, Ralph Uwazuruike began a new wave of secessionist movement with the formation of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in 1999, adopting a non-violent posture. The group was later fractionalized after Uwazuruike was accused of corruption, mismanagement of funds meant for the struggle, and betraying the core tenets of the secessionist struggle. The fractionalization led to the formation of other groups such as the Nnamdi Kanu-led Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Ben Onwuka-led Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) (Amanambu, 2017). However, it was the IPOB that became more popular after it succeeded in mobilizing millions of Igbo youths worldwide. More so, Nnamdi Kanu renewed the separatist agitation on Biafra by reviving the defunct Radio Biafra and making it a platform to educate and sensitize Igbos both at home and in the diaspora on the urgency for an independent Biafran state. His approach is the use of incisive and inflammatory statements that appeal to the Igbos but derogate the Nigerian government. Consequent to the above, the renewed separatist agitation has continued to raise national eyebrows particularly as it pertains to the indivisibility of the country.

Also, the government's response and approach to quelling the agitations have either worsened the situation or provided further justification for the tale of marginalization of the Igbo ethnic group. The management of the situation with IPOB – the arrest of its leader, the prosecution in court, the proscription of the group as a terrorist organization,

the attack on his home in September 2017, and his eventual disappearance and re-arrest – by the government further endeared the group to the people of the South East region and made the leader – Mazi Nnamdi Kanu – a revered hero of the people in the region.

In January 2020, governors of the South West region saw the need to form a regional security outfit codenamed *Amotekun*. This was in response to the threats of kidnapping and other violent crimes by herdsmen of Fulani extraction. A retrospective analysis of the events that happened in 2015 will also be necessary to recall when Chief Olu Falae, an elder statesman, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), and former presidential candidate of the defunct Alliance for Democracy was kidnapped in his farm. Investigations by the Nigerian police revealed that the incident was perpetrated by Fulani herdsmen some of whom were captured, tried, and sentenced to life imprisonment (Dayo, 2017). The South East region was also suffering from the menace of Fulani herdsmen. As a result of the atrocities perpetrated by the killer herdsmen, the Ebonyi state governor, Eng. David Umahi lamented that even though his people accommodated and protected Fulani herdsmen in his state, they still killed his people. The lamentation, which was recounted by a prominent online news platform – Sahara reporters – reported the killing of 25 persons in the Egedegede community in the Ishielu Local Government Area of the state. There were other cases in Imo, Abia, Anambra and Enugu. However, the governors of the Southeast region saw no need to set up a regional security outfit in the face of obvious failures of state security agencies and sometimes accusations of complicity of the police and other security agencies by victims of these Fulani herdsmen attacks.

It took a non-state actor – the Indigenous People of Biafra – to set up the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 2020. The ESN was well received by the people in the South East and that singular move by Nnamdi Kanu further endeared him to the people of the region as their hero. After much criticism from the people, the governors of the South East region established a phony regional security outfit for the South East region codenamed *Ebubeagu* months after the formation of ESN. The formation of E*bubeagu* was a volte-face which as of November of 2021 was yet to officially begin operations. In all, the governors created a gap that the Indigenous People of Biafra took advantage of to entrench themselves in the security and governance architecture of the southeast region. So, presently, the Indigenous People of Biafra operate a shadow government in the South East region. On the 30th of May 2021, the group declared a sit-at-home in the region and the level of compliance was largely impressive. However, some government actors dismissed it as a one-off thing. After the re-arrest of Nnamdi Kanu in June of 2021, the group in August declared Monday of every week as a sit-at-home in honor of its leader. The group instructed, at the time, that the Monday ritual would persist until their leader was released from custody. In addition, any day of the week that their leader would appear in court was also declared a holiday in his honor.

Even though the group later canceled Monday's weekly ritual, the people appear to still observe the sit-at-home ritual. Although some people have argued that people continue to comply with the weekly sit-at-home exercise out of fear. If the weekly sit-at-home exercise was observed out of fear, what about the directive for people to stay indoors anytime Nnamdi Kanu is to appear in court? The bottom line of our discussion here is that there currently exists a dual governance structure in the southeast region, where non-state actors issue directives like their state counterparts. There is a civic governance structure and a primordial governance structure. The next segment of our discussion will throw more light on the existence of two publics in the southeast region of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this paper is the theory of Two Publics by Peter Ekeh (1975). The scholar's argument in the theory of two publics is that the advent of colonialism in Africa has inadvertently led to the emergence of a distinctive historical arrangement in modern post-colonial Africa – the existence of two publics instead of a single public, as is obtainable in the Western Democracies. Ekeh posits that many of Africa's problems are due to the dialectical relationship between the two publics. According to him, the two publics are the Moral Primordial and the Amoral Civic publics. The Primordial and Civic publics operate different principles of morality, yet connected. Ekeh categorized the primordial public as private and related the civic public with colonial administration that existed in what is now regarded as the public sector. Even though these two publics appear to be different, politicians nonetheless, operate concurrently in both the primordial and civic publics. The imposition of colonialism and its impact on the shaping of African politicians led Ekeh to explain the two publics in terms of the native sector and the colonial or Westernized sector. The native became primordial.

In the native sector, morality is highly regarded. The Westernized sector became the civic public where, in the views of Ekeh, morality is not as highly regarded as it is in the native sector. The primordial public, in the views of Ekeh, has no economic reward. Its usage and importance are in the admiration respect and security that is obtained from one's cultural society, while the civic public is exploited for economic gains where one is ordinarily not obligated to give back in any form. As such morality is not highly regarded. In the Nigerian situation, Ekeh categorized the educated elites as being members of the two publics. He is of the view that privileged and educated Africans take advantage of the civic public to make financial gains to please their local communities. This activity helps them to get the needed acceptance and support from their primordial public. As such, Ekeh asserts that it is acceptable for a public official in the civic space to be corrupt to employ the proceeds of such corruption to strengthen his or her primordial public. This dual loyalty in favor of the primordial public is a

major factor that is crippling African politics to this day.

Professor Ekeh's postulations on the theory of Two Publics aptly capture the essence of our discussions in this paper. The interplay between the primordial and civic publics in Nigerian society in general and the southeast region, in particular, has remained problematic. The IPOB and their secessionist movement – though outlawed by the Nigerian state and declared a terrorist organization – still resonates deeply with the indigenous people of the region home and abroad. Indeed, the failure of the Civic public in its primary responsibility of addressing the genuine economic and security concerns of the people of the Southeast creates a governance gap and unwittingly creates a condition that compels the people to return to the Primordial Public as a platform upon which these concerns could be addressed. The government's clampdown on their activities further cements this view. There have often been comparisons between how the killer herdsmen were treated and how the agitators were treated by the Nigerian state. These comparisons are made in the face of the federal government's decision to grant amnesty to repentant deadly Boko Haram terrorists and bandits.

All of the above have contributed to creating in the southeast region, what we call **dual patriotism.** The idea of dual patriotism is one of the very few concepts that can be applied to explain the current situation in the southeast region of Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

That the security and governance structure in the southeast region of Nigeria has been polarized is no longer in doubt. This is because the Indigenous People of Biafra enjoy informal legitimacy. After all, they appeal to the primordial sensibilities of the indigenous populace. The question that needs to be urgently addressed is; how we come out of this ugly situation. The Governor of Anambra state, Prof. Chukwuma C. Soludo during his campaign tour in Onitsha stated that the South East loses about N10 billion weekly to the Monday sit-at-home exercises. Economists and analysts have also warned that the weekly economic lockdown will increase the poverty situation in the region, especially for those individuals and groups whose economic livelihood and survival depend on daily streams of income. It is to this end that we recommend as following;

1. The governments of Nigeria should, as a matter of urgency, justify their existence as a platform for the promotion of the welfare of the citizens by being alive to its responsibility of protecting the lives, liberty, and property of the people of the South East. This will make the resort to other identity platforms unnecessary.

2. The Federal government should embrace dialogue in the interest of peace and political stability.

3. The governors in the region are also enjoined to take the lead in the negotiation for peace and to advance a counter-narrative to the people of the South East region on the need for unity and peaceful coexistence with other ethnic nationalities in the Nigerian federation.

4. The message of unity and peaceful coexistence should also be taken to the grassroots through traditional rulers, religious leaders, and their institutions.

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