

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Arresting Separatists Agitations for Nationhood through Legal and Communication Paradigms: The New Perspectives

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Abstract

The predatory character of post-colonial states and African's way of providing plausible solutions to national questions has remained a nightmare. This is evident on the manner regions or better still, ethnic groups that found themselves lost in the scheme of things. Thus, calling for self-belonging and inclusion by groups and cleavages is a direct link to restructuring, accommodating the excluded minority and forging ahead for peace and stability. In Nigeria, the scenario is very crystal clear on how successive political regimes had failed to come up with lasting solutions to national questions. It is in the light of this that this paper examines the legal and communication paradigms of arresting separatists' agitations in Nigeria. Two objectives guided this paper and based on these objectives, two research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this study. This paper was anchored on the framing theory and the frustration aggression theory. Data were collated using the secondary method of data collection. Findings show that there are international laws and charters that support self-determination and the media also have a huge role to play. This study recommends that instead of using force, the Nigerian government should engage in diplomatic dialogue and other means. The administration should stop making threats to "crush" the unrest in the near future and release unconditionally the hundreds of protesters who are currently detained.

Keywords: Separatists, Secession, IPOB, Self-Determination, Biafra.

1. Introduction

As a sovereign country, Nigeria has continued to experience conflict prone separatist agitations since the 1967/1970 failed Biafran secession campaign. Some of the prominent separatist and sectarian groups include the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Middle Belt Federation (MBF), and Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) among others. Some of these groups can be regarded as self-determined groups, separatists, nationalists, civil rights, and indigenous peoples' rights groups.

The theatre of socio-economic and political struggles among and within nations, groups and individuals has

shifted to the media. In this scenario, media activities and products lack harmony and tend to pursue different goals in line with their ownership. Thus, the media coverage of separatist and sectarian activities in this era of hypermedia has become an even greater concern. The era ushered in a simple and swift access to information and dissemination. Antagonists and perpetrators of oppressive, exploitative, exclusive, and evil activities in the public sphere are all players in the packaging and dissemination of information

A deeper philosophical investigation would be necessary to fully understand why the mass media is regarded as a necessary component of any contemporary democracy, especially in a nation with a long history of separatist agitation and ethno-

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religious strife. In particular by government officials, the Nigerian media has frequently been charged with portraying a generally unpatriotic and hostile attitude in its reporting on happenings in Nigeria. According to the government, the Nigerian media should be cautious when covering bad occurrences and should instead focus on covering those with a good message because this type of reporting would ostensibly serve to bring together the diverse facets of Nigerian society and promote development. In other words, Nigeria would be more integrated and the chances of progress would be better if citizens were kept in the dark about bad things that happened, especially those involving government officials. However, it is questionable if such paternalistic journalism would be beneficial to Nigeria as a whole.

Unquestionably, Nigeria is a multiethnic country, and the interactions between these ethnic groups present a severe and centrifugal challenge to the country's existence. Politics will inevitably give birth to a democratic system that may foster progress because of its very essence and character. However, in Nigeria it has taken on a dangerous dimension by turning into a gauge for gauging contribution to nation building as a result of frequent military coups coupled with the ethnicization of politics even before independence. It now serves as a tool for spreading and allocating resources and power across the country.

There have been many separatist uprisings throughout Nigeria's history. Those who have closely studied Nigeria's political development may not be surprised by this given the diversity of her people and the variances in demography, land mass, natural resource endowment, and educational, social, and economic development. One could contend that these differences have produced and continue to foster hatred, hostility, and a fear of ethnic dominance not only among Nigeria's 250 ethnic groups but also between the majority groups and the ethnic minority. Separatism has persisted in the federation due to the centrifugal tendencies produced by Nigeria's ethnocultural diversity, with each underprivileged ethnic community clamoring for more freedom of expression. The military junta that controlled Nigeria for the longest time following independence achieved success in subduing these impulses via the use of flagrant force without necessarily erasing them. Emerson's contention that the introduction of democratic institutions can occasionally accentuate pre-existing ethnic divisions in ethnically divided polities is supported by the rise in separatist movements that

have polarized the federation along ethnic, regional, and religious lines since May 29, 1999.

Oyekola (2015) noted that because, as Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Lyttelton reportedly claimed, "the only cement which kept the shaky structure of Nigeria together was the British..." the colonial authority was aware of the deep-seated ethnic rivalries among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. They would undoubtedly disintegrate if left on their own within a few months.

Many of these ethnic groups clamouring for the balkanization of the nation have always complained of the continuous allegations of being marginalized that have formed the basis of several crises and loss of lives in Nigeria. Their allegations of marginalization originated from perceived denial of their rights in the manner at which national leadership positions were distributed in the country for sixty years and counting. Critically, when considered in line with other tribes, there seems to be a systematic denial of sense of belonging to other tribes especially in development and leadership positions. This can be found in what may be described as strategic exclusion of citizens from other states from certain position of authority in Nigeria and location of major national industries and facilities in the area. This perceived denial of supposed national rights over the years has placed other tribes on the verge of complain of being marginalized. In this regard, some activists capitalize on this perceived marginalization and subjugation of their tribes to form different secession groups to press home the separatist agenda

There is no denying that the nation is more divided now than it has ever been, happily, despite the aforementioned dire prophesy not coming true. Numerous ethnic and militant groups, such as the Northern Elders Forum, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), the Niger Delta Avengers, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, This article therefore explores strategies for quelling separatist agitations in Nigeria in the context of the foregoing.

2. Statement of the Problem

As was already mentioned, there have been many challenges throughout Nigeria's history as a result of unresolved national problems, such as

group marginalization, resource distribution, the politicization of religion, ethnic militancy, terrorism, and corruption. One of the primary manifestations of some of these unresolved issues is the growth of organizations in the South-East that call for political and self-determination independence, such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

In Nigerian politics, separatist agitations and movements have long been a frequent occurrence, but Awofeso (2017) argues that the current scale of these threats is nonetheless closely related to the country's ongoing national debate. In other words, they continued to act as agitators' go-to instrument for airing grievances against the Nigerian government and a platform for calling for proper political accommodation (Alumona, Azom&Iloh, 2017).

It is beyond dispute that the nation's ongoing changes since the start of this democratic experiment have sparked discussions and anxiety about the future of the Nigerian federation in all spheres of society. The difficulties in consolidating democracy described above, which the Nigerian country was unable to address, serve as evidence of this. Particularly with regard to the insurgency issue, it has been so greatly inflated and obscured that apprehension and mutual suspicion govern every facet of governance.

Based on the above, one may begin to wonder if there are legal and communication perspective to self-determination? From the legal point of view, are there international laws and charters that support self-determination and what are the implications of the balkanization of a nation? From the media's point of view, what role do the media play in the escalation or de-escalation of separatist agitations in the country? These and many more this paper hopes to dissect.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this paper are as follows;

1. To determine the role of the media in the de-escalation of separatist agitations in Nigeria.
2. To determine the legal rights of self-determination under international law

4. Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this paper, the following research questions were formulated to serve as a guide for this paper;

1. What is the role of the media in the de-escalation of separatist agitations in Nigeria?
2. What are the legal rights of self-determination under international law?

5. Literature Review

5.1 An Historical Perspective of Separatist Agitations in Nigeria

The prospect of ethnic groups breaking up has periodically surfaced in Nigeria's political history. These threats first appeared in the early years of the federation and have continued ever since. Political leaders of different ethnic groups have occasionally used threats to secede as a negotiating tactic to gain concessions from other ethnic groups. For instance, the majority of the delegations' expressed desire for secession during the British Colonial Office's constitutional conferences nearly put an end to the negotiations between representatives of various ethnic groups. At the General Conference on the Review of the 1946 Constitution convened in Ibadan in 1950, the Northern delegation said that it would seek independence from the rest of Nigeria unless the North received 50% of the seats in the new House of Representatives. (which is equivalent to the combined representation of the Western and Eastern regions). The Southern delegation initially opposed it, but eventually the members of the Eastern Region Legislative Council agreed to stop the country's division.

Ezera (2009) asserts that the country was spared from dissolution by the decision of the Eastern Legislative Council members to abandon their opposition to the North's demand for equal representation in the legislature with the two southern provinces. If the British colonialists' choice to designate Lagos as Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory was not changed, the Yoruba had also vowed to withdraw from the planned federation of Nigeria. The Colonial Office swiftly responded to this warning by treating it as an analogous threat to the use of force.

Following the pogrom in 1966, the Igbos agitated for the restructuring of the federation to put an end to the separatist movements of the three biggest ethnic groups in Nigeria. The first secessionist's struggle to be waged in the country was the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970. The Igbos alongside other ethnic groups in the old Eastern region, attempted a failed secessionist attempt to declare an independent Republic of Biafra in July 1967, determined to end the perceived Hausa/Fulani dominance, despite sensing that their call for restructuring the federation would fail.

The ethnic minority in south-south Nigeria's Niger Delta region joined the majority ethnic groups in

pursuing secessionist goals prior to the collapse of Nigeria's first republic. The first known instance of such resistance in post-independence Nigeria was the "twelve-day revolution" led by Isaac Jasper AdakaBoro, an Ijaw from the Niger Delta, to try to secede from Nigeria by announcing an independent "Niger Delta Peoples Republic" on February 23, 1966, forty days after the first military coup of January 15, 1966.

Because they were worried that the government of Eastern Region, which was dominated by the Igbo ethnic majority, and the central government, led by an Igbo named General Aguiyi-Ironsi, would overlook them in the exploration and administration of the region's enormous hydrocarbon deposits, the Niger Delta's ethnic minorities sought resource ownership (Ekpo, 2018). The rebels issued an order declaring all existing oil contracts invalid and directing oil companies conducting business in the region to deal directly with them out of fear. The Niger Delta's ethnic minorities launched their first coordinated violent campaign against the Nigerian State's exploitation and neglect during the revolution, which was put down by federal soldiers exactly 12 days after it began. The spirit of resistance may have been sown by the failed uprising in the Niger Delta region and fostered till the mass mobilization in the 1990s. It is obvious that AdakaBoro's twelve-day revolution served as a model for all succeeding resistance movements in the area.

All forms of insurrection and separatist agitation by ethnic groups were outlawed as a result of the military's intrusion into Nigerian administration, which was accompanied by its anti-human rights stance and undemocratic tendencies. The annulment of the presidential election of June 12, 1993, purportedly won by Yoruba politician M. K. O. Abiola, may have been the only instance of the country's unity being visibly threatened by separatist threats during military rule. On June 23, 1993, Nigeria's self-declared military president Ibrahim Babangida annulled the results of the aforementioned election, setting out protests and civil unrest, especially in the south-west of the country. Thus, throughout the federation, separatist movements drastically decreased during the military era.

A resurgence of separatist agitations has occurred with the return to democratic governance on May 29, 1999. Following the militarization of the resource control agitations, the Niger Delta region set the tone for this era of separatist movements. In the area, there were a number of militant organizations with various

leaders all claimed to be working toward resource control. Numerous militant organizations have vowed to declare an independent Niger Delta Peoples' Republic and separate from Nigeria at various points in the past. For instance, on the 1st of August 2016, the AdakaBoro Avengers gave a three-month warning that the Republic of Niger Delta will become independent (Emmanuel, 2016). The intended proclamation of secession, however, was to be canceled later, and the Avengers claimed that some notable regional leaders, including former president Goodluck Jonathan, had intervened to prevent it.

There is further proof of the Yoruba's threat to secede after 1999. Several prominent Yoruba leaders rose from an emergency summit held in Ibadan sometime in 2015 and threatened secession, saying that the Yoruba would be reviewing their status in the Nigerian federation in response to ongoing murderous attacks by some Fulani herdsmen on several Yoruba farming communities and the kidnapping of a prominent Yoruba politician, OluFalae. The Yoruba leaders said that they had no alternative but to work toward political independence for the Yoruba because Nigeria's federal structure could no longer guarantee their safety with regard to their lives and property (Ola and Henry, 2015).

Two Igbo grass-roots organizations, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, have likely launched the most intense separatist campaign since 1999. (IPOB). Both organizations, which are run by different individuals, have actively promoted the establishment of the independent "State of Biafra," making them categorically separatist organizations. The five core Igbo States in South-East Nigeria should secede from the Federal Republic of Nigeria and form an independent sovereign state called Biafra. This is the main objective of both organizations. By pursuing this goal, the parties hope to bring back the specter of the Biafra Republic, which Col. Ojukwu first proclaimed in 1967 and caused the Nigeria/Biafra Civil War. To inform the Igbos about the idea of Biafra, the organizations run a pro-Biafra radio station and have coordinated numerous pro-Biafra rallies in significant cities in South-East Nigeria.

The main complaint of the pro-Biafra activists seems to be that the Igbos have not been fully reintegrated into Nigerian society since the end of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War and that their home region of South-East Nigeria has suffered from ongoing

neglect and appalling marginalization on the part of Nigerian society in terms of federal appointments, social infrastructure, and economic development. It is important to remember that this is not specific to the south-east geographical region of Nigeria, even though the federal government's continued disrespect for south-east Nigeria cannot be seriously contested. Despite making a significant contribution to the nation's economic growth and survival, the south-south geopolitical region experiences a similar fate.

5.2 Theoretical Perspective of Separatist Agitations in Nigeria

The term 'separatism' can refer to a variety of concepts; from the demand for more regional autonomy by a federal state's unit to the easing of political shackles by the center to the outright secession of a federating unit through the declaration of its own political independence. As a result, the term 'separatism' has been broadly construed to include both secession and increased regional autonomy. However, the term "separatism" is most often used in its strictest definition to describe the agitation by a distinct political unit within a polity for greater decentralization of authority by the central government in order to ensure the sub-national unit greater autonomy in some activities. Despite the fact that both terms relate to varying degrees of political instability or disintegration, with secession ultimately resulting in the breakup of the polity, separatism and secession, in this narrow sense, are not synonymous.

The leadership of the movement, the level of mass support it can muster, and the occurrence of supervening events like war or revolution that may present the separatists with opportunities for secession or compromise with the central government for greater regional autonomy are just a few of the variables that can cause the goals of any separatist movement to change. Therefore, a separatist movement that first aspires to expand regional autonomy inside an established political territory may, if the circumstances justify it, make an alliance with another group that shares its ideas in order to gain independence.

The history of separatist movements in Nigeria unquestionably demonstrates that they frequently switch between the fight for increased regional autonomy and the overt threat of secession. Most separatist organizations, with the possible exception of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), have likely supported secession and regional political autonomy at the same time.

MOSOP explicitly fought for political autonomy so that the Ogoni could participate in Nigerian affairs as a distinct and separate political unit, including the right to manage their political affairs, while also reaffirming the Ogoni's desire to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Separatist agitations may be caused by a variety of circumstances, albeit they may differ depending on the polity. The most prevalent of these variables, it would seem, may be a long-standing feeling of oppression and deprivation among members of a polity's culturally homogeneous group. If a culturally distinct group feels that their area is not receiving a fair share of the union's benefits from the federal government or has been singled out for marginalization and neglect by the state, their loyalty to the state may erode, alienating their members from the government.

Since Nigeria's early years as a British Colony and Protectorate, several opinions have been made on the immediate and indirect causes of separatist agitations. Tamuno (2012) argues that Nigeria's 'heterogeneous ethnic composition, cultural diversity, huge size, different administrative procedures, contentious political and constitutional frameworks, and the absence of a strong ideological magnet' are to blame for the country's separatist impulses. However, according to Rothchild (2013), Nigeria's federal system, which was initially composed of 'three major populous, semi-autonomous regions, scarcely operates to discourage conceptions of secession as each of the regions had all the conventional conditions of nationhood'. Nigeria's political history, according to Kirk-Greene (2014), had molded and predestined the nation for disunity. The forces of Nigeria's political past have seldom been on the side of national identity.

It is argued that three important reasons, including ethnic plurality, a generalized fear of dominance among the various ethnic groups, and the dividing policies of the British colonialists, are directly responsible for the predominance of separatist agitations in Nigeria. These elements are interdependent and unable to be isolated from one another. For instance, the inequalities in demographics, land mass, educational attainment, social advancement, and economic prosperity among the peoples of Nigeria had a significant impact on the fear of ethnic dominance that was a primary driver of Nigeria's federalism. Similar to this, it is quite debatable if the British colonialists' policy of "divide and rule" in Nigeria was influenced by the population's diversity.

5.3 Separatist Agitations and the Challenges of Nationhood: Lessons from the Biafra Agitation

In the past, separatist agitators' responses to perceived marginalization and oppression took several forms. Their effort to become an independent state is also ongoing. While some periods were marked by little more than vague threats of secession, others saw genuine attempts at secession, either via violent means or, more recently, through non-violent methods. Ibeanu (2016) noted that the Igbo elite has traditionally advocated for either greater inclusiveness in response to the perception that they are being victimized. The inclusive strategy reflects the mindset of the Igbo elite, who believe that the best way to redress the victimization of their people is to increase its political, economic, and social inclusion. Radical separatists, on the other hand, believe that the Igbo's mistreatment can only be stopped by the establishment of a sovereign, independent state of Biafra. Separatists disagree on the best way to achieve secession, even if they all agree that it is the only way to end Igbo persecution. They put out three options for achieving sovereignty: violent secession, civil disobedience, and more recently, a referendum.

As previously noted, Michael Okpara, the Premier of the Eastern region, warned in 1964 that his region would secede as a result of the circumstances surrounding the general elections that year. However, his threat was only a threat and was not followed by any concrete action. When genocide was occurring in other parts of the country three years later, it was not the case for the local population. Because all other attempts to resolve the situation had failed, the Biafra that existed between 1967 and 1970 was established by a violent strategy. As a result, the federal government and the separatist Biafra fought a full-fledged war for thirty months.

When MASSOB reintroduced the idea of Biafra into Igbo awareness in 1999, the group made it plain that its preferred method of achieving the restoration of the Biafran state was non-violent means rather than restarting hostilities with Nigeria. In order to challenge the authority of the Nigerian state, it consequently adopted tactics including planning nonviolent marches and protests, flying Biafran flags in public places, holding sporting events, and creating its own currency and passports. The group persisted in preaching non-violence as a means of achieving its independence from Nigeria despite numerous crackdowns on its members by the Nigerian security forces.

IPOB adopted a slightly distinct strategy. It constantly

advocated nonviolence, much like MASSOB, despite severe provocation from the Nigerian security forces. However, on occasion, some of its members have been known to use violence, particularly when carrying out orders from their leader, NnamdiKanu. While the MASSOB asserted to be nonviolent and gentle in its approach, the IPOB has a history of adopting violent methods (Awofeso, 2017).

The use of media propaganda by IPOB is a crucial additional strategy. It recognized the importance of communication and developed Radio Biafra, an underground radio station through which it provided information to those who supported their cause while also utilizing the station as a platform to criticize the Nigerian government and its officials. This radio station, which is allied with street-based organizations, represents the most prominent and radical diaspora-based movements (Owen, 2016). As a result, Igbo youths all over the world soon became aware of and attuned to the Biafran concept. What IPOB demanded was that the Igbo-speaking states should hold a referendum to decide whether people want to stay part of Nigeria or create the State of Biafra. None of this would be tolerated by the Nigerian administration. It has reiterated its commitment to keeping the nation one and indivisible at many forums. It has also responded to the agitators with ruthless force, utilizing the security services to both disrupt and shoot at their gatherings in addition to the arrest and prolonged detention of several of its leaders. The process resulted in numerous fatalities and numerous maiming. This is despite the fact that the agitators were never armed. The international community has taken notice of this as well, as some interested parties are starting to wonder what the government's response will mean for human rights.

These protests undoubtedly have an impact on Nigeria's politics and socio-economics, both locally in the south-east and nationally. First and foremost, the IPOB's repeated marches and protests affect the local economies of the communities where they take place. In fact, during the recent IPOB leader NnamdiKanu-ordered sit-at-home protest on May 30, 2017, all commercial and social activity in the south eastern states and certain south-south states came to a full halt. A huge impact on the region's economic growth results from this, especially when you consider how many man-hours were missed due to the protest on that particular day.

Security-wise, the ongoing agitation for Biafra has special consequences for regional and national security,

including the possibility that organizing potential demonstrators could intensify armed violence and exacerbate the current levels of insecurity. It might also result in coordinated attacks on south-easterners living in the north. In reality, a coalition of Arewa youths recently gave Igbos living in the north a quit notice asking them to leave by October 1, 2017, in response to IPOB's actions. Although the quit notice was subsequently suspended, it serves as a warning about how far-reaching the effects of the agitation might go. In connection with the aforementioned, every time agitators and security forces meet, lives and property are lost. Security forces have reacted to the Biafran challenge on several occasions with harsh force displays that left victims in their wake. During protests, numerous Biafran sympathizers have died. More people have been hurt, and locals' properties have been ruined.

The renewed separatist movements in Biafra have also severely hampered efforts to promote national unity, political stability, and peace in Nigeria, undoing the limited progress made since the end of the war. As some groups within them are already protesting for Oduduwa and Niger Delta republics, the agitations for Biafra are already having snowball effects on other ethnic nations, such as the Yoruba and the Niger Delta peoples. In other words, it has made other radical elements cognizant in other sections of the nation, especially in groups who feel excluded from the Nigerian project, and they are starting to wonder whether they should continue to live side by side with the rest of Nigeria.

Positively, the agitations have warned Nigerian authorities that unless quick changes are made to the scheme, dismemberment may be a possibility. Even if there hasn't been a well-articulated proposal to that effect, every other region of the country—outside of the core Hausa/Fulani north—is seriously pushing for the country to be restructured (apart from a few dissident voices like those of AtikuAbubakar). This is a benefit of the Biafran self-determination movements since many people think that a restructured Nigeria will end the agitations since it will no longer have the current structure, nature, and character that stoked and nourished the secessionist movements in the first place. Several Yoruba organizations, political, religious, and traditional leaders met in Ibadan in September 2017 to discuss the state of the union. The summit's conclusion demanded either an imminent dissolution or an urgent restructuring of the nation. The OhanezeNdigbo and numerous other ethnic nationalities have reached the same decision.

How can the calls for the creation of a Biafran state be best quelled? The Nigerian government has chosen to employ force. All evidence point to the fact that using force does not produce the desired effects since the more force used, the more determined the agitators are. Over the years, the Nigerian government has typically responded to separatist agitations by labeling the agitators "troublemakers" and sent law enforcement agents to use force to put an end to their agitations. This frequently causes casualties and exacerbates ethnic tensions, which hardens separatist agitations even more.

5.4 The Media and Separatist Agitations in Nigeria

The media has become the new stage for social, economic, and political conflicts between and among nations, entities, and people. In this situation, media operations and products are discordant and frequently aim for different objectives depending on who owns them. As a result, in this age of hypermedia, media coverage of separatist and sectarian actions has grown even more alarming. The time period brought forth easy and quick access to information and its dissemination. Players in the packaging and dissemination of information include those who are information's adversaries and those who carry out oppressive, exploitative, exclusive, and evil activities in the public sphere.

The most recent events in people's environments are made public through the media. In this era of media democratization, the framing of these events and the conflicting messages that the mass media regularly transmit to consumers are experienced differently and have varying effects.

Nigeria's sociopolitical structure predisposes the nation to interethnic conflict, which has culminated in attempts at secession by various ethnic nations at various points in time. These conflicts facilitated the establishment of several national yet ethnically-biased media outlets. This is due to the fact that these organizations, as well as the government, frequently use the media to spread their chosen ideas, "ventilate their complaints, and demonize their opponents." The aim of these media organizations is to garner widespread support, which makes the media either spread messages of intolerance or misinformation, support the status quo, or act as tools for resolving conflicts if their information or messages are viewed as trustworthy and representing a range of viewpoints.

Therefore, it contends that the nature of media productions or messages shapes or determines how the public perceives the media.

Separatist movements have persisted in becoming a topic of national discussion over the years. As a result of expressed displeasure with specific issues in Nigeria, some regions of Nigeria are attempting to secede and establish their own republics. The Middle Belt, South-South, and South-East of Nigeria are all affected by these agitations. These agitations have also been covered by Nigerian media outlets. Although academics have looked at how the media covers such agitations less focus has been placed on how the audience reacts to the reporting.

Peace and social harmony are desired by every nation state because they are necessary for the peaceful coexistence of that nation's inhabitants (Owuamalam, 2016). Raising discord among a nation's population is what gave rise to Radio Rwanda's 1993–1994 genocide in Rwanda, which set a new global record. In reality, Nigeria is facing difficult obstacles like agitation, hate speech, and counter-operations in an effort to achieve a unified Nigeria. The protesters have justifications for their activities and feel that it is appropriate to express their opinions on radio Biafra so that others can hear and comprehend them. Agitations of all kinds undoubtedly have the potential to spark conflicts that could undermine the stability and security of a country. Agitations, particularly the IPOB agitation for self-government in Nigeria, had sparked a number of violent skirmishes, the majority of which ended with casualties and destruction of property. However, the media has continued to use sentimental and marginalization-inspiring rhetoric to spread ideas that support various agitations to various audiences.

5.5 Right to Self-Determination: Nigerian, African and International Law Perspectives

Self-determination denotes the legal right of people to decide their own destiny in the international. Self-determination is a core principle of international law, arising from customary international law, but also recognized as a general principle of law, and enshrined in a number of international treaties. Article 1 of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the provisions of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) provides that all peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of the above right, indigenous people are inured with the right to

freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1541 identified the following as the legitimate methods of decolonization consistent with the principle of self-determination: Independence, free association and Integration with an existing state. More recently, it has been postulated that the right to self-determination can be exercised internally – Internal self-determination allows a people broader control over their political, economic, social and cultural development, while stopping short of succession.

Scholars agree that one of the most divisive concepts in international law is the right to self-determination, which includes the right to secede. It has been the focus of intense discussion throughout the 20th and 21st centuries and has influenced many of the shifting interstate ties throughout this time, especially during decolonization. Even though there are now just 17 non-governing territories in the world that have the ability to exercise their right to self-determination and achieve decolonization, the right is nevertheless a crucial and frequently debated aspect of international law. This is largely attributable to the evolution of the principle of remedial secession, which aimed to apply the right to secessionist self-determination outside of colonial contexts in situations where territorial minority ethnic groups had experienced structural discrimination and grave violations of fundamental human rights.

Having control over one's own life is the classic definition of self-determination. When used politically, this refers to the ability of a country's citizens to determine how it is governed. At the Versailles Peace Conference, President Wilson used the word for the first time in this manner, and his secretary of state, Robert Lansing, warned that the phrase was "laden with dynamite." It will inspire unrealistic expectations. Many academics agree that this is accurate because it is widely acknowledged that the idea is "attractive so long as it has not been realized," which this essay aims to demonstrate (Marcel, 2011; Obed, 2013).

Over the past century, the meaning of the self-determination concept has experienced numerous revisions in both politics and law. The Aaland Islands case from 1920 was the first instance of self-determination being discussed in international law. In order to determine if the residents of Aaland may exercise their right to self-determination and move from Finland to the Kingdom of Sweden, the archipelago brought the case before the Council of

the League of Nations. Positive international law does not recognize the right of national groups, as such, to detach themselves from the State of which they form a part by the simple statement of a wish, the Council declared. As a result, it was decided that the right to self-determination did not correspond to a right to secede. In 1945, the United Nations Charter, which mentions self-determination in Article 1, went into effect. As a result, the right to self-determination was officially acknowledged in a piece of international law for the first time, confirming that it already existed. However, the Charter's absence of a definition and explanation of what self-determination means made it difficult to exercise the right, particularly in cases of secession. However, it was changed by the 1966 International Covenants, which gave a detailed explanation of what the right to self-determination entails: "*All peoples have the right to self-determination.*" By virtue of that right, they are free to choose their political status and to build their economies, societies, and cultures. As a result, self-determination was included as a human right; nevertheless, this inclusion was not meant to grant individuals a right, but rather to peoples (Obed, 2013).

The primary goal of granting this right was to offer a significant means of decolonization. Self-determination was used by fifty-five states to achieve independence between 1945 and 1970, demonstrating the usefulness of the concept in this situation. This intended usage was also evident in the Namibia case, where the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that South Africa's presence in Namibia was unlawful under international law since the right to self-determination had come to apply to non-self-governing territories. Therefore, the main goal of advancing a right to self-determination that would lead to secession was decolonization. However, as more nations adopted the idea and established post-colonial governments, the international community grew concerned about the implications of secession being viewed as a right in a post-colonial world.

Article 20 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) stated that "All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen." Despite the fact that the above law domesticated in Nigeria as African Charter on Human

and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act, Cap. A9, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 forms part of the Nigeria's municipal Legislation, the issue of self-determination has continued to be a thorny issue that defiled all thesis of peaceful resolution.

Scholars argued succinctly that failure of government to comply with the provisions of the ACHPR or apply political solution to resolve the agitations is a derogation and a breach of the Nigerian law; and that absence of adherence or application of any of the above prognosis, particularly the later, is the reason for the intensification and quadrupling of the separatists' agitations bedeviling Nigeria. Further, the researchers warn that the separatist' agitations may increase if adequate peaceful-resolution measures are not deployed or applied to arrests this dire situation.

6. Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on the media framing and frustration aggression theories for this study. Media framing theory was first suggested in 1974 by Goffman (Gever, 2018). Goffman had argued that people interpret what is going on around their world with the use of primary framework. Entman (1993) observes that to frame is to "promote a particular problem definition and/or treatment recommendation." The focus of the theory is that the media can promote and project certain aspects of a story in its coverage as important while also making other aspects appears less important. Framing theory has been found useful by researchers studying media construction of conflict because it provides the framework for understanding the contribution of the media in resolving conflict. This is partly because of the power that the media have in either resolving or escalating conflict. Only one poorly framed media story is enough to set a whole country on fire. For example, the separatist agitations are promoted by mainly those who see themselves as being marginalized in the country, and the media continue to frame them as marginalized ethnic groups.

The frustration aggression theory was developed in 1939 by psychologist John Dollard and his associates. Expansion to the theory was subsequently carried out by scholars such as Leonard Berkowitz (1962) and Aubrey Yates (1962) (Olley&Ekarefo 2013). The theory focuses on "want and get ratio" and the difference between expected need and satisfaction and the actual need satisfaction. The basic assumption of the theory is that people are likely to express aggression if they do not get what they want. Shedding more lights Olley and Ekarefo

(2013) write; ‘often times, when people are unable to get what they deserve, frustration sets in and this could result in violence or protests against those they consider responsible for their state of deprivation.’ This theory was found useful to explain the likely causes of separatist agitations. These separatist groups have expectations as Nigerians, but feel frustrated that such expectation are not being met, hence, the resort to violent agitations and the call for separatism so as to address perceived injustice.

7. Methodology

This paper adopted the secondary source of data collection. The research data for this paper were collected through secondary data. This includes consulting of textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines and surfing the internet.

It should be noted that answers to the research questions in this paper are provided in the literature review.

8. Conclusion

Growing separatist agitations are clearly a threat to Nigeria’s stability and unity. If not for Goodluck Jonathan’s spirit of sportsmanship, the majority of astute observers of Nigeria’s ethnic politics believed that the nation would not survive the 2015 presidential election. As the research has shown, the problem with Nigeria is not necessarily her ethno-cultural heterogeneity or divisive colonial experience but one of an unjust and discriminatory federal system that has been manipulated to favour one ethnic group at the expense of the others. Although her federal system was deliberately designed by the founding fathers to eliminate ethnic domination and encourage the constituent units to develop at varying speeds, years of military rule had done incalculable damage to these twin pillars of Nigeria’s federalism by entrenching an unjust and hyper-centralized federal structure that facilitates ethnic domination and subjugates the constituent states to the fiscal dominance of the centre.

African nations’ penchant for offering logical answers to pressing national issues and the predatory nature of post-colonial powers continue to be nightmares. This is demonstrated by the ways that Nigerian regions, or better still, ethnic groups, have become dispersed throughout the country. In order to restructure, accommodate the excluded minority, and move forward for peace and stability, groups and cleavages must call for self-belonging and inclusion. In Nigeria,

the situation is extremely obvious in terms of how previous political regimes had failed to find viable answers to pressing issues facing the country. The attempt to secede by various ethnic nationalists shows clearly how one region is favored at the expense of the others.

South Easterners do, however, feel economically and politically outcasts, and the government’s rigid approach is making matters worse. Then, the Eastern Region had proclaimed itself the Republic of Biafra, beginning a three-year civil war that was bloody and expensive. The nation is once more confronted by a separatist threat. More crucially, there is renewed agitation for an independent Biafra state across the southeast, and President Muhammadu Buhari’s aggressive response to the agitation has backfired, igniting passions and bolstering separatist sentiments. The government must alter course and give discussion precedence over coercion. Understanding the causes of the agitation is the first step in any response. They include a strong sense of shared victimization among the separatist groups, as well as political and economic grievances.

9. Recommendations

Based on the various literatures that were reviewed, the following recommendations were made;

1. Instead of using force, the Nigerian government should engage in diplomatic dialogue and other means. The administration should stop making threats to “crush” the unrest in the near future and release unconditionally the hundreds of protesters who are currently detained.
2. It should also reassure people that resources will be distributed fairly and infrastructure will be developed.
3. In order to lessen the perception of marginalization, exclusion, and victimization, efforts should be made to incorporate all states into the overall plan. In order to hold prominent positions and seize control of the government in Nigeria, the South East should strategically place itself among the two most powerful political parties in Nigeria and end party segregation.

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