

The Igbo nation in Nigerian democratization: The need for collective political bargaining

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Abstract

Agitations by the Igbo for proper integration into the scheme of things in Nigeria's socio-economic and political activities have been quite a protracted one. It took a noticeable perspective after the 1960 Counter Coup. This was followed by the civil war genocide, periodic massacre, discrimination and marginalization of the people east of the Niger. The current practice is suppression and repression of protesters through official and extra-judicial murders on sight – with the police and soldiers serving as prompt executioners. The study examines the position of the Igbo people in Nigerian democratization. It argues that the Igbo nation has not been able to achieve internal political unity as a means for achieving collective political bargaining in the contestation of Nigerian state values. The Igbo is officially disorganized by successive Nigerian power elites. This notwithstanding, unity and collective political bargaining remain workable options for Igbo reorganization and successful integration into the Nigerian scheme of affairs. The study relies solely on library sources to generate its data. Group theory is adopted as the theoretical framework for explaining how contestation of values among different political groups in Nigeria determines the position of Ndigbo in Nigerian political process. Findings show that ethnicity is a dominant factor in Nigerian politics and the Hausa and the Yoruba have used their ethnic strength to dominate the Igbo politically since after the civil war. This is because Igbo politicians would always go for national

political parties in search of individual interests. Such actions have weakened internal unity of the Igbo political groups.

Key words: *the Igbo nation, democracy, democratization, political bargaining*

Introduction

Politics across the world is characterized by the struggle for material and non-material scarce resources among the contending groups of the population. The need for identity, security, survival and social development accounts for the unending tussle for power and wealth. In plural or multi-ethnic societies, the contestation over who get what when and how is more competitive and stiff. Social mobilization is based on common values, norms and beliefs among contending groups. It is a situation of “we and them” scuffle - a game sometimes unguided by principles of morality and law. It is at times a warfare or “do or die” affair against the basic tenets of democracy or rule of the people’s law. The situation describes Nigerian political process since independence. Political elites are the major actors through which ethnic groups galvanize and mobilize against themselves for contestation of state power. This glaringly manifests itself in the lives of successive political parties since independence. Party formations and organizations are influenced by ethnic coloration. Each party represents interest a major ethnic group. For instance, while the Northern People’s Congress represented the Hausa and Fulani, All People’s Grand Alliance and Action Group respectively represented the Igbo and Yoruba in different political eras. The condition worked against spread of party tentacles across the country and consequent absence of national character

in the parties. The consequences of the situation necessitated the merger of NPC and NCNC to form national government in 1960 (Obikeze and Obi, 2003). Eze (2008) avers that “political parties fostered on ethnic sentiments were formed such as the Action Group (AG), which metamorphosed from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (children of Oduduwa) and the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) which made no pretention of representing only the interest of the people of Northern Nigeria. Thus, with the flocking together of the notable Yoruba politicians to Action Group, and leading northern politicians into NPC; most leaders of NCNC came from the East. The situation improved as contestation for power advanced. Those who wanted power by all mean where forced by necessity to spread party structure nationwide. The law registering political partied all became strict on the issue. The outcome was the emergence of national parties like the Nigerian Republican Party (NRC), Social Democratic Party (SDP) and lately, People’s Democratic Party (PDP). Despite this spread, the parties are still shrouded in electoral malpractices, political violence, politics of exclusion and ethic marginalization unhealthy for democratization,

The spread notwithstanding, the Igbo have not been able to command superiority in political arrangements of the country since independence. This is despite their political performances, population, contributions, spread and settlement all over the country. Some of these attributes would have enabled the Igbo to have access to their hosts’ culture, custom and belief system, and influence them overtly or covertly to support their political aspirations. As it is in other places, so it is back home in the region. There are conflicting interests among the Igbo elites and

usually against collective interests. The situation became pervasive after the end of civil war where their population, houses and economy were destroyed. In their struggle to survive, they became prey to manipulation and vulnerable to political exploitation and destabilization. Since the civil war, the Igbos have not had a strong political organization, party or pressure groups that can advocate, protect and promote their collective interests. In cases where one tried to spring up disunity among the political elites posed a major challenge. The case of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) is a typical instance. A party tagged to be Igbo party by structure, ideology, membership and sponsorship, it cannot dominate the Igbo area. Even when it made some success by winning elections in Anambra and Imo States, the departure of Governor Rochas Okolocha of Imo State from the party reduced it to a one party state. The Yoruba and Hausa guide and guard their collective political interests so secretly, jealously and purposefully. Their voting behaviors always go along ethnic interests.

However, the Igbo people seem not to have lost their integrative or unifying capacity. Rather, their problem may be viewed from destabilizing manipulations of the successive power blocs dominating Nigerian state system since the civil war. To this end, this paper:

- (a) conceptualize the basic variable of the study
- (b) shows power equation of the Nigerian State.
- (c) identifies the position of the Igbo people in Nigerian power structure.

- (d) interrogates the position of the Igbo in Nigerian democratization.
- (e) identifies their major challenges in Nigerian politics and
- (f) recommends possible measures for their liberation.

The Igbo nation

Igbos are indigenous people of Eastern Nigeria. They are one of the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) that dominate Nigeria's political, social, cultural and economic landscape since its amalgamation in 1914. The people speak Igbo language as their dialect with little differences in intonation. They have common tradition. Introduction of Christianity in the region in 1887 adversely affected its traditional religion and belief system of the people. Presently Christianity is more or less a common religion in the Igbo area. The people dwell around east and west of the river Niger which lies between latitude of 5N and 7N. By its southern border it is surrounded by the Ijo, Ogoni, and Ibibio people, on the north are the Igala, and the Tiv, on the west are the Isoko, the Urhobo, the Bini, and the Isha peoples, and on the east lives the Ekoi, the Efik, and the Yako peoples. The Igbo are also in Bendel (mid-western Igbo in the present Delta State), Rivers and Cross River States (Olisa, 1998). In present Nigeria political state divisions, the Igbo are people of the South-East Region comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu Imo and those in Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers States.

Traditional Igbo society was known for farming, craft, iron work, production of palm products, trading and traditional education. However, in the present time commerce and industry

are now predominant occupation of the Igbo. Farming is now like a part time job for the old and rural dwellers due to the absence equipments for mechanized farm. This adversely affects cost of living in the region. Traditionally, the region is describe as a democratic society with a decentralized system of decision making. Decisions are taking in different group categories with individuals having the opportunity to express and defend themselves through such groups. Prominent among them are the Age grades, the Umuada (daughters of the land), the Chief Priest and his assistants and the Council of the Elders which is the highest decision making body in Igbo democracy. As Kpughur (2014) avers “the Igbo also had developed a political institution, but the principal governing authority in each community for making of rules and deciding cases was a Council of Elders”. This democratic institution was destabilized by the colonial administrations in the quest to create a centralized and uniform system of governance suitable for colonial exploitation. The primary essence of this was easy dissemination of information, collection of taxes and other economic gains. This singular act destabilized established institutions and created suspicions among the people. This affected the Igbo political and economic development as a nation. In other words, democracy was in place and consolidated as the accepted pattern of governance in Igbo land before business minded European adventurists distorted the system. Invariably put, Igbo democracy would have maybe advanced on its own to point of generating a democratic system and process that would have guaranteed its societal development and global recognition than it is now, if it had not suffered western abortion of its socio-political systems. Unfortunately,

western scholars hardly mention original Igbo democracy in their texts like the do the Greece democracy.

Through their adaptive endowment, intelligence and hard work in the colonial and early post colonial eras in Nigeria, Igbo occupied important positions in government, military, civil service, industry, trade and commerce in Nigeria. One of the four political parties that dominated 1960 and 1964 election was formed and dominated by the Igbo. Coup and counter coup of 1966 and Biafra-Nigeria Civil War of 1967-1970 adversely affected the place of Ndigbo in Nigeria politics and economy. With huge lost of businesses, finance, man power and positions during the civil war, Igbo people were subjected to second class citizens in Nigerian politics, government and economy. Even Gowon's 3Rs Policy (Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation) failed to reconcile, reconstruct or rehabilitate and integrate Ndigbo into the mainstream of Nigerian State system. As Madubuko (2008) argues, the 3Rs which Gowon declared in 1970 has remained a bundle of contradiction. This explains incessant agitations against marginalization, discrimination, oppression and repression of the Igbo people by successive Nigerian governments. The Igbo are not safe in Northern Nigeria go by periodic murder and destruction of the properties without justifiable provocation. They are murdered even when the cause of dispute does not concern them. Thousands of lives of the people have been lost in Kano, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Bauchi, Jos and Lagos.

However, since the end the civil war, Ndigbo have made arduous efforts to integrate themselves into Nigeria socio-economic and socio-political scheme of things. This has been

unsuccessful due to lack of strong common platform to assert themselves back to the system. Nigerian political system has been identified to be ethnic based and any ethnic group that wants to be recognized and appreciated must create a strong political base of its own through which to demand for recognition from the system. In as much as the Igbo in recent time have been able to create a niche for themselves in trade, commerce and industry, lack of audible voice in the seat of power has kept them manipulated and marginalized.

Ndigbo are industrious, sociable, adaptable and friendly. They are less jealous because they can compete favourably if given the same opportunity. High taste is one of the characteristics for which they are known. They stand for the best and are republican in politics. Any contrary behaviour could be traced to their displacement since the end of the civil war. They are very important to the Nigerian development and should not be discriminated any more. Their continuous marginalization, and exclusion from the centre of Nigerian affairs will only continue to mount more fears to the rest of the population. Responses and consequences of such marginalization would not be the best for the country's unity and development.

Democracy

Pitifully, the concept of democracy does not enjoy general agreement on definition. Attempts to make one are resisted from all side as defenders of different regimes claim to be democracy (Sartori, 1962). Democracy has captured the political imagination of the world population. Societies that are clearly different from democracy in politics and principle claim to be democracy. The

system is particularly appealing to the oppressed peoples of the world whose yearnings for freedom, equality and justice are frustrated (Nnoli, 2011). No doubt, democracy in praxis has many hues and shades (Nor, 2014). However one of the fundamental principles of democracy is the ability of the electorates to have alternatives in electing their political leaders (Terhile, 2014). Democracy is an institutional arrangement in which individuals having competitively struggled for the people's votes and acquired them; secure the power to carry out political decision (Maduagwu, 2003). It is government by consent and consent in the long run is the product of what an electorate believes democracy to be (Sartori, 1962). In defining the electorates in democracy, Barrow (1983) opines that "democracy is that form of government in which all adult persons have equal rights, both nominally and practically to vote regularly for any representative they choose, for a parliament that alone has the power to legislate; and in which additionally, absolute freedom of expression is guaranteed". Modern political of democracy is a system of governance in which the rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens acting directly through the competition and cooperation of their representative (Schmitter and Karl, 1993). In view of the above, democracy is citizen concerned and determined, outside citizen participation the process and outcome of democratization cannot be said to be democracy or democratic. No wonder Abraham Lincoln in his foremost and ever subsisting definition contended that 'democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people'. Therefore the common denominator in defining and determining democracy even democratization is the people.

More so, democracy is characterized by civil rule, periodic election, rule of law, participatory governance, tolerance of the opposition, free competition, equity and above all majority decision as a way to chosen the direction the society goes. Democracy, does not exist where these features are lacking or truncated. The hallmark of the whole process and practice is the welfare and development of the people, elimination of injustice and oppression. Arguably though, no capitalist society has had these characteristics at a go and in full rather it has been gradual, more often full of struggle, agitation or even revolution. Such process is democratization. Democracy is a product of struggle. The struggle, in its peculiarities and particularities, defines not only whether democracy exists or does not exist but also, if it exists, the nature and characteristics of the emergent democracy (Nnoli, 2011).

Political party system steams the engine of democratization. Essential attributes enumerated above may be inconsequential if multi-party system through which people make their choice and participate in governance do not exist. Political party is that political structure through which both politicians and electorates interact and compete in determining and defining government formation and governance pattern. According to Nwoye (2005) political parties are the organizational embodiments through which candidates seeking for political office are recruited, assessed and nominated. The core aim of each political party is to prevail over the other in a bid to capture state power or to maintain it. In as much as it exist in different form and shape in different societies, its absence is unimaginable in today's capitalist societies, weather developed or developing, liberal or

regulated. This prompts Orji (2008) to aver that to talk about democracy is to talk about competitive political parties. Likewise, Omotola (2009) professes that the role of democracies has been so romanticized that scholars believed that neither democracy nor democratic societies are thinkable without political parties. However, political party formation, structure, operation and citizens' participation may vary in different societies. Liberal societies are usually open for all multi-party systems with less government intervention, whereas in socialist and communist societies like China, Cuba, etc regulation is encouraged. In such political systems, centrality of ideology is paramount, and participation is limited to the state party. Such rigidity is often found in military controlled societies especially in Africa where party formation, funding, organization, structure and citizens' participation were determined by military governments. Nigeria experienced such rigidity under Babangida and Abacha Military Regimes of 1985-1999 and 1993-1999 respectively. The hangover of political parties' strangulation by the military in Africa has continued to haunt party politics and the process of democratization in the continent. In Nigeria, party systems remain largely underdeveloped and fractured essentially due to a host of factors that have undermined the democratic process since independence (Nwoye et al, 2016).

Though, no country would also claim to have gotten to its destination in the democratic struggle. Every society is still democratizing. Moreover, their extent of democratic development and achievements varies. This is part of the reasons why there is no uniform democracy both in theory and practice. Of course, this contributed to varying definitions of democracy. Every scholar or

school of thought defines it according to his experience and inclination. Even though countries like the US, Britain, France etc can be said to have advanced democratically than other countries of the world, they are not at their democratic destination. They are still democratizing not yet democracies.

Pitiably, the serious contradiction in today discourses and practices regarding democracy and democratization is measurement through only the instrument of western culture, ideology, economy and development. Such measuring criteria are totally different in historical experiences, condition and need of most other states especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America. According to Nnoli (2011) “this (*attitude*) is not science but sheer chauvinism’, in other words projects democracy as imperialistic tools of the west (north) to exploit the south”. Western societies are not politically perfect. They also need to change for better. They are not yet at their destination as they are still on the process (democratization). The attitude of forcing the exact art and science of western democratization on the developing countries without considering their internal realities makes democratization and democratic intent of the west controversial and suspicious. These societies had already existing culture, norms and system of interaction which are quite different from that of the west. Democracy should be society friendly and environmentally modeled. Upon which the process of its growth (democratization) should be anchored not imposed. It should be ‘peoples’ democracy not western democracy.

Democratization

Democratization is a process of establishing, expanding and consolidating ideal democratic norms in a social formation. It is a transitional process that transcend from an autocratic or dictatorial system to a democracy. Towing this line of thought, Azeez (2006) adduces that it is an identifiable phase in the process of transition from authoritarian to democratic system that are critical to the establishment of a stable, institutionalized and lasting democracy. It can invariably be equated with democratic consolidation if and only when the process continues to imbibe those principles and practices that will eventually rest the power of rulership in the people. In addition democratic consolidation can also mean an improvement in a democracy. This means improvement in the quality of governance in a society where people rule themselves. This justifies Terhile, (2014) when he says that democratic consolidation is the process by which new democracies mature, old democracies improve in a way to prevent likely reverse to authoritarianism. The paper assumes there is already in existence a state of democracy characterized by fundamental human right and freedom, constitutional stability as a fulcrum of society and governmental stability and also opportunities for equality, justice and fair play. Ojo argues in Ngara (2014) that when major players recognize sufficient common interest in keeping to the rules of the game, it outweighs the cost of undermining them. Established above is the realities that democratization or democratic consolidation is a progressive process of seeking and attaining better democratic norms, principles and practices that are better than one such society has previously. It requires greater executive and military

accountability to the citizenry, removal of barriers to political participation and mobilization by the marginalized groups and more effective protection for political and civil right of all citizens (Diamond, 1996). These principles and practices no matter how it varies from one to another is expected to be according to generally accepted standard of rule of law, periodic election, freedom of expression and press, just judiciary, tolerance of opposition, free competition, participatory governance, accountability and transparency.

Nigeria is engaged in this process of introducing democratic principles and practices. The process is truncated by a lot of challenges including colonial culture, military incursion, civil war, imperial influences, ethnicity, religious bigotry etc. Nigeria was created in 1914 through the amalgamation by Fredrick Luggard of the Southern and Northern Protectorates. Prior to that period, each of the areas that made up Nigerian state was independent from each other. The process of modern democratization of Nigeria can be said to have started in 1922 through the introduction of Clifford Constitution which allowed first elective principles. The constitution gave room for formation of political parties' and participation in election for elective positions. Pitiably, only for certain citizens that possessed up to 100 pounds, who were male by gender and resident in Lagos or Calabar (Obikeze and Obi, 2003)

Nationalist movements capitalized on these lapses of the 1922 constitution to demand for its change to more involvement of the indigenous people in their country's politics. It created room for Richard constitution of 1946. Its lapses were also obvious; NCNC branded it as unilateral and autocratic and called

for the revision of the constitution (Obikeze and Obi, 2003). The protest and demand was progressive leading to 1951 Macpherson constitution and 1954 Littleton constitution. It also necessitated 1953 London Conference, 1954 Lagos Conference, 1957 London Conference and 1958 Conference. Even after independence it continued with different demand.

Democratization pattern of the post-colonial period focused at challenging the military which intervened in Nigeria polity six years after independence (1966), later in 1983 till 1999. The military was like Nigeria's colonial masters in interrupting and destroying democratization due to their abhorrence of rule of law, non-participatory governance, non-tolerance of opposition etc. It was authoritarian in manifestation. Describing it in proper perspective Nnoli (2011) avers that its authoritarianism are the arrogance of government; its penchant to project power as personal and group power, its tendency to make and implement policies without consulting people; its hostility to dialogue in preference for dictation in the running of government; and its partisanship in the making and implementing of policies'. Obviously, it was antithetical to democratic development of any society how much more the then newly emerged state like Nigeria.

More so, democratization process in Nigeria also changed from being nationalistic to ethnic in nature. Victory in election and justification of any government's right to governance now depends on the ethnic consideration. It became noticeable that political parties were and are formed on ethnic lines. Madu (2000) asserts that after independence, Nigerians began to realize that really, tongues and tribes have a lot to play in the new

dispensation. This became evident with the formation of political parties that were regional and ethnic in nature” like NPC (North or Hausa) NCNC (East or Igbo) AG (West or Yoruba). The military in 1993 election broke the jinx of electing ethnic and sectional leaders by forming two nationalistic parties, the National Republican Party and the Social Democratic Party. The two political parties did not come out of the wishful resolution of the people rather by the decree and imposition of the military. The people accepted it due to the desire just to oust the military from politics. This notwithstanding, the election was annulled by the same military leadership of Gen Babangida (Terhile, 2014). This act drew Nigeria back again to another political turmoil. After decades of interruption of civil rule in Nigeria, democratic governance was restored back in 1999. Since then democratic process has been steady with elections holding as scheduled in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015. The development featured Obasanjo 1999-2007, Yar’dua 2007-2009) Jonathan 2009-2015 and Buhari 2015-date as presidents. The development has helped to enhance democratization in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding its numerous challenges, democracy gets improved every day. The most surprising improvement is winning of election by an opposition party which had hitherto never happened in the annals of Nigeria’s democratic evolution from 1960. Power of incumbency has been a determining factor in winning election. Every contestant tries to attach up with the winning party. 2015 election changed this history due to presidential tolerance of the opposition party, rule of law and freedom of expression which Nigeria democracy has inculcated into its political system under President Goodluck Jonathan. In as

much ethnicity still played its role in defining this victory, the boldness of the incumbent party to allow and accept defeat is quite appreciative as good development in these democratization processes.

It is also important to state that democratization process in Nigeria has been sustained by resilient press. As Nwagbo, Okafor and Obiora (2016) project that democracy, politics and the media are overlapping concept. Dogged institution like the press never gave up in its persistent demand for good governance, democracy and democratization in its entire ramification, notwithstanding military rascality and brutality on them. Nnoli (2008) concurs to this in his assertion “Nigeria has also had a long history of combative journalism. By 1997 it had a vibrant mass media whose struggle for democracy had been wide-ranging and persistent. There were over 35 radio stations and 45 television stations, the print media was publishing more than 250 titles, ranging from dailies to weeklies, news magazines and special interest journals”. This number as mentioned by Nnoli has grown more than double in present Nigeria and some media stations have gone international. Their services are no longer only watched and read in Nigeria rather in other countries of the world through the present effort of digital broadcasting pressured by current wave of globalization.

In recent time social media metamorphosed into good political instrument for political mobilization, sensitization and change against authoritarian rules and coercive hegemony of government over conventional media leading to direct and informal access to the masses by every political group and parties creating the fora for sharing of ideas, manifestoes etc. Social

media has been attributed to be partly responsible for victory of the opposition party (All Progressive Congress-APC) against the ruling party (Peoples Democratic Party- PDP) in 2015 election. More so agitation by Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) against political marginalization and repression has been intensified through social media. In as much as this may seem to be distracting to the government of the day and collective entity of Nigerian state, it still enhances democratic process and attitude of government towards the governed in addressing their feelings and expectation which democracy represents.

Theoretical discourse

Group theory believes that societies are comprised of many groups or units each of which possesses and wield some measure of power. As such its proponents argue that power is not concentrated in a single group. For them, power is dispersed among a wide variety of social groups. These groups are largely autonomous and almost independent centre of decision (Gaub, 2003). Essentially, these groups have their sphere of power in their respective sphere of operations. They are more or less interdependent within the social organization. They tend to balance each other's power. As a result, public decisions are largely an outcome of this equilibrium or balance of power. Resources i.e money, skill, power, influence and organization available to the various groups vary from one group to another. These differences in skill and resources help to determine the extent a group is able to achieve its goals and interest (Chikendu, 2002).

Individuals may be divided into several groups but they continue to be members of the same community; owe allegiance to same state and governed by its laws and public policies. They enjoy equal rights as citizens (Gaub, 2003). Furthermore where a group fails to get its requisite share in the authoritative allocation of values, it becomes expedient for such group in such political environment to assert itself in the struggle for power to gain relevance and recognition through its elites. Obvious, the possibility of this is through internal organization and mobilization, competition and alignment with other groups. Group theory took its emergence from Bintby's scholarship "The Process of Government" in 1975. Bintby argues that society is nothing other than a complex of groups that compose it (Chikendu, 2002). Scholars like Joseph Raz (1986), Larry May (1987), Francis Svensson (2005) contributed towards improving group theory (Vinod and Deshpande, 2013).

Nigeria's society in this respect is comprised of so many groups in its composition especially on ethnic lines. These groups are more than 250 (ethnic groups) but dominated by three prominent groups (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) who represent the interest of others under them. Deficiency in this horizon is because interaction is not interdependent, outcome of public decision is not usually a product of equilibrium. This results to the raising questions of justification of membership of the same community, allegiance to the state and supremacy of the law and public policy. The Igbo being marginalized entity of this structure is expected to organize itself internally by jettisoning every division that affects their influence as a group, form alignment to enable them compete favorable in order to get equitable share of

national values (politically, economically and otherwise). Failure to balance power with others as the theory advises, will not allow equitable share of the resources. The relationship will no longer be interdependent and such group would not be regarded as autonomous. Invariably enjoyment of equal right as citizens becomes a mere paper provision. Vinod and Deshpande (2013) advise that “government should address such a situation to avoid deprived groups engaging in some destructive activities to destabilize the system in order to gain recognition. They argue that “cultural groups should be recognized, their needs be addressed, and if need be, special rights be given to groups”. Government of Nigeria has not actually performed effectively, this role of addressing deprived group’s demands to maintain a stable polity. The effects of this negligence are obvious: mutual suspicion, ethnic division and struggle, royalty and patriotism to tribal affiliations rather than central government, political crisis, marginalization and demand for independence by some groups.

Power distribution in Nigerian politics has essentially been situated within the ambit of group (ethnic) influence, coercive power tussle, mobilization and alignments among the likely interest (ethnic) groups. Manifest of this, unarguable is seen in the fourth republic power alignment: 1999-2007 President (South-West, Yoruba), 2007-2009 (North-West, Hausa), 2009-2015 (South-South, Ijaw), 2015-date (North-Central, Hausa). Prior to this dispensations, especially during the military era, all the heads of state except Ironsi and Obasanjo, were of Hausa extraction. Reality of this means that in the sector of political power (military and civil) Igbos are not well disposed to command influence that will enable them ascend to power.

Therefore constructive internal restructuring is needful to be able to exact appreciable influence in group power distribution in Nigeria political domain. The power that be must allow this to happen for Nigeria to progress.

Political bargaining in Nigeria democracy

Victory in election and formation of government in Nigeria have been acts of agreement between ethnic groups to give their support to such move or formation of alliance among some political parties representing such ethnic lines. Manifestation of this was real in 1958, 1964-1965 elections. Subsequently, it continued even in 2015 general election. In this political development, the Igbo have kept crying of marginalization. Even at these woes they have not been able to create a platform for bargaining for power or adequate allocation of value from the polity. Unlike the Igbo, their contemporaries (Hausa and Yoruba) have always formed a political party to call their own both in structure, ideology and base. Existence of this gives them strong hold in demanding for recognition for every government and for promoting collective interest of their people. AG (Action Group), AD (Alliance for Democracy), ACN (Action Congress of Nigeria) are political parties serving as ethnic identity and instrument of bargain of the Yoruba in the struggle for power and authoritative allocation of value in the game of who get what, when and how in Nigeria. With this they have been able to mobilize and galvanize the support of their people at the grass root and even the elites both the traditional rulers and intellectuals thereby making the tribe significant in the country. Evidence of this, is the control of the states in the region by their political

party AG, AD, ACN and now APC. Likewise in the northern Nigeria parties like NPC, APP, ANPP, CPC and APC have been representing the interest of the region in all ramifications. With one voice these parties have commanded the voice of the people at grassroots in every election. Unfortunately such strong and collective political identity hardly exist among the people of the Igbo ethnic group even where such emerges like in the case of NCNC, UPP and APGA, the people hardly give them substantial support they require to survive. Rather some give their support to other perceived strong political parties of other ethnic group. It is worse when a candidate like Rochas Okolocha wins on the platform of such party as it happened in APGA and dumps the party for a more national one. This singular act has not actually given the leverage to the Igbo Nation in getting their share in Nigeria's political bargain. Political bargain in Nigerian from independence till date has usually been based on ethnic formation and affiliations. In as much as this has not helped the system to grow it still remains the only true way of advancing any nation's interest within the polity of Nigerian entity.

The Igbo nation in Nigeria political bargaining

Political bargaining in Nigeria since its independence, especially after the civil war has been ethnic based. Each ethnic group organizes and galvanizes its people to struggle for power within the polity. Even political parties, ideologies and manifestoes have ethnic representation. However, it can be stated that the Igbo have not been able to establish good institutions and framework for objective and beneficial bargain in Nigeria polity like other tribes. They have all it takes to do it namely human, financial resources,

contacts and otherwise. Pitiably, lack of patriotic leadership and committed followership have been serious setbacks to their unity of purpose. Obviously this is the only frontier and bond through which such forceful structure can be established. The mentality of IGBO ENWE EZE and AKU NESI OBI IKE distracts everyone from giving his/her respect and mandate to such established institution like OHANEZE NDIGBO.

Ohaneze Ndigbo which supposedly should serve such expectation is always divided among itself in quest for power. Division of such collective identity and common interest-pursuing organization contributed immensely to its weaknesses. Some people cling to it to seek for government recognition for personal interest at the expense of Igbo interests. This penchant attitude for self aggrandizement among the elites of the Igbo affected the region's interest during creation of states and local government areas in country during military regimes. Number of states and local areas in a region determine what accrue to it from national allocation.

States and local government distribution among Nigerian regions

Zones	No of States	No of L.G.A
South East	5	95
South West	6	137
South South	6	122
North East	6	186
North West	7	112
North Central	6	121

Source: Madubuko, (2008:118)

Federal allocation to states 1999-2005 in billions of Naira

Group 1		Group 2		Group 3		Group 4	
Delta	387.4	Ondo	165.2	Ogun	134.4	Ekiti	102.0
Rivers	357.6	Niger	164.5	Edo	131.5	Plateau	101.9
Akwa-Ibom	313.6	Imo	155.5	Anambra	130.2	Gombe	99.6
Bayelsa	285.6	Jigawa	151.8	Cross River	126.7	Nassarawa	96.7
Kano	254.4	Bauchi	146.0	Zamfara	125.6		
Lagos	226.6	Sokoto	146.0	Yobe	121.8		
Kastina	192.9	Osun	143.5	Abia	120.6		
Oyo	180.3	Adama wa	136.9	Taraba	119.0		
Kaduna	177.4	FCT	136.2	Enugu	117.0		
Borno	165.6	Kebbi	134.6	Kwara	122.5		

Source: Madubuko, (2008:116)

Such division and attitude is not pronounced among other ethnic groups especially, the Hausa in Arewa Consultative Forum and the Yoruba in Afenifere. Even Niger-Delta people are more united. For instance Niger Delta through its militant group demanded for government attention over oil spillage, aquatic

pollution and underdevelopment of the area and got government attention. Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was created to develop the area, ameliorate the suffering of the people. Amnesty Programme was established to train, empower and engage the unemployed and restive youths of the areas. Politically, vice president slot was given to them under PDP arrangement to compensate them. This made the region produced Nigerian President (2009-2015) in the person of Goodluck Jonathan at the death of Umoru Musa Yar'dua. The Yoruba consistently demanded for the office of the president and other vital political positions at the federal level starting from 1960. The coordinated efforts to achieve this gave rise to selection of Chief MKO Abiola as flag bearer of the SDP in 1993 presidential election which he won. Though the election was annulled, Abiola imprisoned and later died. The people of Yoruba through all their frontiers, organizations and elites locally and internationally kept on agitating for restoration of Abiola's mandate which to them was Yoruba's mandate. Manifestation of this was the selection of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as PDP Presidential flag bearer in 1999 and subsequent victory in that election. He governed Nigeria as president from 1999-2007. This same ethnic group went further to produce Vice President of Nigeria in 2015 through a careful political arrangement by amalgamation of CPC, ACN, ANPP and a fraction of APGA.

Unfortunately, from 1960, Nigerian leadership from Igbo extraction was ceremonial president of Azikiwe 1960-66, six months military president of Ironsi as against 38 years of the Hausa, and 11 years and 3 months of the Yoruba. Every agitation for president or vice president in recent times has not yielded a

successful result for the Igbo - MOSSOB and IPOB protest notwithstanding. The obvious is that the people of Igbo ethnic group are not united in their quest for political recognition and they are not taken to be serious. The political actors of Igbo extraction that actually suppose to encourage the activities of these groups, direct it to positive issue to achieve collective interest are the one sabotaging their efforts. State governments of the region have engaged state efforts for brutal elimination of these pressure groups tagged enemy of Nigerian unity and integration. South-east governors forum hardly speak out seriously on injustice against their people unlike their counterpart in the north. Sharia law got total support of Northern Governors' Forum even when it was posing serious threat to Nigeria unity. Even the recent controversial Fulani Herdsmen attack in Enugu State, the Northern Governors stood to defend their people. Boko Haram is argued to have subsisted during Goodluck's administration due to support it gained from economic and political elites of the north which paved ways for 2015 presidential victory. We will however, not fail to highlight the fact that the successive powers that be contributed immensely in disorganization of Ndigbo. Political elites from the order regions are afraid of let power get to the hand of the Igbo because of the atrocities they have committed against Igbo people. They are afraid of what the Igbo will do if they grab power. Such fear should vanish for Nigeria to move forward. They did not believe that a South Southerner can govern without dividing Nigeria but Goodluck did it better than most of them.

Since this 4th Republic, the Yoruba have had parties to call their own (AD and ACN), Hausa (APP, ANPP, CPC). Igbo came

up with APGA in 2003 still date the party is not commanding respect of all spectra of Igbo society. The elite class among them prefers identifying with the ruling class at centre rather their own people thereby truncating efforts of average Igbo men to have a platform of their own for political bargaining in Nigeria political structure. The conviction of an average Igbo man is one Nigeria, unity of purpose and peace that is why in every part of Nigeria, the Igbo are there not just for business but building modern permanent structures and institutions even better than the indigenous people of their areas resident. This is ideal and best when the whole nation or at least the tripartite ethnic groups work in that direction. Taking the fight from one group that is not in the majority nor controls state power is mere waste of time. Where Nigeria has been divided and recognized on ethnic basis, it is incumbent on the Igbo to create a niche in Nigerian polity to be able to get their own equitable share. This should not be done in isolation anymore. Internal structure within Igbo people should first and foremost be created. With such well to do platform other tribes will be ready to associate and negotiate with them. Unfortunate incidence where the political actors of the area are divided within themselves and form alignments with people of other region to outdo their own brother is suicidal in political bargain chessboard. The experience during PDP primary of 1999 and 2003 where some Igbo men aligned with the north to scuttle presidential ambition of their own brother, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, who was founder of the party and borne the brunt of Abacha military onslaught against agitators for democratic transition. The betrayal gave an edge to Obasanjo a new entrant into the party. Though, it was manipulated by the power elites to compensate the

Yoruba for Abiola's victory denied, it could have been a tough outing that would call for recognition and negotiation with the Ekwueme group. Even during Obasanjo regime 1999-2003 the Igbo produced about 4 senate presidents as a result of incessant impeachment orchestrated by the government. It was not same in the House of Representative house of representative the north produced only one speaker during that dispensation. Southern Nigeria political scene has ever been dominated by cleavages (Nnoli, 1978). Of course this is antithetical to her political development and recognition.

Power distribution in Nigeria since Independence

North West	Year
Gen Murtala Mohammed	July 29 1975- Feb 13 1976
Alhaji Shehu Shagari	Oct 1, 1979- Dec 31, 1983
Maj Gen Muhammadu Buhari	Jan 1, 1984- Aug 27, 1985
Gen Sani Abacha	Nov 17 1993-June 8 1998
Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	May 29 2007-2009
Muhammadu Buhari	May 29 2015-Date
North East	
Alhaji Abubakar Balewa	Oct 1, 1960-Jan 16 1966
North Central	
Gen Yakubu Gowon	July 29, 1966-July 29 1975
Gen Ibrahim Babangida	Aug 27 1985-Aug 26 1993
Gen Abdul Salami Abubakar	June 9, 1998- May 29 1999
South East	
Gen Aguiyi Ironsi	Jan 16 1966- July 29 1966
South West	
Gen Olusegun Obasanjo	Feb 14 1976-Oct 1, 1979

Chief Ernest Shonekan	Aug 29 1993- Nov 17 1993
South South	
Goodluck Jonathan	2009-May 29 2015

Source: Madubuko 2008 with updates to 2016 by the authors

In summation, North-Central 18 years, North-West 14years (still counting), North-East 6 years totally 38 years (still counting) for the North. South-West 11 years and 3 months, South-East 6 months, South-South 6 years totaling 17 years and 9months for the South. The Igbo only got six months in this 56-year of power distribution in Nigeria

Conclusion

Political bargaining in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria is always characterized by struggle and cleavages. Every group wants its region to benefit immensely from distribution of the national resource which is usually scarce. But to get much out of this, each group strives to unite itself, create formidable platform for productive bargain and associate with other strong groups who can help them to achieve their interest. Failure to resort to dialogue or neglect of agitations by the power that be may not be the best for Nigeria. Rather, understanding the working of the system and forming a formidable force to reckon with in the political equation is needful and useful. Such force must be accommodated for peace to reign. The Igbo should adopt a collective bargaining attitude in their quest for political relevance in Nigeria polity by first and foremost putting their house in order. Again, they should define their collective interests objectively, strengthen Ohaneze and use a political party like

UPP, APGA or PPA to mobilize human and material resources that will enable them bargain favourably with other regions. Continuous attempt to neglect the Igbos and people of the South-South is not healthy for Nigeria's continuous existence and one political entity. Population distribution and constitutional requirements for victory in presidential election made it impossible for any region to win presidential election alone without acceptance and support from people of other regions. Therefore, there is the need for collective bargain, not just by crying against marginalization and deprivation in the scheme of things but by standing out and taking the responsibility. In this task, political elites and intellectuals of the Igbo region have quite enormous job to do to accomplish this dream which has been at the front burner of the tribe since Nigerian independence in 1960. Failure to do this would still mean being irrelevant in the political equation of Nigeria.

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