
Ending the Unending Biafra Agitation: Transitional Justice

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ABSTRACT

The historical reports of attacks targeted against Easterners living in northern Nigeria after the coup of 29 July 1966, including 240 military officers of which three quarters were easterners led to the Nigerian civil war. Counter-agitation program of the Nigerian government has been more of military (Python dance) than non-military in its intervention and strategies, but there is a need to shift paradigm because it is not effective, leading to human rights violations as recorded in Abia, Anambra and Imo states where the government and civil society organizations are having conflicting figures in terms of casualties. This study is significant as it will explore non-military strategy. It will adopt a triangular survey method, employing In-Depth Interview (IDI), and questionnaire for primary data collection, while secondary data will be collected via archival documents and contemporary research will be reviewed. The theory that shall guide this study is Conflict Resolution/Transformational Theory rooted in the work of Galtung (1996) who suggested that conflict has both "life-affirming and life-destroying" aspects and that such conflict arises out of the contradictions in the community foundation or structure. This approach focuses on transformation of deep-rooted armed conflicts into peaceful ones based on a different understanding of peace-building approaches.

Keywords: Biafra, Agitation, Renaissance, Coup, Nigeria, Conflicts, Transitional Justice.

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The historical reports argue that a series of attacks targeted against peoples of Eastern region living in the north of Nigeria after the coup of 29 July 1966, during which Nigerian troops of northern origin systematically killed about 240 southern officers and men, of whom at least three quarters were easterners which led to the emergence of Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as the Supreme Commander to replace General Aguiyi Ironsi, an ethnic Igbo. This action destroyed the Nigerian army as an effective agent of Nigerian unity as well as the unity of the command because Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, who was the Military Governor of the Eastern Region, did not recognize Gowon as the rightful person to assume the position of supreme commander. Another massacre of citizens of the Eastern region in the north in September 1966 and the mass migration back to the east that ensued widened the rupture in national unity. Unfortunately, Nixon (1972) remarks that there were no peaceful measures explored, but unilateral moves of repression in areas of economic and political relations by both the East and the center worsened the conflict until the Eastern region transformed into Biafran Republic by proclaiming its independence on 30 May 1967. Causes of the 1967 Biafra agitation - Pogrom, military depletion, displacement leading to economic impoverishment and injustice.

The recent resurgences of Biafra agitations since 1999 under names like MASSOB and IPOB was based on the post-war events where former Biafran soldiers of Igbo ethnic group were reabsorbed into Nigerian army as conquered people, making them second class citizens thereby leading to their cries of marginalization (Amadiume, 2000). Also, the 20 pounds ceiling placed on bank lodgments for every Igbo after the war no matter how much such persons had in banks which is a calculated policy to neutralize the savings and capacity of the Igbos to rehabilitate and re-integrate into the Nigerian economy. Ikpeze (2000) articulated four clear dimensions this marginalization has manifested; 1. economic strangulation, 2. politico-bureaucratic emasculation, 3. military neutralization and 4. ostracism.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Understanding the structural and immediate causes of violent struggle is a prerequisite for developing sustainable resolution. This is so, because, wrong diagnosis will lead to wrong treatment. "In other words, analysis of what causes violent conflict/terrorism is an important step for any policymaker who would avoid it" (Adekanye 2007b: 215). Examining the Nigeria's intervention strategy for the Biafra agitation will reveal the use of force for force, which is due to the diagnosis which sees the struggle as first and foremost a military problem, which must be matched with military force, just like the counter terrorism programs in Nigeria which are majorly military oriented, making scholars wonder if that is the only approach that can work. The intervention strategy adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria since the 1960s has been force that led the civil war of 1967.

Even since 1999 with the restoration of democracy, that has seen the resurgence of the Biafra struggle under different names like MASSOB and IPOB, Nigerian government has been adopting one strategy – force – 'Python dance'. There is a strong need to link both the root causes and the proximate causes to the intervention strategy that must be developed and used. If abject poverty, illiteracy, marginalization, ethnic rivalry and intolerance and many other socio-economic and political conditions are seen to be the causes of Biafra agitation, then, for countering the phenomenon, any intervention that can bring lasting solution to the problem must address those conditions. Therefore, the problem this study is focusing on is the wrong intervention strategy of the Nigerian government in the Biafra agitation.

1.3.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explain the need to go beyond the use of military force for countering the Biafra struggle by developing appropriate alternate strategies for countering the phenomenon based on sound diagnosis of the sources of the problem.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Provide an up-to-date overview of the struggle from 1966 to 2017.
2. Explain the causes of the agitation leading to the civil war of 1967
3. Discuss the other sources of the resurgence of the struggle from 1999 to 2017
4. Explore the consequences of wrongly applying purely military means to non-military causes or sources of the Biafra agitation and
5. Describe the elements of good and sound strategies that can help address root causes of the struggle that will provide a long-lasting and sustainable resolution.
6. Recommend solution to the unending Biafra agitation

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study includes the following:

1. What are the major incidents of the Biafra agitation recorded in Nigeria?
2. As far as cause goes, what are the conditions that led the initial agitation of 1960s?
3. What has caused the reignition of uprising in the region fifty years after the secessionist war occurred?
4. To what extent is the sole military response in use effective in countering the Biafra agitation in Nigeria?
5. Are there some kinds of non-military strategies that would be necessary for stemming the Biafra agitation in Nigeria?
6. What solution strategies can be recommended for ending the Biafra agitation?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The academic and policy relevance of this study cannot be over-emphasized considering the current security realities in the Nigeria. Counter-agitation and counter-terrorism program in Nigeria has been more military than non-military in its intervention and strategies, but there is a need to shift paradigm because it is not effective. The casualty level is very high, the impact in terms of ameliorating the situation is very little and citizens all over the world are calling for a change of approach. There are calls proposing the expansion of the strategies towards violent conflict to go beyond just military to include non-military components. But the most recent call came from two former US Presidents, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton in December 2012, who argued that the US 'war on Drug' in Mexico is not working because 60,000 Mexicans have been killed between 2008 and 2012 and still the US drug problems are not abated.

They propose that the government of America go back to the drawing board because the US military approaches are not effective. In the same vein, this study is proposing that the Nigerian government go back to the drawing board to develop a strategy that goes beyond military and explore peace processes and socioeconomic provision. So, proposing a policy change based on academic research is important considering the challenges that Nigeria is facing today with the military (Python Dance) program that is leading to human rights violations as recorded in Abia, Anambra and Imo states where the government and civil society organizations are having conflicting figures in terms of casualties. This study will be very useful in countering agitation in Nigeria because it will design an implementable strategy for countering agitation.

1.5 Scope of the Study

Even though the Biafra agitation has come to be a major security issue of nationwide proportion, and the scourge of the problem was threatening to spread across the whole length and breadth of the southern Nigeria territorially as members of the groups are holding rallies and this forced the Nigerian government under President Mohamadu Buhari to proscribe the group a terrorist organization in 2017. This study cannot be limited to those southern states even though the states concerned have borne the brunt of agitation attacks, they have not been the only ones to be affected by the problem as there are reprisal attacks in northern Nigeria as was noticed in Kano and Kaduna and the most recent is the October 1st, 2017 quit notice deadline given to the Igbos to leave northern Nigeria. So, selecting them alone for the study will not be sufficiently representative of the domain and will negatively affect the recommendations of this study especially when the researcher is hoping to raise a policy paper from this study. Therefore, to achieve a national spread, the geographical areas of our study in include states outside of the south-east zone. The thematic scope of the study is to provide an up-to-date overview of the struggle from 1966 to 2017, explain the causes of the agitation leading to the civil war of 1967 and discuss the other sources of the resurgence of the struggle from 1999 to 2019. The study will explore the consequences of wrongly applying purely military means to non-military causes or sources of the Biafra agitation and design and describe the elements of good and sound strategies that can help address root causes of the struggle that will provide a long-lasting and sustainable resolution. The time frame of the study will concentrate on the agitation periods – 1967 to 1970, and from 1999 to 2017.

2. METHODS

This research adopts a survey qualitative method, and employ in-depth interview (IDI), for the collection of primary data, and for secondary data, archival documents and contemporary research will be reviewed. The IDI discussions are conducted in Lagos State the most cosmopolitan state in Nigeria with a lot of Igbo people and many other ethnic groups making it easy get diverse opinions to enrich the study.

2.1 Conflict Transformation Theory

The theory that shall guide this study is Conflict Resolution Theory rooted in the work of Galtung (1996) who suggested that conflict has both “life-affirming and life-destroying” aspects and that such conflict arises out of the contradictions in the community foundation or structure. This approach focuses on transformation of deep-rooted armed conflicts into peaceful ones based on a different understanding of peace-building. Another scholar who is credited with developing the first comprehensive conflict transformation-oriented approach to peace building is John Paul Lederach who argued that there is a need to resolve the dilemma between short term conflict management and long-term relationship building as well as the imperative to resolve the underlying causes of the conflict. Lederach sees the need to develop enduring structures of building peace by focusing on reconciliation in the community – the need to rebuild destroyed relationships. In this model, 3rd party intervention in conflicts should focus on supporting the (internal) parties to the conflict to achieve peace (Paffenholz, 2009).

2.2 Causes of the Agitation Leading to the Civil War of 1967

Causes of Biafra agitation can be divided into two- the remote causes which refer to those errors committed, mistakes made, events, that in one way or the other contributed to the Nigeria’s political instability, which are often ignored, but form the bedrock of the immediate crises that led to the attempted secession. (Iproject 2019) According to Iproject these remote causes date back to pre-amalgamation era, but their negative consequences still persist as freshly as ever till today. Nigeria is a very diverse country having independent kingdoms, empires, republics, caliphates with different socio-political structures, cultures and (sometimes) religion, which in most cases differed greatly from one another’s. Northern Nigeria was a highly centralized socio-political structure, with the caliphate at the head possessing an absolute power both in political, judicial and religions matters, while the South the case was different. The Yoruba dominated South-West was another form of centralized system of government which was more democratic and largely less totalitarian compared to the North. The Igbo dominated the East and their system of government was mainly republican as the small political units scattered everywhere were independent of one another. The system was totally decentralized and no one had the power to lord it over the other, yet they had leaders who just had the mandate to represent their people the way the people wished; as everybody was involved in the political life of the community and everything was by consensus. It was very clear that Nigeria is a country of people with different value systems that has no unity of purpose but has to be brought together by the colonial masters for the major

Reason best captured by Alexander Madiebo in these words:

The federation of Nigeria as it exists today has never really been one homogenous country, for its widely differing peoples and tribes are yet to find any basis for true unity. This unfortunate yet obvious fact notwithstanding, the former colonial master had to keep the country one, in order to effectively control his vital economic interest concentrated in the more advanced and “politically unreliable” (Madiebo, 1980:3)

2.2.1 The Remote Causes of The Biafra Declaration.

The failed coup of January 1966 led the massacre of the Igbos in the North which was the first part of the well-organized pogrom which was evidently of Northern government initiative started on May 29, 1966 with thousands of corpses of Southerners littered the major cities in the North. With no punitive measure from Ironsi against their first act, with full confidence they came back the second time and this time, Ironsi who visited the West on his nationwide tour was killed along with Lt. Col. Francis Fajuyi, the Governor of the West, and many soldiers of Southern origin and Easterners in particular were victims and after them, the Eastern civilians became the primary targets.

The massive killing of the Igbos by Gowon regime was non-stop and Ojukwu was looking for a solution to this problem. Gowon remained heartless and quickly called his diversionary ad hoc constitutional conference that took off on 12th September 1966 which was more of dictation than discussion that within few weeks with the support of the North, endorsed confederation and later shifted to federation, and eventually ended with the unitary system of government. The last effort for peace was squandered when Ojukwu and Gowon interpreted the Aburi Accord differently despite the fact that it was well documented. Ojukwu having noticed the unrelenting thirst for the blood of the Easterners, called the Eastern Nigerian community leaders on May 26th, 1967, and explained the situation them and the Consultative Assembly in turn mandated him on May 27th, 1967, to declare Eastern Nigeria a sovereign state with the Name 'Republic of Biafra' at the earliest possible date. Gowon's swift reaction to this was to abandon the Aburi Accord and created twelve states of on May 27, 1967, and Ojukwu declared the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967 and the Biafran war started on July 6, 1967. (Madiebo, 1980)

3. CAUSES OF THE RESURGENCE OF THE STRUGGLE FROM 1999 TO 2019

The recent resurgences of Biafra agitations since 1999 under names like MASSOB and IPOB could be due to the restoration of democracy which gave people more voices to contribute and gave rise in the agitation. Also, the strength of the technology, social media and education. But most importantly, the internationalization of issues. Globalization is making it easier for people all over the world to know that what happened in another part of the world can happen where they are. Igbos are seeing that protests are leading to changes and they are encouraged to do so. I also think that because the present agitators are post-war youths who did not go through the torture and hardship of the victims of the civil war, and therefore cannot understand the danger of calling for 'war'.

However, two of the interviewees for this study, Igbo men, one who is an electrician and the other who sells provision store who described himself as a victim of the civil war because his family lost their houses in Port Harcourt explained that the increment in the agitation noticed in President Buhari's administration (2015 +) is very high because of the understanding of who he is considering his past antecedents. Going back to when he was the head-of-state in 1984, Buhari antagonised Ndigbo by locking up Vice-President Alex Ekwueme, an Igbo man, in jail in Kirikiri, while President Shehu Shagari, a Fulani man was only placed under house arrest. Also, as Chairman of the Petroleum Trust Fund, (PTF), during General Abacha's regime, Buhari discriminated blatantly against the South and especially the South-East as he built 13,870 kilometres were built in the North representing 76 percent while he built 13.5 percent in the South-East and South-South combined.

PTF's National Health and Rehabilitation Programme (NHERP) did not carry out a programme in the entire South as it got 0 percent allocation, while the North got 100 percent in the tertiary programme. In the vocational programme, the entire South had only 3 percent while the North had 97 percent. The same was for the primary education where the South had only 12 percent but the north was allocated 88 percent and for secondary education, while the North had 86 percent, the South had just 14 percent.

The five states of the SE gave Buhari only 1000 votes, which has never happened in the history of Nigeria politics. He is marginalizing the Igbos and even said so in his media interview in Washington DC at the US Institute for Peace. According to Aribisala (2015) the treatment of the Igbos as second-class citizen is one of the causes of the Biafra agitation. The Igbos constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, and since the civil war 45 years ago, they have been treated as if they were a minority ethnic group. No Igbo man or woman has been considered worthy of being head-of-state, and the only one of the six geopolitical zones of the country with five states, all other zones have six or more. This administration did not think it proper to appoint Igbos to any important position and even their constitutional rights based on federal character policy are denied them. In addition to the Buhari administration's anomalies is the decision to move Boko Haram prisoners down from the North to the South-East which was strongly resisted by the Igbos as it would have made them a target of suicide-bombers.

Apart from political reasons, poor socio-economic condition plays a huge role. The South East have the least of federal government presence in all areas and been that government is the highest employer of labor, there are many unemployed youths, who are educated and do understand the wickedness of the government. Another participant, a Yoruba man, a pastor and a technocratic argued that the problem of Nigeria not been able to divide if need be was caused by an Igbo man, Dr. Azikiwe and he was very angry with what the IPOB is doing now and does not see any wrong with the use of force by the government. Considering the socio-economic condition, he said the Igbos are doing well even without holding power, after all when Jonathan was in power, the Igbos had their turn.

However, this study guesses that the worst reason for the unending agitation is the feeling of rejection and a sense of been victims in a country of their own. Obasi (2015) argued that the political and economic grievances, separatist agitation of the Igbos is driven by a strong feeling of collective victimization, which was reiterated in 1949 by the prominent Igbo leader Nnamdi Azikiwe who asserted "it would appear that God has specially created the Ibo people to suffer persecution and be victimised because of their resolute will to live". Also, almost 50 years later, another distinguished Igbo, Chinua Achebe, claimed that "Nigerians of all other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the Igbo". Mostly notably is the record that over 30,000 Igbos in the north were killed and two million fled back to the south in 1966 in the "Igbo pogrom" right after the January coup and July counter-coup. During the Biafra War, all other groups rallied round the federal government and supported them to kill about two million people, mostly Igbo, and more died during post-war riots and conflicts in the north. But unfortunately, these feelings of rejection have been deepened over the decades by recurrent rioting in the north in which Igbo have suffered great losses.

4. APPLYING PURELY MILITARY STRATEGIES TO MANAGING THE BIAFRA AGITATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Analyzing the governments responses to the agitation since 1966 have been generally intolerant and combative. (Kazeem 2017). The government generally lumps the separatist movement together with terrorists' group like Boko Haram and the militant Yoruba group the O'odua People's Congress (OPC) as "extremist groups" threatening national security. Nigerian government led by General Gowon's response was the civil war. In the fourth republic led by President Olusegun Obasanjo, the administration arrested the leader of the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Ralph Uwazuruike, charged him with treason and detained him from 2005 to 2007. Police clashed with MASSOB members repeatedly, killing many. The next repressive government was that of President Buhari's government has been similarly intolerant. IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu was arrested in October 2015 till April 2017, by November 2015, he issued a "serious warning" that: "The corporate existence of Nigeria as a single entity is not a subject of debate and will not be compromised". On another occasion, he said: "For Nigeria to divide now...it is better for all of us to jump into the sea and get drowned".

Following the hardline stance of the president, security agencies shut down the unlicensed radio station, Radio Biafra, operated by the separatist group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), banned pro-Biafran newspapers, arresting and brutalising non-compliant vendors. These measures have driven many publications off the streets, but have not curbed the even more vigorous social media. The security agencies have also broken up rallies and meetings, killing and arresting scores. According to Amnesty International report, at least 150 agitators have been killed between August 2015 and August 2016. Even though the army rejected the report, IPOB argued that the number of deaths was even higher. By January 2017, IPOB organized a “solidarity” rally with new US President Donald Trump and police reportedly killed 11 participants and arrested more than 65 and many are still in jail. Army Chief, Lt Gen Tukur Buratai later vowed to “crush” any threat to the country’s unity and territorial integrity, a warning apparently carried out in the 2nd of December in the shooting of protesters.

Government’s choice of force is typical as studies have shown that it is not the best strategy. The Just War theorists have argued that the choice of war must be when it is the last option and when certain conditions are met. But research has shown that governments of countries like to use force because of political reasons which most times make it unnecessary, drag for a long time and do not achieve the desired goal. A Yoruba lady medical doctor who was interviewed on the government use of force totally condemned it and argued that it cannot help the situation, but said that improving the socio-economic conditions of the Igbos in the region would be helpful. Some of the consequences of the government choice of force and indiscriminate arrest and detention of IPOB members include undue elevation of the IPOB members as leaders of the people, and giving them publicity and media coverage, high level of casualty as many people are killed, properties worth millions of Naira are destroyed. For example, the MASSOB spokesman Uchenna Madu said Kanu’s arrest and detention assisted “immensely in reviving the consciousness and sympathy for Biafra’s actualization”. This is definitely not what the government wants to achieve – reviving the consciousness of Biafra. Another commentator, Aribisala (2015) argued that the arrest of Kanu has given him huge publicity locally and internationally, and elevating him to a leader and a freedom fighter. This new status is what he is using to engage other high-profile world leaders and getting the required and needed attention. The heavy-handed response has earned the agitators wider local and international sympathy, radicalised their followers and trigger more desperate actions.

In terms of loss of lives and properties, Kazeem (2017) recorded that police actions were largely restrained, broke up some rallies, arrested scores of people and charged 137 as at 1st of December. According to him, the agitators claimed some protestors were killed by police. There were attacks on mosques and northern business interests in the South East invited retaliatory violence against Ibos and their businesses in the north. The most scared consequence is the tension and fear the military strategy the government chose to adopt is causing in the citizenry. According to Adefisoye and Ariyo (2019) the various military operations have evoked tensions and skepticism in different quarters. For example, during the period of Operation Python Dance II, the Abia state Governor, Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu, declared curfew as parts of efforts to reduce the rising casualties resulting from violent clashes between the military and IPOB activities. This operation led to the killing and disappearance and killing of several IPOB members (Adigun, 2018), Ekwueme and Uguwanyi (2018). Even Amnesty International 2016 Report have it that the military *gunned down unarmed people* during an event organized by IPOB in Onitsha, Anambra state. (Amnesty International, 2016b). On September 11, 2017, about 50 military personnel invaded the NUJ House in Umuahia, Abia State in the South-East region and journalist were harassed and intimidated and working tools like phones, iPads, tablets and other official documents were destroyed.

The growing tension in the polity due to the military operations in Nigeria has led to huge mistrust of the military as noticed in the purported vaccination planned by the Nigerian Military as it parts of its corporate social responsibility elicited great tension across the South-East and South-South regions. The Punch Newspaper on October 12 reported that schools were closed and many communities across the two regions were thrown into confusion as people rumored that the military is trying to spread diseases via fake vaccination. The people of that region could not trust the military.

The economic effects of the military operations are disastrous as the military's shows of power and intimidation have sent panic and suspense everywhere such that there has been a decline in economic activities in the waterways. There is shortage of food supply, transportation crisis and other social challenges.

All the participants response on this had one response - not good and dangerous. The negative effects of the use of military force are too many to count. The socio-psychological effects of their operations are severe. The trust base of Nigerians of the military is very low. They see them as agents of oppressive government and wish they are withdrawn to the barracks. They complained that the Buhari's administration look like we are in military regime. The presence of the soldiers all over the South East has been highly condemned as it has negative effect on the economy. Movement is restricted and transporters a bemoaning the situation.

5. APPLYING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING THE BIAFRA AGITATION.

Having realized that the government approach is sole military force, and it is not working as the Biafra agitation is still on, it is very obvious that there is a need for other strategies that will bring a lasting solution to this problem. Research has shown that military force has never resolved conflicts of identity and ideology. Mbagwu (2017), Rothman (1997). Identity based crises are the most difficult conflicts to resolve as participants are ready to pay the ultimate price and the force of bullets cannot stop them. Also, research has shown that non-military/TJ strategies are better alternatives as they address the fundamental causes of the problem like in South Africa, Chile, Sierra Leone, Argentina and Rwanda just to mention a few.

Transitional Justice (TJ) is the best alternative strategy that can help resolve the Biafra agitation because the principles of TJ are relevant in resolving the agitation. According to the International Center for Transitional Justice - ICTJ (2009:1)

Transitional justice is a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights. It seeks recognition for victims and promotion of possibilities for peace, reconciliation and democracy. Transitional justice is not a special form of justice but justice adapted to societies transforming themselves after a period of pervasive human rights abuse. In some cases, these transformations happen suddenly; in others, they may take place over many decades.

The 2004 UN Secretary General defines Transitional Justice as

...the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation

Analysing the conditions (human rights violations, abuses, killings, armed conflict, dictatorship, abuse of the rule of law, lack of democracy and so on) that make TJ possible, it is obvious that the conditions leading to the Biafra agitation are similar as identified in the causes of the IPOB agitation and therefore can benefit from the TJ based intervention. TJ principles are most helpful either in a post conflict transformation after armed conflict; or in dealing with past abuses committed by dictatorships or authoritarian regimes. The main aim of transitional justice is to end impunity and establish the rule of law in the context of democratic governance. The major transitional justice mechanisms to deal with past human rights abuses are discussed next.

5.1 Criminal Prosecutions

When offenders are not punished, they continue to create the impression that it is proper and the victims continue to hurt. But if there is a criminal prosecution of perpetrators who have committed major human rights violations, it sends a clear message that it is not acceptable and it helps healing of the past abuses. One of the motivations for the Biafra agitators is the lack of acknowledgement of the wrongs, pogrom and abuses meted out to the Igbos by the Nigerian government which has not been addressed. That is even why there has been a court hearing at the ECOWAS court seeking the compensation for losses the Igbos incurred. If there is a criminal investigation into issues of abuse, violations and killings of the Igbos especially in northern Nigeria and other parts of the country, this study believes that there will be a sense relief on the part of the agitators as those responsible for committing crimes, including serious violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of international human rights law, are tried in accordance with international standards of fair trial and, where appropriate, punished. So, establishing criminal tribunals represents a historic achievement in seeking accountability for international crimes.

5.2 Truth Commissions

Truth Commissions (TC) are established to seek truth concerning atrocities committed by people during conflict situations; this a truth-seeking process could help to investigate human rights violations. Even though, this Commissions are non-judicial inquiries that help determine the facts, root causes, and societal consequences of past human rights violations, the aim is to provide acknowledgement and recognition of suffering and survival to those most affected and this is a very important process in transforming any conflict. Truth Commissions help:

...to discover, clarify, and formally acknowledge past abuses; to address the needs of victims; to "counter impunity" and advance individual accountability; to outline institutional responsibility and recommend reforms; and to promote reconciliation and reduce conflict over the past by listening to victims' stories, perhaps holding public hearings and publishing a report that describes a broad array of experience of suffering, commissions effectively give victims a public voice and bring their suffering to the awareness of the broader public.

The major goal of the truth commissions is to promote national reconciliation, with many incorporating the word "reconciliation" in their official mandate and/or name. It is important to know that reconciliation is not a quick fix, but it is a long-term social process that cannot be achieved by a truth commission alone. And imagine a country like Nigeria that went through a three years civil war where over one million people were killed from one ethnic group and the country has not thought it necessary to establish a TC where the accused and the victim could at least meet and discuss their experiences. But unfortunately, what our government did was make efforts to kill all information relating to the civil war to the extent of removing Nigerian history from our school curriculum at primary and secondary education.

If the country has had a time to discuss the Nigerian civil war, I am sure the division, anger, pains and ethnic hatred in Nigeria would not be this much. If Nigeria had established a TC, I am sure the anger of the Igbos towards the other ethnic groups would not have been this bad until the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and late Chinua Achebe would not have made those statement expressing the hatred the Igbos face in Nigeria since after the civil war to the extent that they have not been allowed to become president of Nigeria which is one of the complaints of the Biafra agitators.

5.3 Reparations

During conflicts, people incur loss, both materially and emotionally. Any effort to help repair the material and moral damages of past abuse is very important in transforming that conflict. The repair could take a mix of material and symbolic benefits to victims that may include financial compensation and official apologies.

Sometimes, the society could establish a form of memorial to acknowledge and preserve memory of victims publicly and raise moral consciousness about past abuse, in order to build a bulwark against its recurrence. Reparations are important to victims as they seen as the most direct and meaningful way of receiving justice. Many Igbos are still complaining of the losses they incurred as a result of the Nigerian civil war. Many of the victims lost properties in different parts of the country especially in Port Harcourt and in the North. Successive governments have made no efforts to return their properties to them. The loss still hurts and the governments both at federal and state levels have not deemed it necessary to return people's properties to them. Even in the Army, many Igbo officers lost their positions and a treated as second class citizens in the Army. If the Nigerian government is serious about resolving the Biafra agitation, it must make effort to address the issue of losses the Igbos incurred because of the war. Repairing the relationship should not be based only on the statement of General Gowon 'no victor no vanquished' which was accredited to him as a way of saying that there was winner or loser. Something concrete must be done to address the injustices that led to the civil war and the violations and death committed during the war. All the respondents in this study have advocated for reparation for the Igbos.

5.4 Institutional Reform

Another important action that must be taken to transform any conflict and bring sustainable peace is to reform the government institutions to make sure that they promote fairness and equity to safeguard against the recurrence of human rights violations. The institutions that could be reformed include the parliament, judiciary, security sector and the electioneering process. Programmes on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration must be initiated as the war fallouts must be addressed. Public institutions that supported the authoritarian regime must be reformed to promote democracy, human rights protection and sustainable peace. Those institutions that created fears in the people must be reformed to be efficient and fair institutions that enjoy civic trust and vetting of the personnel who supported the oppressive government.

These staff members must be removed from public service because they will obstruct the reform that is planned. The people's trust in the public service will be low if the people who perpetuated the oppression are still in service. Unfortunately, the people who executed the pogrom against the Igbos are still in service and continue to stop any effort to resolve the agitation and demands of reparation and equity. The vetting of these oppression agents is one of the demand of the Biafra agitators, and I believe that if these public employees who are personally responsible for gross violations of human rights or serious crimes under international law are still in service, it shows a basic lack of integrity and breached the trust of the citizens they were meant to serve.

5.5 Gender Justice

Gender based sexual violence is always one violation that is always associated with armed conflict and TJ principle strongly advocate that efforts should be made to challenge impunity for sexual and gender-based violence and ensure women's equal access to redress of human rights violations. It is a must for post conflict reconstruction to have a section that addresses gender justice because women and men experience conflict and human rights violations differently. Studies have shown that women are seen as spoils of war, and perpetrators must be prosecuted, reparations must be delivered to women and their families. Women's experiences must be documented and institutional reform that secures human security needs and promotes women's access to justice must be implemented. A lot of Igbo women were violated by Nigerian soldiers as they were seen as army wives. Rape cases were reported and after fifty years of the civil war, there has been no effort made to address the violations the women faced. In an effort to end the agitation for Biafra secession, the wrongs against the women and children must be addressed.

5.6 Memorialization

Memorials are kept for a purpose, and in the context of TJ, they serve the purpose of honouring those who died during conflict or other atrocities, examine the past, address contemporary issues and show respect to victims. The benefits are many and one of them is that records help to prevent denial and help societies move forward. Just like many countries remember certain events by dedicating a day to commemorate the occasion or person, so should the victims of war and human rights abuses not be forgotten and states have a duty to preserve the memory of such crimes. Another important reason why memorials should be kept is that they serve as indispensable educational initiatives to establish a historical public record that is beyond denial and to help prevent repetition. This study strongly believes that if efforts are made to immortalize the memories of the victims of the Nigerian civil war, and special memories and sites of the war are preserved, it is believed that it will help reduce if not end the Biafra agitation.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this study have shown that the agitation is real, the response by the government is military force, and the result is further agitation making it unending. However, the TJ strategy is relevant and the mechanisms are appropriate and it is the way to go. But declaring IPOB a terrorist group is not deterring the group. So, the study is advocating for a change of strategy from military force to look at the TJ principles as they can be effective in resolving the agitation and the attendant problems.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy recommendations are made:

1. Nigerian government must go beyond the use of military force as it is only escalating the tension. There is a strong need to initiate non-military strategies
2. The issue of marginalization which the people of the South East zone is complaining must be addressed. Constitutional provisions that guide the interactions and relationships of all zones in the country must be adhered to for peaceful co-existence
3. Poor economic conditions must be improved upon to manage youth restiveness. It has been identified that unemployment is playing a role in the agitation.
4. Government should initiate a peace process so that dialogue could start. Mere intimidation cannot stop the agitation. When people have opportunity to talk like in TC, wrongs could be righted and wrong assumptions could be cleared.
5. There is a strong need to initiate a program to promote unity of all ethnic groups. Nigerians are divided along ethnic lines and it is dangerous. Policies of government are viewed with ethnic coloration which is dangerous. Efforts must be made to make our multi-ethnicity work for our benefits.

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