

The ills of IPOB sit at home and it's Implication on the Economy of the South-East Geo-Political zone of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The continued observance and obedience to ill may one day resort to institutionalizing ill as a legitimate approach and practice of the people as against the age-known legitimate norm, practice and character of the people. This explains the IPOB sit at home and its adverse effect on the economy of the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria visa-a-viz her economic development. Hence this paper examines the effect of the ills of IPOB sit at home and it's implication on the economy of the South-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. However, as its objective the paper examined the nature of the IPOB sit at home, the extent at which the IPOB sit at home is affecting the economy of the south-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study is based on secondary sources of data which comprises of internet materials, magazines, newspaper publications, and journal articles. While relying on content analysis and the Relative deprivation theory as its framework of analysis, the paper identified that IPOB as a group is currently shooting the south-east zone and other areas within its loyalty on the leg, which may sooner or later crumble the economy of these areas. The paper recommends among others that dialogue is a tangible tool that will go a long way in melting the heart and mind of the presidency, which will yield a fruitful result than the sit-at home.

Key words: Deprivation, Economy, Economic Development, Secession, Agitation

1 INTRODUCTION

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a separatist organization in Nigeria, comprising mainly south-east geo-political zone, part of South-south, and part of North-central (Benue and Kogi). IPOB was formed in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu over the perceived excessive power abuse wielded by the Nigerian state which they deemed illegitimate, hence the quest for independence of the Biafrans(Igbo's) from Nigeria's government, which was further orchestrated by perceived marginalization, and corruption etc.

Following several media attacks on the Nigeria's government by the IPOB war-lord (Mazi-Nnamdi Kanu) On 19 October 2015 Nnamdi Kanu was arrested by Nigeria security force on the charges of sedition, ethnic incitement and treasurable felony. As a result of this arrest, on the 2nd of December 2015 most part of Anambra state especially in Onitsha, and part of Aba, Umuahia, and Enugu states recorded high rate of protest, riots, and police clashes which resulted to the death and injury of not fewer than 129 persons which were mostly youths. Nnamdi Kanu was later bailed following several public agitations.

The scenarios worsened, that in June 2021, Kanu was arrested by the Nigerian government in Kenya and brought back to the country. He was re-arraigned on charges bordering on treasonable felony brought against him by the Federal Government over his agitation for the separatist Republic of Biafra. On July 30, 2021, Emma Powerful the IPOB spokesperson declared that every Monday starting from August 9, 2021 would be a sit-at-home. A form of protest that will continue till Nnamdi Kanu its leader released from the

custody of the Department of State Security. On August 2021, IPOB introduced sit at home order which started firstly as an annual event partly to remember those who died in Nigeria Biafra war, then so many people did not mind a day to remember the dead. The annual sit at home later transformed into a tool for achieving other goals including awareness of other Biafra related issues of the recent.

The sit at home is becoming so frequent that it has triggered a backlash and a diminishing return. Knowing fully well the state of Nigeria government, sit at home can't solve the problem neither will it grant liberty to Biafra nor the release of Nnamdi Kanu, instead it will turn to be a thorn in the people's flesh as it affect their daily living.

The basic thrust of this paper therefore; is to examine the ills of IPOB sit at home and it's implication on the economy of the South-East Geo-Political zone of Nigeria. The study is based on qualitative analysis which relies on secondary data as its source of information. This include: books, newspapers, journals, among others. Be that as it may, the paper is divided into five sections. Section A deals with the introduction. Section B focuses on conceptual clarification. Section C is concerned with theoretical framework and Section D deals with discussions on the problematic, while section E focuses on conclusion and recommendations

2 Conceptual Clarification

In this study, it is necessary to clarify and analyze some concepts in relation to the problematic. Conceptual clarification is a critical factors in carryout any political research. This is important because it generate clear and deep understanding of the concepts under review. Conceptual clarification deals with the clarification of concepts / variable containing information about the problem under investigation. According to Biereenu Nnabugwu (2006), Conceptual review is a systematic examination or analysis of document containing information about the problem being investigated or studies. It is believed to be most essential part of every research because every human work is reviewed for better understanding. It is important to analyze thematically the divergent views of scholar in this study.

Scholars have described IPOB from their different views and perspectives. Though no known scholar have been able to give any definitional concept of the term. Thus, literature on concept will be more focused on IPOB as an organization and also the comments of the people through media publications based on Monday Sit at home order.

Scholars like Ekpoand Agory (2019 p5), describe IPOB as a secessionist movement based in south-east Nigeria with the aim of restoring the defunct Biafra, albeit through peaceful means. He maintained that the objectives of the organization are to facilitate and advocate the Igbo's right to self-determination. Nwaiwu (2016) and Okafor (2017) traced the formation of the group to the historical and cultural origin of igbo, so as to seek the secession of Biafran Nation from Nigeria.

On the phenomenon of IPOB Monday sit at home, a statement released by Anambra state commissioner for information and public enlightenment published by Onu (2021) on the national newspaper on the issue of Monday sit at home stated "this reminder has become imperative in view of the tendency of some people to observe in the last few months every Monday as a work free day, in compliance with the directive by some non-sectors in an efforts to prey the federal government to free the leader of the Indigenous People Of Biafra (IPOB) Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, who is standing trials for some charges in Abuja brought by the federal administration. The statement shows the ongoing observation of IPOB Monday sit at home order

as a result of the detectors of Nnamdi Kanu and many government workers that are strictly abiding by the sit at home order.

According to Okoye (2021) on the effects of IPOB Monday sit-at-home on national development cum political activities of the Southeast Region reads; “enforcers of the sit-at-home order have inadvertently been dealing a fatal blow to investments, investors and investees in south-east zone. He added, on the education sector, not a few examination candidates had missed taking their examinations because the enforcers of the sit-at-home order thwarted their efforts to reach the venues of their examinations on time on days we observed sit-at-home order”. From this assertion, it is obvious that the IPOB Monday sit-at-home order cum strategy has continued to wreck-havoc on the socio-economic activities within the state, because rights to run businesses, investments, education as at when due are being tampered with. □

Though the case was slightly different on the 2nd of December, 2021 as Akpan(2021) featured the empower on December 1st 2021 which states that

“We wish to inform Biafrans, friends of Biafra and lovers of freedom that our Leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, will be in court tomorrow, December 2, 2021 in Abuja. We therefore, urge Biafrans living in Abuja and its environs to come out en masse to solidarise with our leader with our leader” He later maintained that; there will be no lockdown tomorrow in any part of Biafra land as a result of the court appearance. Biafrans residents in Biafra land, as well as visitors to Biafra to Biafra land, are free to go about their lawful businesses without fear of molestation and intimidation. □

Drawing from the above, in an environment of fear of the un-known and uncertainty can an economy thrive? In giving a conceptual definition of economic development as one of the keywords in this paper economic development on a broad scale, is anything a community does to foster and create a healthy economy. It is also a policy intervention aiming to improve the well-being of people.

According to Karl Seidman economic development is "a process of creating and utilizing physical, human, financial, and social assets to generate improved and broadly shared economic well-being and quality of life for a community or region". Daphne Greenwood and Richard Holt distinguish economic development from economic growth on the basis that economic development is a "broadly based and sustainable increase in the overall standard of living for individuals within a community", and measures of growth such as per capita income do not necessarily correlate with improvements in quality of life.

3 Theoretical Framework

Relative deprivation theory was adopted for the purpose of this paper. The theory is based upon the view that the fundamental causes of political violence are the social and economic forces that operates within society. The relative deprivation theory was first developed by Runcimen to explain attitude of social inequality in twentieth- century in England. The major tenets of relative deprivation theory held that people are deprived of the things of high importance or necessity in their society such as status, money, right, and justice which tend to be hope or expectations of the people that their dissatisfaction will be attended to. According to Ruciman egoistic deprivation is a single individual feeling of comparative deprivation and Flynn argued that relative deprivation theory belongs to the larger body of interdisciplinary work known as

social movement theory. Social movement theory started in the late 19th century and includes the study of social mobilization (culture, political manifestation etc). This theory has been further contested by researchers of relative deprivation theory, who point the factors of the theory fail to indicate another unseen factor that moves individual or group of people towards social movement which is the will or their will. The "will" suggests that individuals are propelled to join a group activities believing in the strength of their "will power" to help them achieve meaningful results. A denial of the will power prevent some individual from joining despite facing the same problem or issues as those who join social movement activities.

Also Gurr (1970) explains relative deprivation in relation to psychological frustration aggression theory which argues that the reason of human attitude to violence is the mechanism inherent in frustration does not explicitly imply violence, when it's sufficient and prolonged its often leads to anger which degenerate into violence.

The theory explain the economic political and social deprivation that is relative rather than absolute, based on perception of justice and social of worth just as much as on the need to fulfill basic human rights. Relative deprivation theory also talks about poverty and social exclusion. The consequence of relative deprivation theory manifest through behaviour and attitude, feelings of stress, political attitude and participation in collective action. The grievances as defined through the deprivation aspect of this theory are considered instrumental in analyzing the convolutions of inequality and raison d'etre of the Biafran separatist movement and agitation in Nigeria. In other words, the theory explains IPOB sit at home as an instrument of agitation against deprivation and inequality that leads to the sit at home.

4 IPOB Sit at home Order

IPOB is an acronym for Indigenous People of Biafran, founded in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu a British Nigerian political activist and nationalist known for his advocacy of the contemporary Biafran independence movement

Previously, Biafra existed as an independent multiethnic republic consisting of the Igbo, ijaw, efik and ibibio people which was declared by lieutenant colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu for three years (1967-1970), which the federal government tried to preserve the federal Republic of Nigeria and dissent the idea of Biafra independent state. This disagreement brought about the Nigerian-Biafra civil war that lasted for three years at which about 3.5 million persons lost their lives mostly orchestrated by starvation on the side of the Biafra. After the war in 1970, Biafran forces surrendered through armistice brokered by the defunct OAU.

Nnamdi Kanu a dual British and Nigerian citizen created a radio station called "Radio Biafra" in 2009 in London. IPOB evolved after he gained fame from his broadcast messages on Radio Biafra where he criticized Nigeria government of corruption. On 19th October 2015, Kanu was arrested by the Department of State Service on the charges of sedition, ethnic incitement and treasonable felony. In reaction to his arrest, there was upsurge of agitations and protest by group of pro-Biafrans in south-eastern region who made efforts to see to his release. Going by this, and as day goes by Kanu's arrest made many IPOB supporters to gain, further traction, as their mobilization grew. In 2015, many protests and police clashes were recorded of which large number of both protesters and police men were killed in Onitsha, Obosi, Aba, and Umuahia etc.

IPOB supporters have cited historical events such as the 2016 election of President Donald Trump and Britain vote to exit the European Union as a proof of international support for self-determination. Many claimed that Donald Trump victory provides hope for the IPOB group in their ability to secede from Nigeria.

Trump political interest is in line with Biafra freedom because of oil pursuit. The IPOB protesters keep calling for the release of Nnamdi Kanu and other Biafran activist that were jailed. The protesters demand for independence referendum, to have a date set by the government. Nnabuike Nnadede, the editor of pro-biafran media "voice of Biafra" stated that the Igbo people suffer from lack of resources, hence part of reason for their protest to gain opportunity to vote for independence.

As a result of the continued radical protests and killings of the security personnel which were unconfirmably attributed to the IPOB agitators and protesters, the federal high court in Abuja labeled the IPOB a terrorist organization on 18th September 2017. The IPOB tried to fight against this proscription and sought to reverse the court decision in 2018. Though it was unsuccessful and they continued to be declared a terrorist organization under Nigerian terrorism Act. Notwithstanding the much effort by Nigerian states to silence the pro-biafran movements through excessive deployment of police force in the area, in 2016, it was recorded that between 29th/30th May many IPOB members were killed during governmental operation of preventing IPOB members from marching from Nkpor motor parts on a rally. According to Human Right report, from August 2015 to February 2016, about 170 unarmed civilians were killed and 400 were arrested, charged and detained without a proper trial.

Meanwhile, in the midst of these numerous protests, Nnamdi Kanu the leader of the IPOB organization failed to appear in court since April 25, 2017 to answer to the charges against him by the federal government. He was arrested previously without trial for over a year and was arraigned on 8th November 2016 for charges of criminal conspiracy, membership of an illegal organization and intimidation. He was bailed after several public agitations including world Igbo summit group on April 2017 orchestrated by his poor state of health, hence needed better medical attention that couldn't be provided in the police custody, as part of the condition for his bail was barred from granting interviews, meeting in group larger than ten persons, organizing and attending rallies or social function.

Mazi Nnamdi Kanu fled the country to Britain out of his wish in September 2017, after losing his parents and loved ones in a premeditated attack on 13th September 2017 in his home town Umuahia by the combined forces of the Nigerian Air force and Army. While in Britain, through the instrumentality of his Radio Biafra, on the 12th of December 2020, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu announced the formation of the eastern security network which was formed on the ground to flush out bandit and illegal forest occupants that usually class with farmers in Biafra land.

Following a clash and gun-battle between the Nigeria Arm force and Eastern security network on 22nd January 2021, IPOB gave all the governors of southeastern region of Nigeria 14days to ban open grazing, threatening the deployment of the Eastern Security Network to enforce a ban if the authorities did not do so. On April 9, 2021, IPOB formally allied itself with Ambazonia governing council (AGOVC) and the Ambzonian Defence Force, the alliance was denounced by the interim government of Ambazonia as well as other Biafran separatist group.

Meanwhile, on June 29 2021 Nigerian government announced that Nnamdi Kanu had been rearrested, allegedly abducted from Kenya on the 19th June, 2021 and was subsequently charged to court again and remanded in the custody of the department of the state services.

With all these, IPOB introduced sit at-home order, which started firstly as an annual event, to remember those who died in Nigeria Biafra war, which later metamorphose and became a tool of drawing

attention to the plight of the leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu. The sit at-home became so frequent that this triggered a backlash and a diminishing return. In August 2021, at least six people were killed and three buses set ablaze in Anambra State after a joint security patrol team killed two persons suspected to be a member of IPOB enforcing the group's sit-at-home order in the area. In the same month, two travellers were burnt to death with shops and vehicles, including buses belonging to Libra and Okey transport companies were reportedly set ablaze in Imo State. Eventually, after months of forced compliance, the sit-at-home lockdown was extended. The PUNCH had reported that the group on September 14, 2021, called for an end to the imposed order which genuines is in doubt, coupled with the spiral of violence that had been set in the region.

5 IPOB Sit at Home and Businesses in the South-East, Nigeria

Business activities of south-east- region is grounded every Monday as the dark cloud of fear, emanating from the order and the enforcers of the order still hung over the people who would stay indoors to avoid being harassed by IPOB militants.

In the above line of argument, Chika (2021) "reported that he felt like a fugitive travelling on a Monday to Nnewi as the bus driver had to sneak past any crowd to avoid being mobbed".

"It felt like I was running away for committing a crime. Everyone in the 14-seater bus held their breath when they saw a crowd of protesters. At a point, they stopped our cars and we had to chant, 'We are for Biafra! This is Biafra land!' Even after all that, they impounded our vehicles and told us to wait. We had to wait till about 9pm.

Following a media report on an interaction with an official of the Young Shall Grow Mothers:

"The loss we experience cannot be quantified, because we are losing. We have over 46 parks in Lagos, and on Monday, the least number of vehicles to leave Lagos are 100 while only 10 leave for Abuja. We are losing and we can't quantify the loss. The company is losing resources". "In four-five Mondays in a month, we are losing. We still have to pay workers. It also affects the company in the sense that the workers who earn a percentage from what they charge the passengers have to fend for themselves. Some of these people affected are the loaders. We also have managers and assistant managers who feed from the proceeds of the loaded buses, they are not on salaries. It also affects the passengers too.

He further posits that a new bus can cost over N25m, you really don't want to lose that kind of investment. In fact, when passengers come on Monday, nobody will attend to them because travelling is a risk on the lives of innocent people and on the drivers' lives. There is no point taking that risk."

In the same vein, Oluwaseyi, a customer service officer at God is Good Motors, noted that the enforcement of the sit-at-home order had badly affected their revenue because their buses no longer plied five routes.

"Since the sit-at-home order, we have lost six routes. For us, we don't go to Aba, Enugu, Awka, Uyo and Owerri on Mondays. On a normal day, we get to go to these places. That affects the revenue and also gives us extra workload. The people, who are to travel on Monday, end up rushing to travel on Tuesday

or Sunday in order to avoid all of those things. So it has not been easy. This has affected us so much that I really wish the government and IPOB would have a dialogue to end the tension,”

On the contrary, IPOB members argued that the groaning of the eastern regions, worth the sacrifice of sitting at home every week if it will bring freedom of the Igbo's. They even compared it with the black South Africans and their leader Nelson Mandela.

On a second thought, sitting at home doesn't sound like a suitable strategy that can bring about freedom or release of Nnamdi Kanu. Instead of being a relieve, the sit at home keep being a thorn in the people's lives as it affect them all round both academically, economically, etc.

The sit at home is more of a threat to the people as many problems are being incurred by the Igbo's. A lot of killings and missing of people including prominent men in the society , hardship and impoverishment, economic instability, loss of lives and properties, etc. According to Okwesilieze Nwado, people who fend for themselves through their daily handworks would be adversely affected by the decision of IPOB; it would further deteriorate the economy of the zone.

6 Summary

IPOB sit at home order which started on the 9th of August 2021 till date was as a result of agitation for freedom/independence of the Biafrans, release of the IPOB leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and other issues like the ill application of fiscal federalism, corruption and bad leadership in Nigeria government etc.

Though the sit at home was to help in lessening the burden of the Igbo masses but on the other hand it turn out to be a big burden on the people. Places like Nnewi in Anambra state, have encountered a lot of damages as a result of the sit at home order. People's means of income are being affected mostly the daily income earners who depend and survive by what they earn daily, high rate of killings of both innocent souls.

A quick-end to the sit at home will go a long way in resuscitating the about-to-die economy of the south-east region. If not, the continued observance and obedience to this ill may one day resort to domesticating sit at home as a legitimate approach and practice of the people of south-east region, as against the age-known legitimate norm, practice and character of every dat hustle of the people. A popular actor and lawyer Kanayo O Kanayo on his 60th birthday pleaded to his Excellency Muhammadu Buhari to grant release to the IPOB leader as the president of the country with the executive power, as the sit at home has done more harm than good to the people. Every Monday all economic activities including others like academics are shot down. The poor become poorer even the rich are also affected. Instead of being a form of relieve to the area, the sit at home keep impoverishing the states and the zone. Thus, IPOB Monday sit-at-home order is a serious threat to the economic activities of the Southeast region of Nigeria. □

7 Recommendations

- Dialogue as a tangible tool: IPOB members and the federal government should engage in a dialogue to agree on the solution to these quandaries. Hence it will go a long way in melting the heart and mind of both the IPOB members and presidency, which will yield a fruitful result than the sit-at home order currently embarked by IPOB.

- Unity in diversity: The President should use the resources and goodwill at its disposal to unite this country. It is better that the grievances of groups within regions that have continued to wreck-havoc both to innocent citizens and security operatives are known.
- Fiscal federalism: Federal government should ensure equitable distribution of resources among the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria via proper federal character system. This will help to reduce what the IPOB perceived as marginalization.

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