# Resource Control and Secessionist Movements in Nigeria: Implications for National Unity and Development

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## ABSTRACT

The geographical entity called Nigeria came into existence on January 1, 1914, when the then Northern and Southern protectorates were merged. Since then, successive governments in the country have been trying to unite the diverse elements that make up the country, all to no avail. From the North and South, there have been called for the dismemberment of the country due to the failure of successive administrations to address the national questions. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the issues confronting Nigeria's unity and suggests a way forward. The paper is anchored on elite and frustration-aggression theories and relies on secondary sources of data. The paper contended that injustice, high-handedness, and marginalization of certain sections or regions of the country in the governance of the country accounted for resource control and secessionist movements in the country. The paper suggests justice and inclusiveness of all sections of the country in the affairs of the state, among others.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria came into existence on January 1, 1914, when the Northern and Southern protectorates were merged and since then, Nigeria has been a mere geographical expression because the British created it for administrative and economic conveniences and not for internal coherence [1]. According to Lord Lugard, the amalgamation was aimed at unifying administrations and not peoples [2]. Besides, the various ethnic groups that were lumped together were never consulted on the merger [3]. This and subsequent colonial policies that followed have been responsible for acrimonies relationship that existed among the various groups that make up the country.

From the Northern and Southern parts of the country, there have been called for secession by different groups championing the cause of their people. In the South-South, groups such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Avengers, among others, have campaigned for self-determination, justice, and resource control. In the South-East, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF), and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The South-West paraded groups such as the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC); the Oodua Republic Front (ORF). While in the Northern part of the country, there exist groups such as the Middle Belt Federation (MBF) also agitated for autonomy on grounds of the ''unfair provisions of the 1999 Constitution [4].

The call for resource control and dismemberment of the country have been attributed to marginalization [5]. In a like manner, [6] attributed the root causes of separatists agitation to political and economic marginalization as well as the government hardline stance. By the same token, [7] adduced the causes of threat to national unity to poor national governance, leadership, over-centralization of power and resources, corruption, poverty, lack of patriotism, among others. Similarly, [8], attributed secessionist activities to an inability on the part of the government to foster a sense of common identity and national consciousness among the diverse groups that make up the country, bad governance, and continuing promotion of inter-ethnic hatred and unhealthy rivalry. An eminent Nigeria historian attributed secessionist threats to the heterogeneous ethnic composition, varied administrative practices, and controversial political and constitutional arrangements, cultural diversity, vast size, a problem associated with Nigerian federalism, personality clashes between Nigerian leaders before and after independence, and the absence of a strong ideological magnet [9].

The agitation for resource control and call for the dismemberment of the country has resulted not only in the loss of lives but also created disharmony among the diverse groups that make up the country. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines resource control and secessionist movements in Nigeria and the implication for national unity and development. It addresses among others, resource control, their types as well as the rationale for resource control, secessionist movements, and the reasons for agitations for secession and the implications of resource control and secessionist movements for national unity and development and suggests a way of addressing the problems.

The paper is organized into seven segments of which this introduction is a part. The second section is the conceptual clarification and it dwells on the concepts that are germane to the study. The third part analyses the theories on which the study is anchored. The next segment is an overview of secession threat in the country while the fifth section takes a cursory look at secessionist movements in the south-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The sixth part examines implications of resource control agitation and secessionist movement activities on national unity and development and the last section is the conclusion and recommendations.

### 1.1 Conceptual Clarification

It is imperative to clarify the concepts used in this discourse and these concepts are resource control, secession, secessionist movement, national unity, and development.

## 2. RESOURCE CONTROL: AN EXPLORATION

The term resource control has attracted different interpretations among scholars, politicians,

activists, and policy analysts. As [10] rightly noted: "the quest for resource control by the people of Niger Delta lies at the heart of the violence in the region".(p.42) For A [11] resource control has been a recurrent decimal in the history of the Niger Delta of Nigeria and attributed this to the historical importance of the region.

[12] defines resource control from four perspectives, politicians, militants, ordinary 'Deltans, and non-Deltans'. For the politicians from the Niger Delta region, resource control means personal enjoyment of the benefits of oil at the expense of most people they represent. Whereas, the militants see it as a way of recovering through armed struggle the petroleum resources that have been supposedly taken by the country's power elite through political manipulation and those outside the region view it as refusing other parts of the federation the benefits of federalism by insisting on the control and enjoyment of a natural resource which should be the patrimony of all Nigerians. And to the average Niger Deltans, it means environmental degradation, poverty, and hunger amid plenty. For [10], resource control refers to the "desire that the region is left to manage its natural resources, particularly its oil and pay taxes and or royalties to the federal government." (p.42).

Following [13,10] resource control can be categorized into three absolute resource control, principal resource control, and increased derivation, and these are discussed below:

## 2.1 Absolute Resource Control

It is a resource control in which all the resources of the region are owned and controlled by the people of the region. This kind of resource control is included in the Kaiama Declaration, which is contained in paragraph 5 of the Declaration and its states that "every region should control its resources 100 percent of which it will allocate funds for running the central government" (cited in [10] p. 42.

Similarly, [14] defined resource control as the total takeover of the resources situated in the oil-bearing states by the people of the state. For Ifedayo [cited in 15] resource control entails the access of communities and state governments to natural resources situated within their frontiers and the liberty to develop and utilize these resources without allusion from the central government.

## 2.2 Principal Resource Control

This is a type of control in which the oil-bearing communities play a key role or participate actively in exploration, exploitation, marketing, and sales of the products [16,17,18]. For instance, [16] sees resource control as a "compelling desire to regain ownership, control, use and management of resources for the primary benefit of the first owner (the communities and people) on whose land the resources originate." [cited in 10 p.42].

For [18], resource control means "a direct and decisive role in the exploration for, the exploitation and disposal of, including sales of the harvested resources." He identified three components of resource control as.

The power and right of a Community or State to raise funds by way of tax on persons, matters, services, and materials within its territory. The exclusive right to the ownership and control of resources, both natural and created within its territory. The right to customs duties on goods destined for its territory and excise duties on goods manufactured in its territory [18].

The seventeen states chief executives (governors) of the Southern part of Nigeria in their communique at the end of their summit in Benin, Edo state, define resource control "as the practice of true federalism and natural law in which the federating units express their rights to primarily control the natural resources within their borders and make an agreed contribution towards the maintenance of common services of the government at the center." [cited in 19, p. 1] [20], define resource control as the right of the Niger Delta to take possession and manage the revenue accruing from oil and other natural resources by the tenets of true federalism. Equally, [17] defines resource control as the control and management of resources by the state or local government where the resources are found, under the guidance of the central government, and then pay an agreed percentage to the central government.

## 2.3 Increased Revenue

Resource control from the perspective of increased revenue involves a rise in the present derivation percentage from 13% to 25% as demanded by the elite of the region in the 2005 National Constitutional Reform Conference. [15] see resource control as the way and manner the

government revenue is distributed among the different tiers of government namely the federal, state, and local governments. [21] defines resource control as "the substantive powers for the community to collect monetary and other benefits accruing from the exploitation and use of resources in its domain and deploy same to its developmental purposes." (p.46).

In the light of the above definitions, resource control entails ownership, control, management of a natural resource by a community, and payment of an agreed percentage of the proceeds of the natural resources by the owners (community/state) to the central government for the overall running of its assigned duties by the constitution.

## 3. THE RATIONALE FOR RESOURCE CONTROL

Several reasons have been advanced for agitation for resource control and they include among others, environmental degradation, lack of infrastructure, poverty, and unemployment, poor corporate social responsibility, and domination by the major ethnic groups.

Ako 2011 [10] attributes the demand for resource control to perceive political and economic marginalization of the people of the region by the majority ethnic group leaders at the helms of affairs in Nigeria. Omoweh [cited in Dibua, 2005 [22], contends that the denial by succeeding administrations in Nigeria to increase the level of participation of the oil-bearing communities over their natural resources as well as the environmental and social impacts of oil exploration necessitated the need for resource control. Corroborating this [23], argues that government neglect of environmental management in the Niger Delta accounted for the demand for resource control and violence in the country. For [24], the demand for resource control is to encourage the practice of fiscal federalism as the most effective means of liberating Nigerians from the result of authoritarianism and misrule.

It is important at this juncture to examine some of these factors stated above and how they contributed to agitation for resource control.

The environment of the oil-bearing communities in the Niger Delta has been debased due to oil spillage, gas flaring, and other activities such as oil exploration and exploitation by transnational oil companies. The inhabitants of the Niger Delta are concern about the environmental degradation of their region because it is their source of living. They depend on the environment and rivers for subsistence, socio-cultural survival, food, and shelter. Thus, a conflict of interest exists between the indigenes of the region and the Nigerian state concerning the environment [25]. Consequently, the people have no access to land where they can farm, they can fish because the rivers have been polluted and the fishes destroyed in the process. This created frustration and anger among the people and they not only demanded the control of their resources, but also employed violent means to show their displeasure [26-35].

Another reason adduced for resource control is the lack of infrastructural facilities in the oil-bearing communities. The argument is that successive administrations in the country have neglected the region where the bulk of resources of the nation is derived from. The oil-bearing communities lack basic amenities like roads, hospitals, electricity, schools. The inhabitants of the region accused the central government of using their resources to develop other regions [26]. contended that the paucity in social amenities and harsh socio-economic conditions fueled alienation among the people of the region and accounted for the agitation for resource control.

Furthermore, the nature of the Nigerian political system contributed to the agitation for resource control. The Nigerian federal structure is centralized with powers and resources vested at the center. Also, Nigeria is a mono-cultural economy with the bulk of the revenue coming from oil, and the region where the resources are derived from felt that they were being shortchanged by the successive administrations because of the principles used in the allocation of revenue to the component units. The structural defects in the Nigerian federal system have been attributed to long years of military rule which was dominated by the majority ethnic group particularly the north, which used its position to advance the interest of the group and denied the rest of the federation especially the region that produced the golden eggs the fruit of its labor in terms of resources for its development [36].

Interestingly, several studies [37,38,39,40,41,42, 43,44,45,46,47] have pointed to the defective federal system and absence of equity in the disbursement of revenue among the federating

units as the cause of agitation for resource control in the Niger Delta. The people of the Niger Delta are dissatisfied with how rents accrue from oil proceeds are distributed among the component units of the federation. This is one of the major grievances of the people and is responsible for the armed conflict against the Nigerian state.

## 4. SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS

Nigeria, like other parts of the world, has been and is witnessing the proliferation of secessionist movements and persistent demands in certain regions of the country for the creation of an independent new state. But before defining the secessionist movement, it is imperative to explain the concept of secession. The term secession is a contested concept in social sciences. Indeed, there is no uniformity in the meaning of the concept among scholars. Secession has also been used interchangeably with self-determination but they are not the same. While the former can be realized within the borders of the existing state, for example through power-sharing arrangements, the latter cannot be realized through the existing state [48]. Furthermore, self -determination emphasizes the right of people to determine their destiny as regards their cultural, social, economic, and political development [49]. These rights as [50], argued cannot be applied internally by groups within an already independent state. However, [51], contended that the expression of self – determination does not often disintegrate a state. Hence, some agitations could be about relative autonomy within the state while some might be outright secession.

Like many social and political phenomena, secession has been a subject of inquiry by separate and often unrelated disciplines: legal studies, political science, and applied philosophy. This diversity of approaches has created a definitional problem [52]. However, scholars agreed that secession involves the creation of a new state by the withdrawal of a territory and its populations from an existing state. According to Caney (1998) cited in [53], secession refers to a territorial community that breaks away from its former host state and the founding of its separate state and sovereign political entity. In a like manner, [54] sees secession as" the creation of a state by the use or threat to use force without the consent of the former sovereign" (p.375). By the same token, Kohen (2006) cited in [55] sees secession as "the creation of a new independent entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing State, without the consent of the latter. [also] to be incorporated as part of another State" (p.537). For Dahlitz (2003) cited in [55] secession arises whenever a significant proportion of the population of a given territory, being part of a state, expresses the wish by word or by deed to become a sovereign State in itself or to join with and become part of another sovereign state. [56], sees secession as a demand by an ethnic-nationalist group for either independence from, or significant regional autonomy within a state.

From the foregoing, secession involves the breakaway or withdrawal from an existing state and the creation of a new one. Having to define secession, it is important at this juncture to examine the meaning of secessionist movements and to this, we do in the following paragraph.

According to [57], secessionist movements are groups seeking withdrawal from a larger political entity or a country to become an independent state, separate from the former country they belong to. Put differently, secessionist movements are groups that are bent on having their independent enclave different from the hitherto ones they belong to. Similarly, [58], sees secessionist movement as "a conscious effort, attempt, and agitation by a group of persons of common primordial or constructed identity, interest, and destiny to pull out of an already existing sovereign state for an independent state of their own." (p.95). The method adopted by these groups to achieve their objectives range from peaceful or non-violent approach to violent approach. Examples of these groups in Nigeria are Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) formed by Ralph Nwazuruike, Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF) led by Benjamin Igwe Onwuka, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) led by Nnamdi Kanu. In the South-South geopolitical region of the country, we have, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People led by late Ken Saro Wiwa, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). In the South-West geo-political zone, there is the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC); the Oodua Republic Front (ORF), advocates the creation of the Oodua (or Oduduwa) Republic for the Yorubas [1].

## 5. NATIONAL UNITY

The term national unity has been used interchangeably with national integration, nation-building, and national cohesion and it has been defined differently by scholars. According to [59], national unity means a feeling of common purpose that binds peoples of diverse cultures, colors, and ethnic nationalities together as one. Similarly, Duverger cited in [60], sees national unity as the process of unifying the various segments of a society to make it harmonious based upon an order its members regard as equitably harmonious. Likewise, Morrison, et al (n.d), define national unity as the process by which members of a social system develop linkages and location so that the boundaries of the system persist over time and the boundaries of sub-systems become less consequential in affecting behavior. In a like manner, Jacob and Tenue cited in [60] define national unity as a cordial relationship existing among members of a political community. It can also mean a state of mind or disposition that is cohesive, committed to acting to achieve mutual goals.

From the foregoing, national unity can be seen as a process where people of diverse beliefs, co-exist peacefully as one family under the national ethos and constitution.

## 6. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of development has been defined differently by scholars. Put differently development means different things to different people. For some, it means making life better for all. To others, development means economic growth (increase in GDP). [61] equates progress and modernity with development. [62] defines development as a multi-dimensional process involving the totality of man in his political, economic, psychological, and social realities among others. Likewise, [63] sees development as a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems. By the same token, [64], sees development as involving the steady and systematic change in the cultural, economic, and political spheres of society in a way that increases production, empowers the people and their communities, protects the environment, strengthens institutions, grows quality of life and promotes good governance.

It is important at this juncture to define national development. [64], defined national development as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political, and technological advancement of a country or nation. While [65] defined national development as the ability of a state to provide a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and elimination of poverty, provision of adequate welfare, shelter, clothing to its citizens. This means socio-economic growth, popular participation in politics, overall restructuring and transformation of the society, social justice, and positive changes in social relationships and intergovernmental relationship.

From the foregoing definitions, national development is an all-around development that consists of the political, economic, technological, and social spheres of a nation.

## 7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on two theories namely elite and frustration-aggression theories. The choice of elite theory is because the elite decides how the political and socio-economic life of a nation is organized. Moreover, the elite shapes the developmental direction of a country by the way they allocate resources. When resources are equitably distributed, development and peace prevail but when resources are unjustly allocated, underdevelopment and violence prevail [66]. While frustration-aggression theory enriches our understanding of the motive or driving force for the agitation for resource control and secessionist activities in the country.

### 7.1 Elite Theory

In every society or organization either developed or developing, simple or complex, a class of people selected or elected occupies the topmost position in such society or organization and this is due to their educational attainment or skills position and in some cases, birth (royalty) this category of people are known as elite.

The term elite refers to "a selected and small group of citizens and or organizations that control a large amount of power. It is also used to analyze the groups that either control or are situated at the top of societies" [67]. The elite theory stipulates that power is concentrated in the hands of a small group known as the 'elite' in any given society [68]. This small group is called 'Guardians' by Plato in his work "Republic" [68]. There are several versions of the elite theory ranging from that developed by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, C, Wright Mills, Floyd Hunters, and a host of others [69,70].

Pareto, in his insightful study of the elite, divided the elite into governing and non-governing elite and ascribes to the group scholarly prevalence or predominance which differentiated them from the general populace. Similarly, Mosca cited in [70], divides society into the ruling class and non-ruling class. The ruling /political class is the elite and the sub-elite. The sub-elite class in this setting alludes to technocrats, managers, and civil servants, who are above the masses as far as access to an opportunity from a state. The elite class which consists of governing and the non-governing elite are highly organized compared to the masses and, as a result, they cannot be dared by the masses [70].

Mitchel's analysis is centered on bureaucracy and not the actual government undertakings. He contends that every social and political organization in society is run by a few minorities, which make the decisions. He attributes the oligarchic tendencies of an organization to the complex nature of the organization, the nature of human beings, and the phenomenon of leadership (cited in [70]. Other notable elite theorists include [71,72]. The major thrust of the elite theory is as follows:

In every society, there is and must always be a minority which rules. According to [73], "it is an organization, which gives birth to the domination of the elected over the electors, of the mandataries over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization says oligarchy" (p.15). This indicates that the oligarchy is a rational derivative of the organization. In addition, Pareto argues that minority is inevitable in all societies – developed or developing simple or complex society. This minority that rules derived its initial power almost always from a force like the monopoly of military power. But with time, this power is transformed into domination through routinization. The minority ruling circle comprised all those who occupy powerful political positions.

Changes in the ruling class occur in many ways; the recruitment of those from the lower strata of the society into the ruling elite group. Another way is that a new group is integrated into the governing elite or by a complete replacement by a "counter-elite" through a revolution. These changes in the composition of the elite group are known as the circulation of the elite.

According to Pareto, people are ruled by the elite, where throughout human history, the continuous replacement of certain elite with another, new elite rise and old elite fall. In his words, "elite or aristocrats do not last. They live or take a position in a certain time. History is a graveyard of aristocracies" (cited in [69 p. 16].

The importance or utility of this theory (elite theory) to this study is that elite are the managers that direct and allocate resources among competing groups in the society. The failure of the elite to use these resources to improve the living condition of all may cause people to revolt against those they perceive to be responsible for their predicament (unemployment, poverty, etc.).

More so, the action or inaction of the elite about oil resources management or its distribution among component units in a federation like Nigeria and units within a federation can lead to violence. To paraphrase [74], the elite decide who gets what of the oil wealth, when, and how. Moreover, the control of this resource as earlier pointed out is a source of conflict among the different elite groups.

Furthermore, the theory enhances our understanding of the intrigue and dynamics that characterized Nigerian body politics. Through the elites theory, one can understand that both governing and non-governing have through policy and actions caused or manipulated the citizens to achieve their selfish goals and also enriched themselves and make themselves relevant in Nigeria's political arena. The elite especially the governing ones also used their positions of authoritative allocation of resources in the society to cause disaffection among the people by pitching one group against the other.

According to [75] whatever Nigeria has or has not become, it is due primarily to the deeds and or misdeeds of its leaders. This implies that the poor state of development of the country and other myriads of problems confronting the country can be laid squarely at the doorstep of the leaders. In other words, the deficit in leadership in terms of commitment, selflessness, and political will to take the bull by the horn are lacking in Nigerian leaders and that have been responsible for the situation in which the country finds itself. [76], corroborates this assertion by saying that Nigeria's major problem is leadership. Therefore, the Niger Delta region also faced leadership problems. Hence, the elites of Niger Delta extraction are responsible for the problem confronting the region because of their misplaced priority or their failure to prioritize the needs of

their people but instead, they compounded the problems of the region through corrupt practices such as misappropriation of fund, which deprived the region the needed resources for its development [77,78].

Nevertheless, the theory has been criticized by scholars. The notion of elite revolves around power and yet this concept is not well defined by the classical elite theorists and this makes it possible to include in the ruling elites wielders of different sorts of powers and also those who wield no power [79]. Similarly, [80] contended that the elite theorists failed to develop a clear-cut elite concept and that most of their arguments were general and lacking concrete substance. [81] maintained that no single elite exercised overall influence on every aspect of decision-making. In his work Who Governs? Examine three political issues in New Haven, Connecticut namely: party nominations for local elective offices/ positions, public education, and urban development. He found that no single elite operating behind the scene, but rather many lines of cleavages and politicians who were responsible for the desires of the citizenry.

The theory is too simplistic because it fails to differentiate between different political systems and assumes that all political systems are the same. The genuine differences between democracy and authoritarianism are dismissed. They are all regarded as an oligarchy. The argument that political elites are superior to the masses is simply an assertion. No objective criteria are being provided by which we can measure the superior quality of the elites [82].

## 7.2 Frustration-Aggression Theory

The frustration-aggression thesis states that aggression is a product of frustration and frustration is a product of aggression. The theory analyses violence from the point of view that when someone is prevented from realizing his goal, he vents his anger on those he perceives as a hindrance to the realization of his/her goal.

The frustration-aggression theory is the brainchild of John Dollard (a psychologist) and his associates namely Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (cited in [83] in their spearheading work on the subject and the later research led by [84]. The theory as articulated by [85] states that "the occurrence of aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression."(p.338). However, [86]

modified the second part of the statement that states "the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression to read: "frustration produces investigations to several different types of response, one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression". Dollard et.al (1939) cited [87], sees frustration as "an interference with the occurrence of an instigated goal-response at its proper time in the behavior sequence". It is important to note that a hindrance does not constitute frustration. It becomes frustrating when one strives to achieve this goal. For Dollard, et.al (1939) cited in [83], aggression means "any sequence of behavior, the goal response to which is the injury of the person toward whom it is directed".

But, aggression is not likely to occur if aggressive behavior is repressed through strategy associated with punishment [87]. Eminent political scientists such as [88,89,87], have applied this theory to the study of political violence.

The theory examines violence from the psychological viewpoint and attributes it to inhibition or blockage of goal attainment [90]. While trying to clarify aggression, researchers point out the contrasts between what individuals feel they need or should and what they get, the need -get-proportion [87] and contrasts between expected need fulfilment and actual need fulfilment [88]. Where the people's want or desire is unmet, the inclination is for individuals to go against those they consider in charge of disappointing their aspirations [91].

The crux of this theory is that aggression is the result of frustration and in a circumstance where the actual yearning of an individual is denied either directly or indirectly by the outcomes of the way the society is organized, the feeling of disillusionment may lead to such a person to express his displeasure through violence that will be targeted at those he /she considers to be responsible for his/her predicament [92]. The resurgence of secessionist movements in the southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria can be attributed to the frustration of the people of the region due to the marginalization of the region by the Nigerian state.

The frustration-aggression theory enables us to comprehend the driving forces that accounted for both the agitation for resource control and the resurgence of secessionist movements in the south-east of Nigeria and why it has persisted despite government highhandedness of the

activities of the movements in the region. Moreover, the theory enables us to understand that when people yearning is not met, there is the tendency that this may cause frustration and aggressive behavior (violence) by the people. For instance, the Niger Deltans believed that they were marginalized and short-changed by both the Nigerian state (neglect of the region) and the multi-national oil companies (environmental impact of oil exploration on the ecosystem) from enjoying the oil wealth which God has deposited in their region. In other words, the inhabitants of oil-producing communities or states, expect to derive benefits from this resource in terms of the development of the region. For instance, employment, provision of social amenities such as hospitals, schools, roads, water, electricity, and other good things of life that make life meaningful. Unfortunately, these social amenities are lacking and the people live in abject poverty.

Consequently, they became frustrated and blamed those they perceived to be responsible for their predicament. For instance, the youth in the Niger Delta consider the multi-national oil companies and the federal government represented by the elite from the dominant ethnic groups as being the stumbling block to the realization of their dreams of benefiting from the abundance of natural resources found in their region and because of this the multi-national oil companies were the targets of the youth who used violence means to show their displeasure to them for depriving them of enjoying the benefits of being the owner of the oil and gas resources found in their domains. They destroyed oil installations or facilities and also kidnapped oil workers for ransom and demanded autonomy and control of their resources. Thus, frustration-aggression arises because of the youths being unable to benefit from the oil wealth which has been cornered by the elite and used to take care of themselves and their immediate families. The consequence of this is violence which is also instigated by the elite. While the Igbos complained of the denial of the highest office in the land, lack of infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, and many others accounted for the frustration and aggressive behavior of the people towards the Nigerian state and their resolve to demand a separate state of Biafra.

## 8. THE THREAT OF SECESSION IN NIGERIA: AN OVERVIEW

Secessionist threats are not new in Nigerian politics [93]. It dates back to the period before the independence of Nigeria. Evidence abounds in the literature where the three defunct regions, through utterances by their political leaders, threatened to break away from the entire country.

According to Ojo (2004) cited in [1], secession is a potent weapon in Nigerian political bargaining between 1950 and 1964. Indeed, the North, in 1950 and 1953 at the Ibadan General Conference and reaction to the crisis generated by the demand for self-government by the South respectively, threatened to secede from Nigeria.

In 1950, the representatives of both the North and South met at a General Conference in Ibadan to review the Richard Constitution of 1946 and one of the heated debate was the issue of the ratio of representation in the Central Legislature to be established in the new Constitution that would replace the Richard Constitution. The Conference had at the committee stage recommended quotas of 45:33:33 for the Northern, Eastern, and Western Provinces respectively. The North rejected this ratio and one of the representatives of the North at the conference, the Emir of Zaria made it clear that "unless the Northern Region was allotted 50 percent of the seats in the Central Legislature, it would ask for separation from the rest of Nigeria on the arrangements existing before 1914'. He was supported by his counterpart from Katsina [9]. Also, in 1953, the North threatened to pull out of Nigeria following a motion for self-government moved by an Action Group member, Chief Anthony Enahoro that Nigeria should become self-government in 1956 on the floor of the House of Representatives. A counter-motion was moved by a Northern replacing 1956 with "as soon as practicable." This motion led to a chain of events that culminated in the Northern House of Assembly and Chiefs endorsed an eight-point program, which, if implemented would have led to the secession of the North from the rest of the country [9].

Another instance of Northern threat to secede from Nigeria was the January 15, 1966 coup. The manner of execution of the coup affected the relationship between the Igbos and the Hausas. Prominent politicians and military officers of northern extraction were killed while those from the East were unhurt. A revenged coup was staged by Northern officers on 29th July 1966 and some officers of eastern extraction including the then military head of state Major-General Aguyi Ironsi and Col. Adekunle Fajuyi. It was reported that the north designed a separate flag and

composed a national anthem in a bid to proclaim 'The Republic of the North' [94].

The Eastern region also threatened secession in 1964 following the rigging of the 1964 General Election and 1965 Western regional elections. Before December 1964, the N.C.N.C, then led by M. I. Okpara, the Premier of the Eastern Region, openly threatened secession. During an interview on 24 December 1964, Okpara expressed the desire of the Eastern Region to secede from the Federation. Earlier, on 10 December 1964, President Azikiwe had in a dawn broadcast to the nation warned of the dangers of disintegration arising from the allegations made about the conduct of the 1964 federal election [9]. In the course of his nation-wide address, Azikiwe observed:

I make this suggestion because it is better for us and our admirers abroad that we should disintegrate in peace and not in pieces. Should the politicians fail to heed this warning, then I will venture the prediction that the experience of the democratic [sic] Republic of the Congo will be child's play if it ever comes to our turn to play such a tragic role [9].

The secession threat that was carried out by the Eastern region was when the late Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the Eastern region as an independent state of the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967. This action led to the Nigerian-Biafran war which lasted for thirty-month (May 30, 1967-January 15, 1970). The war has been described as the first modern civil war in sub-Saharan Africa after independence and one of the bloodiest. About one to three million people died, mostly of starvation. The levels of starvation in the war were three times higher than the starvation reported during World War II in Stalingrad and Holland [95]. Ojukwu [9] attributed the secession to Nigeria's exploitative and systematic killings of the Ibos since 1945 in Jos, in 1953 in Kano, and in 1966 following the first and the second military coups in Northern parts of the country.

In what is today known as the South-South geopolitical zone an attempt was made to pull that region out of Nigeria. Major Isaac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw man led an armed campaign for Niger Delta autonomy, resource control, and self-determination for the people of the region in the mid1960s. Put differently, Boro and his Niger Delta Volunteer Force declared the Niger Delta Republic as Independent State on February 23,

1966, and gallantly engaged the federal forces in a battle that lasted for twelve days.

In a like manner, the West also threatened secession in 1953 on the status of Lagos. The colonial government and the Northern and Eastern regional governments supported that Lagos should be detached from the Western region, remain a neutral territory as the federal capital. The Western regional government led by Awolowo vehemently opposed this and wanted Lagos to be administered as part of the western region. As the disagreement raged, Awolowo sent a strong-worded cable to the Secretary of State in which he claimed the freedom of the Western region "to decide whether or not they will remain in the proposed Nigerian Federation" (9, p.570). In the resumed constitutional conference of 1954 in Lagos, Awolowo's Action Group vehemently argued for a constitutional provision for the right of any of the federating regions to secede from the federation. This was opposed by Nnamdi Azikiwe's National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). The conference ended with an agreement that no secession clause would be written into the amended constitution (Aremu & Buhari, 2017; [93,57,9].

Since the restoration of civil rule in May 1999, there has been a resurgence of groups across the length and breadth of this great nation demanding self-determination for their people based on perceived injustice and marginalization. The call for the dismemberment of Nigeria especially among the Igbos have been attributed to among others, the treatment of the Igbos as second class citizens in Nigeria, the denial of sensitive political positions to the Igbos, the Igbo dominated geopolitical region is the least with several states (five) when compared with other geopolitical zones.

The marginalization and isolation of the Igbo ethnic group in the political, social, and economic arrangement of the country coupled with the inability of all tiers of government to address the key developmental issues such as socio-economic and political as well as inefficient and ineffective governance structure in the administration and management of the commonwealth accounted for the agitation for both resource control and a secessionist movement in the country [96].

Moreover, the manner and way the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari

treated the Igbo people; particularly in political appointments necessitated the call for secession by the Igbos. The administration neglected the constitutional provision of federal character which ensures fairness and a sense of belonging in appointment, project citing, etc. Hence, the violation of the constitutional provision is an invitation to anarchy and this accounted for the repeated call for secession among the Igbos. The following section examines these various groups particularly those from the eastern part of Nigeria which is the focus of this paper.

## 9. SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS IN THE SOUTH-EAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

The restoration of civil rule in Nigeria in 1999 witnessed an upsurge of secessionist movements in the country more especially in the southeast where numerous groups are demanding an independent state of Biafra. Some of these movements include the Coalition of Biafra Liberation Groups (COBLIG), Biafra Foundation, Biafran Liberation Council (BLC), the Biafra Actualization Forum, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). This section of the paper examines the last two namely: MASSOB and IPOB. These two groups were selected because they are formidable secessionist movements with large followership in the region and have caused a breach of security in the region. Thus, this segment of the paper takes a cursory look at these groups and what they stood for, and their modus operandi.

### 9.1 The Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)

MASSOB was formed in Lagos on 13 September 1999 by an Indian trained lawyer, Chief Ralph Uwazuruike. He was a member of the then ruling party, People Democratic Party but became disappointed when the then President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo made appointments that excluded the Igbos [97, p.41]. The Objectives of MASSOB include the actualization of the independent state of Biafra; supporting all entities using peaceful means to bring about Biafra; encouraging sincere and honest dialogue with all ethnic nationalities in Nigeria aimed at peaceful separation of Biafra; and informing the world about the actualization of Biafra [98]. The leader of the separatist movement, Chief Ralph

Uwazuruike openly canvassed for the disintegration of the federation and periodically engaged the Nigerian security agencies in battles [99].

MASSOB claims to be a peaceful movement and adopted a strategy of non-violence in the realization of its objectives. According to Uwazuruike [98], 'Biafra failed because of our violent approach, but this time around we do not want any casualty, yet we are more determined than ever to have our independent Biafra' (p.30). He maintains that the plight of the Igbos was unacceptable and called for the disintegration of the country along ethnic lines. In his very words:

What you should understand prima facie is that Nigeria is no good, how Nigeria is being administered is not good. That is why some people are even calling for a sovereign national conference, some people are calling for Biafra and others say self-determination. What I am saying as a person is that I want the Soviet experience to happen in Nigeria. My idea is to let Nigeria divide into as many places as possible; let the people go (IRIN News 2005).

The leadership of the movement adopted different strategies in the twenty-five stages in the struggle for the actualization of Biafra. Some of the activities of the movement included: the formation of the Biafra Security Agency; circulation of the Biafran currency, known as Biafra Pound and mobilizing its use for business transactions; rallying of Nigerians of Igbo extraction, mostly traders, to observe a sit-at-home order; mobilizing the boycott of the 2006 census exercise in Igbo states because these states were not part of Nigeria; and organizing the popular Lagos soccer tournament as a means to bring home its demands and making a symbolic declaration of independence during these events [100,98].

The Movement was also involved in communal and civil functions. Some of these are forceful seizure of fuel tankers moving from any part of the East to the North as a sign of protest against the non-supply of adequate products to the East; taking on-board security issues some cities in the East (especially Onitsha); enforcement of the official price of petroleum products in filling stations in Igbo states; enforcement of sanitation laws in urban cities in the East with punitive measures for defaulters; the enforcement of rules on the residence of states considered to be Igbo states or Biafra territories and pegging of rents

where it has become exorbitant and the settlement of disputes between warring groups [98].

The Movement also internationalized its struggle through the submission of the Biafra Bill of Rights to the United Nations and in 2001, it opened Biafra House in Washington, DC to coordinate its international activities [98]. It is important to note that MASSOB's activism was limited to sensitization campaigns, radio and online propaganda, and trafficking in memorabilia [101].

Though the movement claimed to be non-violence, its strategy was seen as being aggressive and this led to the arrest of the leadership of the movement. For instance, in 2005, Uwazuruike was arrested and charged with treason but granted bail in 2007 to enable him to attend the burial of his mother who died while he was in detention. Also, the MASSOB members battled the Federal Government and the police, and this resulted in the death of some of the members. In 2006, Peter Obi, the then governor of Anambra State ordered a shoot-at-sight order against the Biafra activists who were notorious for their disturbance of public peace in Onitsha, the commercial hub of the state [102].

## 9.2 The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

The IPOB is a secessionist group that claims to represent the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria and called for a referendum for the independent state of Biafra. It is the most popular, most radical, and most controversial of all the secessionist movements in the southeast of Nigeria and accuses MASSOB of compromising the vision of the Biafra actualization campaign, after collecting money from the Nigerian government [103].

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) emerged due to disagreement between Chief Ralph Uwazuruike, leader of the MASSOB, and his lieutenants in the Diaspora. Such lieutenants include Nnamdi Kanu based in London, Uchenna Asiegbu based in Spain, Clifford Iroanya in Houston Texas, USA, Mmaranma Ugochukwu (Dallas, Texas), Leonard Aniemene (Trinidad and Tobago), Chika Edoziem (Switzerland), Onyinyechi Nlebedim (Malaysia), Austin Ofomah (Australia), etc. [104].

There seems to be no consensus among scholars as to when IPOB was formed. For instance, Chiluwa [103] was of the view that IPOB was formed in 2013 while [105] and Goggins [106] believed that the separatist movement was formed in 2012. For [107], IPOB was formed in 2014. Nevertheless, IPOB is a breakaway faction of the MASSOB and was led by Nnamdi Kanu, a Nigerian-British based in London and the deputy leader of the Organisation is Uche Mefor. IPOB aims to restore defunct Biafra and its objectives include among others, to facilitate and advocate the Igbos' right to self-determination and also fight for the fundamental freedom of the Igbos in diaspora [59].

IPOB activities include sensitization of the people through the distribution of flyers, meetings, marches, and prayer meetings. Though the group claimed to be non-violence the method adopted by it was violence and this led to the government taking a hard stance on the group. The group made use of inflammatory and incisive statements, coupled with hate speeches as its modus operandi. According to the [108]:

IPOB has occasionally resorted to violent rhetorics, not least through the transmissions of Radio Biafra. The occurrence of clashes between security forces and activists, some resulting in casualties on both sides, has also been reported during IPOB arrangements.

Similarly, [109] and [110] contended that IPOB and its leading members adopted hateful and inciting statements or what other people referred to as the language of beasts and cheap propaganda on social media, calling for the dissolution of the country into different countries or states. IPOB activities brought them into collision with law enforcement agencies and as a result, many of the members lost their lives in their clashes with law enforcement agencies, and its leader Kanu and others were charged to court for treasonable offenses. For instance, in 2016, it was estimated that 146 people died in the clash between IPOB members and the law enforcement agencies [111].

The Federal Government of Nigeria in its efforts to control the excesses of IPOB adopted force and legal actions. The force involves the use of military action against members of the group. Put differently, armed forces were deployed to the region on a special operation code-named Egwu Eke II (Python Dance II), which was conducted between September 15th and October 14th, 2017. The aim of the exercise according to the

Nigerian Army was to rid the region of criminal elements [103]. The legal action involved the proscription of the group by an Abuja Federal High Court, following an ex-parte motion filed by the Attorney General of the Federation. The section that follows examines the implications of resource control agitation and secessionist movement activities on national unity and development.

## 10. IMPLICATIONS OF RESOURCE CONTROL AND SECESSIONIST MOVEMENTS ON NATIONAL UNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

There is no doubt that the agitation for resource control and secessionist movement activities especially those examined in this piece has far-reaching consequences on national unity and development in Nigeria. This segment of the paper takes a cursory look at some of these implications.

The agitation for resource control by the South-South people of the country resulted in the polarization of the country into those in favor and those against resource control and this affected the unity of the country. The Southern part of the country was in favor of resource control while the North was against it. For instance, the elite from the Niger Delta was upset by the failure of successive administrations in the country to attach more weight to derivation or upward review of the derivation principle. At the 2005 constitutional conference, they demanded an upward review of the derivation to 25%, in the first instance, which was expected to be increased to 50% after five years and eventually 100% sometime in the future [112]. While the elite from the Northern part of the country vehemently opposed the demands by the elite from the Niger Delta. The elite from the north felt that much has been conceded to the region and as a result, the delegates from the region (Niger Delta) staged a walkout of the conference. However, the 2005 conference recommended an increase in derivation to 17% in the interim pending the outcome of expert commission (Adeosun, 2018 [36]. Similarly, the 2014 conference recommended that government should set up a technical committee to determine the appropriate percentage on the derivation and other issues such as special intervention funds and issues of reconstruction and rehabilitation of areas ravaged by insurgency [113]. As at the time the report was submitted to the Jonathan administration, the country was already preparing

for the 2015 General Election and the electioneering campaign was on and the issue of implementation of the report became a campaign issue. In other words, the implementation of the 2014 National Dialogue was politicized. Thus, the recommendations of the conference were not implemented. The present administration which succeeded the Jonathan administration after the defeat of the latter in the 2015 General Election remarked that the report of the conference has been confined to the archives.

Resource control agitation has resulted in the militancy and violence conflict among the people in the Niger Delta due to the inability of successive administrations in the country to address the issue of underdevelopment, poverty, environmental degradation, and unemployment of youth in the region. Different militant groups have emerged in the region campaigning for self-determination and autonomy for the region, among such groups are Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND). Niger Delta Avengers, etc. These groups employed violent means to accomplish their objectives, they destroyed oil installations, kidnapped oil workers, bombed government infrastructural facilities, theft of oil by syndicates, among others. The resultant effect of militancy activities in the region was the loss of jobs by the youth of the region due to the bombing and closure of some of the oil installations as well as the relocation of some of the oil companies' headquarters to Lagos.

In the Niger Delta or South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, the resource control protest has led to unity among the different classes of the elite in the region in their quest for an increase of the 13 percent derivation formula, the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Commission which is mandated to cater for the socio-economic development of the region. The agitation has also led to improvement in corporate social responsibility by transnational oil companies. For example, the Shell Petroleum Development Company spearheaded efforts to fight all forms of pollutions in the region while Chevron and SPDC are encouraging agriculture in the region [36,10,114].

The secessionist movement activities or agitations in the southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria have serious implications on the unity and development of the country. The agitations have affected the economic activities of the region as many man-hours were lost to protest

and many companies relocated to a safe place where their investments would be protected.

According to [115], contended that the recurring agitation for Biafra has both regional and national security implications, including the chances that mobilization of potential protesters could escalate armed violence and worsen the existing levels of insecurity. Besides, the country is currently facing several insurgencies in different parts of the country, the addition of the southeast security threat would be overstretched the security forces and also lead to an increase in government spending or allocation to defense and reduction in budgetary allocation to social services such as health and education.

It could lead to organized attacks on the people of the southeast geopolitical zone of the country residing in the northern part of Nigeria. Indeed, the quit notice issued to the Igbos residing in the north by a coalition of Arewa youths to leave the north by October 1, 2017, was in response to the activities of IPOB. Though the quit notice was later suspended, it showed the far-reaching consequences of the agitation.

The recurrent agitation by the secessionist movements for an independent Biafra State has serious implications for political stability and democratic consolidation. The demands for Biafra by the secessionist movements in the south-east can produce snowball effects where other groups in other regions of the country may demand greater autonomy or separation [115]. The separatist agitation by Sunday Adeyemo for the independent Odua Republic is a case in point. More so, the activities of the secessionist movements (MASSOB and IPOB) could raise the risk of inter-ethnic disaffection, destabilize Nigeria's democracy and worsen the crisis of confidence among the government and the various ethnic groups in the country.

Another implication of the secessionist movement's activities in the southeast of Nigeria is the disruption of economic activities in the region and the country at large. The frequent demonstrations by both MASSOB and IPOB members and the clashes between them and the security agencies often lead to disruption of economic activities in locations where these protests occur and these have serious implications for both the region and the country in terms of revenue, employment generation and image of the country. A corollary to this is the issue of discouragement of investments in the

region in particular and the country as a whole. With increasing hostilities between the secessionist groups and Nigerian authorities, the investment climate in the South East could be made more unfriendly, discouraging potential investors from directing their resources to the area [115]. No shrewd investor would invest his resource in an unstable country.

## 11. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEN-DATION

The paper examined resource control agitation and secessionist movement activities in Nigeria with a focus on the southeast geo-political zone of the country as well as the implication of such demands on national unity and development. The paper was anchored on elite and frustration-aggression theories and through these theories, it was established that the elites ranging from traditional rulers, businessman and most importantly political office holders failed to provide good governance at all levels of government and this failure made the people to be angry and frustrated. The paper revealed that the resource control and secessionist groups' demands for the creation of defunct Biafra and the resurgence of separatist demand could be attributed to environmental degradation, lack of infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, and marginalization. The implications of resource control and secessionist groups' activities were thoroughly examined and some of these include economic activities and discouragement of investment; political instability and democratic consolidation; regional and national security; polarization of the country along ethnic and religious lines; militancy and violence. It is based on these findings that the paper suggests the following:

## 12. RECOMMENDATIONS

The government should as a matter of urgency address the root causes of resource control and secessionist movements' agitation to have a sense of lasting peace in the country. The way out is to address the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta by allocating more resources for the cleaning-up of the environment polluted by oil spillage and enforce the rule that the oil companies operating in the region should stop gas faring.

Moreover, the government should implement the 2005 and 2014 Constitutional Conferences recommendations especially those relating to

issues of revenue allocation and devolution of powers. Presently, there is agitation for restructuring of the polity and this has been addressed by the 2014 Constitutional Conference Report and what the government should do is once again re-visit the recommendations and implement them.

The present federal structure is centralized, powers are concentrated at the center. Therefore, there is a need to devolve powers and revenue to the component units for them to discharge their constitutional responsibilities.

The government should be inclusive by this the writer means that all segments of the Nigerian Society should be involved in the administration of the country. There has been a cry of marginalization by the Igbos of their exclusion in the present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. The government should look into this and take appropriate steps to address the problem through the appointment of more Ndi Igbos into strategic positions in the present administration. In other words, attention should be paid to addressing the governance and structural issues that gave birth to the renewed agitation.

These recommendations if implemented would go a long way in addressing some of the perceived problems which threaten the unity and development of the country.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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