

Squaring Up the Problem of Justice and the Quest for Self Determination in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper discussed various agitations for self-determination in Nigeria arising from the problem of justice. It contented that the problem of justice and self-determination premised on the overarching importance placed on basic rules, institutions and structures of the society. Existing literatures on structures and institutions as a basic foundation of society have yielded marginal results because of behavioural features are relegated, thereby disregarding the human elements. My finding is that just laws and strong institutions can only ensure justice if they take cognisance of human desires, motives, consent and sentiments which define plural societies otherwise, there will always be agitations for self-determination from various nationalities as we have in Nigeria. Adopting qualitative method of research, the paper concluded that an effective framework for resolving the problem of justice and self-determination in Nigeria which requires a combination of basic rules, institutions and structures with those human elements crucial to social order and development. There is the need to incorporate the diverse elements of various ethnic groups that are crucial to their sustenance in Nigeria.

Introduction

Virtually all contemporary states of the world are pluralistic in nature. Most of these contemporary states, have had to grapple with the quest for self-determination because of the problem of justice.

This paper therefore, focuses on the analysis of self-determination in plural states. It begins with what Self-determination entails. I discuss the political conception of self-determination as it is related to this study. I attempt a broad analysis of Self-determination in Nigeria that has been inundated with group agitations as a result of noticeable cases of injustice; under Historical background, the case of injustice as well as cultural and identity factors. I will then discuss impediments to self determination which include insecurity, eclectic national unity and stability; human rights against marginalization, repression, and political exclusion; and unequal distribution of power and resources. I will then discuss how to eliminate impediments

to self determination through inclusive governance to addressing any feeling of marginalization; negotiation of differences via dialogue to resolve any conflicts (injustices) or the agitation for self determination and the attempt to promote national unity. The last part will be on evaluation and conclusion.

What is self-determination?

Self-determination is not a simple and straight-forward concept but a complex one among the nineteenth-century liberalism's most cherished propositions dealing with the rights of individuals and peoples. It has been significant in the quest of the people to agitate for separate autonomy from a plural state when faced with problem of justice. Besides, Self-determination has become one of the fundamental principles of international society since it was popularized by Woodrow Wilson in 1916 when he included it in his fourteen points agenda. Also, the Bolsheviks embraced it in the course of the World War I' (Abubakar, 2003)... Hence, the need to clarify the notion. E. Kolawole Ogundowole conceives self-determination as "self-regeneration, self-realization and self development, self-promotion, self-realization and self-reliance." (Ogundowole, 2005). Reflecting on the focus of this research which is the critical appraisal of the right which a people or group claim to have "to preserve their national life," (Tamir, 1999). Self-determination can be interpreted to mean "a greater autonomy through the achievement of limited rights of self-government as distinct sub-units within the state." (Buchanan, 1995). In this case, the people or group should be free to determine their political, social, economic and cultural development. This is why we have different conceptions of Self-determination which include: metaphysical, biological, social, cultural, economic and political conceptions. However, only political conception of self-determination is discussed as a theory of self-determination from the perspective of a group of individuals that can lay claim to group rights. In this case, self-determination, self-determination, as addressed in this paper, concerns national or ethnic groups.

Political Conception of Self-determination

Political self-determination is also captured in Article 1 of United Nations Charter which reads:

"All the peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status..." (UN, 1803). This entails national self-cognition, self-awareness as well as the political will of a group of people to express their collective self in political decisions of the state. Hence, such a group of people will have relevant political commitment towards the actualization or attainment of Self-determination which may sometimes translate to political autonomy (UN, 1803).. This is what United Nations General Assembly declares as "the establishment of a sovereign and independent state, the free association or integration with an independent state or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people..." (UN, 1803).

Having explained the different conceptions of self-determination, we summarize the idea of selfdetermination self-realization and self-reliance. And self-determination which is our concern here has to do with the right which a people have to preserve their national life. This can be a quest for “a greater autonomy through the achievement of limited rights of self-government as distinct subunits within the state” (Emerson, 2009). This means that a people should be free to determine their political, social, economic and cultural development. In this case, when we refer to the right to Self determination, we do not mean that the indigenous peoples have the right to secede from the plural state at any point in time they so desire.

Historical Background

Leo Kuper captures virtually all the various conceptions of Self-determination while analyzing the substantive provisions regarding Self-determination in The Prevention of Genocide as he contends:

By virtue of the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the charter of the United Nations, all people have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every state has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the charter (Kuper, 1969).

Accordingly, United Nations has it in Article 1 of its Charter which partly reads:

“All the peoples have the right to Self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural developments” (UN, 1803).

This principle was incorporated into the 1941 Atlantic Charter and was also recognized as a right of all peoples in the first article common to the International Covenant on civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which have been in force since 1976 (UN, 1966). The United Nations General Assembly, in its Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States conceive of self determination in resolution 2625 (xxv), Article 1 as “the establishment of a sovereign and independent state, the free association or integration with an independent state or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people constitutes modes of implementing the right to Self-determination by that people” (UN, 2625).

However, there are two contradictory cardinal principles incorporated in the UN declaration, namely “the establishment of a sovereign and independent state” and “free association or integration with an independent state”. The declaration recognizes the principle of self determination as long as it is limited to the groups participating freely in determining those who govern without seceding. The same declaration grants in principle that a group can contemplate secession if the interest of that group is jeopardized and the state as presently constituted no longer protects the interest of the group, and the declaration attempts to

reconcile this contradiction by stating that:

Nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent states conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples as described above and thus possessed of a government representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour (UN, 1803).

The foregoing implies that in a plural state where there are peoples of different races, ethnic groups, religions, cultures and traditions or colors, a group of people can enjoy the right to selfdetermination but in a form that falls short of separation or total independence and not about right of secession. Hence, we need to emphasize the limitation to the right to self-determination as well as unjust treatment. This is because where and when there is discrimination or unjust treatment and the government does not represent all the peoples, self-determination may assume the form of the establishment of sovereign and independent state. Hence, when there is just and fair treatment of different groups in a plural state, the quest for self-determination as a right does not necessarily lead to secession. However, when there is unjust and unfair treatment of a group in a plural state, selfdetermination may then lead to secession.

The foregoing informs why efforts have been made to distinguish between internal and external self-determination. By internal self-determination is meant participatory democracy; the right to decide the form of government and the identity of rulers by the whole population of a state and the right of a population group within the state to participate in decision making at the state level. Also, internal self-determination can mean the right to exercise cultural, linguistic, religious or (territorial) political autonomy within the boundaries of the existing state. And by external self-determination which some have described as “full” self-determination is meant the right to decide on the political status of a people and its place in the international community in relation to other states, including the right to separate from the existing state of which the group concerned is a part, and to set up a new independent state (UN, 1803).

The foregoing analysis boils down to the conception of self-determination as a right choice of participation and of control. Hence, Self-determination is conceived simply to mean that human beings, individually and as groups should be in control of their own destinies and that institutions of government should be devised accordingly. With this idea of self-determination, we may contend that it originates from democratic norm and it continues to be linked to the core concept of democracy which grants the people the right to choose their rulers and to participate in decision making.

To this end, in exercise of self-determination, people may choose to be ruled by leaders who are from among their group whether within the framework of an existing state or outside that framework. Being so, peoples and nations must be granted abundant means for satisfying the

needs for human security and welfare of their members so that they can be fulfilled and their right to self-determination actualized.

It is pertinent to note that self-determination is only contemplated when members of a group or some groups in plural states are denied certain rights that can qualify for group rights. These include the rights to enjoy their own culture, to speak their own language, to profess and practice their own religion, among others. This is why Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights modestly presents the defense of the rights of ethnic minorities (UN, 1966). The rights of ethnic minorities entail group rights which contrast with the rights held by individual members of the group. A group right is possessed and exercised by a nation or a people as a group. This refers to a collective right of a people. Hence, it is not appropriate to interpret a collective right of self-determination as merely an aggregate of the individual rights to self-determination of those who make up the relevant nation or people. In contradistinction to this, the right to self-determination of an individual is normally understood as the right of a person to determine his or her own life rather than a right over the lives of others. Thus, the right of a group to determine the character and destiny of its collective life cannot be merely an aggregate of individual rights of self-determination. We may certainly appeal to individual rights of self-determination, and to the values that underlie them, in making the case for a collective right of self-determination, but that does not imply that the collective right will be no more than the set of individual rights to which we appeal.

Furthermore, self-determination as a group right has been incorporated with human rights. The preambles to the UN's Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and UN's Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) characterize the rights set out in each covenant as human rights. The first articles of both covenants ascribe to all "peoples" the right of self-determination, the right freely to dispose of their natural wealth and resources, and the rights and yet they also figure in the UN Covenants as human rights. In addition, Human rights have been given an increasingly inclusive content to include rights to goods such as development, peace, and healthy environment, communication, humanitarian assistance, and a share in the common heritage of mankind. They are rights to goods that are collective in nature and rights that are often more intelligibly borne by groups than by individuals. Another area in which the issue of collective human rights has arisen is that of the rights of indigenous peoples (UN, 1966).

Cultural and Identity Factors

There has been a long-standing debate over whether the rights the United Nations should recognize or establish are those of indigenous people (individuals) or those of indigenous peoples (groups).

Evidence abounds to suggest that United Nations is more concerned with group rights hence the need to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples (group). This is why Tamir simply conceives self-determination as "the right of a people to preserve their national life (Tamir, 1999). Allen Buchanan conceives this as a quest for "a greater autonomy through the achievement of limited rights of self-government as distinct sub-units within the state" (Buchanan, 1995). When self-determination is interpreted as a greater autonomy or secession, it often brings about conflicts, crises, wars and revolutions in plural states. But when a group of people in a plural state is marginalized and deprived, they can feel threatened and sufficiently

afraid to the extent of doing anything to protect their interests, especially when they are convinced that the state no longer represents their interests. And as M. Ignatieff has argued: "Ethnic hatred is the result of terror which arises when legitimate authority disintegrates (Ignatieff, 1993). Virtually all modern states of Africa have had to contend with the problem of justice which has led to the quest for self determination. This is the case of Nigeria before independence to date as I shall be discussing in what follows.

Nigeria came into being in 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated Northern and Southern protectorates. Various nationalities and communities which have hitherto existed independently were subordinated. And to enhance control and incorporation of Nigerians as colonial subjects, Lugard utilized the system of "Indirect Rule" which fundamentally emphasized the use of existing traditional political structures for the purposes of administration. "The impact of the colonial encounter on the evolution of the politics of patrimonialism and predation exacerbated inequalities, marginalization and ethnic conflicts in the political process of Nigeria (Afolayan, 2002).

Various sections of Nigeria have had cause to threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria in the past. Apart from Chief Obafemi Awolowo who describes Nigeria as a "mere geographical expression (Awolowo, 1947), some contemporary Yoruba leaders are calling for a Sovereign National Conference and restructuring of the federation. Some sections of Igbo leaders are calling for a confederal arrangement, while others who belong to the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) are insisting on revisiting secession. In the North, some states are insisting that Sharia should be implemented despite the resolution of the National Council of States which directed all Northern states to desist from implementing the Islamic legal system. This is perhaps one of the reasons that at the moment, there are bombings in some parts of the North by Boko Haram. Succinctly put, peoples in plural states often find themselves as strange bedfellows competing with one another for the control of state power and resources. For instance, even when Nigeria has been restructured into states formation, the states are subservient to the federal Centre and the marginalization of several ethnic communities from any access to state resources continues. This is why Olutayo Adesina has interrogated how "North, East, and West" are playing the "Politics of Elite Fragmentation" in Nigeria (Adesina, 2015). They represent the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and have the fear and the consciousness that the ethnic group that captures state power would have control over the resources of the state. Hence, the struggle for power and pursuit of interests of the people are done along ethnic divide and members of inter-ethnic relations are now with suspicion (Adesina, 2015). I now expatiate on how different sections of Nigeria have threatened the corporate existence of the plural state of Nigeria with the quest for self determination.

In his 1947 book: *Path to Nigerian Freedom*, Obafemi Awolowo writes:

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are 'English', 'Welsh; or 'French: The word 'Nigerian is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not (Awolowo, 1947).

This assertion of Obafemi Awolowo has been variously misconstrued "to imply that there was no basis for Nigeria's unity. His intention was to stress the suitability of a federal constitution for the unity and progress of the country. (Awolowo, 1947). However, Margery Perham has a better understanding of Awolowo's position which he moderates:

If the new Nigerian constitution can express and develop the special virtues of the main groups, each of these might well make, out of its many component societies, a unit sufficient in size, numbers and in its unified culture, to rank someday as a nation. If, however, the main groups can come together at the Centre to pool and share their traditions and resources, whether through a federal or a unitary system, then there may someday be a Nigeria which will be a leading power on the African continent and might make Africa's main contribution in the international sphere (Perham, 1947).

The emphasis of both passages quoted above is on the diversity and plurality of Nigeria. After all, there is an entity or a geo-political space called Nigeria. However, there is the need to acknowledge this fact by those who direct the affairs of Nigerians. They must accommodate people's differences rather than coercing them to forget their differences. Where and when this is not done, there will be agitations and quest for self-determination as we have had to contend with at various times in Nigeria.

Impediments to Self-determination

The Northern leaders of Nigeria threatened that the North would secede from Nigeria in 1950 if the North was not given 50 percent representation in the Central legislature. Delegates from the North and the South met in Ibadan to review the Richards Constitution. They demonstrated their sectional interests concerning one of the most controversial issues they discussed which is the ratio of representation in the Central Legislature. When the conference recommended quotas of 45:33:33 ratio for the Northern, Eastern, and Western Provinces respectively at the committee stage, the Emir of Zaria who was a member of the Northern delegation at the conference threatened "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 (Awolowo, 1947). This threat was supported by the Emir of Katsina who was also a Northern delegate. And by the time the 1951 Constitution came out, the British Government has "conceded the Northern demand for parity of representation in the Nigerian Legislative Council (Awolowo, 1947).

It may be argued that the British Government conceded the request of the North so that the arrangement put in place would remove the threats of secession from Nigerian political evolution and development. However, the North repeated the same threat of secession in April 1953 during the 'self-government' debate in the House of Representatives in Lagos. The Action Group sponsored a motion seeking self-government for Nigeria in 1956, but the Northern Members of Parliament sponsored a counter-motion demanding self-government for Nigeria 'as soon as practicable'. Arising from this, a Lagos mob abused the Northern Members of

Parliament while returning to the North. In retaliation to this, a riot broke out between the Northerners and the Southerners in the suburbs of Kano in May 1953.

There was a threat of succession then but "the members of the Northern House of Assembly and the Northern House of Chiefs, in an emergency joint session in May 1953, endorsed an eight-point programme, which, among other things, provided for virtually independent Regional Governments. Under this scheme, there was to be a non-partisan, executive, Central Agency, responsible for such common services as defense external affairs, customs, and West African research institutions. According to Ahmadu Bello, the arrangements represented 'our compromise on the suggestion of secession from Nigeria, as it then was'. At this stage, Nigeria's solidarity demonstrably suffered a serious setback (Abubakar, 2003).

We can be inferred from the passage quoted above is that the Northern leaders actually contemplated external self-determination in 1953 which would have done the North no good because there were not enough resources in the North to support maintenance and development of the region. It is not impossible that the colonial masters educated the Northern leaders on this reality and convinced them against secession. And so they decided to remain in Nigeria while the 'cat and dog' relationship between the North and South continues.

Still in the 1953 conference, the status of Lagos, Nigeria's capital and leading commercial Centre was discussed. Eastern Region regarded Lagos as a 'no man's land'. Western Region considered Lagos as a Yoruba town which must be administered as part of the Western Region. Northern Region considered Lagos seaport as being more important than Port Harcourt. Hence, there was the fear of the Northern leaders that they might be denied their key outlet at Apapa. They withdrew their support for the merging of Lagos Municipality and the Colony districts with the Western Region as it has been since 1950. Subsequently, the Secretary of state then-Oliver Lyttelton decided that Lagos should be the federal capital of Nigeria, and that the municipal area of Lagos should be regarded as 'Federal Territory'. He thought that, though his decision would be disagreeable to the Action Group, it would 'make for a United Nigeria.' The question that is germane here is that if Lagos was made the capital of Nigeria and the Municipal area remained part of Western Region as it has hitherto been, how would this be against United Nigeria or cause disunity? Our contention here is that retaining the municipal area of Lagos as part of the Western Region could not have affected the unity of Nigeria negatively. Rather, the decision to make Lagos Federal capital of Nigeria and municipal area of Lagos as 'Federal Territory' that led to the threat of secession by the leaders of the Western Region. In October 1953, the Action Group (AG) and its supporters, including the Egbe Omo Oduduwa reacted sharply by re-opening the question of Lagos. At about the same time, Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier of the Western Region, sent the secretary of state a strongly worded cable concerning this subject. In the communication, Awolowo claimed, among other things, the freedom of the western Region' to decide whether or not they will remain in the proposed Nigerian Federation (Awolowo, 1947).

In the characteristic manner of the British colonialists, if this request was made by the North, it would probably be granted. But the request coming from the South, not only was it not granted, but with a threat of imperial action against the West if it tried to secede. The reply to Awolowo's cable reads: "The secretary of state has directed that you should be informed that any attempt to secure attraction of that decision by force will be resisted, and in this context, I am to observe that any attempt to secure the secession of the Western Region from the Federation would be regarded as the use of force (Abubakar, 2003).

Now that the West was not favoured in this quest for self-determination, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C) then led by Nnamdi Azikwe and others were happy that the Action Group (A.G) lost out. The West was not happy because the sources of revenue accruing to the West have been reduced by exclusion of Lagos from the Western Region. This simply means that economic interest is the reason for the threat of secession in this case. The Western Region no longer had access to the revenue coming from the Municipal area of Lagos. This would definitely have negative effect on the development drive of the Western Region then. And so the Action Group would not give up on the quest for self-determination.

The Resumed Conference on the Nigerian Constitution held in Lagos between January and February, 1954 considered the question whether any Region should have the right to secede from the Federation. During deliberations, the Action Group delegation argued for the recognition of the 'right' of secession in the constitution. The AG argued its position that "any form of unity imposed from without would invariably lack enduring cohesion. It predicted that the 'dream' of a United Nigeria would fail unless the principle of freedom of association...were conceded (Awolowo, 1947). The foregoing implies that any region so wish should have the freedom to dissociate from United Nigeria. For Western Region's delegates, a dream of a United Nigeria would not be realized unless the terms of the association pleased all the federating units. Hence, the constitution should allow that any territory not pleased by the terms of the association should have the right of 'contracting out' of the Federation. "In making the above demands, the A.G. strongly upheld the principle of basing federalism on the consent of the people" (Akinyele, 2003). On the other hand, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (N.C.N.C.) delegation at the 1954 Resumed Conference in Lagos rejected the request of the Action Group (A.G) for the 'right' of Self-determination which would mean secession. The N.C.N.C. argued that "the Nigerian federation differed from a league of nations, which could allow its members to contract out whenever they so desired"(Awolowo, 1947). The argument of the N.C.N.C. here is not convincing because Article 17 of the U.S.S.R. constitution in 1936 provided 'the right of secession' whereas U.S.S.R. was not a league of nations but a plural state like Nigeria. But the N.C.N.C. conceived Nigerian constitution to be an 'organic law' which should not be broken by conceding the 'right of secession (Tamuno, 1970).

At the end of the conference, it was resolved that 'no secession clause should be written into the amended constitutions'. But the secretary of state who wanted to give Nigeria a unitary constitution changed his mind and gave Nigeria a federal constitution (Tamuno, 1970). But to further demonstrate lack of harmony and unity among the various peoples in the plural state of Nigeria, this issue which would have been laid to rest after the conference reared its head again. What Awolowo and his people originally wanted is federal constitution which they now got. Azikiwe who objected to secession also favored federal constitution going by his impression of

the view of "Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase in 1869 concerning the indissoluble union formed by the people of the United States under their Federal System of Government. He also agreed with Professor K.C. Wheare's dictum that 'no right of secession rested with any state acting alone (Tamuno, 1970). Azikiwe still issued a public statement on this issue on why N.C.N.C. delegation rejected the right of secession. This only generated ill feelings among the peoples of the federating units in the crucial transition from colonialism to independence.

The quest for self-determination continued in Nigeria after independence. The restlessness in the Western Region as a result of the A.G. crisis in 1962 and the 1963 census manipulation and controversy never attracted threat of secession. However, The Federal election of December 1964 and the Western Region election of October 1965 was so tense that secessionist threats reappeared. Even before the December 1964 election took place, 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 with Nnamdi Azikiwe, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Okpara expressed the desire of the Eastern Region to secede from the Federation (Tamuno, 1970).

Azikiwe who was with Okpara regarded the 'secession idea' as that of Okpara. And another N.C.N.C. leader, Dennis Osadebay, then premier of the Mid-West Region, in a public statement on 19 December, 1964 rejected secessionist call. However, the controversial elections in the Western Region in October 1965, which was acclaimed to be rigged, reopened old grievances as "N.A. Frank Opiyo, then an N.C.N.C. parliamentarian in the Federal House of Representatives, called for the secession of the Eastern Region from the Federation without any further delay (Tamuno, 1970).

Yet another secessionist threat in Nigeria came in the Middle-Belt section of the Northern Region in 1965 because of the political conflicts between the leaders of the United Middle Belt Congress (U.M.B.C.) and the N.P.C., the ruling party in the Northern Region then. The Tiv people desired to secede in 1965 because they were deeply frustrated with the maladministration of the Tiv area during the colonial era until independence. Again, the N.P.C. leaders stoutly opposed the demands of the United Middle Belt Congress (U.M.B.C.) for the creation of more states in the Northern Region. Then Isaac Sha'abu, the U.M.B.C. member for Shangev-Tiev (Tiv Division) in the Northern House of Assembly, during the debate in February 1965 on the Governor's address contemplated Self-determination of the Tiv people as answer to the perennial Tiv disturbances. He argues:

Because the Northern Peoples Congress does not want peace in that Division (Tiv) and the only course we can take now since we are not wanted in the North, is to pull out of the North and the Federation as a whole. We shall be a sovereign state. We shall be joining nobody. We are 1,200,000 in population bigger than Gambia and Mauritania and we have the manpower and every other thing (Tamuno, 1970).

Although Sha'abu was opposed by some other members of the Northern House of Assembly such as Vincent Orijime and Muhammadu Suleiman, he has expressed the frustration of his people and like in any other plural state, when people are frustrated or

dissatisfied with the way their affairs are being directed, they can contemplate self-determination as the way out. This goes to show how precarious the peace in plural states is and how fragile the unity among the different peoples in plural states can be. In the case of Nigeria, if the constitutions of Nigeria have always been safeguards against any part of Nigeria seceding, during the military regimes too, there was no tolerance for secession, more so that the existence and oath of the armed forces include safeguarding the territorial integrity of Nigeria. Two events demonstrated lack of tolerance for Self determination under the military regimes in Nigeria. From the foregoing narrative, we can contend that insecurity has been implicated as an impediment to self-determination.

Eccletic National Unity and Stability

In February, 1966, Isaac Adaka Boro, Sam Owonaro, and Nottingham Dick among others were frustrated in advocating the creation of Rivers State out of the Eastern Region because of what they perceived as oppression and injustice. When the Ironsi regime was not willing to oblige their request, they declared 'Delta Peoples Republic'. Their contention is that petroleum in their communities was being pumped out daily from the veins of their people. Hence, their people-Ijaws would be in perpetual bondage if they failed to fight for freedom from Nigerian state. They set up Niger Delta Volunteer Service as a "Liberation Army" and declared war to liberate the Niger Delta from the multi-ethnic state of Nigeria. Simply put, Boro and his group attempted a secession of the Delta area of Nigeria by violence when they declared war to actualize their political self determination which, if successful, will lead to economic self-determination. "For some in the affected area, the war was a welcome experience. For others elsewhere in Nigeria, it was a baffling task trying to explain a shooting war in a country whose inhabitants were just beginning to adjust to the novel experience of army rule"(Okereafor, 1974). They were arrested, tried and condemned to death for treason but later pardoned by General Yakubu Gowon. The deduction we can make from this is that some people are never satisfied being forced to remain in a state that is heterogeneous. Such a people will always agitate for self-determination. In spite of the failure of Boro and his group, the struggles for self-determination continue in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria although in another dimension such as resource control.

Again in 1966, Nigeria witnessed the most pronounced secessionist attempt made by disaffected Ibos following the military coup d'etat of 29 July, 1966 and the subsequent killing of their kinsmen in parts of the federation. These were sad events, which then encouraged Ibos to think that they were unwanted persons whose security could not be guaranteed within the larger Nigerian state. Hence, Lt. Col. C. Odumegwu Ojukwu, Military Governor of Eastern Region between January 1966 and 29 May, 1967 led the Ibo to declare 'Biafra Republic'. He promoted himself a 'General' and became the 'Head of State' from May 1967 to 11 January 1970. During this period, the Biafra Republic engaged Nigeria in a civil war for thirty months (Tamuno, 1970). The war was fought on the ground and conclusion of Nno victor, No vanguard, and Nigeria was re-united.

Human rights against marginalization, repression and political exclusion as well as unequal distribution of power and resources are some of the reasons why people agitate for self determination. Hence, each time a people or group contemplates or attempts secession in a

plural state, it is usually argued that it is to defend its rights which include the right of 'self-determination'. Given the factors already enumerated, a people or group often contemplates opting out a state where it has hitherto co-existed with others. Other factors may include the heterogeneous composition of plural states, cultural diversity, differences in political systems arrangements, and institutions, marginalization and a host of others. These factors usually constitute obstacles "to the evolution of strong national consciousness"(Afolayan,2002). They do render the project of nation building a worthless and needless exercise. Also, they do promote strong ethnic loyalties. In fact, the quest for self-determination as it manifests in secessionist threats or separatist agitations in Nigeria has also made the project of national unity or national integration difficult in Nigeria just like all plural states in Africa.

How to eliminate impediments to self-determination

To reduce or eliminate agitations for self-determination in Nigeria, leaders must ensure that there is inclusive governance in order to address any feeling of marginalization. Nigerian leaders must be prepared to negotiate their differences via dialogue at a Sovereign National Conference convoked without being subjected to the manipulation of National Assembly. Through such dialogue, all conflict unjust matters and agitations for self-determination will be resolved. Attempt will then be made to promote national unity.

Evaluation and Conclusion

All these specific cases of secessionist threats and separatist agitations in Nigeria underscore the need to recognize the right of all nationalities to self-determination. By so doing, there is the need to incorporate the diverse elements of various nationalities that considered to crucial to their sustenance in plural societies. There is also the need to always respect the will and wishes of the peoples concerned. By so doing, every nationality will be allowed to present its interests and views for consideration by those who direct the affairs of the people. Decisions will only be taken after reasoned arguments when compromises and consensus are achieved. The present day arrangement whereby different ethnic groups are merged together and administered as nation-states, without their involvement and explicit consent, is not desirable. Forced union can only bring about frictions, crises, conflicts, wars and revolutions. Such is the experiment of the colonial masters who undermined the heterogeneous nature of the plural states created with "bunch of contradictory structures" by administering them as nation-states. When the different peoples and groups that constitute these states begin to notice "uneven development of regions, peoples and socio-cultural settings that constitute them", they resort to political struggles to the point of demanding self determination (Kamanu,1974).

Reflecting critically, some people who benefit from the structure of plural state often argue that providence has a purpose for bringing different peoples together to form a plural state. Hence, people must remain together regardless of whatever challenges they may be facing in their union. They thus foreclose the idea of political secession. But when we reflect on the nationality question and the problem of justice that a people often face in plural states with national marginalization and oppression, I will argue to the contrary that God cannot bring peoples together to be living with injustice. God Himself abhors injustice. God will allow the people to have a say in their affairs, "including determination of national state borders

according to the 'sympathies' of the population, up to and including complete freedom of secession" (Ogundowole, 2006) but this is only necessary especially, when injustices persist.

Furthermore, before a people begin to contemplate Self-determination in terms of political autonomy, they must be able to articulate the issue of injustice involved and identify properly the people involved. As mentioned, the issue must be conceived to have constituted injustice before the call for Self-determination can be supported as being worthwhile. The People affected by the injustice must comprise a population that is adequate enough to be a nation-properly called and not just a sub-ethnic group. The determination of the group of people desiring Self determination must be convincing. This is because a group may contemplate Self-determination which a member of the group does not believe in it. Once the majority of the people are convinced, the group must be prepared for 'political' self-determination. And as Ogundowole contends: "The call for political autonomy is vague and meaningless unless and until it includes the right to a political sovereignty - the right to secede"(Ogundowole, 2006). This is so if and only if there are injustices.

The foregoing analysis boils down to the realities of present days 'plural, multi-national societies' with perennial tensions occasioned by their heterogeneity or plurality which in itself is a fundamental problem. If the heterogeneity and plurality of the contemporary multinational states represent backwardness, then the recognition of the right to secede is progressive and just. Thus "the recognition of the right of secession reduces the danger of the disintegration of the federation." (Ogundowole, 2006). This may become needless when justice is seen to be done in all cases.

However, when all conditions are present for contemplating political autonomy or secession, from 'an oppressing kind of political union', arrangement must be made for 'a referendum of the nationality or nationalities that desire to secede'. This is not to argue that every clan reserves the right to 'ask for self-determination in the form of a separate independent sovereign state' but that nations or nationalities desiring political autonomy should be free to decide whether to stand alone or associate with others. In other words, every nation has 'freedom of association and disassociation'. In this regard, what nations or nationalities abhor is 'forced association' or union by compulsion (Ogundowole, 2006). As a matter of fact, application for self-determination of a group must address the issue of injustice in the present socio-political arrangement before United Nations can agree to conduct referendum to decide the position of the people seeking self-determination. Such a group must be self sufficing. Above all, there must be legal frame work put in place for self determination in Nigeria.

My submission here is that the quest for self-determination which I have discussed in this paper is as a result of the nature of plural state and the problem of justice associated with it. Hence, various theories of justice have been espoused which can be constantly deployed to address the grievances of the groups and subsequently reduce the quest for self-determination in Nigeria.

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