



A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS WHY NDIGBO NEED TO FIRST TAKE BACK NIGERIA

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Abstract

The challenges facing the Igbo race today, especially within the Nigerian state, have historical and economic foundations, explanations and interpretations. Challenges have resulted in the resurgence of the desire and demand for Biafra as an exit option from Nigeria. This essay examines these challenges together with the plausibility and feasibility of the 'exit' option. It argues that against the backdrop of the historical fact that Ndigbo were the first occupant of the Nigerian territorial space as well as their ubiquitous economic investments all over Nigeria, the people need to first take back the Nigerian state. This essay posits that it is in taking back the Nigerian state that Ndigbo can, if necessary, carry out a planned and deliberately conscious Biafran exit. Employing historical, analytic and critical methodologies the paper tackles the difficulty of tracing the origin of the Igbo race as well as their historical and economic place in Nigeria. The paper further discusses the lack of political power as the missing link responsible for the woes of Ndigbo in Nigeria. It then concludes by examining the philosophy of rootology and the political, legal and diplomatic strategies of the Movement of Biafrans in Nigeria (MOBIN) as the best way to begin the process of Igbo restoration and revival.

Keywords: Biafra, Economics, History, Ndigbo, Nigeria, Political Power, Rootology.

Introduction

History heralds and harbours human identity. Economics sustains and strengthens human bodily existence so that Man can continue to make more history. The problems faced by Ndigbo in Nigeria today have historical and economic foundations. This problem can neither be understood nor addressed without them. What Chinua Achebe, in *The Trouble With Nigeria*, calls “a flood of deadly hate” (45) has resulted in the continuous attempt to blind, back or blur Igbo identity as well as squeeze the people out of physical (economic) survival.

As the Nigerian State wobbles and fumbles into an uncertain future with a possibility to crumble, as she staggers and flatters along way with the capacity to scatter and shatter, there is an urgent need for Ndigbo to decide what to do to strike a balance between the desire for self-determination within or outside Nigeria and the survival of a country which she historically-birthered and has continued to sustain economically. In a recent book titled *To The Rescue*, Prince Chukwuemeka Onyesoh has called “self-determination” the “pathway to a genuine federation of peoples with no shared values”.

The crises in the Nigerian state have made the desire and demand for “exit”, for the dissolution of the union, the most plausible option available to all the ethnic nationalities except the Hausa/Fulani



oligarchy sustained by what Chinweizu has correctly called “Calphate Colonialism”. I also want to say that I am also a strong believer and supporter of the “exit” option. As an Igbo-Biafran, I believed that Biafra is “the crystallization of the cherished hopes of (our) people” (Odumegwu Ojukwu, *Time magazine*, January 16, 1970).

However, I believe that it is in “taking back Nigeria” and running it the way we did before and shortly after independence in 1960, that self-determination, either within or outside the Nigerian State, can be guaranteed, obtained and sustained. The most enduring, most significant change occurs from within. Yeast, as an agent of expansion, is not useful until it makes contact with the dough. No one can sweep a house when the person is outside that house. The only way to clean a house, no matter how dirty it is, is to step into it with the relevant materials for the cleaning and begin the process from somewhere within that house.

Our thesis is that it is in the repackaging of Nigeria, in the occupation of our visionary place within her territory, that Ndigbo would both preserve her historical identity and protect her ubiquitous economic investments within her territory. I will, as a way to prove my thesis, show that if there is any title such as “Owner of Nigeria”, it cannot be contested by any other ethnic group in Nigeria. Ndigbo would be the eternal owners and holders of such a title! Again, who are the “Independence Champions of Nigeria”? Who else but Ndigbo? Who are the helm that turns the economy of Nigeria-from Kaura Namoda to Abeokuta, Gashua to Badagry, ...? Again, Ndigbo is unrivalled here.

It does appear to me that this compulsory exit from Nigeria is a surrender position. No doubt, Ndigbo have had a rough and tough deal in Nigeria. But how did we surrender the Nigerian space to those we allowed to cohabitate with us in the beginning? Can we survive another *hurried* exit? Is it not possible that we leave Nigeria on our own terms, at our own time and singing our own tunes in our own tone?

I intend to show that historically, Ndigbo were the first to arrive within the Nigerian space and that ordinarily, Nigeria is their birthright. Economically, I will also show that no other ethnic nationality has as much investment as Ndigbo within the Nigerian space. If we are to search for any people that can be called “True Nigerians”, no other people are qualified to acquire that tag except Ndigbo. Despite the death of over 30,000 of their kinsmen during the pogrom of 1966 and over 2 million during the war of 1967-1970, Ndigbo still opted to help in the development of all parts of Nigeria-just few years after the war.

As a concluding reflection, I will show the inevitability of political leadership in changing, for the better, the conditions of Ndigbo within the Nigerian State. In this connection, I will show the role that the Biafran ideology can play, especially the strategies of the Movement of Biafrans in Nigeria (MOBIN). I shall employ the philosophy of Rootology (tracing a problem from its foundation) in order to be able to wade through these challenges.

The Occasion for History and Economics



The fastest and easiest way to destroy a people is to destroy their history and deny them the capacity to survive economically. Africa today appears like a beggarly continent because of these two aspects of culture. As we fall head-over-heels, in an irrelevant attempt to remain “relevant”, making the so-called “scientific” the orbit of learning, we forget that history makes use of science, even though it is not a strict science. Interestingly, it was in his study of the *history* and actual practice of science that Thomas S. Kuhn, in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, discovered that the colossal image of science can be debunked.

In his popular book, *What is History?* C.H. Carr had observed that, “the liberal 19th century view of history had a close affinity with the economic doctrine of *laissez-faire*” (20). For Carr the 19th-century historian, had declared that all history is contemporary history-which means that the past must be conceived with the eyes of the present, and the problems of that present. The implication is that the contemporary challenges of existence must be understood in the light of the historical evolution of the people.

The fact that the knowledge of the past has been filtered and presented to us through one human mind or the other has become a real challenge in evaluating the facts of history. In 1896, Lord Acton had observed that “ultimate history we cannot have in this generation, but we can dispose of conventional history and show the point we have reached on the road from one to another” (quoted in Carr 10). The good thing about history, however, is that if you try to twist it, it would reappear again, in another way, via the objective tides of history itself.

It would be difficult, if not outrightly impossible, to discuss history, the history of a people, without taking into cognizance what Chima J. Korie in, “The Igbo Global History” refers to as “displacement caused by economic factors, political oppression, conflicts and famine” (151) “Economic needs have played major roles in the choice of place of settlement. Sometimes when people are compelled to settle in some places (eg. Mountainous Areas), they are made to economically adapt to that environment in order to survive.

The three basic requirements of man (outside air) are food, shelter and clothing. All economics must address these basic needs, otherwise they would be of no interest to and for man. It is only when man can keep his body healthy on earth that he could build a Society where in other matters can thrive. All these are driven by economic interests.

No other theorists have exalted the economic interest model of human nature as much as orthodox Marxism. In the spring of 1845, Karl Marx *Theses on Feuerbach* had written that “the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual; in its reality, it is the ensemble of social relations”. what In the view of the Marxists, these “social relations” are entered in the process of the production of the economic goods of society. In the process, society gets divided into two classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the being the owners of the means of production and the latter, the working class, who are forced to sell their labour power in order to earn wages for survival. No wonder Karl Marx and Frederick Engel’s, in the opening lines of the *Communist*



Manifesto, wrote that “the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle” (L).

In the Marxist analysis, therefore, history and economics meet with the possibility of understanding politics in terms of economics or what is called “political economy”. All the crises that confront our world today are either crises of identity or that of economics. What the Marxists argue, with some degree of logical validity and practical manifestations, is that social existence determines the essence or consciousness of man. In his essay, “The Ontological Basis for the Failure of Liberal Democracy in Africa...” Joseph Agbo had noted that the sojourn of the liberal democratic alternative to Africa is more economic than political. For him, is projected only to create the right atmosphere for capitalist exploitation; politics is, thus, the foundation and root of economics.

Who Are Ndigbo?

This question has a historical, psychological, physical, ontological, and (above all) spiritual dimension and responses. Perhaps, the controversies and confusions engendered by the attempt to answer the question historically point to the fact that history may not be able to unveil this race that appears to be fundamental to understanding humankind as a whole. In his essay, “Ndigbo: The Elusive Leadership and Consensus”, Oluwole Osagie-Jacobs writes, “The Igbo tribe is as unique as its history. Of all the tribes in Nigeria, it is this tribe that is most difficult to place in terms of origin ... it is, therefore, difficult to construct the contemporary Igbo man from his past.”

However, rather than the disadvantageous and pitiable manner in which this “difficulty” (that is, if it really exists) has been conceived and perceived, is important to ask ourselves if it is not because The Igbo, a global race that is seen as a tribe in Nigeria, has her roots deep in the furthest past where history, with its inadequacies, cannot reach or access. And in this regard, we must remember Catherine Acholonu-Orumba’s monumental book, *They Lived Before Adam: Pre-historic Origins Of The Igbo, the Never-Been Ruled*. With admirable scientific, Linguistic, archeological, intuitive revelation insights, backed by facts, the book traces the Igbo to the very beginning of man on Planet Earth as *Homo Erectus*, About 500,000 to 1,000,000 years ago.

Most historians and scholars of the history of Igbo concern are aware of historical works such as those of Professors A. E Afigbo, S.C. Ukpabi, and K.O. Dike, before them, etc. Of course, one cannot forget the archeological excavation of non-Africans like Prof Thurstan Shaw in 1959 at Igbo-Ukwu, which proved beyond doubt that. Civilization existed in that area over a thousand years ago. However, Acholonu’s book is as daring as it is amazing.

And although there are parts of the book that are very controversial and even revolting to those with deep Christian convictions, this should be expected from any revolutionary and unconventional research. The linguistic and scientific proofs therein are difficult to reasonably gainsay. Acholonu states the kernel of the over 450-page book, as it connects to what she calls the “Igbo phenomenon”, in the following words:



The global course I had set for my search led me ever more and more to information indicating that in times beyond memory, the Igbo and their Kwa brethren bestrode the continent of Africa and in time became instrumental to the making of an indigenous Nigerian civilization that had birthed, not only the black African civilization, but also all known world civilizations. Traces of this phase of Igbo and world history have all but been lost and buried in millennia of dead history, consigned to the period now generally known as prehistory. Yet traces remain in myths, legends, scriptures and histories of other continents, in the languages that people still speak today all over the world, as well as and most importantly, on the stone inscriptions of Ikom and the strange engravings and symbols on the bronze and copper monuments of Igbo Ukwu. (ix)

From the foregoing, we see immediately that the issue of “who” the Igbos are becomes sort of “Mundane”. The question of how the rest of the human race is Igbos becomes a much more necessary and significant one. It has long been established that Africa is the “Cradle of the human civilization”, and Acholonu takes it further by declaring that “the ancient name of a large part of the country now known as Nigeria was originally known as Biafra. This word *Bi-Afra* is the origin of the word *Africa*” (Xiii).

Following the discovery that some of the excavated artifacts from Igbo Ukwu by Prof. Shaw contain stars similar to those on the scepter of King David in the Bible, we should shift to a seemingly familiar territory regarding the origin of the Igbos: the Hebrew (Jewish) origin. And for us as Christians, this history is very useful. According to this Hebrew-Igbo connection, the Igbos are the descendants of Jacob’s 7th son, Gad. Gad is said to have 7 sons - Ziphion, Haggi, Shunni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli (Gen. 46 16 KJV). V.M.C. Eyisi wrote a book in the Igbo language with the title, *Akuko Nbido Ndigbo: (Amaziri Ebe O Diga N’ Akwukwuonso*, which I would translate as history of Igbo (It IS now Known Where It Is In The Bible.) In that book, he writes that:

Gad bụ nwa nke asaa nke jekọọpụ (Mbido 29:30- 31:11) bụ onye Mụrụ Eri, Arodi na Areli (Mbido 46: 16). Arodi bụ onye toro ntala alaeze Arochukwu. Umunne nwoke ato ndi a: Eri, Arodi na Areli tinyere ndi ikwu ha ndi ozo jiri otu obi bikoo n’ Aguleri tupu ha ebido bisawa na mpaghara ala Igbo ndi ozo. Ha bikotara onu otutu afọ wee mewe otu odinaala, otu omenaala na otu asusu tupu Arodi ahapu Aguleri gatee aka ka o noro ebe ahụ mabawa ma na- ebisakwa. Ebe ahụ ka ejizi Arochukwu mara n’ ubochi taa.

Translation:

Gad, who is the 7th son of Jacob (Gen. 29: 1-30: 11), was the one that begot Eri, Arodi and Areli (Gen 46:16). Arodi was the one that laid the foundation of Arochukwu kingdom. These three brothers, Eri, Arodi and Areli, together with their other kins and others, lived with one heart at Aguleri before they began to spread to other parts of Igbo land. They lived together for several years and shared the same culture the same custom and the same language before Arodi left Aguleri and went and lived far away so that he could bear children and spread out. That place is known as Arochukwu today (26)

Some of those who migrated with Eri, Arodi and Areli, were their half- brothers, who became the descendents of the ijaw (Izon) and Edo nations. The historical, cultural, linguistic, psychological



and even religious affinity between the Igbos and the Hebrew have been established by several researches. In fact, there is still a place at Aguleri today called Obu-Gad. As a matter of fact, comrade Uduma Idika has observed several feasts and festivals from his Edda land (in Ebonyi State) that not only follow the processes of many Jewish celebrations, but many times even bear the same name. In his essay, “Igbo-Hebrew Origin: Myth or Reality”, comrade Idika argued that the original Igbo religious conviction is monotheistic; that is, the Igbos believe in one supreme deity, just like their Hebrew or Jewish relations.

In his massive book, *Ado-na- Idu: History of Igbo Origin*, B.O.N. Eluwa discusses what he calls “The 3 Theories of Igbo Origin”. In a work that took about 50 years to complete (although he confesses that he “did not set out to write a book when he started gathering information about (Igbo) people at about the year 1934”), Eluwa writes that the book presents his “Research findings in the sequence of their progression. For instance, three theories of Igbo origin were examined. These; that the Igbos are autochthonous, literally sons of the soil; that they originated from Egypt; and that they are of Hebrew origin” (XXV). He adopted the phenomenological (descriptive) approach by setting out the arguments for and against each of the theories and allowing the one with credibility to speak for itself.

Now, whichever is correct, one thing is certain: Ndigbo are a no-mean people. If they are autochthonous (if “they lived before Adam”), then they are the original *Homo Sapien*; if they are from Egypt or are Egyptians, then they belong to the very first of the human civilization (In his Book, *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy*, Innocent Onyewuenyi vividly portrays how the “famous” and revered Greeks - the creators of western civilization - all owed what they knew from the Egyptian Mystery Schools) and if they are Jews, a spiritual, economic and intellectual glory is conferred on anything and anyone Igbo. Which other state can survive (since 1948) amid 9 enemy countries, each with enough hatred to detonate a nuclear warhead on her? It can only be Isreal; that is, the Jews. It is interesting to point out here that 3 Jews were the intellectual brains behind the Atomic Bomb - Einstein (American- Jew), Heisenberg (German- Jew) and Sakharov (Russian Jew).

There have been arguments to the effect that it is the Jews who are Igbos and not that Igbo’s are Jews. These people say that Abraham became a Jew at the age of 75 when Ndigbo had been in existence. Acholonu’s book places the Igbo at the very origin of the human specie.

Perhaps, as we conclude this reflection on who the Igbos are, it is necessary to note that the difficulty in placing them relates to the fact that they perhaps represent humanity itself. After all, doesn’t the Igbo say “Eri-oge” when they want to refer to something in the fare distance; perhaps at the beginning of time? Is that not another way of saying, “in the time of Eri”? Well, we can console ourselves by the known fact that after a long sojourn on Planet Earth. Man is still asking the question “what is man?” in his recent book, *In Biafra Africa Died: The Diplomatic Plot*, Emeffena Ezeani writes that “the story of Biafra is the story of Africa. Indeed it is a story of our humanity”, (XV). To think Igbo is to think Biafra, to think Biafra is to think Africa, and to think



Africa is to think humanity. Objective, unbiased researchers believe that these facts are incontrovertible.

Ndigbo and Nigeria's Territorial Space.

Unbiased historical evidence point to the indisputable fact that Ndigbo are not just the original occupants of the territory that later became Nigeria, but are actually the progenitors of the Bantu or Nok culture that gave birth, not only to black civilization, but equally all known world civilizations. In her massive work, *They Lived Before Adam*, Catherine Acholonu Olumba had written: "that Afra's African base was within the territory designated today AS Eastern Nigeria and Western Cameroun can be attested to by the place-name, Bi-afra, which in ancient maps of Africa is designated as the centre of the earth, Median-Biafra" (235). This vast area known as "Biafra" or "Biafara" has been in the map of Africa produced by the Portuguese explorers since 1492.

Chima J. Korie, has tried to show how the Igbo has contributed not only in shaping their own identity, but also in bringing about other global civilizations. In his paper, "The Igbo in Global History", he writes:

Linguistic evidence shows that the root Bantu word emerged in what is now Nigeria and Cameroun by 2,000 BC. This migration throughout Africa is one of the largest migrations in human history. The ancestors of the Igbo people were most-probably part of the proto-Bantu speakers, whose knowledge of agriculture especially tuber production and then working technology, helped to people and colonize the rest of the continent, South of the Sahara

The implication of Acholonu and Korie's position is that if Ndigbo are the autochthonous ancestors of the human race and if the Niger-Benue/Cameroun axis is the natural homeland of their ancestors, the statement that they are the original occupiers of this territory should be obvious.

Acholonu observes (painfully) that the world knows who the Igbo are only the Igbo themselves "do not" (xiv) that the identity of Ndigbo is peculiar appears to be known by others except Ndigbo themselves. Acholonu reveals her shock when a Northern Nigerian, Abdul Salau:

Presented a paper, detailing Igbo linguistic connection with Egypt, and specifically stating, to everyone's surprise, that many ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria have Igbo origins, and that the *Kwa* elements in such places or names as Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kwara etc have very ancient mega Igbo links (xvii-xix)

The evidence of Igbo influence in Northern Nigeria appears to be more difficult for many to be believe. But anyone who knows the language would immediately identify the *kwa* element in the names such as Kwara, Kwakwnzo etc. of course, it is a well-established fact that language is the best element in proving the traces of human migration. It is, thus, laughable to see or hear people whose names are clearly Igbo denying their Igboness. It is the best expression of identity crisis.



Perhaps one of the strongest evidence of the Igbo occupation of Nigeria's territorial space is found in Southern Nigeria, especially in the South-West, now mainly occupied by the Yoruba people. It is a fact now that the Yorubas met Ndigbo in the territory that has now become geopolitically designated as South-West, Nigeria. In his book, *ADO-NADU*, Eluwa (then Secretary-General of Igbo State Union) writes about the empire of Ado-Na-Idu, which Ndigbo operated for over a thousand years before the arrival of the Yoruba. According to Eluwa:

The empire of Ado-Na-Idu existed long before the kingdoms of Oyo and Benin as well as the contemporary kingdoms of Dahomey and Ashanti This was partly brought about by the fact that Ado-Na-Idu lay outside the areas traversed by the early Arab and European travelers. Furthermore, the Ibo and their fellow tribes of Ado-Na-Idu did not seem to have developed strong institutions for the preservation and transition of oral tradition Only scanty information about Ado-Na-Idu as a background to Igbo history has survived (102-3).

The capital of Ado-Na-Idu was Ife and the Ado stool was title Ogene before the Yorubas changed it to Ooni. It is a well-known fact that the Egbas, Ekitis, Egbados, Ifes, Ijebus, Ijeshas etc did not regard themselves as Yorubas until the coming of the Anglican mission in the 19th century. Again, it is known that in Yoruba history, the Oyo people are usually regarded as *Yoruba Porap* (the original Yorubas). According to Eluwa, it was the attempt by the Yorubas to usurp the Ado stool that led to the battle of *Idu-na-Oba*, between the Yoruba and the Igbo. These resulted in the migration of Ndigbo from today's South-West to today's South-East, Nigeria a migration that occurred in batches and which, according to Eluwa, took about 3 centuries to complete. According to some African historians, including the mercurial Basil Davidson, Ndigbo and their Kindred tribes arrived this territory, this Nigerian space, at about the 6th century BC. The Yorubas arrived at about 7th century following their escape from the early Jihadists of that period.

It is this Ado connection that is the reason why Onitsha people refer to themselves as Onicha-Ado. According to Eluwa, as recent as 1951, Obafemi Awolowo had led Yoruba people to Onitsha in order to, as he put it, "unify all the sons and daughters of Oduduwa" (113) By that visit of the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, it implies that the Yorubas see Onitsha people as the "Sons and daughters" of their progenitor, Oduduwa. But it is obvious that the Onitsha Ado people were already in this space before the Yoruba arrival. Onitsha people are aware that their ancestors came from Ife and it is because of the historical place of the Ado Empire in this connection.

The latest thesis is that Ndigbo are the original bushmen even before the dawn of *homo sapien* makes our insistence that Ndigbo cannot just give up Nigeria so cheaply a critical one. The only way for Ndigbo to strengthen their historical claim over Nigeria's territory is for them to strategize, plan and package a deliverable and conscious programme of action. Even if Ndigbo give up on Nigeria, they should not give up Nigeria. To give up on Nigeria is to express weariness on the possibility of her survival owing to the current situation of political quagmire, social unrest and economic fixation. However, to give up Nigeria is a worse case scenario. It means, to surrender the space where we thrive, where we have developed, where our investments are scattered. My



thesis is that we should give out Nigeria, at our own terms when we feel like doing it. No people have created, developed and sustained Nigeria like Ndigbo.

The Original State of Ndigbo in Nigeria

The Igbo Nation was not originally in this temporal “fallen” state in Nigeria before Now. For a people whose language has been identified to be at the root of many languages in the world, including Chinese, Hebrew, French, etc, they used to be the rudder that turned the colonial and post- colonial civil service. (Achelonu-olumba 364-405) They occupied the top echelon of the military and provided the sacrificial glue that kept the Nigerian state going since independence. For a people that had to practically play “Catch- up” in the area of formal education, the rise of Ndigbo to the zenith of Nigeria’s socio- political arrangement was simply phenomenal. As a matter of fact, the cultural, social, economic and political nature and personality of the Igbo is jealousy-inducing and hatred- invoking.

Osagie Jacobs, writes with pompous relish that “it may appear untrue, but is a fact that the Yorubas had a secondary school 60 years before the Igbos and a University graduate 40 years before them”, yet he quickly admitted that when the first University in Nigeria, (University of Ibadan) was to have its first indigenous Vice- Chancellor, an Igbo man, Prof. Kenneth Onwuka Dike, arose to that pinnacle. He also noted that 5 Igbo professors, to Yorubas’ 4, were in the top management (academic) cadre of the University between 1948- 1950.

The proximity of the Yoruba territory to the shore line’s was responsible for this head-start by the Yorubas. For they received the missionaries and the formal education in their company first before others. In his book, *There Was A Country*, Chinua Achebe Explains the reason for the ability of the Igbo’s to cover the ground and overtake the Yorubas, and the fact that this led to resentment and hatred for the Igbo. He summarizes the origin of the Igbo resentment in Nigeria in the following words:

The Igbo Culture, being receptive to change, individualistic, and highly competitive, gave the Igbo man an unquestioned advantage over his compatriots in securing credentials for advancement in Nigeria’s colonial society. Unlike the Hausa/ Fulani he was unhindered by a wary religion, and unlike the Yoruba he was unhampered by traditional hierarchies. This kind of creature, fearing no god or man, was custom- made to grasp the opportunities, such as they were, of the white man’s dispositions. And the Igbo did so with both hands. Although the Yoruba had a huge historical and geographical head start, the Igbo wiped out their handicap in one fantastic burst of energy in the twenty years between 1930 and 1950 ... (75)

Achebe goes on to cite Paul Amber who explained that:

With unparalleled rapidity, the Igbo advanced fastest in the shortest period of time of all Nigeria’s ethnic groups. Like the Jews, to whom they have frequently been likened, they progressed despite being a minority in the country, filling the ranks of the nation’s education, prosperous upper classes.... It was not long before the educational and economic progress of the Igbo led to their becoming the major source of administrators,



managers, technicians, and civil servants for the country, occupying senior positions out of proportion to their numbers. Particularly with respect to the Federal Public service and the government statutory corporations, this led to accusations of Igbo monopoly of essential services to the exclusion of other ethnic groups. (74-75)

Achebe argues that the open society of the Igbo, where everyone is perceived in terms of being as good as the other, created a condition of can-do-ness that resulted in healthy competitions for success. He identified some other factors that brought about educational, economic and political success for the Igbo. These include the fact that the population density created a hunger for space, which led to a progressive increase in the number of Igbo in Northern Nigeria from about 3,000 in 1921 to about 130,000 in 1952. For Achebe, although the Yorubas led everyone in Nigerian in educational attainment from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries, yet “within 2 short decades, the Igbo had closed the gap and quickly moved ahead as the people with the highest literacy rate” (76).

The original position of the Igbo in Nigeria even began prior to the dawn of colonialism. At the dawn of slavery, Igbo slaves were also the most- demanded. In a position paper on behalf of the Igbo- Hebrew Cultural restoration Organization (IGBOBRIO), titled, “The Road Map To Igbo Restoration And Reconstruction”, Uduma Idika estimates that 1 out of every 4 slaves bought in Africa, one was Ibo. The concept of “Oyibo” as a designation for the Whiteman in Nigeria came from their question “Onye Ibo?” each time slaves are brought for purchase. “Onye Ibo”. Her means, “Is she/he” ibo? Because the strength of the Ibo was legendary. The paper opines that the Igbo arrived the territory that became Nigeria around the 6th or 5th century BC.

Everyone knows that anti colonial agitations in Nigeria assumed a vibrant bite when the great Zik of Africa got involved, especially with his newspaper, *The West African Pilot*. That he arose to become Nigeria’s first president, was not much of a surprise. He was the shining star in the government of the First Republic. The surprise was that he did not become the first prime minister.

The first coup of January 15, 1966 again had Igbo at the helm from Nzeogwu to Ifeajuna, from Okafor to Anuforo. One of the major actors, Ben Gbulie in his book, *Nigeria’s Five Majors* paints a vivid picture of the reason behind the coup and the fact that it was not an Igbo Coup. The truth simply was that the educational attainment the endurance and perseverance of the Igbo and their versatile nature put them ahead. And it was not just in the army, it was in all facets of life.

Interestingly, it took the Igbo to also quell the coup. Major- general J. T. U. Aguiyi- Ironsi was the GOC of the Army, the first Nigerian to get to that rank, and in league with Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, they ensured that the coup did not fully succeed - in an attempt to save Nigeria, Again, when the civilian government could no longer continue, it took another Ibo, head of the parliament, Nwafor Orizu, to take the inevitable decision to invite the military to take charge of governance. And who else is most qualified in the military, but the highest ranked officer, Maj- Gen. Aguiyi- Ironsi, another Ibo!



It is on record that Emeka Ojukwu was the First Nigerian to enter the military, not just with a Bachelor's but a Master's Degree, from no mean an institution than Oxford University in England. Of course, his father, Sir Lious Odumegwu Ojukwu is known to be the first millionaire in Africa. When Queen Elizabeth II visited Nigeria in February, 1956, Sir Lious Ojukwu donated his Rolls Royce and his driver to British-Nigerian government to drive the Queen around Nigeria. But there is no time and space to chronicle all the firsts of the Ibo in Nigeria, Africa and the World. Or is it not an Igbo man, Philip Emegwari, that is the "father of the Internet"? And is Chinua Achebe not the father of African literature? Was it not Adiele Afigbo that was a first Nigerian to obtain the Ph.D in Nigeria? But the point I want to make here is that the current situation of the Ibo in Nigeria Is neither a historical nor a natural fact. It was deliberately and systematically planned, executed and meticulously sustained.

Among the ethnic groups in Nigeria, there is no doubt that the Ibo is altruistic and other- directed, and have been more interested in pursuing the survival and success of the Nigerian state, than any other. Or did the Ibos in Enugu not Vote a Fulani man, Mallam Umaru Altine, as the first Mayor of the city of Enugu? Nationalist, Mbazulike Amechi, tells the story of how he, Mallam Altine and others shared the same prison cell in 1952 (202, in Biafra Africa Died). According to Ezeani "with the exception of the Eyo Ita and Azikiwe episode, there is no other record of Ibo domination or marginalization of other people available to (me)" (202). Ezeogo Francis Akanu Ibiam, in "For The Love Of A New Nation: Text Of Protest Letter of Dr Akanu Ibiam to her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, (1968)", recalls how Biafrans were "purposely and systematically forced out" of Nigeria, brutally and atrociously murdered in Northern Nigeria; yet, "eastern Nigeria did not retaliate in any way, for we do not kill strangers within our gates...(cited in Ezeani 245-48) Northern Nigerians in eastern Nigeria were, therefore, collected together and escorted safely by train across the border to their own section of Nigeria".

The Ibo is, therefore, caring and consider strangers as dignitaries. This was the situation in Nigeria until what Achebe calls the "naively idealistic coup of January 15, 1966" (82). The way the coup turned out led (plausibly) to the conclusion that it was an "Igbo coup". However, records by actors and participants, including those from western and Northern Nigeria, have shown that this conclusion was (is still) mistaken. In any case it led to a revenge coup of July 29, 1966 that resulted in a virtual wiping out of Igbo military officers. The murderous frenzy unleashed by the rest of Nigeria (led by Northern military officers) has been described in Various terms: genocide, pogrom, mass-murder etc. My father was a soldier and was in Congo with Aguyi- Ironsi. He told me that at Ikeja, about 400 eastern Nigerian soldiers were detained during the counter- coup and that he was among the 44 that survived the slaughter.

By the time the super- powers of the United Kingdom and Russia helped Nigeria to pound Biafra and starve them into surrender, it was left for Gowon's Finance Minister Obafemi Awolowo, to hand to the Ibo a paltry £20 (twenty pounds) to start allover again. Unfortunately, this amount was only giving to those who had accounts in the banks and who did not operate it once during the war. From that moment, the "mighty" headed for the fall"-economically, politically, militarily and worst of all psychologically".



Ndigbo: The Movers of Nigeria's Economy

Without the individuality, versatility, energy, innovativeness, open-spirit, creativity, drive and gusto of Ndigbo, it would not be an over-statement to say that Nigeria would have been a grounded entity. In spite of the ubiquitous nature and presence of Ndigbo within the Nigerian state, the country has continued to gasp for survival breathe. Any objective analyst or researcher would not find it hard to conclude that Nigeria would have been worse-off, but for Ndigbo in her economy.

The fundamental reason for my thesis that Ndigbo should not cheaply give up Nigeria is economic. No other people, no ethnic nationality in Nigeria has as much investments in Nigeria as Igbo people. Not only are they involved in the distribution of already made products, from home and abroad, they are also involved in the manufacture of goods-from drugs to confectionaries, from textiles to petro-chemical products, from agro-allied products to vehicles.

Infact, that Nigeria is a sleeping giant in all facts of life has chiefly been blamed on the lack of the political will by successive governments in Nigeria to release the creativity of Ndigbo from what Odumegwu Ojukwu calls "a glass cage". In the book, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*, Karl Maier quotes Ojukwu as saying, "free us (Ndigbo) and we will put a refinery in every state capital in Nigeria" (286). For a people that faced a genocidal war in their own territory after the attempt to wipe them out, outside the Igbo territory (especially in Northern Nigeria), the return of Ndigbo to drive Nigeria's economy again is simply phenomenal. The economic strangulation of 20 pounds (given to those who had bank accounts and did not operate them even once during the war) could have nailed any other people to the cross of perpetual poverty. But not Ndigbo. According to Maier "the Igbo survived, however; and they returned to occupy an integral part of the economies of cities, such as Kano, where they had been slaughtered thirty years ago" (285).

Several factors have been fingered as responsible for the capacity of Ndigbo to survive, come will, come woe. But I want to discuss only one of them. Many people, especially non-Igbo believe that Ndigbo are selfish people. However, no truly selfish person can achieve the dimension of success that Ndigbo have achieved over the years. What Ndigbo have as a people is self-love, not selfishness. As truly God's people, Ndigbo follows the classical Biblical injunction: "Love your neighbor, as you love yourself" (Matt 22:37-39). No one that does not love himself can love another.

Harnessed and channeled the right way, then self-interest, when placed within certain rules and boundaries, can be good, leading to a more prosperous and humane society. Here, it is important to distinguish between self-interest and selfishness. Self-interest, unlike selfishness would often lead one to commit acts of altruism. Rightly understood, it knows that a lonely man is an Island, that we are of a larger community, and that what is good for others is good for us. To put it another way: pursuing our own good can advance the common good. Igbo investments in Nigeria are so-massive that it would be foolish and irresponsible to just give it up cheaply on the guise of the failure of the Nigerian state. When in July, 2017, a coalition of youths in Northern Nigeria gave Ndigbo on October 1st 2017 deadline to vacate the North, those who knew better saw it as



laughable. One, this was 2017 and certain pronouncements are not possible. Two, with a 44 trillion naira investment in Northern Nigeria owned by Ndigbo, what was the expectation of the North? That the Igbo would run and create another abandoned “property” saga about 50 years after it happened?

I am told that the best hotels in Kaduna and Lagos are owned by the Igbo. In 2015, I was in a place called 6th Avenue in Festal Town, Lagos where there are private houses constructed outside the ones built by the government. When I saw the state-of-art buildings in that place, I jokingly told my friend, Ejike Metu that I am sure the Igbo owe 90% of the houses there. He asked me, “which people are you leaving a whopping 10% for?” As far as he was concerned, Ndigbo owes about 96% of the buildings there, with the Edos (the “Idu” of Ado-Na-Idu) and others sharing the remaining 4%. That is the Igbo human being for you. Ndigbo have the capacity to break into virgin forests and convert them into business and residential paradise in just few years! In his, “Bringing Back the Past Glory of the Economy of Alaigbo”, Sam E. Ohuabunwa recalls how Eastern-Nigeria grew faster than all the other 3 Regions, especially in the days of Michael I. Okpara, who was premier from 1960. For him, the economy was “anchored on three strong pillars: Agriculture, industry and commerce” (45) After the war, and in a bid to first survive, Ndigbo took industry and commerce to every nook and cranny of Nigeria. They became so ubiquitous that a particular cliché became popular in Nigeria: “any place you cannot find an Igbo, then that place is not habitable”! Nothing secures economic interests enduringly as much as political power. The Gulf War of the early 1990s had to be fought because, as at that time, Kuwait had over a hundred billion dollars investment in Europe and America. For the late Saddam Hussein to annex Kuwait and make it the 19th province of Iraq would have meant transferring all that enormous wealth of Kuwait to Iraq. Also when NATO Forces invaded Libya in 2011, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk berated the United States-led force, calling their action “hypocritical, meddling and at best, as oil theft-based (166, quoted in Emeka *Emekesri, Biafra or Nigerian Presidency: What the Ibos Want*). After NATO has laid its hands on Libya’s oil, the country has never been the same again.

What Ndigbo have invested in Nigeria is such that they should fight with the last drop of their blood against anybody or any power that wants to put the country in a precarious situation. Ndigbo have surrendered Nigeria’s space for too long and left it in the hands of people whose only interest is how to rape the resources in her territory. If you take Ndigbo out of Nigeria’s economy, the economy would collapse. Although by policy design, Ndigbo have been kept out of the gigantic money-spinning sectors (such as oil, mining, communication etc), their control of SMEs (Small and Medium Scaled Enterprises) has ensured that they drive the heart of the country’s economy.

In their essay, “An Exploratory Study of Igbo Entrepreneur Activity and Business Success in Nigeria as the panacea for Economic Growth and Development”, Johnson J. Orugun and Tunde Akeen have studied the contribution of Ndigbo to the development of SMEs in Nigeria and how the SMEs constitute the major sources of economic development in the developing countries. According to them, “Igbo entrepreneur in the country have been observed to be *sine qua non* for the economy of Nigeria and the quality of the people at both rural and urban settings”.



Making their analyses against the backdrop of Adam Smith's discourse in *his The Wealth of Nations*, Orugun and Akeen did not speculate in their research. They proceeded to state, *inter alia*, that their investigations reveal that:

75% of investment in Lagos are owed by Nigerians, 5% by Hausa/Fulani, 15% by foreigners (non-Nigerians), 5% by other Nigerians, non-Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, 1% by Yoruba, which include Mike Adenuga ... statistics show in Lagos that Igbo investments is not less than 300 trillion naira; it is double of that in Abuja, at about 600 trillion naira. In Kano and Kaduna Igbo investments run up to 10 trillion naira, respectively, while in Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa States, Igbo investments run into 5 trillion naira, respectively. In plateau State, Igbo investment is hovering around 15 trillion naira. One of the major arguments being used to explain why African countries, including Nigeria, have not been able to develop, or more appropriately, have been acquiring development hiccups, is that these set of people have not been given enough chance to participate in the development process ... remove the Igbo from the country and Nigeria would collapse like a flimsy deck of cards. In similar tenant, Governor Gabriel Susana of Benue State opined that any state government that ignores the Igbo does so at the risk of its economy. This research was published in 2014 and it does not say when it was carried out. The implication is that these figures may well have increased geometrically.

What emerged out of their study is that the Igbo entrepreneurial activities are the panacea for Nigeria's economic development. This economic ground, is Thus, one of the major reasons why I believe Ndigbo cannot abandon the country to those that employ intimidating, blackmailing and coercive strategies to keep them out of the Nigerian state or territory. It is bad enough that Ndigbo are been kept out of the policy strategies of many government in Nigeria, but to continue to bemoan that situation with the mentality of surrender is a tragedy that we must reject.

In his paper, "the Igbo Entrepreneur in the political Economy of Nigeria", Olarewaju Olutayo has argued that although the question of entrepreneurship has no ethnic coloration, it is an indisputable truth that "it is known that the Igbo, when compared to other major ethnic groups in Nigeria, are in the forefront of entrepreneurial activities, especially in the informal sector ... the Igbo admire the man of energy, the goal getter. The qualities stressed in children's upbringing are property, money, honesty, and loyalty to Kinsmen". What it means is that Igbo industry, frugality and energy are almost as genetic as its well-known historical and sociological traits. No wonder Korie states that even before the advent of colonialism Ndigbo had "a well developed economy, that had developed far beyond subsistence levels that met the food and exchange needs of the population before the colonial encounter" (156).

What I want to achieve in this subsection is to ask Ndigbo to factor economics in their desire and demand to exit from Nigeria. The request to exit from Nigeria, either as Biafra or by any other name we chose, is a right. But it is right that we must demand for it with open historical and economic eyes. We must discuss our economic investment at the same time as we seek self determination. We must evolve a strategy that combines and captures what we plausibly desire



and what feasibly can be done, within our historical context. Without economic freedom, political freedom is a farce. We cannot be making noise on the streets in the name of Biafra while our adversaries are in the Parliaments making laws and developing policies that ruin our economic investments. And to political discourse we now turn.

Political Power: The Missing Link.

Ozoemena Nwa Nsugbe, a Well known Igbo traditional music icon, was so-concerned about what the lack of political power has done to Ndigbo that he was compelled to sing, “*Igbo Choba Pawa*” (“Igbo, seek political power). It is in the character of artists to commit any disturbing challenge in songs in order to popularize it and put in the front burner. Unfortunately, many of those that listen to that song do not reflect on the words. They simply enjoy the rhythm and lyrics. The singer laid the blame of the state of affairs on the unfortunate focus of Ndigbo on “buying and selling”.

The last 2 decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century witnessed the emergence of Igbo leaders, may merchant-rulers, who are agents of forces outside Igboland. These are politicians with no ideologies or better still, whose ideology is pecuniary. These are politicians who believe nothing, know nothing about Igbo plight and feels nothing about the subjugation that the people are exposed to since after the war in 1970.

Majority of today’s Politicians in Igboland are either products of the “endless” and epileptic transition to civil rule under the self-styled evil-genius and military President, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida or products of the accidental Head of State, Abdusalami Abubakar. The latter was so much in a hurry to return Nigeria to democracy, nay civil rule, that he used a few weeks to package a constitution for the people of Nigeria. The serious-minded among Ndigbo showed apathy in the midst of both the Babangida and Abubakar transitions. The result was the hijack and usurping of the political space in Igboland by men who wanted to upgrade their Curriculum vitae, (C.V.) not those who wanted to serve.

On their way to upgrading their C.V. (as ex-this or ex-that political office holder), they stumbled on our commonwealth laid tenacious grip on it, and have since been transferring it to their cronies, relations, nuclear-family, boot-lickers, and others who have been playing agency-roles (like them) for forces outside Igbo land.

If Ndigbo were to tell themselves the truth, they must admit that more than 70% of what is happening to them today is self-inflicted and can only be solved by a deliberate and conscious self-appraisal and self reconstruction. Adiele Ebere Afigbo, had once wished he could get an opportunity to, as he puts it:

Strip Ndigbo naked before their eyes and those of the world in the matter of their own concern to their culture and civilization, so that they may see that many of the things that they complain about result from short-comings in their individual and group character, especially from the suspicion which appears to dominate the relationship between their political juggernauts and economic moguls, on the one hand, and their men of intellect and



learning on the other (53, “The Origin of Igbo Civilization: Aspects of the Inner Dimension”).

I do not think that anyone needs to “strip Ndigbo naked” any more. They have ingloriously both allowed themselves to be stripped naked and then painfully removed their skin to (unfortunately) expose their flesh and bones to ordinarily preventable political infirmities.

Today in Igboland, the political juggernauts, business moguls and the man of letters are all trying to outwit each other in the lure to control the allocation from Abuja. Once any or all of them takes or take custody of the allocation, all we would find would be *monuments* and no *movements*! Of course, one should not forget that all these began with Ukpabi Asika’s concept of “*Onye ube ruru, ya racha*” (“he whose turn the pear gets, let him lick”). The implication is that since the pear is sweet, and since it is licked by he who has custody of it, why then would he allow it to get to another? Compare current occurrences with the days of Nnamdi Azikiwe, Michael Okpara, Akanu Ibiam, K.O. Mbadiwe, Aja Nwachukwu, etc, and we would be left with no option but to conclude that politics in Alaigbo is in waterloo. This is why Chudi Ofodille in his *The Politics of Biafra and the Future of Nigeria*, argues that Ndigbo have been reduced to “political insularity” in nigeria

I will not blame Ndigbo for what happened to them. No one beaten should be prevented from crying or at least feeling the pain. Similarly, I will not blame Ndigbo for the desperate need to (first) survive after the war that destroyed their environment, desecrated their culture, damaged the then fastest growing economy in the world, dehumanized the people and finally demeaned their psyche. I would not blame a people whose properties were declared abandoned in their own homeland, who got 20 pounds for any amount of money left in the bank before the war. In a presentation in Arewa House Kaduna, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, Paints the Igbo plight thus,

They have been defeated in war, rendered paupers by monetary policy fiat, their properties declared abandoned and confiscated, kept out of strategic public sector appointments and deprived of public services. The rest of the country forced them to remain in Nigeria and has continued to deny them equity. The Northern bourgeoisie and the Yoruba bourgeoisie have conspired to keep the Igbo out of the scheme of things. In the recent transition when the Igbo solidly supported the PDP in the hope of an Ekweme Presidency, the North and South-West treated this as a Biafran agenda. Every rule set for the primaries, every gentleman’s agreement, was set aside to ensure that Obasanjo, not Ekweme, emerged as the candidate. Now, with this government, the marginalization of the Igbo is more complete than ever before. The Igbo have taken all these quietly because they reason they brought it upon themselves, but the Nation is sitting on a time bomb. (See, “Yorubas Are the Problem of Nigeria”).

Unfortunately, Sanusi believes that the above lot befell Ndigbo as a result of their “foolishness” in “shattering” the peace of the country with the January 15, 1966 military coup; which he believes was carried out by the Igbo for the selfish interest of Ndigbo. I admire Emir Sanusi. He is one Northern bourgeoisie that says his mind, sometime in a fiery manner, without carrying whose ox is



gored. However, I am sure that if he looks deep inside himself, he would know that not only was the coup of January 15, 1966 not an Igbo coup carried out for Igbo interest, Ndigbo had no need of a military putsch to occupy social, economic and political positions in Nigeria since, as at that time, they were in charge (by merit) in the country.

The current inability of Ndigbo to occupy the political space of Nigeria, from what Sanusi said above, appears to be a grand conspiracy to ensure that Ndigbo do not, to use Sir Ahmadu Bello's Phrase, "have control over their future". But the saddest part of this miserable condition is that Ndigbo are not even allowed to take charge of even their ancestral territory. Politicians who bear Igbo names but play agency roles for powers and forces outside Igboland, are hoisted or foisted upon the people. This situation has largely remained the same because of our people's apathy and almost total surrender of that political power to these agents.

Considering the way modern nation-states are structured and taking into cognizance the character of the world order, to be politically ignorant or to surrender your political space to those who have not got your mandate, is the worst thing that can happen to any people. Any people that surrenders their political space would suffer continuous social, economic and psychological deprivation and de-humanization. German Philosopher, Bertolt Brecht, was thus, correct when he wrote:

The worst illiterate is the political illiterate. He hears nothing, sees nothing, takes, no part in political life. He does not seem to know that the cost of living, the price of beans, of flour, of house rent or any other material condition of good living depend on political decisions. He even prides himself on his political ignorance, sticks out his chest and says he hates politics. He does not know that from the political none performance comes the prostitute, the abandoned children, all the hostilities we have in the world, robbers and more particularly, corruption in our country.

Political policies determine the place of historical fact and the feature of economics in any society. Apathy or surrender is, therefore, exhibited to the peril of those who do so. Unfortunately, even the Church that should know better distance herself from the political activities of the state yet there is more politics played inside or within the Church itself.

Young people are worst hit or the worst culprits in this political surrender. Many people have no PVC (Permanent Voters Card) and those who have watch films, play draft or sleep on election days. That "our votes want count" is the mantra that we have used to short-change ourselves and keep ourselves in perpetual bondage. We cannot clear the inside of a house while we are standing outside. We have become members of a "Murmuring Republic", complaining and murmuring about how bad things are. Yet, we forget that unless we arm ourselves with brooms, rakes and booths (if the house is as dirty as Nigeria's own), step into the house with determination, knowledge, zeal and zest, the process of getting the house clean would not even begin.

We must deliberately create in Igboland and among Ndigbo (wherever they are) a new set of traditional, religious and (especially) political leaders with a service-mentality. We must find new



Michael Okparas and Akanu Ibiam who desire to serve Ndigbo with all their heart, all their Soul and all their body. 37 years ago (1985), when the former premier of Eastern Nigeria (today's 9 states), Michael Iheonukara Okpara died, his corpse was put in the morgue so that a small bungalow would be built for him before his burial because he had no house. He and Akanu Ibiam (who was governor while he was premier) did not acquire estates and properties with public funds when they superintended over the affairs of Eastern Nigeria between 1960 and 1966.

In his essay, "The Crises of Identity and the Quest for Development in Africa: The Place of Leadership in Creating a New Culture", Joseph Agbo had observed that when a society is so rotten from top to bottom and the people face the crisis of not even knowing where they are coming from or going to, leadership is usually critical in fostering a new culture from the top. He cited two examples from history. One was Abraham Lincoln who, after the American Civil War between 1861 and 1865, employed leadership dexterity, commitment and justice to restore confidence in the breakaway Southern States into the Union.

He also cited the case of Japan. Perhaps, no people have suffered the humiliation of identity crisis as much as the people of Japan. Following the atrocities of her Emperor, Hiro Hitto, the allied forces decided that they would test-run the atomic bomb on Japanese territory. Thus, on August 6, 1945, 3 aeroplanes headed for Japan: one carried an atomic bomb code-named "Little Boy", the other carried a device to measure the corrosive effect and the third carried a camera to photograph the bombing. One thing led to another, and instead of Tokyo (the original target), the bomb was eventually dropped in Hiroshima. Three days later, a second bomb, codenamed "Fat Man", was dropped in Nagasaki. The next day, August 10, 1945, Japan surrendered and World War II came to an end. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese died in those 3 days and more in the coming years. The Japanese people suffered serious identity crises, psychological strength was at its lowest ebb.

However, by a deliberate policy, the Meij Dynasty in Japan combined western investments with confusian work ethics to begin a process of rebuilding Japan. The Japanese worked and worked, they confronted their challenge with what Ghanaian Philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, would call "open utilitarian eyes" In less than 4 decades, Japan was back, dazing and dazzling the world with technological break-through. That is the work of focused and purposeful leadership.

What sort of leadership do we have in Aligbo today? Are we sure the type of impunity and convoluted politics we have today under democracy even existed in the darkest period of military dictatorship in Nigeria? Are we not faced (as our own brand of democracy) with what Sabastine Odonon calls "Scattocracy". In his book, *War Without Name: An Introduction to Political Theory of Scattocracy*, he distinguishes Democracy from Scattocracy in the following words:

The most appropriate opposite of Democracy is Scattocracy ... because in democracy, everything is supposed to be semen and certain, especially issues pertaining to administration and governance. But where this is deficient, it all turns out to be Democracy in principle but Scattocracy in practice. Simply put, Scattocracy is a situation in government whereby the administrative pattern of a ruler is extremely disordered in principle and in practice, leads to a haphazard litany of unschemed programme without a



reasonable measure of fulfillment.... Scattocracy is a scattered ruling power or disorganized ruling principle. When a government is described as operating a scattocrate policy in her administration, it includes exclusively every manner of purposelessness, visionlessness, detectionlessness disjointed myopism and most inclusively self-opinioned elements orchestrated by selfish demonstrative focus (88).

This is the lot of Igbo politics that is yawning for urgent and decisive change. A people for who pacifism is of eternal value and virtue, have been turned into passivity and apologists who have become incredulous to conventional morality. Our politicians have appropriated the worst aspects of Machiavellianism wherein the idea of acquisition, retention and expansion of power are all there are to politics. And the younger generations of Ndigbo are caught in this malady, with the purposeless educational system not doing anything to alter it, the more it would appear as the normal. If that happens, bringing about any enduring change would become more herculean to achieve.

In all the states in the so-called South-East of Igboland, are politicians, (who are lords and masters) backed by a caliphate-imposed, hegemonic Constitution. The description of the tyrant given by Girolamo Savolaroma, a Dominican Frier who wrote before Machiavelli. According to him:

the tyrant terrifies his subjects as a spider delicately balances at the centre of a web, he dominates the life of all around him He turns his entire state into a machine for his own profit and that of his few friends. He does not shrink from robbing wealthy men of their possessions or pure young women of their virtue (Quoted by Anthony Grafton "Introduction" to Machiavelli's *The Prince*).

This paints the exact picture of the nature of political power in Igboland today, where opposition is an anathema, where the Houses of Assembly members in the states are appointed by the Governor, and bills are rubber-stamped just by a mere phone call from "His Excellency" to the speaker a night before the sitting of the House.

Our situation requires a rescue mission. A new set of political leaders must be raised in Alaigbo, consciously and deliberately. They would not emerge unless they are created with the future in focus. We must look for intellectual and activist politicians in our clime today (no matter how few they are) who would rise with the power of transcendence to fashion a new idea, new values and new culture for Ndigbo as historical needs demand. In his, *Political Philosophy and International Relations*, Joseph I. Omoregbe discusses the need for men/women with the power of transcendence; that is, "the power to transcend the present situation, go beyond it and envisage a totally different and better situation" (vi).

The search for men and women, who would rise above this current quagmire, and generate ideas from where we can fashion practical tasks that would liberate our people, must begin Now!! We must not surrender either to armchair Theorizing or blind practice. We must draw an equilibrium between the two attitudes identified by Ike Odimegwu in his book, *Philosophic Foundations of Politics*. According to him:



the practical politicians sees politics as nothing beyond the game of power and decries what the political theorist does as being too remote from the field of politics; while for the political theorists, the practical politician is so superficial that he does not grasp the kernel of politics. So, who is really addressing the matter and which view marks the boundaries appropriate to show what politics is? (47).

The truth is that political practice in Igboland today has been driven blindly because of lack of guidance by clearly thought-out ideas (theory) guarded by socially-engraved values. That is the foundation of this brazen display of political predatory and parasitic psycho-phancy in our society today. The people that Afigbo earlier referred to as political juggernauts and business moguls cannot abandon the people that Frantz Fanon referred to as the intellectual bourgeoisie in this desire and demand for the enthronement of a new political leadership in Igboland. I would comment on the place of these business moguls towards the conclusion of this essay.

To say that theory without praxis would serve no purpose in Igboland today is to state the obvious. The eleventh of Karl Marx' *Thesis on Feuerbach* states categorically that "philosophers have interpreted the world in various ways, the point, however, is to change it". Joseph Agbo has developed this in his paper, "The principle of Refl-action as the Basis for a Culture of Philosophy in Africa". In that paper, he argued that all reflections in Africa must "reflect action", that is, thinking about what to do or what not to do. In Alaigbo today thinking-for thinking-sake is an unaffordable luxury. We are in dire need of social-thinkers who would provide an alternative, transcendent vision of and for society.

On The Philosophy of Rootology.

As we prepare to end this reflection, we must pause and spare a word on the concept of "taking." The word "take" is an active, not passive verb. To "take" something is to do it in such a way that you do not wait to receive it. We are not asking that someone brings Nigeria to us. To take a *place* is certainly different from taking a *thing*. To take a place requires planning' logistics and a clearly thought-out process. I cannot end this essay without at least adumbrating the way, the manner, the process by which Ndigbo can "take back Nigeria."

It has been stated that the journey of a thousand kilometers begin with a single step. However, I also want to add that the journey also needs to begin from a single spot as well. The process of Ndigbo taking back Nigeria must begin with our taking over and taking charge of the Igbo territory first. Unless we are in control of our political space, we would not be in a position to secure both our identity and investments within Nigeria. It is my believe that this process can begin with a philosophy (the philosophy of Rootology) and a political ideology (the MOBIN initiative). And to these, I now turn.

"Rootology" Emanates from my world, my universe of "poetic license", with an infinite and inelastic ability, capacity and capability to coin neologisms. Although the concept of Rootology" May be strange, it is not altogether unintelligible. It is coined from two words: Root and *Logos*, with the latter meaning "discourse" within our context. However, although "roots" are the part of



the tree or crop or grass that provide nourishment, it is used here as a metaphor for "foundation", "grounding", "base", "basis", "cause", etc. Rootology is, therefore, the scientific study of or focus on foundations.

The idea of a "Philosophy of ..." anything is an attempt to inquire into the "why" and "how" of that thing. Thus, the "philosophy of Rootology" seeks to investigate the "why" and "how" of foundations. And within this context, we seek to apply it to problem-solving in general within any area of reality, and within the specific context of Ndigbo taking back Nigeria. Rootology is the view that no problem can be understood, addressed or solved without beginning from its foundation. The "why" of Rootology is that without a foundational tackle, in the absence of a causal diagnosis, all solutions to any problem would be at best flaky and fanciful and at worst, deceptive and destructive. On the other hand, the "how" (the way) of Rootology is patience and Perseverance, endurance and (sometimes) long-suffering.

A Rootologist does not take pleasure or dwell on top of the Tree of Reality cutting branches, shedding leaves, and plucking fruits. He or she rather stays at the root, digging deep, searching the root that "caused" the branches/ the leaves and fruits. For he or she knows that even when branches are cut, leaves are shed and any of such surface treatment and window- dressings are carried out, the root would still provide the nourishment for new branches and fresh leaves. Those who do not address problems from its root do so out of ignorance, deception and/or laziness. Those who benefit from a particular status quo would not want to have a lasting solution. They would hang on the periphery of the branches, pretending to be doing something, when in actuality, nothing serious is happening- plenty of *motion*, without *movement*!

The major difference between a Rootologist and a Branchologist is that the latter goes for solutions that are easy, cheap and short-lived. But the former, the Rootologists takes the tortuous parts digging deep, tracing the causes and relaying the foundations for an enduring and lasting solution. Root-digging is energy-sapping, time-consuming, and mentally tasking. Branchologists can dress-up in 3-piece suits and attend to the leaves and fruits on the branches. That tall, beautiful 10-storey building has been standing there because it has a solid foundation.

What we advocate in this essay may not be a quick-fix one, but it is the only way. Ndigbo must overcome the buying and selling mentality which was adopted in economics after the war in 1970. At the boom of share-holding in Nigeria in the 1990s, many Igbo traders carried this buying and selling mindset into Capital Market. Many people formed the habit of taking bank loans, buying shares with them this week and selling same next week in order to make quick profits. Of course, as expected, many of them were caught napping when dividends of such shares crashed, leaving them with unbearable bank loans to repay. This attitude does not work in politics. Politics requires planning, calculations and projections. True leaders do not emerge accidentally, they are prepared and made to pass through crucibles of the "why" and "how" of societal existence. Today's Igbo society needs men and women with integrity, selflessness and who are grounded in Igbo culture.



Let us cite some examples that would make us understand the Rootological philosophy better and clearer. In governance, a Rootologist is a *statesman*, he or she thinks of the next *generation*, but a Branchologist is a *Politician*, he thinks of the next *Election*. Ndigbo need state-men/women-politicians who would think about the next election with the mentality to save the next generation. A Rootologist is interested in *sports development*, a Branchologist has a *competition mentality*. He only remembers sports few months to a competition. While countries with Rootological Perception begin preparation for the next Olympics the day after the last one ends, Branchologists-countries wait for two months to the Olympic games, then they would call a press conference, announce that a committee has been set-up and budget billions of funds! A Rootologist is interested in the *educational system*, a branchologist thinks only of the next examination and how to pass it-by any means!

The inability (perhaps, refusal) by Igbo leaders to understand and apply the philosophy of Rootology to the "problem of identity, economic emancipation and political bondage" within Nigeria is the reason why corruption looms larger than life and sticks out like a sore throat. I have often made the hyperbolic comment that even if Angel Michael becomes the President of Nigeria with Angel Gabriel as vice, they would both be corrupt! Why? Because they are both resting on a foundation of corruption! And so, any solution requires that the root be dug and corrections begin therefrom.

In the first place, Nigeria as a geopolitical entity and a subject of international law is not the product of an agreement by the nations that have existed for centuries within her territory before her birth in 1914. The Hausas, Fulani's, Igbos, Yroubas, Izons, Tivs, Nupes, Isokos, etc in Nigeria did not agree to form Nigeria. That was why Obafemi Awolowo in 1947, called Nigeria "a mere geographical expression". For him, there is no body called a Nigerian, the way you have an English, a French, a Welsh, a Yoruba, an Ibo, an Ashanti, a Zulu, etc. And till today, he is still right. Igbo leaders must understand this. Secondly, the supreme document, our constitution, with which we are called to exist together, is not a product of the people. It tells a lie in page one: "we the people..."!

I was taught in secondary school that any document that tells a lie about its authorship is a forgery! Our current constitution was authored by General Abdusalami Abubakar and passed as Decree No. 24 of 1999. How can they be calling us to amend a document we did not author (see Joseph Agbo Transforming the formless)? Thirdly, in an attempt to correct the problem created by the British (by forcing us to be one country), the founding Fathers of Nigeria spent 10 Years (1950-1959) to fashion a Federation, with three Federating Units in 1960 (Northern, Western and Eastern Regions). Today, Nigeria is only a Federation in name. We now have a "Central Republic of Nigeria", with all the resources collected at Abuja and Shared to Governors and Local Government Chairmen/women who in turn share it as they please! Until we get Fiscal Federalism, no one can begin the Fight against corruption. Otherwise, why would Kano State have 44 Local Government Areas, while Lagos (that has more population) would have 20? Why should Kano and Jigawa states have 71 Local Government Areas while all the states in the South- East have Just 95? Why was Fiscal Federalism in Place (the derivation formula of revenue) when the mainstay of Nigeria's



Economy were groundnuts, cocoa, Palm produce, Rubber etc and then it was changed to allocation following the discovery of crude oil? Can corruption fight corruption?

Can corruption be fought with injustice? Why has the Nigerian state become an occupation force in the territories occupied by the nations within her geographical coverage? How can 74 Nigerians be above the law (section 308 of the Constitution)? How can we be given fundamental Human Rights in chapter 4 of the constitution, yet section 6(6c) denies Nigerians the right to seek legal redress when these rights are not provided by the leaders?

If you objectively reflect on the above fundamental and foundational structures, you would observe that any talk about fighting corruption without dealing with their roots would be shadow-boxing with Phantoms! Am waiting at the root! Please, Join me and let us keep digging!

One of the tragedies that have hit Ndigbo in Nigeria is the wrong and false proposition that since we are Biafrans, we should not participate in the politics of Nigeria. Yet, the people who are saying these things have Nigeria's naira inside their pockets carry Nigeria's Driver Licenses, Nigeria's International Passport, send their children, to public and private schools that not only bear names connected with Nigeria but are equally registered in Nigeria! That such statements would be made among a people for who wisdom is an indispensable virtue is indeed symptomatic of a society in need of immediate rescue.

However, I must state that whatever would bear fruits or receive a hearing in today's Igboland must, in one way or the other, be connected to or anchored on the Biafran ideology of Justice, Equity and Truth (JET). Ndigbo are Biafrans by nature. Biafra is not just a place, it is an identity, the basis for recognition. Whatever freedom, independence or self-determination mean for Biafrans cannot be divorced from or antithetical to politics, especially power politics based on values and virtues that have overtime provided spiritual and social respiration for the people.

In a recent publication titled, *The Politics of Biafra and the Future of Nigeria*, Chudi Ofodile has traced the historical basis for the Biafran ideology and observed that not only do politicians of Igbo extraction need to understand the Biafran question, even the rest of Nigeria would be running around without result if the Biafran question is not confronted. Ofodile talks of how "since the Biafran war, a significant number of people from (Agbor to Kwale Asaba) have denied their Igboness to escape the Odium of defeat and the attendant policies of marginalization" (15). The ideological issues surrounding identity and difference, the extent of inclusion and exclusion and how a butterfly would imagine it is a bird, simply by being among birds, would continue to be matters that all true Igbo must confront and reconcile.

The hard truth is that anyone fighting for Biafra's freedom without taking politics into cognizance is joking, running a cult group or (in the absence of these two) wallowing in ignorance. On the other hand, anyone engaged in politics in Igboland without recognizing the place of the Biafran ideology is either involved in the agency-politics we have today (that ignores the will of the vast majority of the people) or is ignorant of the place of the Biafran ideology in the genuine political



participation and emancipation of the people. The vast majority of Biafrans who complain about what they call “Nigerian politics” are not aware that the situation has remained so because they have refused to genuinely participate in shaping and structuring it. They have left it for “them”.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: The MOBIN political panacea

The Movement of Biafrans in Nigeria (MOBIN) emerged after a thorough, critical and constructive understanding and analyses of the root of the problem and, consequently, the root of the analyses of the MOBIN believes that in 1970, Biafrans lost their territory as a subject of international law, but this loss of sovereignty did not mean that Biafrans lost their identity as a people. MOBIN acknowledges the indubitable fact that Ndigbo are Biafrans by *indigeneship*, yet they are Nigerians by *citizenship*. MOBIN is on board, not just as another pro-Biafran group or organization, but as a platform to mobilize, educate, sensitize and conscientize Biafrans on the values and inevitability of the legal, the political and the diplomatic on the road to self-determination. Let us take the kernel of the MOBIN ideology as stated by its Chairman, Barr. Emeka Emekesri during the official inauguration of the Ebonyi State chapter on April 8, 2018. In a “Welfare Speech” delivered on his behalf by the Director-General of MOBIN, Nwada Eberechukwu Anigogbu, he stated, *inter alia*:

A person does not lose his indigenous identity by becoming a citizen of a sovereign country. MOBIN has come to proffer permanent solutions to the national problems and create peace and stability. The Biafrans are Nigerians by citizenship until they gain independence from Nigeria, just as the Scottish people, who are now struggling for independence, are still British citizens until they gain independence, from Britain. MOBIN is not a political party but a political movement imparting political education to the masses. You can describe it as a political watchman or pressure group. You can describe MOBIN as a civil rights movement, a vehicle for political education and enlightenment ... We are the indigenous government of our land by judicial, political and diplomatic processes ... All the indigenous peoples of the land have been enslaved by these wicked politicians. We want to be free. Either freedom within Nigeria or freedom outside Nigeria ... MOBIN believes that the Biafrans must secure and control their political space in Eastern Nigeria first and have the balance of power to negotiate with the Federal Government. We want to start by creating Biafra within Nigeria as a Regional Government just like Scotland within Britain. Some call it restructuring, but we call it devolution of power to the regions, so that every Region will govern itself, control its own resource and develop at its own pace.

This is the philosophy behind the MOBIN ideology. It is legal, it is legitimate and it is in line with international best practices. The MOBIN strategy and *modus operandi* cannot be faulted by the Nigerian government, the international community, nature or even God.

Realizing that if we do not take charge of our political space, we would be swimming against the tide, MOBIN has come up with not only the mobilization of Biafrans for that purpose but equally the identification of core Biafrans who would carry out this emancipation process as political leaders. Having registered Biafran-minded citizens in every electoral ward in Biafraland and with



continuous political education, the take-over process would be steady and gradual. Politicians who are core Biafrans, who understand the JET ideology would be encouraged to take charge of governance in Biafraland, deliver democratic dividends first to Biafrans and then (in the process of that delivery) embark on the process of self-determination.

Perhaps, MOBIN's immediate and greatest task is how to convince and convert the mass of the populace who have been deceived by neophytes and charlatans in believing that Biafra is a jamboree involving street protests without parliamentary process. This task is a tortuous, painstaking and dexterous one that requires a lot of patience and courage. The actions of these youths have largely been driven by the things they have been made to believe. Voltaire, the French philosopher, was thus right when he wrote that "those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities" (Blackburn:396). That we would solve our political challenges by displaying apathy towards the political process is a lie we have internalized to our detriment. Politics is indispensable to our freedom as a people and we cannot continue to live it in the hands of those Joseph Agbo have referred to in one of his essays as "Mercenaries"(Agbo, 2013) (See, "Mercenaries in Governance :...)

Without tackling our challenges from its root, our solutions would be flaky and fanciful. The nature of the challenge facing Ndigbo today is such that strategic political planning is inevitable. We cannot submit to the ignominy of being ruled by those who are not able to reconcile the needs of the people with their predatory hold on our commonwealth. Taking back Nigeria is the historical mission of the new generation of politicians in Igboland. The process of that take-over must begin with the political control of our territory ... And it might end with it!

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