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**Unhealthy Secessionist Agitations in South-Eastern Nigeria and
Implications on National Security**



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Unhealthy Secessionist Agitations in South-Eastern Nigeria and Implications on National Security

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the secessionist agitations; implications on Nigeria's national security; and strategies of managing the challenges. Specifically, the study was anchored on the following objectives; Public awareness, Capacity building and Policy implementation.

Methodology: The researchers adopted Ted Gur's Theory of Deprivation and the descriptive design for the study. Primary and secondary data were obtained. Primary data were collected through the 17 interviews held with the purposely-selected respondents from the in selected South Eastern states of Nigeria, comprising (Enugu, Abia and Anambra) because of the prevailing calls for secessionist agitations in the areas. The secondary source of data included; the existing literatures, relevant journal publications, dailies, magazines and web materials. Data obtained were content-analyzed.

Findings: Findings of the study revealed that the call for self-determination and restructuring pursuant to the nature of country, where good governance is obviously absent, remain parts of the notable causes of secessionist agitation while the struggles have impacted negatively the national security of Nigeria. However, the paper reveals that the instances of secessionist threats in the country have led to all forms of insecurity in the land region, thus resulting in the restrictions of people's movement and also threats to human lives and property. The study therefore recommends there is need for hands-on policies put in place and implemented in relation to the developmental demands of the masses traversing the conflict-proven locations of secessionist agitators for amicable remedies to the growing menace in Nigeria.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The study identifies the gap that lies between policy implementation, the call for self-determination and restructuring pursuant to the nature of country, where good governance is obviously absent, remain parts of the notable causes of secessionist agitation while the struggles have impacted negatively the national security of Nigeria. There are still gaps to be filled in awareness campaign, capacity building and policy implementation on the need for hands-on policies to be put in place and implemented in relation to the developmental demands of the masses traversing the conflict-proven locations of secessionist agitators for amicable remedies to the growing menace in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Secessionist Movement, Ethnic Conflict, National Security.*

Introduction

Since the collapse of colonialism, governments around the globe strive to sustain the corporate existence and unity of its citizens towards peace and tranquility (Adner, 2021). This is because colonial rule gave room for the development of states in a present-day global system by administering amalgamations of desperate ethnic and religious populations that had previously existed as separate entities. Since then, the nation's state of affairs had been grappling with tension manifested in different forms of conflict which include: civil war, insurgency, religious crisis and secessionist agitation, of which remains are unwelcoming to national security (Adner, 2021). Secessionist agitations refer to situations where an individual or group advocates their aspirations, mostly through peaceful political activism anchored on the perception of shared injustice and marginalization, among other reasons. However, national security connotes the capability of government of a state in protecting the state affairs and its people from the various factors that could pose dangerous threats to corporate existence. Thus, governments are compelled to address incidents of national security (Refworld Report, 2021).

In India, secessionist agitation group known as the Khalistant Nationalist Movement in Sikh staged several protests seeking for the creation of the Sovereign State of Khalistant nationalist Movement (Surjit, 2022). These protests turned to riots that led to assassination of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi by her Sikh and the death of over 2,500 civilians (California Times News, 2017). This prompted Indian government to launch Operation Blue Star leading to the killing of over 3,500 Khalistant Nationalist Movement members and destruction of the Sikh Golden Temple (California Times News, 2017). Thus, the secessionist agitation of Khalistant Nationalist Movement has therefore threatened the corporate survival of Indian citizens and national security in the country.

In Kenya, the Mombasa Republican Council led a peaceful agitation in 2014 to secede from Kenya and become a sovereign state on perceived marginalization of the Mombasa coastal area by Kenyan government (African Times News, 2017). This actually led to declaration of the group as illegal organization in 2015 by the Kenyan government. However, the cluster of people disputed the pronouncement in a court which afterward declared the actions of Kenyan government unconstitutional. Thus, peaceful agitations by the Mombasa Republican Council and the application process of rule of law of Kenya posed constructive implications for peace and tranquility for enhanced national security.

In Nigeria, the unheeded calls for constitution amendment and restructuring that could have healed the maladies of perceived marginalization, political alienation, ethnic cleansing, insecurity, among others, have led to several secessionist agitations with attendant negative implications on national security in Nigeria (Timothy, 2029). Some of these secessionist agitations groups include: Movemnet for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nigeria's Indigenous Nationalistic Alliance for Self-Determination (NINAS), O'odua People's Congress, and Niger Delta Greenland Mandate

(NDGM), among others (Prince, 2019). These groups over time, had used social media platforms and staged protests in furthering their aspirations to secede from Nigeria (Refworld Report, 2021). Their activities during physical protests between 2015 and September, 2021 have often led to clashes with security forces with over 500 lives lost and destruction of property worth over US\$2.5 billion (Refworld Report, 2021).

In response to the rising incidents of secessionist agitations, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) employed a kinetic approach by deploying its military forces under Operations Python Dance in the South-East and South-South regions while the non-kinetic approach used involved de-radicalization initiatives in collaboration with relevant stakeholders (News Diary Report, 2021). The deployment of kinetic and non-kinetic approaches by the Nigerian government has assisted in the decimation of secessionist agitation groups and violent protest leading to arrest of secessionist agitators' leaders such as Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho who were standing trials in different courts (Adner, 2021). Nevertheless, the clamp-down of secessionist agitation groups by the Federal Government of Nigeria remains imperative since it could escalate with attendant negative implications on national security in Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification

Secessionist Agitation

Frank (2017) views secessionist agitations as advocacy for departure or separation by a group of people from the larger political unit existing in a state it belongs to, so as to form a new nation of its own. In Frank's submission, it encompasses all the key elements of secessionist agitations which are to mainly to separate and form a new state. Secession is the official separation of a group of people from a political entity. This development commences once a group declares an act of separation (such as a declaration of independence). Secessionist attempts might be peaceful or violent, nonetheless the mission is the creation of a new independent state or territory from which it has seceded. The threats arising from secessions can be a stratagem for attaining more partial goals.

However, there exist *Ethno-national mobilisation*, whereby ethnic minorities have been gradually mobilised to own a state of their own; *Institutional empowerment* whereby the increasing incapability of empires and ethnic coalitions to preserve their colonies and member states intensifies the prospect of success. *Relative strength*, whereas increasingly powerful secessionist actions are more likely to achieve statehood; and the *Negotiated consent* that stipulates that home states and the global community increasingly agree to secessionist requests. However, Buchanan (2007), lends his support to secession under parochial situations; he therefore mentions debates that may be used against secessions thereby: "defending legitimate potentials" of the people occupying the territories being claimed by the secessionists, even in the situations whereby land is stolen; "Self-defence" if losing a fragment of the country would make it problematic in defending the rest. In recent time, secession theorists have pronounced numerous ways a political entity (cities, counties, states and cantons) may separate from the original state.

Theoretical Framework

Relative Deprivation Theory

The relative deprivation theory elucidates the unexpected synergies that emerged from the examination of American soldiers during World War II. Merton (1957), Pettigrew (1967) and Gur (1970) expanded the theory to highlight that deprivation theory was just one component of a broader range of concepts and theories that utilized relative comparisons as a foundational framework for analyzing social entities.

Ted Gur's theory of relative deprivation analyses the potentials for individuals to engage in aggressive and violent actions, such as secessionist agitations, strike, riots, mass protests, revolts and other forms of civil unrest. According to Ikejiaku (2012), this theory suggests that individuals may resort to such actions when they perceive, experience, or encounter obstacles that may prevent them from meeting their basic material needs. Richardson (2011) further supports the idea by asserting that individuals or groups of people are more likely to rebel or revolt when they perceive a discrepancy between the rewards they receive and the compensation they believe they deserve. This perceived disparity between expectations and actual capabilities can lead to feelings of disappointment and discontent within a particular state.

Nevertheless, Aristotle exposed the connection between conflict and deprivation as well as Ted Gur. It is nearly a general supposition that an undemocratic distribution of resources and wealth would definitely aggravate violence or rebellion in a state. That is the reason Gur declares that, there exist numerous factors for 'political violence' and 'political movements', while the overriding causative factors seem to be the independent logic of 'relative deprivation' of the mass of people. Relative deprivation remains the feeling that one is largely shoddier than others being associated with. It is known to be the conscious feeling of negative discrepancies between legitimate potentials and present actualities.

Relative Deprivation proponents trust that political discontent and attendant consequences; protests, instability, violent actions, revolution solely depend largely not only on the total state of economic well-being in the state, but as well on wealth distribution (Nagel, 1974), In nearly all instances, relative deprivation is being cited to be a factor that drives incidents of social disorder like riots, lootings, terrorism, and civil war respectively. In this fauna, social movement and the associated disorderly activities or actions are usually attributed to the grievances of populace that feel marginalized in the state of things in a country or society.

Review of Relevant Literature

Historical Overview of Secessionist Agitations in Nigeria

The history of secessionist agitation dates back to 1946 following the division of the country by Arthur Richard into three (3) unequal fragments, thereby rendering northern region to be larger the Eastern and Western regions as depicted (Tekena, 2018). This led to filing a motion in 1954 by members of House of Representative from the West and East calling for self-government in

Nigeria (Tekena, 2018). The declaration of Republic of Biafra by late Col. Chukwuemeka Ojukwu in 1967 also popped up agitations by the South east region, calling for secession from Nigerian state This came after the first coup detat of 1966 that led to killing of over 3,500 Igbos in the North and destruction of property worth over US\$14.5 million. This incident later resulted to Nigerian 30-months of civil war between 1967 to 1970 with associated casualties of over 100,000 military soldiers and the death of about 2 million civilians which impinges on national security (Hussein, 2018).

In 1968, FGN embarked on national integration programme towards regional equity, unity and peace for improved national security (Gabriel, 2019). However, implementation of the national re-integration programme was lopsided leading to increased perceptions of marginalization, neglect and alienation by some regions with attendant negative implications on national security. For instance, the annulment of 12 June, 1993 General Election by General Ibrahim Babangida which was thought to have been totally won by late Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola contributed to the demand by the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) agitations for secession on perceived political alienation of the Southwestern region of the country (Gabriel, 2019).

Other aspects for secessionist agitation include demands for political inclusion, economic equity and environmental security by Niger Delta militant groups. These posed worrisome security challenges that impinged on national security in Nigeria (Iyabo, 2020). Federal Government of Nigeria established the Federal Character principle (FCP) in 1996 with objectives to reawaken national consciousness and promote uniqueness of identity among other objectives. However, the attainment of national re-integration in Nigeria is still not realistic due to faulty implementation of the Federal Character Principle. This has further led to regeneration of secessionist agitation groups such as: MASSOB, IPOB, Niger Delta Avengers, and OPC among others with attendant negative implications on national security.

The socio-economic conditions of people in Nigeria also remain one of the contributory factors for increased agitation for secession. That is the reason Adams (2020) asserts that worrisome security challenges arising from secessionist agitation could be linked due to failure of Nigerian government in addressing the scourge of environmental degradation from gully erosion, oil spill and poor infrastructure, among other factors (Charles, 2020). Okons (2021) corroborated this assertion that the poor socio-economic condition of people has fueled perceptions of marginalization by the Federal Government of Nigeria, leading to increased agitations for secession with negative implications on national security. The overview has elicited some issues on secession agitation and national security in the country.

Recent Happenings on Secessionist Movements and Agitations in Selected States in the Global System

In recent tie, there have been numerous secessionist movements and agitations in different countries across the globe and some selected instances are highlighted below:

Instances of Secessionist Agitations in Australia and Western Australia

In the 19th century, the then single British colony located in eastern mainland Australia, New South Wales was increasingly separated up by the Britain as new settlements were created - Victoria created in 1851 and also Queensland founded in 1859 respectively. Nevertheless, settlers in the state became restless with goal of dividing the colonies during the later portion of the era; mostly in Central Queensland between the 1860s and 1890s, then in North Queensland (having Bowen as a possible colonial capital) in the 1870s. Other secessionist moves arose and the secession of New England in northern central New South Wales, Deniliquin in the Riverina district also in NSW, and Mount Gambier in the eastern part of South Australia were all agitated for (IDI with Scholars, 2024). Also in Western Australia, secessionists' activities came up numerous times whereby the 1933 referendum for secessions from the then Federation of Australia was passed with a two-thirds majority in the state. However, the referendum was to be ratified by the British Parliament but declined to act on it due to the fact that it could contravene the existing Australian constitution.

Instances of Secessionist Agitations in Austria and Bangladesh

Immediately after experiencing liberations by the Red Army and the United States Army, Austria experienced secession from Nazi Germany on April 27, 1945; and the incidence occurred after seven (7) years under Nazi administration or rule that kickstarted in March 1938. The country's secession became established immediately Nazi Germany was outrightly d been defeated by the allies. At the same time, the Banga Sena (Bangabhumi), a separatist Hindu movement that outrightly supports the creation of a separate homeland for Bengali Hindus existing in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. This particular set of people was led by Kalidas Baidya (Research Findings, 2024).

Instances of Secessionist Agitations in Belgium and the Netherlands

On August 25, 1830, during the reign of William 1, the patriotic movement's operation *La muette de Portici* took place in Brussels; and soon after the incidence, the Belgian revolt took place and eventually culminated in the Belgian separation from the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Research Findings, 2024).

Instances of Secessionist Agitations in Cameroon

Ambazonia in 2017, declared its own independence from Cameroon due to the fact that in about a month before the period, tensions had earlier risen into an open warfare between the Cameroonian Armed Forces and separatists. This conflict was tagged to be "Anglophone crisis", and it was intensely as a result of the October 1, 1961 incomplete de-colonization process of the former British Southern Cameroons (arising from the UNGA Resolution 1608). Therefore, in on January 1, 1960, French Cameroon got her independence from France and was recognized as the Republic of Cameroon, culminating into her admittance into United Nations. At the same time, the more progressive in democracy the citizens of British Cameroon were, they got restricted to

two options then; that is, either through a UN plebiscite (where they people got instructed to merge with Nigeria or the Republic of Cameroon as a federation of two (2) equal states). In the process, the Northern Cameroonians voted to voluntarily join Nigeria but the people in Southern Cameroon voluntarily voted to follow the Republic of Cameroon without a formal Treaty of Union on record at the United Nations (Research Findings, 2024).

However, in 1972, Cameroonians strategically deployed the majority of their population to vehemently eradicate the existing federation and then implemented another system that gave room for the annexation of former South Cameroonian territory by the French-speaking Cameroonian rulers. In 1984, Along the line, Cameroon increased more tensions by reverting to the initial name at independence which was the Republic of Cameroun excluding the former British Southern Cameroons or Ambazonian territory. For over five (5) decades, the English-speaking citizens of the previous or former British Southern Cameroons attempted both locally and globally in dragging the Cameroonian government towards addressing the problems and perhaps revert to the hitherto decided federation at independence. Pursuant to the failure of all the attempts made, the country got engaged in military crackdowns, internet connections were cut off in the English-speaking provinces; and in retaliation to the crackdowns, the Southern Cameroonians unilaterally pronounced the restoration of the UN state of Southern Cameroons on October 1, 2017 named the Federal Republic of Ambazonia (Research Findings, 2024).

Research Methodology

The paper utilized a descriptive design that followed a process of the qualitative approach. The research was conducted in selected South Eastern states of Nigeria, comprising (Enugu, Abia and Anambra) because of the prevailing calls for secessionist agitations in the areas. Purposive sampling technique was adopted; knowledgeable respondents for the study were drawn from traditional rulers, youths, and officials of the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Army, Local Vigilantes and other stakeholder involved in the matter under study. A total number of seventeen (17) interviews were conducted during the course of the study.

Table 1: Distribution of Target Respondent Population

S/N	Target Population	Instrument	No of Respondents
1	Traditional rulers	KII	3
2	Youths	IDI	6
3	Nigeria Police	KII	2
4	Nigeria Army	KII	1
5	Local Vigilantes	IDI	2
6	Scholars on National and Global Politics	IDI	3
	Total		17

Data were derived from *primary sources*: Interviews while *secondary data* were gotten from: Books, journals, and relevant publications to the study while the data collected were content-analyzed.

Research Findings and Analysis

a. Issues and Challenges Associated with Secessionist Agitations in Nigeria

Nearly all the issues that are associated with secessionist agitations and Nigeria's national security include: national re-integration, Nigeria's political structure and socio-economic condition of people. The paper reveals the issues and challenges as follows:

National Re-integration: national re-integration is crucial in addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national security. It awakens national consciousness, uniqueness of identity and loyalty among people with different ethnic and socio-cultural affinities within a given state (Shona, 2019). In Nigeria, the need for national reintegration is premised on rising security challenges posed by secessionist agitation groups such as MASSOB, IPOB, NINAS, Niger Delta Avengers, Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate, and OPC, among others. Some of the reasons for agitations range from perceived discrimination, marginalization and neglect of certain ethnic/religious groups and regions in national building, among others (Zaccheus, 2020).

Achuba (2021) asserted that the Federal Character principle was a thrust in promoting national reintegration. This claim was corroborated by the Transparency International Report (2021) that over 70 percent of governmental appointments, infrastructural programmes and other social initiatives are unevenly distributed amongst the six (6) geo-political zones. This incident has led to perception of marginalization, neglect and political alienation leading to agitations for

secession with attendant negative implications on national security in Nigeria. This could be linked to faulty implementation of issues relating to Federal Character Principles. Accordingly, the contests of defective enactment or operations of the Federal Character Principle is thus an impediment towards addressing secessionist agitations for enhanced national security in Nigeria.

Nigeria's Political Structure: The practice of an inclusive democratic system of government is one of the ways in building a strong political structure devoid from perceived feeling of marginalization, neglect and discrimination among other factors that could lead to secessionist agitation for enhanced national security (Gabriel, 2029) In Nigeria, the separation of the nation into three uneven sizes by the colonial administration in 1914 led to several agitations for secession and calls for political restructuring among others (Iyabo, 2020). Failure of the 1951 and 1960 colonial constitutions to address the problem gave rise to Constitutional Conference of 1963 which paved way for the alteration of the existing regional boundaries (Iyabo, 2020).

The alteration of regional boundaries in 1965 was perceived unevenly shared leading to continues secessionist agitation in Nigeria. Subsequent National Conferences between 1994, 1999, 2005 and 2014 had been held in Nigeria towards national reintegration for peace and unity (Premium Times Report, 2021). For instance, one of the key recommendations of the National Conference 2014 among others as contained at Enclosure 1 centered on restructuring mainly to give each region the opportunity to produce and manage the resources at which they have comparative advantage (Premium Times Report, 2021). This is also meant to address rising incidents of secessionist agitation due to perceived feelings of marginalisation in resources circulation for improved national security in the country. However, recommendations of the National Conference organized by the Nigerian government in 2014 have not been implemented which therefore has attendant negative implication on national security in Nigeria (Premium Times Report, 2021). Thus, the challenge of non-implementation of National Conference 2014 recommendations is an impediment to efforts at addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national security in Nigeria.

Socio-Economic Condition of People: Socio-economic condition which measure the living standard and wellbeing of citizens in a given country is crucial in addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national security Chukwu (2020) asserts that the socio-economic circumstances of people in the zone of infrastructural development, food security and healthcare in Nigeria among others is very poor (Charles, 2020). This claim was corroborated by the Global Human Development Index report 2020 which ranked Nigeria at 161 positions out of 189 the poorest country (NBS Report, 2021). This is notwithstanding Nigerian government's infrastructural and poverty alleviation initiative toward improving citizens' living standard. These claims were further buttressed by John (2021) that decay in infrastructural amenities such as roads, healthcare and schools among others across the 6 Geopolitical zones in Nigeria could be linked to the Federal Government of Nigeria's inability to invest adequate funds in infrastructural development (John 2021). This has further accentuated the perception of marginalization by some regions, largely responsible for agitation for secession. Thus, the challenge of inadequate infrastructural development is an impediment to efforts at addressing secessionist agitation for improved Nigeria's national security. Despite these issues, there are effects of secessionist agitation on national security in Nigeria.

Implications of Secessionist Agitations on National Security in Nigeria

The effects of secessionist agitation on secessionist agitation in Nigeria include disunity, reduction in economic development and circulation of arms. These are discussed subsequently.

Weakens national unity

National disunity is one of the negative implications of secessionist agitation in Nigeria. Shona (2019) asserts that, the threats to national security in Nigeria emanating from secessionist agitation group like IPOB, MASSOB, Niger Delta Avenger, NDGM and NINAS among others have undermined national unity (Shona, 2019). Several protests for secession by these group between 2017 to August 2021 had turned violent leading to over 23,000 death and destruction of property worth over US\$1.5 billion. The NPF and other security agencies has been up to the task in curbing violent protests by secessionist agitation groups leading to arrest of over 2,500 between 2020 to August 2021. Persistent subversive of these ethnic motivated security threats if not properly addressed will continue to destabilize national unity in the country. Thus, secessionist agitation is a product for national disunity with attendant negative effects on national security in Nigeria.

Reduction in economic development

Reduction in economic development is one of the effects of secessionist agitation and by implications national security in Nigeria. This is because, security threats posed by secessionist agitation groups had cost Federal and States governments in Nigeria over US\$1.5 billion between 2019 and August 2021 (Charles, 2021). Peter (2021) asserts that, the Southeast Geopolitical region of Nigeria losses over N10 billion each time it observed the sit at home order often directed by IPOB (Joe, 2021). This money which would have been used to embark on other developmental projects is been put in place to replace the basic physical infrastructure destroyed during protest and violent thereby leading to reduction in economic development in Nigeria. Thus, reduction in economic is one of the negative effects of secessionist agitation and extension national security in Nigeria.

Proliferations of arms and dangerous weapons

Circulation of arms entails growth in handling both authorized and illegal arms. Godwin (2019) asserts that increased trade in arms in Nigeria has led to illegal possession of small arms and light weapons by criminals, terrorists and secessionist agitation group among others. For instance, the possession of arms by secessionist group such as IPOB, MASSOB and Niger Delta Avengers among others pose threats to security agencies when confronted (Godwin, 2019). In 2020, the NPF arrested about 55 IPOB members with arms during protest. Furthermore, Sunday Igboho a secessionist leader for the OPC was also arrested on 4 May 2021 by the Department of State Security Services (DSS) for being in possession of different types of firearms (Adibe, 2021). This implies that if the rise in illegal possession of arms by agitations group in Nigeria is not properly checked, their activities could grow into full-blown insurgency with dire consequence on secessionist agitation in Nigeria. Thus, circulation of arms by secessionist agitation group has negative effects on citizens wellbeing and national security in Nigeria. Despite these effects, there are prospects for addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national security in Nigeria (Research Findings, 2023).

Strategies of Managing the Challenges of Secessionist Agitations for Enhanced National

Security in Nigeria

The strategies to mitigate the challenges of addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national security in Nigeria include review of the Federal Character Principle, speedy implementation of national conference 2014 recommendation and accelerating implementation of infrastructural development initiative. The strategies which meet a Suitability, Acceptability and Ethics (SAFE) test, is discussed subsequently.

Review of the Federal Character Principle:

A review of the Federal Character Principle will mitigate the challenge of faulty implementation of the Federal Character Principle. The objective is to stipulate cogent procedures that would enforce total compliance to the Federal Character Principles mandate toward promoting economic development, national unity and security. In this respect, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) could inaugurate technical committee drawn from relevant Ministries Department and Agencies to put in place modalities for the review of the Federal Character Principle. The FEC could then forward the committee report to the National Assembly (NASS) for consideration. Funds for this process could come from FEC allocations. The process for the review could commence by Second Quarter 2024 and completed by the Third Quarter 2024.

National integration infrastructure master plan

The National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan was approved in 2016 under the National Planning Commission (NPC). The implementation plan of the scheme covers a period of 30 years from 2015-2043 (Peter, 2016). The objective is to address the absence of linkages in infrastructure development across the 6 Geopolitical zones of Nigeria. According to Edward (2021), NPC has presented a blue print of the National Integration Infrastructure Master Plan to the 36 state governors in Nigeria which has been adopted for implementation (Peter, 2016). The blue print will guide all tiers of government in infrastructure planning and development. Thus, full implementation of the plan serves as good prospect for addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national seniority in Nigeria.

Strategic communication initiative

The Office of National Security Adviser (ONSA) developed the strategic communication initiative in April 2016 to harmonize the FGN counter terrorism communication strategy in curbing extremist and secessionist agitation groups narratives (Planned parenthood Federal Republic of Nigeria Report, 2020). The programme covers civil society groups, intelligence communities, inter-religious council and key communicators in government agencies among others. It is asserted that military actions on its own cannot fully address extremists and other pressure groups narratives as well as ideologies that pose threat to national security. Therefore, the deployment of Strategic Communication Initiative holds good prospects in addressing secessionist agitation for enhanced national security in Nigeria.

Speedy implementation of 2014 national conference recommendations:

The speedy implementation of the 2014 National Conference recommendations would mitigate the challenge of non-implementation of National Conference 2014 report. The objective is to address regional perceptions of marginalisation, neglect and alienation across the 6 Geopolitical zones which have led to continuous secessionist agitation for enhanced national security in Nigeria. In this regard, FGN through the 36 state governors could set up a working committee to

come up with modalities for the implementation of National conference 2014 recommendations. Funds for this process could come from the FEC allocation. This could commence by Second Quarter 2024 and completed by Third Quarter 2024.

Accelerating implementation of infrastructural development initiative:

Accelerating implementation of infrastructural development initiative would mitigate the challenge of poor infrastructural development for enhanced secessionist agitation in Nigeria. The objective is to address the incidence of road, healthcare and schools' infrastructural decay across the 6 Geopolitical zones of the country for enhanced national security. The National Planning section of the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning could leverage on the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan to extract those areas that concern regions agitating for secession for speedy implementation. The Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning could also set up a committee to come up with a draft proposal for presentation to the Federal Executive Council for approval. Funds for this process which could come from the Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning allocations. The FEC could approve the implementation of infrastructural development initiative by First Quarter 2024.

Conclusion

The paper established an inverse relationship between successionist agitation and national security and admitted that successionist agitation in Nigeria had negative effects on national security, with the possibility of causing another civil war in Nigeria, if not well managed. National reintegration, Nigeria's political structure and socio-economic condition of people were identified as issues. The challenges include faulty implementation of the Federal character principle, non-implementation of the National Conference 2014 recommendations and poor infrastructural development, in the country. The paper further discussed the effect of successionist agitation on national security to include disunity, reduction in economic development and circulation of arms. The paper highlighted National Integration Infrastructure Master Plan and strategic communication initiative as the prospects. The strategies proffered include review of the Federal Character Principle, speedy implementation of national conference 2014 recommendations and accelerating implementation of infrastructural development initiative.

Recommendations

The paper therefore recommended that:

Nigeria's Federal Executive Council and National Assembly should put in place modalities for the review of the Federal Character Principle to swiftly address all the issues that led to the incessant agitations in the state.

1. The Nigerian government through relevant stakeholders across the 36 states of the nation to come up with modalities for the implementation of the 2014 National Conference recommendations which clearly spelt out the remedies for secessionist agitations in Nigeria
2. The National Planning Commission should come up with a draft proposal for the implementation of infrastructural development initiative by Nigeria's Federal Executive Council for peaceful co-existence and political stability in the country.
3. There should be a political will on the part of Nigerian leaders on true federalism and restructuring to take place in the state.

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