

MAHATMA GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY OF SATYAGRAHA AND THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA'S MODUS OPERANDI TOWARDS SECESSION FROM NIGERIA

Jude Chiedozie OKWUADIMMA*

Abstract

Agitations for self-determination in the face of perceived injustice, relative deprivation, discrimination and victimization are not an aberration. Needless to say that the impetus for the rising separatist movements across the globe was generated by the principle of self-determination enshrined in the Article 1(2) of the United Nation's Charter (1945). However, the method employed in the pursuit of justice and freedom becomes the most determinant factor in the success of such struggle. For Gandhi, the means employed in the pursuit of any end is as important as the end itself because the adoption of wrong means could never lead to a successful end. This study interrogates the Indigenous People of Biafra's modus operandi towards secession, vis-à-vis her leader's advocacy for passive resistance based on the Gandhi's principles of Satyagraha. Relying on the secondary method of data collections and textual method of data analysis, the study utilizes Gene Sharp's Theory of Power to portray the dangers of the adoption of violent means to achieve a peaceful end. This study contends that the use of Radio Biafra to disseminate false information, hate speeches, war threats and the establishment cum activities of the IPOB's armed wing, ESN; do not align with Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Satyagraha.

Keywords: IPOB, passive-resistance, satyagraha, separatist-movements, self-determination

1. Introduction

Separatist/secessionist agitation is not a new phenomenon globally. The wind of secession has spread across the globe overtime that its occurrence rose from eight movements seeking for separate state in 1915 to over seventy movements as at the year 2022(Fazal, 2018; Gupta, 2022). In Africa alone, there are more than thirty-five separatist movements including Bioko of Equatorial Guinea, Zanzibar of Tanzania, Rwenzururu of Uganda, Darfur of Sudan, Canary of Island of Morocco, Somaliland of Somalia, Western Cape of South Africa, Casamance of Gambia, Biafra of Nigeria, Oduduwa Republic of Nigeria, Niger-Delta of Nigeria and Azawad of Mali etc.(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_active_separatist_movements_in_Africa).

These separatist movements are mostly birthed out of perceived marginalization, dehumanization, injustices, victimization as well as relative deprivation which manifests in the socio-cultural, religious, economic and political spheres. The common end pursued by most of these secessionist movements is to evolve a separate state under the principle of self-determination as enshrined in the United Nation's charter, paying little or no attention to the means of achieving this end.

Among all the separatist movements in recent times in Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), an offshoot of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), has attracted the most attention both nationally and internationally, owing to their modus operandi. Amnesty International observes that IPOB, of all the separatist groups in Nigeria, commands the largest medium of inciteful information dissemination through the broadcast of Radio Biafra(an online radio station used in disseminating inciteful hate speeches against the Nigerian Government by Nnamdi Kanu) and it also receives the highest mass mobilization and separatist radicalization(Amnesty International, 2016). While it has been established that agitations for a separate state is within the inalienable, natural and supranational right under both international law and Nigerian municipal law(Aladekomo, 2021), the methods adopted by the agitators towards self-determination must not pose more threat to the people than such struggle intends to mitigate.

Mahatma Gandhi, who was not only interested in achieving freedom but emphasizes more on the purity of the means, declared that violent means cannot be used to achieve a non-violent end (Gaub, 2003:419). In his philosophy of Satyagraha, an embodiment of the principles of truth, non-violence, self-sacrifice and patience, Gandhi provides us the scale with which to measure the *modus operandi* as well as the success and failure of every secessionist movement.

Based on the foregoing, this study employs the Gandhian philosophy of Satyagraha to weigh the *modus operandi* of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) vis-à-vis her movement for a separate state and the impact on the South-East region of Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Constant agitations for self-determination through secession have become ubiquitous. Hardly can one point at any part of the globe where there are no such movements for the actualization of a separate state. Needless to say that the impetus for the rising separatist movements across the globe was generated by the principle of self-determination enshrined in the Article 1(2) of the United Nation's Charter (1945). The declarations notwithstanding, Kilian(2019) avers that because the charter does not in itself guarantee the right to self-determination of specific entities in a particular way, it also applies to various non-state groups(such as the IPOB) who pays little or no attention to the means so long as it satisfies their end.

In line with the foregoing, Mahatma Gandhi, in his philosophy of Satyagraha warns against the dangers of achieving desirable ends through means that are perceived to be impure and against natural justice, equity and good conscience. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) which was an offspring of the defunct Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) launched her movement for secession in 2012. At the early stage of their protests, the group enjoyed massive support from the people of South-East and Niger-Delta regions of Nigeria. Worthy to note is the fact that Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the IPOB had earlier declared thus: "...I am an advocate of passive resistance. Gandhi and Martin tried it to very good effects, so why should it not work in our case?"(Kanu and iwuh, 2023: 4).

Unfortunately, the activities of the IPOB began to raise concerns when their protest degenerated into violence leading to the deaths of two police officers and nine protesters, blockage of the strategic Niger Bridge, burning of the city's central mosque as well as eight trucks belonging to Dangote Groups of Companies, among others on the 2nd of December 2015(Ibeanu,Orji and Iwuamadi, 2016). The above incident further degenerated into continuous attacks and reprisals between IPOB members and the men of Nigerian Police and the military, leading to the famous Operation Python Dance and the eventual proscription of the group as a terrorist organization in 2017. The situation was further exacerbated when the group formed the "Eastern Security Network", known as the armed wing of IPOB in 2020. At this juncture, it became worrisome that IPOB had altogether, toed the same path as the 1967 Pro-Biafran activists which the end was catastrophic for the region. So far, the recent activities of the Eastern Security Network, especially their method of implementing the forceful Monday sit-at-home orders have turned the once most peaceful region into a war zone, with its negative economic impact felt both within and outside the region. Against the backdrop of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha, this study interrogates the *modus operandi* of the Indigenous People of Biafra vis-à-vis their agitations for a separate state and its impact on the South-East region of Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study raises the following research questions to guide this study:

1. Does the *modus operandi* of the Indigenous People of Biafra vis-à-vis their secession agenda align with the principles of Gandhi's Satyagrahan philosophy?

2. Has the Indigenous People of Biafra's modus operandi towards their secession agenda yielded desired result?
3. How has the Indigenous People of Biafra's modus operandi towards their secession agenda imparted the South-East region of Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

This study represents an attempt to weigh the modus operandi of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with regards to their secession agenda on the scale provided by the Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha.

Accordingly, the specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Determine whether the modus operandi of the Indigenous People of Biafra vis-à-vis their secession agenda align with the principles of Gandhi's Satyagrahan philosophy.
2. Ascertain whether the modus operandi of the Indigenous People of Biafra towards their secession agenda has yielded desired result.
3. Isolate the impacts of the Indigenous People of Biafra's modus operandi towards their secession agenda on the South-East region of Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

Mahatma Gandhi: The Man and His Philosophy of Satyagraha.

Prior to Gandhi's appearance on the political stage, the world was familiar with only two instruments of social change, the bullet and the ballot, however, Gandhi introduced a new methodology of struggle that is Satyagraha, in which there was a human touch (Kaur, 2019). In order to appreciate Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha, it is germane to briefly visit his biography so as to appreciate the factors that informed his lines of thoughts. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi mostly known as Mahatma Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, into a Hindu Modh family in Porbandar, Gujarat, India. His father, Karamchand Gandhi, was the Chief Minister (diwan) of the city of Porbandar. Gandhi studied law at the University of Bombay and later the University College London, where he finally graduated in 1891, and was called to the bar of England.

Though Gandhi learned the act of tolerance and non-injury to living beings from an early age, his encounter with David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" inspired his devotion to the principle of non-violence. He led the non-violent resistance and struggle for the independence of India while he declared that all violence was evil after the Amritsar massacre of 379 civilians by British troops, which traumatized the Indian nation. His philosophy of Satyagraha was made famous on the 12th of March 1930 when he led the protest against the British salt monopoly and salt tax.

Gandhi views Satyagraha as the best tool for resolving every form of socio-political conflict in every society. "Gandhi believed in the goodness of man and the humanity in him and by their thoughts and actions, they fought against violence with non-violence, against untruth with truth and against injustice with justice" (Chavhan, 2020:1). Satyagraha embodies three major parts namely: truth, non-violence (ahimsa) and self-suffering (tapasya). As a tool for social and political change, Satyagraha aims to win over an opponent through the following stages:

The first stage is that of persuasion through reason, followed by the second stage which is characterized by persuasion through suffering. Here, the satyagrahi dramatizes the issues at stake by willingly undergoing self-suffering instead of inflicting suffering on the opponent as a test for the truth element in his cause. If neither persuasion through reason nor self-suffering does succeed to win over the opponent, the Satyagrahi resorts to non-violent coercion characterized by tools such as non-cooperation or civil disobedience (Varkey, 2014:172).

The principle of non-violence does not mean that the oppressed should love the oppressor, but it rests on Gandhi's belief that one cannot attain just ends through unjust means and that every unjust means eventually leads to unjust ends. To Gandhi, the best way to disarm your violent opponent is the adoption of Satyagraha. Thus, Varma (1975) opines that "men can slaughter one another for years in the heat of battle, for there it seems to be the case of killing or be killed. But if there is no danger of being killed yourself by those you slay, you cannot go on killing defenseless and unprotesting people endlessly".

Participation in a non-violent struggle based on the principles of Satyagraha, thus, brings satisfaction, enthusiasm and hope to the people. Even a show of friendship towards those who are acting on behalf of authority and seem bent on repression is likely to create a psychological change among the people. Cases are on record when black students in the United States fighting against the American Nazi Party felt hostile and contemptuous in the beginning, but adopted polite behaviors towards the opponents as a strategy and succeeded in practically disarming them (Varma, 1975:381).

For Gandhi, Satyagraha is not just a set of actions; it is also an attitude, a way of life based on certain principles. These principles as listed in Weber (2001:506) include:

- (1) Opponents should not be humiliated or provoked; otherwise it invites violence.
- (2) The satyagrahi should be clear about the essential elements of his case and the purpose of the struggle. This is less likely to invite a violent attitude.
- (3) Honest dissemination of information is essential – opponents are less likely to use violence if they are provided with a full understanding of one's case and conduct.
- (4) Essential interests, which opponents have in common, should be clearly formulated and cooperation established on these lines.
- (5) A satyagrahi should not judge opponents harder than the self.
- (6) A satyagrahi should trust his/her opponents.
- (7) A satyagrahi should always be willing to compromise on non-essentials. In fact, Satyagraha requires willingness on the part of the opponents to "make large concessions on all points except where a principle is involved."
- (8) Satyagraha requires a just cause; it cannot be used for an unjust cause. Personal sincerity on the part of the Satyagrahi is thus the key.
- (9) If a satyagrahi wants to convince his/her opponent of his/her sincerity, s/he will have to make sacrifices for the given cause.
- (10) A Satyagrahi should never exploit a position of weakness in an opponent and advantage should not be taken of an opponent's weak moments if they have not been the result of Satyagraha, but due to extraneous reasons.

The modus operandi of the Indigenous People of Biafra towards their secession agenda from Nigeria

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), an offshoot of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was formally declared in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu and Uche Mefor, following their criticisms of the weaknesses of the modus operandi of MASSOB. Hinging their movement on the failure of the Nigerian government to create a sustainable transitional justice system after the 30 months Nigeria-Biafra war (1967-1970), the group presented her seemingly peaceful objective which was "to push for, facilitate and advocate the Igbo's right to self-determination, while advocating for the right and fundamental freedom of the remnants of the Biafrans who are scattered in all parts of the world as refugees and people in self-exile" (Ekpo and Agorye, 2019:5).

Accordingly,

The IPOB pronounced strategy has been the application of civil disobedience in pressing home their demands for the freedom of Biafran people. In various air broadcasts, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu stated how he has been influenced by Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, and how adopting their approach will lead to the actualization of Biafra. In an interview granted to Newsweek, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu stated his belief in the teachings of Martin Luther King Jr and Mahatma Gandhi, he says, "I hope that what we are looking for can be accomplished peacefully. I am an advocate of passive resistance. Gandhi and Martin tried it to very good effects, so why should it not work in our case?" (Kanu and Iwuh, 2023: 4).

The recent Farmers'/Herders' conflict across the South-East region and beyond also forced IPOB to adopt anti-Fulani agenda. With the help of modern technologies such as the famous Radio Biafra and the new media, Kanu and Mefor were able to sell their anti-Fulani sentiments as well as secessionist agenda which resulted in the mass followership enjoyed by the group across the entire South-East and the Niger-Delta regions of Nigeria. This anti-Fulani sentiment grew to a point that the embattled leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Okwu Kanu declared his readiness to assume the role of the chief security officer of the Igbos and vowed to protect the entire South-East against the Fulanis, hence his demand for bullets and guns from a group of US-based Nigerians for self-defense against the alleged incessant attacks on Igbos by the Fulani herdsmen (Chijioke, 2017). The later actions of the IPOB derailed from their initial claims to have adopted a very peaceful method towards the actualization of a sovereign state of Biafra. Onuoha, Ochuba, Onuoha and Onuh (2021) observe that "IPOB has acquired a notorious position in the list of active separatist movements recognized by inter-governmental organizations around the world, owing to its anti-establishment rhetoric and unprecedented inciting commentaries and activities that could lead to violence of monumental proportion". Affirming the above, Ojo in Kanu and Iwuh (2023:5) quotes the supreme leader of the IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu addressing his followers thus:

If you find anybody in your village asking after Radio Biafra, kill the baboon Hausa, Fulani or Yoruba bastard. Let them keep searching as we keep tweeting for #Biafra." "Any army they (the Federal Government) send to Biafra land will die there. None will return alive even if it require sacrificing my people I will do it.

Onuoha et al (2021) rightly notes that IPOB's style of mass mobilization, which includes demonstrations and protests without police permit, calling for boycott of election in South-Eastern Nigeria, sit-at-home orders to business men and civil servants, and the use of hate speeches against constituted authorities, constitute threat to national security in Nigeria. Sahara Reporters cited in Onuoha et al (2021) reported that;

Through the Radio Biafra broadcast, Nnamdi Kanu (IPOB leader) was reported to have said "if they (referring to the leadership in Nigeria) fail to give us Biafra, Somalia will look like a paradise compared to what will happen to that zoo (Nigeria). It is a promise, it is a pledge and it is also a threat to them. For Kanu and Iwuh (2023), the formation of the Eastern Security Network and the method adopted by them in implementing their forceful sit-at-home orders in the South-East has attracted brutal repression from the men of the Nigerian Army and police force, turning the region into a theatre of war. In their study, Chukwudi, Gberebie, Abasilim and Imhonopi (2019) conclude that the modus operandi of the Indigenous People of Biafra have not just resulted in insecurity in the region, but have also resulted in political instability in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Gene Sharp's Theory of Power. Sharp's theory of power is explained in his book 'the politics of non-violent action' (1973). The theory suggests that the society is divided into two: the rulers and the subjects. According to Sharp, the rulers derive their powers from the consents by the subjects. The idea of 'ruler' as used in this theory includes the chief executives as well as other ruling groups and all bodies in command of the state structure. Sharp's theory of power maintains that non-violent action is a process of withdrawing consent and indeed the best way the subjects can challenge

modern problems of dictatorship, relative deprivations, genocide, war and systems of oppressions by the rulers(Martin, 1989). If obedience is the source of political powers, its withdrawal by the subjects will eventually lead to the collapse of the authority.

Though the struggles of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is predicated on the perceived lived experiences of marginalization, dehumanization, relative deprivation and oppressions suffered by the Igbo race of Nigeria(see Ibeanu,Orji and Iwuamadi, 2016), this theory suggests the adoption of non-violent actions as the most effective way of achieving the goals of the struggle. According to Sharp, Guerilla warfare has huge civilian casualty rates and can hardly lead to any successful struggle (Engler, 2013). The theory maintains that: Non-violent campaigns turn repression into a weakness for those in power. Violent crackdowns against unarmed protests end up exposing the brutality of a ruling force, undermining its legitimacy, and, in many cases, resulting in wider withdrawal of cooperation (Engler, 2013).

Therefore, the Sharp's theory of power suggests that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), in her agitations against perceived injustice as well as the actualization of a separate state, must eschew Guerilla Warfare as well as other violent means and embrace the principles of non-violent actions without which she cannot achieve her set goals.

3. Method of Data Collection/Analysis

This study adopts explanatory qualitative design and as such relies strongly on the secondary method of data collections, which includes sources such as books, journals, online publications, magazines, newspapers, unpublished materials, etc. The study also adopts Textual analysis as the suitable method of data analysis. The choice of this method was predicated on the usefulness of the textual analysis in examining trends and patterns in data obtainable from both unpublished and running documents (Okwuadimma, 2023).

4. Discussion

Mahatma Gandhi's Principles of Satyagraha and the Indigenous People of Biafra's (IPOB) Modus Operandi towards Secession

Satyagraha, loosely translated as "insistence on truth" is the most outstanding contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to social philosophy of conflict resolution. As a tool for social and political change, the principles of Satyagraha are engrossed in the principles of truth, non-violence (ahimsa) and self-suffering (tapasya), which is a veritable instrument to measure the modus operandi of secessionist groups such as the IPOB which agitate for a separate state within an already existing one.

Gandhi's Principle of Truth and the Indigenous People of Biafra's Radio/Media Broadcasts

While the agitation for self-determination/secession may be considered lawful, natural and certainly ubiquitous, Mahatma Gandhi in his philosophy of Satyagraha warns against the pursuit of legitimate ends through illegitimate means, which have historically proven counter-productive. Gandhi provides us with the means through which every oppressed group can withstand their oppressors and cause them to give up without hurting the toes of the oppressed in repression by the oppressors. One of such harmless means is the principle of "Truth" as engrossed in the philosophy of Satyagraha. For Gandhi, Satyagraha is a movement intended to replace methods of violence, and a movement based entirely on truth. He believes that truth does not seek vengeance, and that its demonstration appeals to the oppressor's conscience to see what is true....political action therefore, is a way of discovering truth by requiring a need for self-limiting applications of power and openness to the other. So, tolerance is a means to strive toward truth, mainly because no one is born non-violent, but everyone can become non-violent by daily practice of Satyagraha (Jahanbegloo, 2021:42).

The principle of truth suggests that one does not “do harm or hurt (even the aggressor) with words, deeds or thoughts... acting in a goal-consistent manner, using goal-revealing forms of struggle, acting openly rather than secretly...”(Weber, 2001: 494). The Radio Biafra, established in 2009, has been the major channel through which the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) mobilizes and executes all her activities. Scholars such as Alumona, Azom and Iloh(2019) and Onuoha et'al,(2021), had lamented the use of the Radio Biafra by IPOB through her leader, Nnamdi Kanu, to disseminate false information, hate speeches and to incite violence against the government of Nigeria and some notable individuals and politicians, which negates the Gandhian principles of truth.

In one of his broadcasts through the Radio Biafra on 28th April, 2015, Nnamdi Kanu referred to President Muhammadu Buhari as a pedophile, a terrorist, an idiot and an embodiment of evil, an allegation he later retracted and apologized for(see Daily post, 30th December, 2015). In a similar broadcast in 2018, Kanu declared that President Muhammadu Buhari had died and was buried in Saudi Arabia and that the man in Aso Rock was Jubril Al-Sudani. This declaration, followed by IPOB members' reference to the president as “Jubril al-Sudani created an atmosphere of tension and curiosity. Nnamdi Kanu was able to convince both his non-followers of Buhari's clone with the following as his scientific facts:

1. That the “initial” Buhari was actually 75 years of age, appeared conspicuously frail as against the “new” Buhari that appears to be 50 years old which was obvious in his “gait, his vibrancy, the smoother tone of his face and skin... [and] the slight difference earlobes between the two men”.
2. That the hair on the head of the “real” Buhari had become very scanty and snow white as against the “new” Buhari “who appears to have fuller mane of hair, much darker hairlines, and now permanent spots a cap that he has refused to remove despite repeatedly being dared to do so”.
3. That the “former” Buhari as a Fulani and could speak his Fulani and Hausa languages fluently whereas the “latter” could not speak Fulfulde – the language of the Fulanis.
4. That the immediate family members of the “late” Buhari are staunchly keeping distance from the “new” Buhari even on official occasions.
5. That “original” Buhari was very tall, relative to his appointees and other public officials while the “latter” is quite shorter in height.
6. That having spent over three months receiving treatments, it was highly suspicious that he never returned for follow up, which according to the IPOB leader, is “mandatory” (Janna in Ekpo and Agorye, 2019: 4).

In what could have fueled ethnic and religious crisis in Nigeria, the IPOB leader was reported to have broadcasted through Radio Biafra thus: Kumuyi should be stoned and dealt with thoroughly if he comes to Aba for his planned crusade...Nigeria is a zoo and everybody living in that God-forsaken zoo deserves to die...Any Igbo man that worships in any church with a Yoruba pastor is a fool...No Igbo man should attend any Church where the pastor is a Yoruba man; they are criminals and fools (Ojo, 2021:1).

Similarly, on the 22nd of April, 2021, Kanu, through Radio Biafra, continued with his anti-Fulani broadcasts thus:“Any vehicle you see, from tonight (22nd April 2021), 12 midnight to 5, destroy it completely. That is the time they (referring to Fulanis) move about abducting people. And we keep quiet. ... What stops you young people from, once you see them coming around 4am in the morning, you will block all every exits, set it on fire?”(Sahara Reporters, 1st July, 2021).

Also, following his apologies to President Buhari for calling him a pedophile, while in the DSS custody, Nnamdi Kanu states that “All I was trying to do is to draw attention to the problems afflicting society and something done about them”(Useni, 2015). The above statement credited to the IPOB leader, appears as a departure from the original goal (secession agenda) of the group, portraying it as ordinary traditional pressure group, against the principles of goal-revealing and goal-consistency, as embedded in Satyagraha.

Gandhi's Philosophy of Ahimsa (Non-Violence), the IPOB's Open Demand for Arms and the Activities of the Eastern Security Network (ESN).

While it is not out of place for any group to pursue freedom in terms of self-determination, it is very crucial to ensure that the means adopted in pursuit of this goal is as pure as the goal itself. Allotting serious attention to the means adopted is considered sacrosanct, because violent means cannot be used to achieve a non-violent end (Gaub, 2003:419). In their struggle for secession, Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB had earlier hinted on his adoption of non-violent actions towards their agenda, thus: “I hope that what we are looking for can be accomplished peacefully. I am an advocate of passive resistance. Gandhi and Martin tried it to very good effects, so why should it not work in our case?” (Kanu and iwuh, 2023: 4). However, Nnamdi Kanu’s open demand for guns and bullets during his speech at the World Igbo Congress held in Los Angeles on 5th September, 2015, contradicts his earlier adoption of Ahimsa (non-violence).

Ahimsa (non-violence), for Gandhi, is not just the most suitable method of resolution of any type of conflict, but it is also a way of life, of living in truth (Weber, 2001). In fact, Martin Luther King, Jr. refers to Gandhi’s non-violent philosophy as “the only morally and practically sound method to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom” (Varma, 1975: 366). Seeking to fight oppression by the means of oppression makes the oppressed worse than the oppressor and produces no positive result. Gandhi rightly asserts that “those who seek to destroy men rather than their manners adopt the latter and become worse than those whom they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with them” (Varma, 1975).

The philosophy of Ahimsa therefore separates evil from the evil-doer and admonishes the oppressed to understand that the struggle is actually against evil itself and not the evil-doers, knowing fully well that the evil-doer can be changed through non-violent actions. The philosophy of Non-Violence also: brings in larger and larger number of people into a thorough initiation into the techniques of self-reliance, self-confidence and courage. But it also brings about radical change in the party against which the technique has been used. By breaking the constant circle of the violence of one group leading to the violence of the other, and also breaking the frequent escalation in the extent and severity of violence, it brings about a complete transformation of relationship between both groups (Varma, 1975:382).

Gandhi had earlier warned against the unnecessary provocation of the opponent (oppressor) during the struggle for freedom (see Weber, 2001), which usually attracts repressions that end in high civilian casualties. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), led by Nnamdi Kanu, did not just provoke but also threatened the Nigerian government with war in their inciting broadcast messages through Radio Biafra. For instance, in one of the interviews he granted to SaharaTV’s Rudolf Okonkwo, Nnamdi Kanu warned the delegates that represented the South-East region in the 2014 National Conference not to return to Igboland if they fail to negotiate Biafra’s secession from Nigeria. He went further to issue threats of war to the Nigerian government thus:

If they fail to give us Biafra, Somalia will look like a paradise compared to what will happen to that zoo (Nigeria). It is a promise, it is a pledge, and it is also a threat to them... if they do not give us Biafra, there will be nothing living in that very zoo they call Nigeria; nothing will survive there, I can assure you (Sahara Reporters, 25th March, 2014).

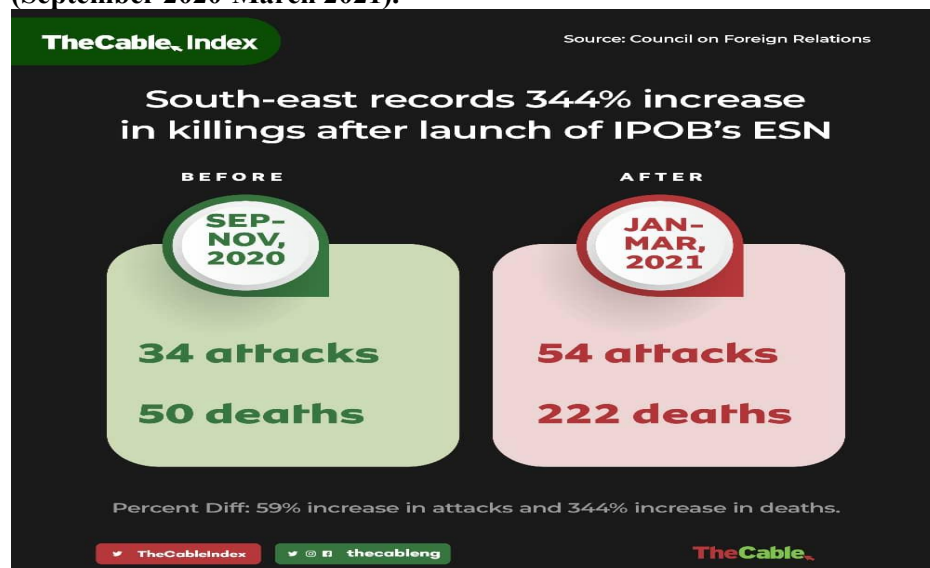
The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) began to make true their threats when their protests degenerated into violence leading to the deaths of two police officers and nine protesters, blockage of the strategic Niger Bridge, burning of the city’s central mosque as well as eight trucks belonging to Dangote Groups of Companies, among others on the 2nd of December 2015(Ibeanu, et’al, 2016). The above incident further degenerated into continuous attacks and reprisals between IPOB members and the men of Nigerian Police

and the military, leading to the famous Operation Python Dance and the eventual proscription of the group as a terrorist organization in 2017.

A video of youths in uniform, parading inside an unidentified bush in Abia state surfaced in 2017 on youtube(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiiPmvcSK0o>), with their commander declaring Nnamdi Kanu as their Commander in-Chief, reechoing their readiness to sacrifice their lives for the restoration of Biafra. On December 14th 2020, IPOB's spokesman, Emma Powerful announced the launch of the group's military arm known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN), with the objective to protect the South-East and South-South regions from Fulani bandits and terrorists. However, the activities of the ESN reportedly launched to ensure the security of lives and properties in the regions, have caused a serious spike in criminal activities leading to increased civilian casualties.

According to the reports of Olatunji(2021), there were 13 attacks and 17 deaths recorded in the five states of the South-East in the month of December when the ESN was launched. Surprisingly, between January and March 2021, the number of violent attacks and deaths in the region had skyrocketed beyond imagination. He further reports that the South-East region recorded 54 attacks, which represents a 59% leap and 222 deaths, representing a 344% rise in death rate.

Figure 1: Rate of Violent Attacks and Deaths in South-East before and after the Launch of ESN (September 2020-March 2021).



Source: www.thecable.ng

As rightly predicted by Gandhi in his philosophy of Satyagraha, both the launch and the activities of the ESN have attracted series of repressions from the Nigerian government, which has resulted in a very high number of civilian casualties across the region. This repression from the Nigerian government heightened, following the use of the ESN by IPOB to attack government facilities such as police stations and correctional facilities(see Olatunji, 2021), as well as the enforcement of the illegal sit-at-home declared by the group in South-East. In one of their operations on the 24th of April, 2021, the joint operatives of the Nigerian police, Department of State Services, and Army raided the alleged operational headquarters of the ESN militant group in Awomama, Imo State, killing the ESN top commander, Ikonso and six others and recovering six AK47 rifles, hundreds of ammunition as well as bullet proof charms (Soniya and Nwezeh, 2021).

The Indigenous People of Biafra's Method of Agitation and the Actualization of their Secession Agenda.

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha was not only interested in achieving freedom but emphasizes more on the purity of the means, because adoption of wrong means could never lead to right results (Gaubu, 2003). Accordingly, it is very crucial to ensure that the means adopted in pursuit of this end is as pure as the end itself, knowing fully well that for Satyagrahi, the means justifies the end.

Despite his declarations thus: "I am an advocate of passive resistance. Gandhi and Martin tried it to very good effects, so why should it not work in our case?" (Kanu and iwuh, 2023: 4), Nnamdi Kanu embraced violent protests, use of Radio Biafra to issue threats of war, misinformation and hate speeches against the government and some individuals perceived as saboteurs. The IPOB's launch of their militia arm, the ESN and the use of same to intimidate and kill opponents, destroy government facilities and enforce their unlawful sit-at-home orders in the South-East created an atmosphere of terror in the region.

Table 1: showing selected activities of IPOB's style of mass mobilization between 2012 and 2017 in Nigeria that led to her proscription.

S/N	Date	Location	Description of Incidence	Casualties/Fatalities
1	Wednesday, 18th Jan., 2012	Onitsha, Anambra State	IPOB members engage in unlawful protest, chanting freedom songs.	This led to the arrest of 23 IPOB members
2	Monday, 28th May, 2012	Aba, Abia State	A large group of IPOB members was allegedly caught attempting to disrupt children's day	19 IPOB members were subsequently arrested by the police.
3	Wednesday, 17th April, 2013	Onitsha, Anambra State	Fight between IPOB members and members of the Association of Igbo Youths during a rally	12 people were injured and this resulted in disruption of public peace.
4	Wednesday, 5th June, 2013	Idemili LGA, Anambra State	IPOB members hold rally to mobilize support for the 8th June sit-at-home order	10 IPOB members were arrested by the police and injured in the process.
5	Wednesday 29th January, 2014	Onitsha, Anambra State	IPOB members and traders clashed during a demonstration at Mgbuka market.	This resulted in injury and hospitalization of 6 people
6	Sunday 14th March, 2015	Enugu, Enugu State Aba, Abia State Abakaliki, Ebonyi State	Protest by IPOB members demanding the resignation of INEC chairman, AttahiruJega	Soldiers used horse whip to beat IPOB members while the police used teargas to disperse the protesters. This disrupted vehicular movement and many were injured in the ensuing stampede
7	Wednesday 21st October,	Port Harcourt, Rivers State	Pro-Biafra protesters marched through major streets of Port Harcourt, Oyingbo and Ogoni.	This protest led to the disruption of vehicular and

	2015			human traffic.
8	Saturday 7th November, 2015	Yenegoa, Bayelsa State	Scores of IPOB members block Mbiama road, Yenegoa, protesting the continuous detention of their leader.	Police arrested and detained about 100 IPOB members.
9	Thursday 3rd December, 2015	Onitsha, Anambra State	Protesting IPOB members block the Niger bridge, thereby obstructing vehicular movements in and out of Onitsha.	The Joint Task Force (JTF) killed 9 of the protesters and injured 18 others, while two police officers were reportedly killed.
10	Tuesday 19th January, 2016	Asaba, Delta State, Aba, Abia State	Pro-Biafra protesters demanding the release of IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, marched through major streets in Asaba and Aba.	This disrupted both vehicular movements and major economic activities.
11	Wednesday 20th September, 2017	Aba, Abia State	IPOB members protesting the operation python dance went on rampage, destroying both public and private infrastructure.	This led to the burning of Ariaria police station and a Dangote truck.
12	Saturday 23rd September, 2017	Umuahia, Abia State	IPOB members clashed with military personnel, stoning their Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) vehicles.	Many of the members and other civilians were wounded in the clash.

Source: Onuoha, et'al (2021).

The table above shows the buildup of violent protests credited to the Indigenous People of Biafra right from their inception in 2012 to 2017, leading to their eventual proscription as a terrorist group by the Nigerian government on the 18th of January 2017. Following his arrest on 14 October 2015 and subsequent rearrests on June 27, 2021, the Nigerian Government placed treasonable felony and terrorism charges against Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the IPOB, and has remanded him in the DSS custody till date. The rearrests and continued detention of Mr. Nnamdi Kanu has caused a serious crack within the group, as the struggle over who assumes the position of the detained leader factionalized the group. The faction led by Chika Edoziem and Emma Powerful was seen giving orders regarding the sit-at-home, which was countered by Nnamdi Kanu's younger brother, Kanunta(Okafor, 2021). Also the Finnish based self-acclaimed disciple of Kanu, Simon Ekpa, who was sacked from the Radio Biafra by the Chika Edoziem led faction, declared that "the Biafra struggle has entered the AUTOPILOT phase, a very dangerous phase that we have no control of what happens, to your tent oh Israel" (Sahara Reporters, 2021). The confusions created by the three contending factions of IPOB and the internal battles among them have left the IPOB without further clear objectives, while their followers wallow like sheep without a shepherd. The designation of IPOB as the 10th deadliest terror group in the world by the Institute for Economic and Peace (IEP) in its 2023 global terrorism index ranking(Daily Trust, 28 March, 2023), has further dealt a blow on the global image of the group as a mere secessionist movement. Just as Mahatma Gandhi rightly posits, the wrong means adopted by the IPOB in pursuit of her secession agenda has lately, created a global perception of the group as one of the most deadliest terrorist groups in the world, which must be decimated at all cost.

Impacts of the IPOB's Method of Agitation on the South-East Region of Nigeria.

Mahatma Gandhi rightly contends that the use of violent actions (against the principles of Satyagraha) in the struggle for freedom, have far reaching negative impacts, not just on both parties in conflict, but also

on the innocent civilians. The IPOB's resort to the use of violent protests, dissemination of misinformation, hate speech and war songs through radio Biafra, as well as the use of the ESN to destroy government facilities and enforce the illegal sit-at-home orders, have negative socio-economic impacts on the South-East region.

Following the declaration of every Monday as sit-at-home (ghost Monday) in the South-East by the IPOB starting from Monday 9th August, 2021, socio-economic activities in the region have suffered serious setback. In one of their usual broadcasts, the group ordered that "All markets, filling stations, motor parks, airports, seaports, banks, schools, etc. as well as social activities in Biafra land are to be shut down on that day (Mondays), everyone is to remain indoors in Biafra land from 6am to 6pm on that day (Ogunode and Chijindu, 2022: 26). With the threats of death and destructions from the armed militia of the IPOB that accompany the above order, no socio-economic activity takes place every Mondays in the region. Ogunode and Chijindu(2022) reports that IPOB/ESN, through the violent enforcement of the sit-at-home order has disrupted academic calendars in South-East region. In fact, they reported that "in one of the invasions in one of the South-East states, both teachers and students scampered for safety as the gunmen shot sporadically into the air and Motorcycles belonging to some of the staff and students were set ablaze by the enforcers of the order". Blueprint (2021) also reported the invasion of Comprehensive Secondary School Nkume Njaba in Njaba local government area of Imo state by the ESN, chasing both students and teachers out of the WAEC examination hall with gunshots. In their survey, Ekechukwu, Nwogu, Ugwukwu and Emerho(2022) observed that the enforcement of the sit-at-home order and the insecurity it fueled in the South-East denied the people (especially pregnant women and children), access to medical care, thereby increasing mortality rate in the region. According to one of their respondents:

I was supposed to see my doctor on a Monday, but I could not go to the hospital due to the sit-at-home order. This made me to deliver my baby in a substandard nearby healthcare facility in my neighborhood. Thank God I survived; many have lost their lives as a result of this. (IDI, 35 years nursing mother, Onitsha, in Ekechukwu, et'al, 2022:84)

According to BusinessDay report (December 23, 2022), the South-East region has suffered massive economic losses estimated at almost N4 trillion in two years, as a result of the activities of the IPOB/ESN that fueled insecurity in the region. The report notes that these losses were as results of factors such as "loss of between four and five working days per week; job losses due to cutbacks by business owners in response to the reduced working hours and other lost opportunities; loss of clients and customers who find alternatives because of the unstable business environment in the South-East; and increased cost of service delivery because of extra logistical costs". The report further analyses that Businesses in the South-East generate between N5.46 billion to N31.39 billion daily in the period under review. Therefore, "losing approximately five days in a month from October 2020 (24 months) means that about 120 days have been lost, which takes the number of lost earnings on only sit-at-home days to between N655.38 billion and N3.77 trillion".

One of the respondents in the survey conducted by Ekechukwu, et'al, (2022) laments thus:

I always make the highest sales on Mondays, most of my customers who normally come from various parts of the country during the weekend, usually lodge in nearby hotels and only to transact businesses on Monday morning. I have lost much money since the market does not open on Mondays. State and federal governments have also lost substantial revenues that would have accrued to them during this period. (IDI, 32 years, businessman, Nnewi, in Ekechukwu, et'al, (2022).

In all these, life in the South-East becomes like the Hobbesian state of nature of brutish, short and nasty, in the sense that he who escapes death by the bullets of the members of ESN still has hunger and poverty to contend with, as a result of the activities of the group.

5.

6. **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Agitations for self-determination or secession in the face of perceived injustice, relative deprivation, discrimination and victimization is not an aberration. However, the method employed in the pursuit of justice and freedom becomes the most determinant factor in the success of such struggle. For Mahatma Gandhi, the means employed in the pursuit of any end is as important as the end itself because adoption of wrong means could never lead to a successful end. At the inception of their struggle, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu had declared thus: "I hope that what we are looking for can be accomplished peacefully. I am an advocate of passive resistance. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. tried it to very good effects, so why should it not work in our case?" With reference to the above declarations by Nnamdi Kanu, this study interrogated the modus operandi of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) towards secession and its alignment with Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha. The study also inquired into the efficacy of the modus operandi of the IPOB vis-à-vis their secession agenda and its impacts on the South-East region of Nigeria. The study found out that the use of Radio Biafra to disseminate false information, hate speeches and war threats against Nigerian government as well as the establishment cum activities of the IPOB's armed wing, ESN; do not align with Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy of Satyagraha. The study also discovered that the adoption of violent actions as well as the use of the ESN to enforce their sit-at-home orders (against the principles of Satyagraha), have rather inflicted self-injuries on the group rather than producing the desired result. Furthermore, the study highlighted the negative impacts of IPOB's methods of agitation on socio-economic activities in the South-East region of Nigeria.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommends the following:

1. The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) should as a matter of principle, adhere strictly to Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of Satyagraha, which Martin Luther King Jr. adjudged "the only morally and practically sound method to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.
2. Absolute reorganization and deradicalization of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in a manner that will ensure the absolute disbandment and the eventual surrender of the men of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) to Nigerian government. This will give them access to amnesty programmes already extended to them by the Governors of the South-Eastern states, while they continue their agitations in accordance with the principles of Satyagraha.
3. The immediate and absolute cancellation of all manner of sit-at-home protests in the South-East, which is the principal agency for the recent socio-economic woes in the region.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable

Consent for publication

Not applicable

Availability of data and materials

Data and materials used in carrying out this study are available upon request

Conflict of interest statement

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***Jude Chiedozie OKWUADIMMA**

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA.
jc.okwuadimma@unizik.edu.ng. +2347030718999.
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-575309970>

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