NDI – IGBO AND THE QUEST FOR SOCIO – POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN THE NIGERIAN NATION: A REFLECTION

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Introduction

The Nigeria – Biafra war of 1967 – 1970 ended officially on the 15th January, 1970. The war was mainly fought between the Federal forces and the then Easterners, precisely the ethnic group called the Igbo. Since then, the Igbo nation has made lots of sacrifices to ensure the unity of the country, Nigeria. The unity of Nigeria remained a major factor in the heart of the Igbo leaders for prosecuting the war. There were other factors that precipitated the agitation for the Biafran state. The reasons were justified even at the international circles. The war lasted for thirty (30) good months. Many died. Many were maimed. Families were disorganized. Properties were lost and a lot of resources were either lost or were put into the prosecution of the war. Development strides were twisted and the hand of the clock was slowed down tremendously. There were gains from the war, collectively and individually. The Biafrans made friends and enemies among the comity of nations. To some people, these are now history. But to some others, there remain scores of indelible marks that continue to hunt them till death.

In as much as the war had its own positive and negative effects, particularly among the Igbo that bore the greatest brunt of it, have there been a reflection over the causes of
the war? Have the Igbo, as a people, reflected over the losses to them individually and collectively? Have they asked whether the issues and causes of the war have been addressed by the Nigerian nation to which they belong as a people? It was agitated, through allegations, that the Igbo ethnic group was dominating the Nigerian politics and economy starting from the 1900. In some quarters, it was alleged that the position of the Igbo group in the polity was not only domineering but an obstacle to some ambitious politicians who now craved for avenues and opportunity to curtail and pigeon-hole them to pave way for the realization of their political and economic self ambition; a struggle against the battle of the Igbo to consolidate the legacy of political and military dominance over the rest of the Federation which then began with increased intensity (Atofarati, 2012). It was also obvious that the battle against the Igbo was to stifle the Igbo survival ingenuity. The Igbo survive in Nigeria not necessarily because of the efforts of government, federal or state, but as a result of the ingenious nature and survival instinct of the people (Maier, 2000). The acrimony, envy, struggles; etc eventually degenerated into coup, counter coup, and then, a bloody civil war, which has been regarded as ‘a war of unity’. What lessons have the Igbo as a people learnt since the end of the war and within the period of rebuilding the Nigerian nation? Has there been any stock-taking regarding the contributions and sacrifices made by the Igbo towards the development and unity of this country, Nigeria? Or is everything mere rhetoric? What were in the minds of our own brothers, the Igbo leaders, who stuck out their neck to ensure that the Igbo have their fair share in the Nigerian nation?

On the other hand, what really are the reasons for the ingrained hatred, acrimony, envy etc, against the Igbo in the Nigerian state? Were there justified reasons for the overt
marginalization of the Igbo, before 1900 and after the Amalgamation of 1914 and even till the beginning of the war? What were the very intentions of those on the Federal side with regard to the genocide that claimed the lives of more than three million people and cut short the lives of so many Biafrans in their prime? The economic blockade was used as a war strategy and justified against United Nations policies. At the end of the war, the Federal government under General Gowon declared “No victor, No vanquished”, yet the Igbo were given, irrespective of the amount of money anyone had, only twenty pounds to start life. This was another ploy to ensure the Igbo people never survived, or it was a structure to supervise their gradual extermination. These are just a few of the injustice meted against the Igbo for asking to be recognized and be integrated in a country owned by all of us. The people of the then Southern Nigeria and even now, the South – East, have leaders. What have they done, in the process of galvanizing the political and economic structure of Nigeria, to alleviate the suffocations of the Igbo people in the Nigerian state, a land full of milk and honey, a nation bound in freedom, peace and unity? Are the Igbo leaders handicapped or are they pretentious in their quest for the Igbo integration and socio – political empowerment of the Igbo people?

This paper, though not a compendium and a chronology, has the following major challenge of reflecting on the potency or reality of the quest by Ndi – Igbo for socio – political empowerment in the Nigerian nation. Consequently, the paper reflects on the following:

a) The Nigerian nation since 1960,

b) The Igbo and the entanglement of the war – the Nigeria-Biafra war,
c) A reflection on the reality for the quest for socio–political empowerment by the Igbo for the Nigerian nation building,

d) An exploration of a structure of socio-political empowerment for the Igbo in the unity of Nigeria.

The methodology adopted in this study is library research of documented materials. The process is analytical, expository and explorative.

The Nigerian Nation Since 1960

Nigeria got her independence from the British in 1960 with Dr. Nnamdi Benjamin Azikiwe as the Governor General. She got her republic in 1963. Then there were three major regional governments of North made up mostly by the Hausa-Fulani (about 65% of the population then) with Kaduna as its headquarters; West made up mostly by the Yoruba (about 75% of the population then) with Ibadan as its headquarters; and East made up mostly by the Igbo (between 60 – 70% of the population then) with Enugu as its headquarters. In these regions, there were minority ethnic groups. By 1963/64 the Mid-West region came into being, made up mostly by the Edo, Itshekiri, Ishan, Urhobo, etc, with headquarters at Benin. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was the Prime Minister and head of government while Dr. Azikiwe became the ceremonial president. The regions had their regional governments with their premiers (Sir Ahmadu Bello in the North, Obafemi Jerimaiah Awolowo in the West, Dr. Michael I. Okpara in the East and Sir Denis Osadebe in the Mid-West) and were blessed with abundance of natural, human and material resources. They were autonomous to the extent that they planned their economy and made laws governing the people (see Olusanya, 1980; Nwabueze, 1982; Ekeh, 1983;
Iheriohanma, 2003; Dibia, 2003 for more explanations on the constitutional development of Nigeria). The parliamentary system of government was adopted at independence.

Before 1960, the federation of Nigeria, as it is known today, has never really been one homogeneous entity. It had widely differing peoples and tribes that had different political, social and religious cleavages, allegiance and interests. The land mass that is today known as Nigeria had existed as a number of independent and sometimes hostile national states with linguistic, cultural, historical and traditional differences and outstanding tribal, political, social and religious barriers before 1900. Nigeria came to being as a result of the interest of her former colonial master that decided to keep the country one in order to effectively control her vital resources for their economic interests. In 1849, John Beecroft was appointed the British Consul for Bights of Benin and Biafra. By 1851, Lagos was attacked by the British in her assumed bid to end the slave trade and set up legitimate trade. In 1861, the Lagos treaty was signed between Dosunmu and the British to cede Lagos to the British, and this marked the effective British influence that extended to the Yoruba hinterland. For administrative conveniences, in 1886, the Oil Rivers Protectorate was declared. In 1900, the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorates of South and North were created. The Colony of Lagos and the Southern Protectorate were merged in 1906. By 1914, the Southern and Northern Protectorates were amalgamated with Lord Frederick Lugard as Nigeria’s Governor – General, having experimented the workability of the system of indirect rule in India. One would have argued with Atofarati (2012) that under normal circumstances, this amalgamation ought to have unified the various peoples and provided a firm structure for the arduous task of establishing closer cultural, social, religious and linguistic ties and bonds necessary for a united and virile
Nigeria as a state. Unfortunately, this was never to be. Instead, there were divisions, hatred, unhealthy rivalry and pronounced disparity in social, economic, political and religious development. The growth of nationalism, patriotism and nationhood, and even political parties took rather ethno-tribal than national interests. Even in the struggle for independence, these parochial, primordial and ethnic cleavages had at one time or the other, some undermining effects in the expected unified struggle by the people against the colonial masters. It has rather been argued that it was the people themselves who were the victims of the political struggles that were supposedly targeted at removing foreign (colonial) domination (Iheriohanma, 2003; Atofarati, 2012).

While some ethnic groups and some minorities braced up to the challenges of the amalgamation, the disparity and disadvantage in the spread of natural and mineral resources, population density and implosion, the simmering unhealthy rivalries, the urge to develop and spread their tentacles all over the nation and even beyond the shores of Nigeria, others rather waited for constitutional amendment and administrative policy pronouncements to develop their own regions and group. The Igbo, for example, out of economic necessities, the introduced tax system and the inherent innate tendencies to explore opportunities, settled for the opportunities of jobs created by the European expansionist programmes, colonial administrative political, economic and commercial structures and the educational opportunities. They saw these as avenues to gain economic and material wealth to develop their home regions. They were resilient, innovative, accommodating, open, peaceful and development – oriented even in areas and communities where they were strangers. These qualities endeared them to their host
communities, and to some, they were seen as foes as the Igbo made the best out of every situation they found themselves.

**The Igbo and the Entanglement of the War – the Nigeria-Biafra War**

This section is devoted not to the chronology or reasons for the war that ravaged Nigeria between 2 July 1967 and 15 January 1970. It analyzes the conditions and affairs of the nation that led to the trauma that devastated the human and material development of the nation, the hostilities and disempowerment that characterized especially a section of the major tripod stand that carried the structure and entity, Nigeria and the justification or otherwise for the seemingly marginalization of the Igbo.

The entity, Nigeria came into existence as a result of the economic interest of the British colonial government. As already been said, the components that make up Nigeria were hitherto different more or less independent communities, groups, empires and kingdoms that had differing socio-political, economic and religious allegiance traceable to any common ethnic origin. They had dissimilar psychological bonding. Atofarati (2012) argues that the only thing common to these people was the name Nigeria since they had different administrative set – up. There was no basis for true unity.

In terms of political and religious organization, the North had the semi-feudal and Islamic Hausa-Fulani that were traditionally ruled by the feudal, conservative Islamic hierarchy consisting of Emirs. The Emirs owe their allegiance to a supreme Sultan who was regarded as the fountain and source of all political power and religious authority. Mobility and growth of the individual and group were mainly ascribed and the society could be described as closed and rigid. In this highly authoritarian religious and political
system, leadership positions were occupied by persons willing to be subservient and loyal to superiors. In this system therefore, it is expected that the essence was to preserve and maintain Islamic and conservative values. Given this scenario, and coupled with the fact of the closed nature of the society, economic and socio-political innovations and radicalism were regarded in the Hausa-Fulani region as subversive and sacrilegious, something intolerable. This has its own effect on development and accounted for the backwardness of the area during the period of struggle for self government. In the West or what is regarded now as South-west geopolitical zone, are the Yoruba who are ruled by a series of monarchs known as Oba and who are less autocratic than their Northern counterparts because of the institution of checks and balances. The political and social system of the Yoruba allowed for greater upward mobility based on achievement rather than ascription. In other words, the Yoruba system is open compared to the Hausa-Fulani. Their supreme deity is Olodumare; Oyo remains their political centre while their religious centre is at Ile-Ife. In the East, precisely the present South-East geopolitical zone are the Igbo who live in mostly autonomous, democratically organized communities with pockets of monarchs in some ancient cities such as Nri Kingdom and Onitsha where the traditional rulers are known as Igwe. Nri is in most quarters regarded as the ancestral home of the Igbo. The political organization of the Igbo is democratic and decisions are made by a general assembly of taxable adults. The society is more open than any other ethnic group in Nigeria. This accounts for the acceptance and easy imbibing of foreign cultures by the Igbo as well as the noticeable development strides and ingenuity of the people.
Among the three ethnic groups, the Igbo often participated directly in decisions that affected them. They had a copious and lively awareness of the political system which they viewed as a veritable platform and instrument for easily achieving their own personal and group goals. They appreciated status symbols and strived to acquire status through acquisition rather than inheritance of wealth. It is observed that with their emphasis on social achievement, creativity and hard work, educational attainment and political participation, the Igbo not only adapted to and challenged colonial rule in innovative ways, they converted their challenges into advantages.

Apart from the above tradition-derived advantages and differences, a further advantage which the Igbo had against the other ethnic groups, especially the Hausa-Fulani, was the British colonial system of indirect rule. The indirect rule was applied to the North through the Emirs and this further perpetuated rather than changed the indigenous authoritarian political system. Christianity, with its attendant largesse, was not extended to the North where Islam appeared to have taken root. Thus, the North remained virtually barricaded and closed to European cultural imperialism. In contrast, the Igbo, particularly the richest or those closely in contact with the European missionaries, either as catechists, interpreters or employees, sent most of their children to schools and particularly, British universities. While the Northern Emirs were busy maintaining their traditional political and religious institutions, thus reinforcing the social structure, the Igbo were busy reinforcing themselves, getting ready for leadership roles through human capacity development and contacts. It cannot be said other than that by the time of independence in 1960, “the North was by far the most underdeveloped area in Nigeria with a literacy rate of 2% as compared to 19.2% in the East”
(en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigerian_Civil_War). The same cannot be said about the West (Yoruba) that enjoyed a higher literacy level having had earlier contact with western education. They also had the advantage of free primary education programme of the pre-independence Western Regional government. While the Yoruba were the first group to adopt Western bureaucratic social norms and produced the first crop of African civil servants, doctors, lawyers, etc., the Igbo took to Western education very actively and adopted Christianity, even though this came a little later because the British found it difficult to establish firm control in the area as a result of the highly autonomous nature of the Igbo communities. However, by the 1960s, Igbo political culture was already more unified and the region became actively prosperous. Igbo tradesmen and literate elites became active not just in the traditional Igbo South, but throughout Nigeria and beyond.

The Igbo have outstanding legacies and characteristics. Apart from the above, the Igbo were described as hardworking, aggressive, grasping, never seen on the streets begging. Some other qualities include doggedness, striving and struggling for unity; never satisfied with their situation and environment, even when all seem to be the best, they strived to improve on it; openness and intellectually endowed; peaceful; resourceful and innovative, always aggressively trying the impossible.

Irrespective of the above qualities, many Nigerians see the Igbo man from the negative side. His doggedness and grasping qualities are misinterpreted to mean grab and aggressive; probably because of his attitude and mannerism. Achebe (1983) summarized the interpretations of the Igbo man’s qualities thus: “Nigerians of all other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the
Igbo. They would all describe them as aggressive, arrogant and clannish. Most would add grasping and greedy”.

I have said that the Igbo would always convert challenges to advantages. Population pressure in Igbo homeland makes it difficult for the Igbo man to have a bumper harvest with crude agricultural implements. Aside this, his aspiration for monetary wages to feed his large family, as a result of his inclination for polygyny, and as a social status symbol, drove, and continues to drive him to other parts of Nigeria and beyond for work and occupation. Any part of the world where you don’t see an Igbo man does not exist; the Igbo appear ubiquitous. The Igbo, by nature is naturally empowered and it is ironical and absurd now to think of an Igbo requesting for empowerment.

These qualities and probably the (mis)conception of the Igbo may have generated the intense hatred and gruesome perception which other groups in Nigeria had and which, when the opportunity of acrimony, songs of secession and war came, those who felt it was time to stop, eliminate or reduce the powers of the Igbo in their socio-political and military domination of Nigeria swore never to miss the opportunity. Some of the immediate and remote causes of the war include: the perceived political and military dominance of a section of Nigeria over the rest and the battle to curtail this; the continued perception by the North that it was marginalized in terms of political and economic development; the defense agreement between Great Britain and Nigeria that was seen as an attempt by Britain to swindle Nigeria out of her sovereignty; the 1962/63 Census figures; the massive rigging of the 1964 General Elections in which the ruling political parties in the regions used all devices imaginable to eliminate opponents; the 1965 Western Regional Elections where rigging and irregularities were alleged to be more
brazen and shameful; the Coup of 15 January 1966 led mostly by young army Majors of Igbo origin and the killing and suspected elimination of prominent politicians in the North; the action and reactions that gradually changed to resentment and culminated into the May 1966 riots throughout the North during which most Easterners residing in the North were attacked and killed, this degenerated into genocide and pogrom; the counter Coup staged by the northern military officers on 29 July 1966 with two major aims of revenging on the East and a break up of the country (the Araba); the creation of twelve (12) states in the country that was originally planned to diffuse the strength and disorganize the unity of the East and appointment of Military Governors to the states and an Administrator for the East; the disregard of the Aburi Accord where it was alleged Ojukwu scored points; and the firing of the first bullet at the dawn of 6 July 1967 from the Federal side.

**The Igbo Quest for Socio – Political Empowerment in the Nigerian Nation Building: A Reflection**

The quest for empowerment implies an acknowledgement of the existence of the capacity an individual or group has to do something or contribute to development but is incapacitated as a result of callous policies, natural or social hindrances, marginalization or sidelining. Essentially, it confers the request for fair share, social justice and fair play, which, in line with the theme of this year’s Ahiajioku, is OKEZUO. In Igbo land, emee nwanyi ka-emere ibe ya, ogbuu alaa. This implies the application of equity, fair play and justice to all. If the Igbo people were at the forefront in the Nigerian politics before the Nigeria- Biafra war, how did they lose grip of their position? It has been observed that the Igbo are naturally endowed and empowered. Their resourcefulness, resilience, ingenuity, creativity and dogged struggle to better their situation are natural qualities that
are supposed to be innate and inherent. Was there any truncation or tilt that eroded these qualities from them and made them to play the second fiddle in the building of the Nigerian nation? Before and after the Nigeria-Biafra war, the Igbo occupied plump positions in almost all the Federal ministries, parastatals and extra-ministerial departments. They were trusted partners in the private sector, especially in manufacturing and commerce. Granted that they fought the war and lost their positions, it has taken forty-two years since the war ended. Is it not enough for them to build their way back to their positions? Even as at now, it is observed that the Igbo occupy, at least, not less than the third sensitive position in almost all plum offices at the federal levels, yet they appear to be incarcerated.

The war dealt an astonishing and indelible blow on the Igbo. The trauma of the genocide, pogrom; the Federal war policies of economic blockade, starvation; loss of relations, loss of property and investment; Awolowo’s various infamous and callous war policies and immediate post war economic policy that subjected every Igbo man, irrespective of the amount he had in the bank to start life anew with only twenty Nigerian pounds; Gowon’s verbal policy of “No Victor, No Vanquished” and the Federal government post war reconstruction programme of “Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Reintegration” that never applied; the abandoned property issue; the subsequent banning on importation of second-hand clothing and stockfish trading that were the pillar of the Onitsha and Aba markets that would have revamped the economy of the East; and many more such policies were made to supervise the faster elimination and subsequent extermination of the Igbo since they were not able to be finally crushed during the war (Achebe, 2012; Atofarati, 2012). Awolowo’s callous and diabolical policies were borne
out of his intention to revenge Zik and the entire Igbo race and to pave way for his inordinate ambition of ruling Nigeria even for a day. He saw the Igbo as obstacle to this ambition.

The Igbo had, and continue to have, rich culture and endowments – material, human and natural resources – to the envy of her neighbours. One would expect that in a situation of unhealthy rivalry, suspicion, acrimony, envy among her neighbours and where they were seen as domineering, especially by their jealous hosts, these variables would definitely degenerate into hostility and the result was war of subjugation. This was what the Igbo people never realized and never learnt a lesson from, and even now, because they made everywhere they went a comfortable home, yet there were countless number of them who never for once visited their homelands until they were chased out of the North. These were the Igbo men and women who found the Igbo homeland very uncomfortable at the time they came home and wished the war ended soonest. This situation has not changed till date. The various religious and political riots, both in the North and in Lagos attest to this fact as the Igbo are always the targets.

Reflecting over the gory state of the Igbo in present day Nigeria, one wonders why it is the Igbo ethnic group that suffers greatly anytime there is riot. It is regrettable that in any list of crimes and criminality, at least one Igbo person must be involved directly or indirectly. Think of official embezzlement, fraud, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Police reports, the Igbo person must be robed in. The question is whether the war effects, the war policies, the attendant hunger and poverty have driven the Igbo to crime committal? In the traditional Igbo culture, no Igbo man accepted any wealth or gifts, especially from a son or someone known to him without
enquiring the source of such wealth. Now the story appears to be different. Criminality and mediocrity are celebrated. Now, ‘the theory of anything goes’ rends the air provided it serves the purpose.

Igbo people are now always at the forefront of political instability in Nigeria. The Igbo man now thinks selfishly of himself first before others confirming the acronym from *IBO* – “I Before Others”. This is in contrast to Bishop Shanahan’s description of the *IBO* as symbolizing ‘Industry’ – which the Igbo were known for; ‘Bold’- indicating that the Igbo man would snap at anything he dislikes and would boldly speak out even if that remained the only source of his livelihood. This made some other ethnic groups to see him as a proud and arrogant man; Obedience – indicating the Igbo man was respectful, peaceful and obedient but not subservient. That the Igbo man now thinks of himself first is absurd and appears that he can ‘do anything’ to survive. The simmering craze to identify drives the Igbo man to take up titles as *Agadagbachiruzo 1; Omegburuumunnaya 1*, *etc.* indicating that if it is not him no other person. The political stalemates in the Senate chamber, particularly in the Second Republic when the position of the Senate president was zoned to the South-East speak volume of this fact. Almost all the Igbo members wanted to be Senate President and were ready to unearth documents to support the impeachment of the incumbent, his own brother. It is regrettable that in the present Nigerian political landscape, the understanding of the war effect that turned the Igbo man as a pauper yet power hungry and ready to accept any political position, provided he identifies, is to use him as government official trafficator indicating the direction government of the day wishes to go. He is best suited as a better sycophant and praise singer job.
The Igbo quest for state creation to ensure equity in the Nigerian nation indicates fairness and justice. The Igbo contribution to the development of Nigeria calls for adjustment in the lopsidedness in the sharing of the commonwealth of the nation. Questions need to be asked here regarding the intentions of the Igbo leaders in the forefront in this request. Is the nation sure that when the stage is set, every community in Igbo land, through their selfish leaders that cannot identify any development projects they have made, will not rally round the unsuspecting illiterates to their own advantages and even scuttle the genuine efforts and deny the ethnic group the much deserved opportunity? Even the leaders in the existing states should account for the resources they have garnered and how much they have used the resources to better the lives of the common man. The recent flooding in the nation has exposed the fragile Igbo economy that is dependent on the resources and food stuff that come to the East from the North. Every family now in Igbo land can only feed if there is stability in the North, otherwise there is always riots in the families when crises in the North prevent transportation of food to the East. Yet each state receives fund and allocations from the central government; each state in the East is involved in the FADAMA and other agricultural development programmes like their counterparts in the North where the leaders have invested the commonwealth to good use, ensure food security and to prepare for any eventuality.

This paper does not wish to subscribe that the original intentions and calculations of the Northern oligarchy in the military, the Islamic extremist Jihadists, and the volatile Northern politicians to disintegrate and, at best, exterminate the Igbo ethnic group through the Federal war policies and the creation of states are seriously achieving the set
goals. State creation primarily makes for even and faster development. It ensures equity in the sharing of commonwealth. It does not suggest disregard to brotherhood cleavages, originality and hegemony. Other ethnic groups still acknowledge their originality irrespective of the states they come from. The Igbo man should see himself first and foremost as an Igbo rather than someone who comes from a particular state; otherwise, the Northern military oligarchy and extremist Islamic Jihadists would be beating their chest and thanking Allah for the idea of state creation. Seeing state creation as divisive implies that it is no longer the white man that put a knife to things that bound the Igbo together, but state creation.

**Exploring Ways for Socio-Political Empowerment of the Igbo for Nation Building in Nigeria**

The quest for socio-political empowerment of the Igbo for national development in Nigeria is very apt now that the stage is set for constitutional amendment, political restructuring and alignment. What the Igbo people need is to look inward, re-engineer the spirit of *Onye aghala nwanne ya and Igwe bu ike* (brotherhood and unity in strength). They should re-enact the spirit of converting challenges to advantages, resourcefulness, initiative, creativity and Igbo ingenuity that produced *Ogbunigwe* (Ojukwu Bucket) that helped sustain the war to the chagrin of the Federal forces. Most of the Igbo Engineers and war prosecutors behind the feat are still alive and this should have rekindled the Igbo resilience and creativity. What is lacking is the right leadership of the likes of the legend *OKONKWO* of ‘Things Fall Apart’, the Ikemba, Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, etc. Thanks to God there are handful of budding Igbo leaders with the requisite vision and mission.
The recommended desired Igbo leaders should be endowed with critical knowledge that is characterized with vision, mission, grounded in Igbo philosophy, focused and never distracted, always working towards the target, firm and resolute though not autocratic, altruistic and ready to offer selfless service. They should adopt bottom up, participatory and community- or people- based leadership. They should always consult with their followers and should realize that followership is a reflection of the leadership.

Revival of an enviable Igbo development-oriented culture and sustainable nationalism that target Igbo identity that has been derogated in preference to that of the Western culture remains a sine qua non. The identity should be symbolized by culture and language. Every Igbo man should stand shoulder high to identify with his language and culture in all ramifications. Teaching of Igbo education should be made compulsory in primary and secondary school curriculum. An Igbo man should have knowledge of his origin, Igbo culture and the history of the Nigeria-Biafra war which should encourage him to know where he came from and where he is going.

The above Igbo education suggested should inculcate the spirit of ‘Igboness’ and redirect the Igbo leadership quest that will make the Igbo think of being an Igbo first before self. It should also instill the burning desire of leaders and followers alike to crave to change situations and convert challenges to own advantages as was the case before. This was the burning spirit that drove the Igbo man that made him the centre of envy of all and which drove the development strategies of self-help, participatory democracy, etc that once saw the establishment of Igbo National Schools all over the land.
There should be Research and Development Institutes to teach the principles of leadership and succession in Igbo land. This leadership and succession plan is considered necessary as a springboard to launch the Igbo race to technological development. Malaysia, Singapore and Japan are considered economically emerging nations because the leadership looked inward, examined and reviewed where they went wrong and charted a course of action. What stops the government of the states in the South-East from establishing Research Institutes to synthesize all the findings in the Ahiajioku Lectures till date as a working document to direct the Igbo leaders? One essence of these lectures is to redirect and to rediscover ourselves. The Japanese technology could not supersede the Nnewi technology of engine redesign and fabrication if not that the government of the South-East failed to encourage the budding and young engineers that are making solo efforts. How far can that go?

The quest for fair share and justice – OKEZUO – and the principle of empowerment find refuge and fountain in concerted efforts, communality, participation and consultations. Every Igbo man is important and has something to contribute to development. The madman on the street may not always constitute a nuisance. He is there because of the function he is performing. State creation and the quest for more states in Igbo land will be meaningful if our pathfinders and leaders eschew bitterness and rancor and go about the request with decorum and the seriousness it deserves. Let this quest and opportunity not offer another forum for other ethnic groups to laugh at the Igbo.

**Conclusion**

The recent happenings in Nigeria call for concerted efforts by all ethnic groups to make sacrifices so that we can build a unified, strong and peaceful nation. Nigeria is our
country and no other one. The Boko Haram bombings in the North, the Kidnappings in the East, armed robbery everywhere, high rate of unemployment, general insecurity in the country, etc all call for proactive actions rather than rhetoric. In the East, the Igbo can not achieve a welcome invitation for investment if the incessant killings, kidnappings and armed robbery continue.

Empowerment, capacity development and contribution to national development are all distracted by general insecurity. Efforts should therefore be made by our present leaders to cultivate peaceful environment that can usher in opportunities for socio-political development of the Igbo. This then will pave way for genuine empowerment.

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