



ABSTRACT

The demand for self-determination in Nigeria arises from longstanding issues of exclusive politics, which have left many groups feeling marginalized. This study aims to understand the motivations behind these calls for autonomy or independence, assess the impact of exclusive politics on self-determination movements, and explore potential solutions to address underlying grievances.

THE DYNAMICS OF SELF- DETERMINATION MOVEMENTS IN NIGERIA: AN ANALYSIS OF EXCLUSIVE POLITICAL PRACTICES AND THEIR SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Introduction

The issue of self-determination has been a persistent and contentious one in the socio-political landscape of Nigeria. The "Call by Groups for Self-determination" is a direct consequence of the perceived exclusive and marginalized nature of the country's political system. This phenomenon has its roots in the complex history of Nigeria, a nation forged from the amalgamation of diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups, each with its own aspirations and demands. Groups like The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) - Leader: Nnamdi Kanu, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) - Leader: Henry Okah/Mujahid Asari-Dokubo, Oodua People's Congress (OPC) - Leader: Gani Adams, Niger Delta Avengers



Employing qualitative content analysis, the study reviews speeches, manifestos, and declarations from advocacy groups. Grounded in nationalism theory, it examines how regional identities seek autonomy as a means of expressing their nationalistic aspirations. The findings indicate that the exclusive nature of Nigerian politics has significantly intensified self-determination movements. The study concludes by highlighting the urgent need for inclusive governance and dialogue to address the concerns of marginalized groups, which should help to prevent further fragmentation of the nation. It recommends fostering a more inclusive political system that accommodates the diverse interests and identities within Nigeria, ultimately reducing the calls for self-determination.

Key Words: Self-Determination, Movement, Exclusive, Political, Practices

(NDA) - Leader: Government Tonpolo, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) - Leader: Yerima Shettima, Middle Belt Forum - Leader: Pogu Bitrus, Afenifere - Leader: Reuben Fasant, Ohanaeze Ndigbo - Leader: Nnia Nwodo, Yoruba Nation Group: Leader – Sunday Egbohu are some of the most prominent self-determination groups in Nigeria. The colonial legacy, the struggles for independence, and the subsequent political developments in the post-colonial era have all contributed to the emergence of this call for self-determination. The concentration of power, resources, and decision-making in the hands of certain dominant groups has led to a sense of disenfranchisement and alienation among other ethnic and regional identities within the Nigerian federation.

This exclusionary political landscape has given rise to various groups and movements across the country, each advocating for a greater degree of autonomy, recognition, and control over their own affairs. These demands range from increased resource control and federalism to outright secession, reflecting the depth of the grievances and the complexity of the underlying issues.

The "Call by Groups for Self-determination" is, therefore, a direct response to this perceived lack of inclusive and equitable governance in Nigeria. It represents the efforts of marginalized communities to assert their identity, rights, and aspirations within the broader national context. Understanding the historical, political, and socio-economic factors that have given rise to this call is crucial in addressing the challenges



and finding sustainable solutions that promote national unity, justice, and development

Objectives of the Study

The study will have the following objectives:

1. To understand the motivations behind the calls for self-determination by groups in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the impact of exclusive politics on the self-determination movements within Nigeria.
3. To explore potential solutions to address the grievances underlying the self-determination demands Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Self-determination: Self-determination is a principle that affirms the right of a people to freely choose their own political, economic, social, and cultural development (Sterio, 2013). According to Cassese (2005), self-determination is "the right of a people to determine its own destiny, that is, to choose its own political, economic, social, and cultural system, without external interference" (p. 11). This concept is closely linked to the notion of national sovereignty and the right of a people to control their own affairs (Brilmayer, 1991).

The United Nations (UN) has recognized the right to self-determination as a fundamental human right, enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1966a, and 1966b). The principle of self-determination has also been invoked in various contexts, such as the decolonization process, the rights of indigenous peoples, and the resolution of secessionist conflicts (Buchanan, 1991; Hannum, 1990).

Exclusive politics: Exclusive politics refers to a political system or decision-making process that favors certain groups or individuals over others, often based on factors such as ethnicity, religion, or social status (Lijphart, 1977). Exclusionary politics can manifest in various forms, such as the monopolization of power, the unequal distribution of resources, and the marginalization of certain segments of the population (Horowitz, 1985).

Exclusion in politics can lead to the disenfranchisement of certain groups and the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). It can



also contribute to the rise of identity-based conflicts, as excluded groups may resort to political mobilization or even violent means to assert their rights and demands (Cederman et al., 2010).

Inclusive and representative governance, on the other hand, is seen as a key component of democratic development and sustainable peace (Norris, 2008). Efforts to promote political inclusion and power-sharing arrangements have been central to various conflict resolution and peace building initiatives around the world (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2007).

Motivations behind the Calls for Self-Determination by Groups in Nigeria

The call for self-determination by various ethnic, religious, and political groups in Nigeria has been a long-standing issue that stems from a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors. This review aims to explore the motivations behind these calls for self-determination and highlight the key literature that has examined this phenomenon.

One of the key motivations behind the calls for self-determination in Nigeria is the historical marginalization and oppression of certain ethnic groups by the dominant group. According to Akanle (2018), the creation of Nigeria as a colonial entity by the British in 1914 brought together various ethnic groups with distinct histories, cultures, and identities. This forced amalgamation has led to conflicts and tensions between different ethnic groups, with marginalized groups seeking autonomy and self-governance as a way to address historical grievances.

The failed promises of political representation and economic development by the central government have also fueled the calls for self-determination. As noted by Ojiako (2017), the centralization of power in Nigeria has resulted in the neglect of certain regions and communities, leading to feelings of economic deprivation and political alienation. This has pushed marginalized groups to demand greater autonomy and control over their resources as a means to address socio-economic inequalities and achieve self-determination.

In addition, the rise of ethno-religious tensions and conflicts in Nigeria has further fueled the demands for self-determination by various groups. As highlighted by Ikubaje (2019), the competition for resources, power, and identity among different ethnic and religious groups has resulted in violence and insecurity in the country. This has prompted some groups to call for secession or self-rule in order to protect their interests and ensure their survival in the face of increasing sectarian violence.



Moreover, the failure of the Nigerian state to address systemic issues such as corruption, impunity, and human rights abuses has eroded trust in the government and fueled the desire for self-determination. According to Ibeanu (2016), the lack of accountability and transparency in governance has exacerbated socio-political tensions and conflicts in Nigeria, prompting some groups to seek self-governance as a way to address these systemic issues and build a more inclusive and participatory political system.

Thus, the motivations behind the calls for self-determination by groups in Nigeria are multifaceted and interconnected, rooted in historical grievances, political alienation, economic deprivation, ethno-religious conflicts, and governance failures. By understanding these complex motivations, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards addressing the underlying causes of these demands and fostering dialogue and reconciliation among different groups in Nigeria.

Impact of Exclusive Politics on the Self-Determination Movements within Nigeria

The impact of exclusive politics on the self-determination movement within Nigeria has been a key area of study in the literature, with scholars highlighting how political exclusion and marginalization have fueled demands for autonomy and self-rule among various ethnic, religious, and political groups. This literature review will examine the relevant research on the topic, focusing on recent publications and authors to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of exclusive politics on the self-determination movement in Nigeria.

Adeolu, O. P. (2020) investigated the influence of exclusive politics on self-determination movements in Nigeria, emphasizing how the lack of inclusivity in political processes has led to grievances and demands for autonomy among marginalized groups. Adeolu argued that political exclusion exacerbates ethno-religious tensions and fuels secessionist movements in the country. Ogbonna, N. (2019) explored the link between exclusive politics and self-determination in Nigeria, highlighting how the concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few elites has marginalized certain regions and communities. Ogbonna discussed how the failure of the central government to address these systemic inequalities has contributed to the rise of separatist movements seeking self-governance.

In a study by Abubakar, A. (2018), the author examined the impact of exclusive politics on the self-determination movement in Nigeria, arguing that the lack of political representation and economic opportunities for marginalized groups has fueled



demands for autonomy and independence. Abubakar emphasized the need for inclusive governance structures to address the root causes of self-determination movements in the country.

Furthermore, Dzimiri, J. (2017) explored the role of exclusive politics in shaping the self-determination movement in Nigeria, highlighting how the manipulation of ethnic identities and the centralization of power have marginalized certain groups and fueled demands for autonomy. Dzimiri emphasized the importance of addressing systemic inequalities and promoting inclusive governance to address the grievances of marginalized communities.

Overall, the literature on the impact of exclusive politics on the self-determination movement within Nigeria underscores the critical role of political exclusion and marginalization in fuelling demands for autonomy and self-rule. By addressing these issues through inclusive governance structures and addressing systemic inequalities, policymakers can work towards promoting peace, stability, and unity in Nigeria.

Potential Solutions to Address the Grievances Underlying the Self-Determination Demands in Nigeria

The self-determination demands in Nigeria have been a longstanding issue, with various grievances underlying the calls for greater autonomy or independence by certain ethnic groups. In exploring potential solutions to address these grievances, it is important to consider a range of perspectives and approaches that have been proposed in the literature.

According to Okolie (2017), one potential solution to addressing self-determination demands in Nigeria is through the implementation of a federal system that allows for greater autonomy and power-sharing among different ethnic groups. This approach, according to the author, could help to address some of the grievances related to political marginalization and exclusion experienced by certain groups. Another possible solution that has been proposed is the restructuring of Nigeria's governance system to better accommodate the diversity of its population. According to Ogunmola (2019), a more decentralized system of governance could help to address some of the grievances underlying self-determination demands by giving more power to local governments and allowing for greater representation of diverse ethnic groups.

In addition, Adebayo (2018) argues that addressing economic inequality and poverty in Nigeria is crucial for addressing the root causes of self-determination demands. By



promoting economic development and ensuring equitable distribution of resources, the government could help to alleviate some of the grievances that fuel calls for greater autonomy or independence. Furthermore, Ojo (2020) suggests that inclusive dialogue and negotiation between the government and representatives of different ethnic groups is essential for addressing self-determination demands in Nigeria. By creating avenues for meaningful engagement and addressing the concerns of marginalized groups, the government could potentially prevent further escalation of tensions and conflicts.

Overall, the literature highlights a range of potential solutions to address the grievances underlying self-determination demands in Nigeria, including implementing a federal system, restructuring governance, addressing economic inequality, and promoting inclusive dialogue. It is important for policymakers and stakeholders to consider these perspectives and approaches in order to work towards a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the self-determination issue in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Nationalism Theory as its lenses for the research. The concept of nationalism as a political and social philosophy has been attributed to various scholars and thinkers throughout history. However, one of the most influential theorists of nationalism is considered to be the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) (Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1998). While Herder laid the foundations of nationalism theory, the concept was further developed and popularized by subsequent scholars, most notably Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, and Eric Hobsbawm (Özirimli, 2017).

The core assumptions of nationalism theory include:

- The belief that humanity is naturally divided into distinct nations, each with its own unique culture, language, and identity.
- The notion that the nation is the natural and legitimate basis for political organization and sovereignty.
- The idea that individuals derive their primary political and social allegiance from their membership in a nation.
- The view that nations have the right to self-determination and to pursue their own political, economic, and cultural interests.



However, nationalism theory has faced several criticisms, including:

- The argument that nations are not inherent or natural, but rather socially constructed and historically contingent.
- The criticism that nationalism often leads to exclusionary and intolerant policies towards minority groups.
- The concern that nationalism can contribute to the rise of ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements.
- The view that nationalism theory fails to adequately address the complexities of modern, globalized societies.

Despite the criticisms, nationalism theory is most to the study as the concept of nationalism and the right to self-determination is highly relevant to the ongoing struggles for self-determination by various ethnic and regional groups in Nigeria, which has been characterized by exclusive politics and the marginalization of certain communities (Ajala, 2014).

The calls for self-determination, such as the Biafran secession movement and the demands for regional autonomy by groups like the Yoruba and the Igbo, can be understood through the lens of nationalism theory (Falola & Heaton, 2008). These groups assert their distinct cultural, linguistic, and political identities as a basis for their right to self-determination and control over their own affairs (Adebajo, 2016).

At the same time, the critique of nationalism theory, which highlights the potential for exclusion and ethnic conflict, is also relevant to the Nigerian context, where the pursuit of nationalist agendas has often led to further divisions and violence (Osaghae, 1998). Addressing the underlying issues of exclusive politics and promoting inclusive governance may be crucial for resolving these complex and long-standing tensions (Suberu, 2001).

Methodology

Qualitative content analysis can be a valuable approach to examining this phenomenon and gaining a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics. This is because, qualitative content analysis is a research method that involves the systematic and in-depth examination of textual data, such as documents, interviews, or media content, to identify patterns, themes, and meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Schreier, 2012). This approach goes beyond the mere quantification of data and



focuses on understanding the nuanced and contextual aspects of the phenomenon under study.

Thus, qualitative content analysis is well-suited to the study for several reasons:

- a. Exploring Narratives and Perspectives: The method allows for a deep dive into the narratives, perspectives, and experiences of the various groups and communities involved in the call for self-determination, providing a rich and contextual understanding of their motivations, grievances, and aspirations.
- b. Identifying Themes and Patterns: Through the systematic analysis of textual data, such as policy documents, media reports, and statements from key stakeholders, qualitative content analysis can uncover the recurring themes, patterns, and discourses that underlie the calls for self-determination and their connection to exclusive politics in Nigeria.
- c. Capturing Complexities and Nuances: The qualitative nature of this approach enables researchers to capture the complexities, nuances, and contextual factors that shape the call for self-determination, which may not be easily revealed through quantitative methods alone.
- d. Informing Policy and Interventions: The insights gained from qualitative content analysis can inform the development of policies and interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of exclusive politics and the call for self-determination, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and sustainable governance in Nigeria.

Therefore, qualitative content analysis is a well-suited approach to examining the call for self-determination in Nigeria as fallout from exclusive politics. By delving into the narratives, perspectives, and discourses surrounding this complex phenomenon, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics and inform efforts towards more inclusive and equitable governance in the country.

Content Analysis

Factors contributing to the Emergence of Self-Determination Movements in Nigeria:

Self-determination movements in Nigeria have been largely influenced by a combination of historical, political, and socio-economic factors. According to Ola (2020), the colonization of Nigeria by the British in the 19th century laid the foundation for struggles for self-determination, as it disrupted the traditional governance structures and imposed new systems of rule. The desire to reclaim sovereignty and



autonomy lost during colonization has been a driving force behind self-determination movements in the country. Furthermore, ethnic diversity and competition for resources have also played a significant role in the emergence of self-determination movements in Nigeria. Adebayo (2018) argues that Nigeria's diverse ethnic composition, with over 250 ethnic groups, has fueled tensions and conflicts over resources and political power. This has led marginalized ethnic groups to seek self-determination as a means of asserting their rights and securing their interests.

Political marginalization and discrimination have also contributed to the rise of self-determination movements in Nigeria. Ogundiya (2017) highlights how certain ethnic groups have been systematically excluded from political power and decision-making processes, leading to feelings of alienation and disenchantment. This sense of marginalization has fueled grievances and demands for self-determination as a way to address historical injustices and achieve political representation.

Economic factors have also played a role in driving self-determination movements in Nigeria. According to Uzo (2019), economic inequalities and disparities between regions have exacerbated regional disparities and added to feelings of insecurity and discontent. Economic grievances, such as lack of development and opportunities, have motivated some communities to seek self-determination as a means of taking control of their own economic futures.

Therefore, the emergence of self-determination movements in Nigeria can be attributed to a complex interplay of historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The desire to reclaim sovereignty, ethnic diversity, political marginalization, and economic grievances has all contributed to the rise of these movements in the country.

Exclusive Politics in Nigeria and its Influence on the Demands for Self-Determination by Various Groups: Exclusive politics in Nigeria, characterized by a winner-takes-all system and marginalization of certain groups, has been a driving force behind the demands for self-determination by various ethnic, religious, and regional groups. According to Olaniyan (2018), the dominance of a few political elites from specific regions or ethnic groups in Nigeria has led to exclusion and alienation of other groups, fueling grievances and demands for self-determination as a means of asserting their rights and interests. Adeleke (2019) argues that the winner-takes-all nature of Nigerian politics where power is concentrated in the hands of a few, has created a sense of political marginalization and disenfranchisement among minority groups.



This has led to calls for self-determination as a way to break away from the centralized power structure and establish their own political autonomy.

Furthermore, ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria have been exacerbated by exclusive politics, leading to increased tensions and demands for self-determination. According to Audu (2017), the politicization of ethnicity and religion in Nigerian politics has deepened divisions and perpetuated exclusion of certain groups, pushing them towards self-determination movements as a means of protecting their identity and interests.

Economic disparities resulting from exclusive politics have also contributed to demands for self-determination in Nigeria. A study by Ayodele (2020) found that economic inequality between regions, exacerbated by corrupt practices and lack of equitable distribution of resources, has fueled grievances and calls for self-determination as a way to address economic disparities and secure a fair share of resources.

This is why, exclusive politics in Nigeria, characterized by political marginalization, ethnic and religious divisions, and economic disparities, have played a significant role in driving demands for self-determination by various groups. The winner-takes-all system and exclusionary practices have created a fertile ground for grievances and aspirations for autonomy and self-governance among marginalized groups in the country.

Strategies that can be implemented to address the Root Causes of Self-Determination Calls in Nigeria: Addressing the root causes of self-determination calls in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach involving political, economic, social, and cultural strategies. Adeleke (2020) emphasizes the need for inclusive governance and power-sharing arrangements to address the exclusivity in Nigerian politics that fuels demands for self-determination. Implementing mechanisms for equitable representation of all ethnic, religious, and regional groups in decision-making processes can help bridge divides and address grievances.

Economic empowerment and development programs are crucial in addressing the economic disparities that contribute to demands for self-determination. Adebowale & Ojo (2019) recommend implementing policies that promote economic inclusivity, create opportunities for marginalized groups, and ensure fair distribution of resources to reduce grievances related to economic inequalities.

Furthermore, addressing ethnic and religious tensions requires promoting inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue, tolerance, and understanding. A study by Ukpung



(2018) highlights the importance of fostering a sense of national identity and unity through education, cultural exchanges, and community-building initiatives to mitigate divisions and promote a shared sense of belonging among diverse groups.

Reforming institutions and addressing corruption is also crucial in addressing the root causes of self-determination calls in Nigeria. Okafor (2021) argues that strengthening accountability mechanisms, promoting transparency, and combating corruption can help restore trust in governance institutions and reduce the sense of disenfranchisement that drives demands for self-determination.

Therefore, addressing the root causes of self-determination calls in Nigeria requires a comprehensive approach that includes inclusive governance, economic empowerment, inter-ethnic dialogue, and institutional reforms. By implementing these strategies, Nigeria can work towards building a more inclusive and cohesive society that addresses the grievances fueling demands for self-determination.

Findings

The following are the major findings of the research:

1. **Motivations behind self-determination calls:** The research uncover a variety of factors contributing to the emergence of self-determination movements in Nigeria, such as historical grievances, perceived marginalization, and cultural identity issues. These motivations vary among different ethnic, religious, and regional groups within Nigeria.
2. **Impact of exclusive politics:** The study is revealed how exclusive politics in Nigeria, characterized by power concentration in certain elites or groups, influences the demands for self-determination. Exclusive politics have exacerbated feelings of disenfranchisement and fuel desires for autonomy or independence among marginalized communities.
3. **Potential solutions to address grievances:** The research found potential strategies that can be implemented to address the root causes of self-determination calls in Nigeria. These solutions include inclusive governance mechanisms, economic empowerment initiatives, inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation efforts, institutional reforms, and anti-corruption measures.
- a. The study therefore, provided insights into the complex dynamics driving self-determination movements in Nigeria and offer recommendations for addressing the underlying grievances to promote stability, unity, and inclusivity in the country.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the calls for self-determination by groups in Nigeria can be seen as a direct result of the exclusive politics that has long prevailed in the country. The concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few elites or dominant groups has perpetuated feelings of marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion among various ethnic, religious, and regional communities. This has fueled desires for greater autonomy or independence as a means of seeking redress for historical injustices and asserting cultural identities. Exclusive politics in Nigeria has created a deeply divided society, where disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and political representation have further exacerbated social tensions and heightened ethno-regional cleavages. The failure of successive governments to address the root causes of these grievances has only strengthened the resolve of marginalized groups to push for self-determination, as a means of asserting their rights and aspirations.

Therefore, urgent action is needed to promote inclusive governance and dialogue in Nigeria. It is imperative that the government and political leadership engage in meaningful conversations with marginalized groups to address their grievances, provide avenues for representation and participation in decision-making processes, and ensure equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. By fostering a more inclusive political environment and addressing the systemic inequalities that underpin the calls for self-determination, Nigeria can work towards healing its fractured societal fabric and preventing further fragmentation along ethnic, religious, or regional lines.

Thus, the need for urgent inclusive governance and dialogue to address the grievances of marginalized groups and prevent further fragmentation is essential for the long-term peace, stability, and unity of Nigeria. It is only through proactive and inclusive measures that the country can move towards a more cohesive and harmonious society, where all citizens feel represented, respected, and empowered to contribute to the nation's development and progress.

Recommendations

1. Conduct in-depth interviews and surveys with representatives from various marginalized groups in Nigeria to gain insights into their motivations for pursuing self-determination. By understanding the underlying grievances and aspirations of these groups, the study can provide a nuanced analysis of the factors driving the calls for self-determination within the country.



2. Analyze the historical and contemporary impact of exclusive politics in Nigeria on the self-determination movements. By examining how the concentration of power and resources has contributed to feelings of marginalization and exclusion among certain communities, the study can elucidate the ways in which exclusive politics has fueled demands for greater autonomy or independence.
3. Engage with policymakers, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to explore potential solutions for addressing the grievances that underlie the self-determination movements in Nigeria. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration among diverse actors, the study can generate recommendations for policy reforms, institutional changes, and conflict resolution mechanisms to address the root causes of ethno-regional tensions and promote social cohesion.

Overall, there should be more inclusive political system that accommodates the diverse interests and identities within Nigeria, thereby mitigating the calls for self-determination. By promoting greater representation, participation, and inclusion of marginalized groups in the political process, Nigeria can foster a sense of belonging and citizenship among all its citizens, reducing the sense of exclusion and alienation that often drives demands for self-determination.

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