

## **The Politics of Marginalization in Nigeria: Challenges of the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic**

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### **Abstract**

This study is a meticulous survey of the experiences of marginalization inherent in the Nigerian politics with particular attention to the marginalization of the Niger Delta people of the South-South and the Igbos of the South East geopolitical zones. The study found out that the people of these areas share experiences of marginalization in diverse dimensions which are hoisted on the minority question as it peculiarly relates to the South-South and the experiences of the Nigerian-Biafran civil war respectively. The theory of Relative Deprivation was applied in the analysis. The theory states that when people feel that they are denied certain rights and privileges relative to a reference group, they are bound to express their discontent through conflicts. This has been the case in the Nigerian federalism over time which has continued in the fourth republic. The study therefore recommended the building of synergy by the South-South and South East geopolitical zones as being imperative and also proposed arrangements that would culminate in having strong federating units and relatively weak federal government as a panacea.

**Keywords:** Marginalization, Deprivation, Derivation, Resource Control, Agitation.

### **Introduction**

The Nigerian state with its nature of cultural pluralism and cleavage has been inundated with claims of marginalization from various elements that make up the state at one time or the other. The foregoing situation has been sustained by the presence of an astounding degree of ethnic nationalism and relatively low presence of civic nationalism. Michael Ignatief (1993) and Milton Esman (1994) cited in Dibia (2000) explain that “civic nationalism is when a nation is composed of all its people regardless of race, colour, creed, gender, language or ethnicity. Here people possess equal political and social rights and choose to be members of a nation along with others, regardless of ethnicity, who share broadly similar beliefs and values. Ethnic nationalism by contrast holds that people’s allegiance is to an ethnic group or nationality into which they have been assigned not to a larger political entity encompassing many different ethnic groups or nationalities” (p.174).

The Nigerian political trajectory has been characterized with the utilization of state powers in appropriating resources and offices in a manner that put some ethnic nationalities at a disadvantaged position thereby making the politics of marginalization an important political question in the Nigerian political system. The point being made therefore is that the politics of marginalization is entrenched in the Nigerian political life and such tendency has the capacity to destabilize the state and sap it of development. The Nigerian state consists of the majority ethnic groups viz Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo and a host of other minorities. The minority ethnic groups from the oil resource areas in the South have been agitating for more emphasis to be given to derivation in the sharing of federal allocations arguing as it were that during the time the agricultural products of the majority ethnic groups held sway that derivation was given emphasis. Thus, the Niger Delta people are saddened by the fact that those that control political power at the national level use political power to the advantage of their people and disadvantage of the oil host states. Agbese (2003) writes that:

Saro-Wiwa and other minority rights advocates have employed the concepts of internal colonialism to help explain the plight of minorities in Nigeria. The essence of internal colonialism according to Ben Naanen runs as follows: majority ethnic groups acquire power on the basis of their numerical superiority. They use the political power to transfer resources from territories of ethnic minorities to their own areas. Thus, economically advantaged core areas of Nigeria emerge in territories largely populated by ethnic majority. Conversely, the removal of resources from minority areas create a periphery of economically advantaged territories. Political power in the hands of majorities translates to economic power, which in turn is used to simultaneously develop ethnic majority territories. At the same time, the same political power is used to arrest the economic development of minority territories (pp. 246-247).

The perception of marginalization by the Niger Delta people gave rise to rebellion championed by Isaac Adaka Boro in 1967. It is imperative to state that the fear of marginalization by the minorities had become an issue even in the colonial period as the fears expressed by the minorities resulted in the setting up of the Willinck Commission of 1957-

1958. The fears of the minorities both in the colonial and early post colonial era centered on possible domination and marginalization by the majority ethnic groups in the regions. However, though the Willinick Commission recognized that the fear of the minorities were genuine but rejected the idea of creating regions for them, the Gowon's Military regime in the post colonial era created of twelve state structure on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1967, which dismantled the regional governments and the seeming hegemony of the majority ethnic groups in the regional politics and created separate states for the minorities. By this, states like Rivers and South Eastern States emerged from the former Eastern region with the East Central state being a core Igbo state.

Consequent upon the foregoing and indeed simultaneously energized by the latter centralization tendency occasioned by military rulership, the central government which arrogated huge powers to itself became the source of problem to the minorities who started seeing the federal government as the villain superintending an unjust authoritative allocation of values.

The incursion of the military into the Nigerian body politic ruptured the growth of democratic philosophies and institutions and opened doors for more challenges to nationhood. The coup of January 15, 1966 which the Igbos were in the front line and the counter coup of 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1966 championed by military officers of northern extraction divided both the civilian and the military classes and raised ethnic nationalism to an unprecedented height. The massacre of the Igbos in the north and other circumstances relating to the ill treatment of the Igbos culminated in the declaration of the Biafran republic by the Governor of the Eastern region, Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1967. The secession bid of the Eastern region did not go unchallenged as the federal side deployed forces to challenge the declaration. Inevitably, a civil war ensued and this lasted until 1970. The war ended but its psychology has continued to inform events in the Nigerian

national politics hence the cry of marginalization has become synonymous with the Igbo ethnic nationality. The Igbos have been tactically sidelined in key national positions and even in the evolving federal structure of the Nigerian state, the Igbos have obviously been unfairly treated. Thus, while other zones have at least six states, it is only the South East that is left with only five states and least number of local government areas.

Taking a critical look at the Nigerian political landscape, it is evident that the issue of marginalization is not reserved for the minorities but the pang is being felt by the Igbo ethnic nationality which is counted among the majority ethnic groups in Nigeria. The issue of marginalization is hydra-headed and requires the most careful attention as the unresolved issue bordering on the marginalization of some sections of the country has remained critical factors in the Nigerian fourth republic. The issues have found expression in the incessant call for restructuring and resource control as well as the agitations of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for the restoration of the sovereign state of Biafra.

The Nigerian state therefore needs to address the numerous contradictions that have given rise to the feeling of marginalization which inevitably breeds ethnic nationalism as the country returned to democratic rule in the 4<sup>th</sup> republic which has been unbroken since 1999.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study has the under-listed objectives:

- To unveil the grievances from various units that have the capacity to undermine the Nigerian state
- To take a critical look at the Nigerian state with the intent to explain how its structure and fiscal federalism have generated contradictions that have become a challenge to nationhood.

- To assess the complaints of marginalization with the aim to ascertain whether they are genuine/real or perceived.
- To make research-based recommendations

### **Statement of the Problem**

The essence of the existence of the Nigerian state is to protect the interest of the diverse people that compose the federal state. Thus, the essence of federalism is to ensure that there is unity and fairness while the diversity of the people is preserved. The federal government has the role of utilizing political power in balancing the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the political system to ensure that there is equilibrium which assures peace and systemic acceptability. Conversely, the Nigerian state for long has been under the rulership of the northern elites who have used the instrumentality of the military to build political hegemony which has permeated the system and so become a serious issue of concern in Nigerian politics. Thus, the federal government has been modeled to be an instrument in favour of the north and in order to favour the north, it has by the same logic created feelings of marginalization in diverse ways among the people of the south irrespective of whether they are counted as minority or majority ethnic groups. The feeling of marginalization therefore has become the bane of statehood in Nigeria as various ethnic groups put forward various demands they consider efficacious in salvaging their disadvantaged situations in the Nigerian state. Thus, the actions and inactions of the federal government instead of breeding civic nationalism have fueled ethnic nationalism and divisive politics in Nigeria.

Consequently, the following research questions are asked:

- Does the Nigerian fiscal federalism and allocation of revenue reflect true federalism?
- Does the present structure of the Nigerian state guarantee fairness to all ethnic nationalities?

- Does ethnic group confer an advantage/disadvantage in benefiting from federal allocation of resources and offices in Nigeria?
- Why do the Niger Delta people and Igbos feel marginalized in the Nigerian State?
- Can the feelings of marginalization be curtailed or out rightly wiped out in the Nigerian body politic?

### **Methodology**

The study relied on data gathered from various textbooks and journals as well as data culled from the internet.

**Theoretical Framework:** The study is anchored on the theory of relative deprivation. The theory holds that when people feel that they are being deprived of certain necessities in the society whether it is materialistic or socio-political, they will organize into social movements that would agitate for the things of which they are deprived. Michaela Schulze and Rabea Kratschmer – Hahn aver that “Relative deprivation theory is a widely discussed field of contemporary sociology. A common assumption of this field of research is the fact that the feeling of being disadvantaged is related to a reference group. This feeling will arise from the comparison of oneself to others”. Besides Dibia (2000) explains vividly that:

The theory of relative deprivation began in the early 1960s with the publication of James Davies book “Towards a Theory of Revolution”. The theory states that revolutionary events are likely when a prolonged period of rising expectations and increasing gratification is following by a short period of sharp reversal. During this time, the gap between expectations and gratifications quickly widens and becomes intolerable (p. 172).

Dibia (2000) further writes that “in Gurr’s work, why Men Rebel, he argues that ‘the primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicization of that discontent and finally its actualization in violent actions against political objects and actors. Discontent is the product of relative deprivation, which is defined

as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and value capabilities" (p. 172).

It is therefore glaring that the gap between expectation and realization of what is expected has the tendency to crystallize in conflicts. In the Nigerian State, there is rising claims of marginalization from various quarters though this study limits its scope to that of the Niger Delta people over resource allocation and that of the Igbos over a range of socio-political issues which include but is not limited to being sideline and not being given a chance to clinch the Presidency and hold high public offices at the national level as well as having the least number of states and Local Governments compared to other zones. These deprivations in the Nigerian state have at one time or the other culminated in militant ethnic nationalism which found expression in the formation of groups such as MEND as well as outright civil war from 1967-1970. The circumstances that predisposed Nigeria to militant ethnic nationalism and even civil war have scarcely changed even in the fourth republic as the northern political power bloc have whether in power or not maintained their hegemony in Nigerian politics to the disadvantage of the groups under review. The Nigerian politics is therefore characterized with scheming against the aspirations of those already disadvantaged by the existing power framework.

## **Results:**

### **The Fate of the Igbos in the Nigerian Political Equation**

Although the Nigerian state from the colonial era had in-built structural characteristics that predispose it to ethnic rivalry especially as it relates to the creation of a federal state that is structured to create northern hegemony in the politics of the country, it was however the military takeover of power and the events surrounding and following it that escalated the endemic structural defect and elevated it to a monumental proportion where some units of the

federation feel greatly marginalized by others. The military takeover on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 coupled with the counter coup of 29<sup>th</sup> July 1966, the massacre of the Igbos in the North and other events gave rise to a civil war from 1967-1970. After the war, although the Gowon's administration declared that there was no victor no vanquished and promised a policy anchored on three "Rs" viz. Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction for the Eastern Nigeria that was devastated by the war, the actions that have followed in the post civil war era indicates that the Igbos are regard and treated as conquered people. Uwalaka (2003) writes that:

The war ended since 1970 and 33 years since, none of the promises have been realized in any appreciable or recognizable way. Rather the Igboman in particular have been made to feel vanquished all these while. Even though physical formal war did end, yet there appears to have been more insidious, more perfidious, more destructive and dangerous "war" against the Igbos, which have been classically called "the Igbo question" in Nigeria. This is a "war" against the people's psyche, against the people's self identity and self worth; a war against the people's economic welfare symbolized in the now widely used word marginalization (p. 19).

The post civil war policies were articulated to create marginalization of the Igbos perhaps as a punishment for participating in the war from the secessionist side. Eke writes that illuminating on the Nigerian-State, Ofoeze (2009) examined the position of the Igbo as a classical example of marginalization through public regulative, extractive and distributive policies in Nigeria. Since the first military coup was perceived as originating from the Igbo of the Eastern Nigeria, the Igbo were made to pay the price through several and various obnoxious policies after the war even though the victors claimed "no victor, no vanquished" in principle, but in practice, they were dictating the formula for sharing the spoils of war against the betrayed and defeated Igbo. One of such policies of deprivation and marginalization began with proclamation by the Nigerian minister of finance, Obafemi Awolowo... that hunger is a credible and potent instrument of war. Stemming from that



espousal, the minister went ahead to exchange twenty Nigerian pounds for as much as a basket of the Biafran Currency as a measure to disenfranchise the Igbo from effective participation in the post war indigenization policy that transferred ownership of hitherto foreign concerns to Nigerians” (pp. 27-28). By this action, the Igbo man was kept out of the ownership of shares in such concerns while their Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba counterparts became co-owners of the concerns. The Igbo man has been marginalized in diverse ways in the Nigerian State.

Commenting on the marginalization of the Southern Nigeria through the instrumentality of state creation of which the Igbos of the South East zone is the worst hit, Nwokocha (2007) cites Tony Nyiam as remarking that “such one town states of Zamfara, Kebbi, Sokoto, Gombe, Jigawa, Yobe and Katsina, if they were in the South would not have qualified. They cannot compare with the population and viability of the combination of cities that make up the proposed Aba State or Ijebu State. Aba comprises the heavy commercial town of Aba, Omoba, Nbawsi, Obehie, Owaza, Azumini and Owerinta. Whereas the commercial town of Ijebu Ode, Ikenne, Shagamu, Ijebu Remo, Ijebu Mushin, Ijebu Igbo and Odogbolu are all part of the Ijebu kingdom (p. 208).

Thus, state creation with the concurrent creation of local governments in Nigeria during military regimes headed by the military rulers of northern extraction was used to perpetuate the northern dominance and to ensure that the north derives maximal benefits from the resources basically derived from the South at the expense of the people of the South who were consigned to a disadvantage position. The Igbos are the worst hit in this respect as they have the least number of states and local governments compared to both other zones and also compared to the three major ethnic groups in the country. Uwalaka (2007) restates

Chimaraoke Nnamani that “Today the mainland Igbo are chiseled in five states, while the Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani have seven and 19 state muscles. In the disbursement of national resources, the Igbo shares pale to insignificance in comparison with the old west and the old north... By the local distribution, the South East has a mere 85 local council areas as against 138 of the South West, 124 of the South-South, 112 from the North East, 113 for the North Central and 186 for the North West” (pp. 22-23).

The foregoing scenario is saddening as it smacks of injustice which has the potency to culminate in ethnic agitations. The marginalization of the South in the Nigeria politics has received serious attentions among the people of the South who have sought to express their dislike for the political scenario through various means which include militant ethnic nationalism as well as the demand for a national conference where the problems of the Nigerian federalism will be x-rayed and dealt with. Nwachukwu (2004) states that “The Southern part of the country who feel neglected had to rise up in protest and resistance. This resulted in the formation of the various ethnic nationalities. Firstly, they started with the demand for sovereign national conference. This as they explained was to enable them sit together as people with one objective and one destiny to iron out their differences and chart a new cause devoid of oppression and exploitation” (p. 236).

The need for the outcomes of such desired national conferences to be implemented in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Both during the military and civilian regimes such conferences have been held but the full implementation of the recommendation has not been achieved at any time. In 1994/1995, Gen. Sani Abacha set up the constitutional conference. President Olusegun Obasanjo set up the Political Reform Conference in 2005 while President Jonathan convened the National Conference in 2014. The issue of the marginalization of the South has been a recurring decimal and needs to be properly addressed in order to safeguard the stability of the country and assure ethnic cohesion. The issue of the marginalization of the

South East has remained a matter in the Nigerian fourth republic which commenced on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1999.

### **The Marginalization of the South-South: Derivation Versus Resource Control**

The people of the South-South otherwise referred to as the Niger Delta are a set of people in the Nigerian federalism that have over the years felt grossly marginalized in the scheme of things. They constitute the bedrock of the country's foreign exchange earning yet the area feels abandoned by the federal government in provision of the needed infrastructure. Referring to the Niger Delta, Ugochukwu (2004) remarks that "with the advent of oil, the Region started generating about 90% of Nigerian foreign exchange earnings and 80% of the Federal Government revenue. Yet over 40 years after, no meaningful development has taken place in the region. In fact, the World Bank Report rated the Niger Delta as the least developed zone in the country in spite of its enormous contribution to the national purse. The long years of neglect and deprivation couple with the insensitivity of previous governments and oil companies as well as the failure of previous development intervention agencies had over time, created a keen sense of deprivation among the people" (p. 229).

It is obvious that oil which is mined in the Niger Delta is the mainstay of the Nigerian economy but it is saddening that the region from which this natural resource is extracted is abandoned and indeed left to feel marginalized in the scheme of things whereas in true federal states, they would have been the one to harness the resources in their domain and pay royalties to the federal government. The Niger Delta people right from the colonial era raised various issues demanding resolution by the Nigerian state, which have been aggregated to be the Niger Delta question. Ibodje (2008) explains that "the Niger Delta question... started with the pre-independence demand by the people of the region for the development of the area as well as for institutional arrangement for satisfactory political participation and self determination. The issues have also developed since after independence to encompass matters

concerning revenue allocation and resource control, environmental degradation by the activities of multinational oil companies, disruption of oil companies activities, militancy to press home the people's demand, poverty reduction and various forms of declaration by groups in the Niger Delta challenging the authority of the Nigerian State to lay claim to the monopoly of coercive force" (p. 148).

The Niger Delta question signifies a call for fairness and justice in dealing with the Niger Delta people in the scheme of things in the country. The federal government has not shown good faith in relation to giving derivation emphasis. Derivation constantly declined until it got to the lowest ebb before it rose to the present stage where it is stipulated that it should not be less than 13% as enshrined in the 1999 constitution.

Isumonah (2005) cites Naanen (1995); Mbanefoh and Egwaikhide (1998) as averring that the derivation principle was accorded 100 percent and later 50 percent weight in sharing of federally collected revenue when agricultural produce from the territories of the major groups were the greatest source of revenue just as it is common place that the weight assigned the derivation principle was reduced and subsequently wipe out when revenue derived from oil exploitation in the territories of Southern minorities assumed far greater significance" (p.172). Ibodje (2008) further notes and corroborates the foregoing as he asserts that:

With the prevailing revenue sharing formula then as based on the existing derivation principles, 50% of the governments share of the oil profit went to the regions of origin which put so much money in the coffer of the Eastern Region to which the greater proportion of the oil producing areas of the Niger Delta belonged. However, by the 1959 Petroleum Profit Tax Ordinance, the federal government had started in earnest to show the signal that it was determined to be on the driver's seat in the control of the oil business at the expense of the oil producing areas. And with the creation of states in 1967 and the transfer of the oil-producing Niger Delta from the hands of the Igbo to the hands of the minority political class, the coast became clearer for the federal government to exert such control. Thus, as oil continued to emerge as the dominant source of government income, the federal government's proportion of the share of the oil revenue also continued to grow fatter at the expense of the oil producing states (p. 153).

The resolution of the Niger Delta question demands the determination of the federal government to wipe out all the vestiges of marginalization. Ezirim (2008) concludes that “nothing could be done to resolve the Niger Delta crisis without a genuine effort on the part of the Nigerian state to give the people of the area their dues both on human and infrastructural development. Anything short of this, spells of continued crisis in the area and underdevelopment of the whole nation as the Niger Delta is the livewire of the Nigerian State” (p. 228).

The Niger Delta people desired the restoration of the era when derivation was put at 50% to the resource host region. Agu (2004) writes that “during General Ibrahim Babangida’s military regime, the Niger Delta people kept on pressing for a reversion to section 134 of 1963 constitution which stipulates as follows: there shall be paid by the federation to each region a sum equal to 50% of (a) The proceed of any royalty received by the federation in respect of any mineral extraction on that region and; (b) Any mining rents derived by the federation during that year from within the region” (p. 264).

This demand for the restoration of 50% percent derivation to the state was carried far by the Niger Delta people and no wonder during the 1994/95 National Constitutional Conference the issue of derivation came up and the conference recommended that the principle of derivation shall be constantly reflected in any approved formula as being not less than 13 percent of the revenue accruing to the Federation Account directly from any natural resource. This recommendation was enshrined in the 1999 constitution. The Nigerian government under President Olusegun Obasanjo introduced the on/offshore dichotomy politics, which affected the accruals to the oil bearing states. Agu (2004) further points out that “the inability of the federal government to implement the thirteen percent as agreed in the 1999 constitution generated the crucial issues in resource control” (p.264). Resource

control is a demand occasioned by a long period of marginalization and lack of good faith by the Nigerian federal government. Jega (2007) remarks that:

The politics of resource control has its genesis in the manner by which revenues from petroleum related economic activities have become the mainstay of the Nigerian political economy. Presently, these revenues contribute about 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. More than 50% of these are allocated to the federal government as its share of the federation account, while what remains is shared out to the states and local governments using a sharing formula, which especially the six oil producing states, of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Ondo and Rivers consider unjust and inequitable. Prolonged military rule in the country, presided over by a faction of officers of predominantly northern origin, has exacerbated the perceptions of marginalization and inequity in the generation and sharing of these revenues and have contributed significantly to the current politics of resource control (p. 221)

The Igbos in the South East and the Niger Delta people of the South-South share diverse experiences of deprivation and marginalization and therefore need to build a common front against the common threat that face them despite the perceptual errors arising from the experiences of the war. Eke (2010) notes that:

It can be correctly said that time and circumstances after the war are healing the wounds of misperception, distrust and antagonism between the Igbo and their Niger Delta brothers to the chagrin of 'mistrust' perpetrators. To continue to be externally instigated against one another may be courting the collective annihilation through political obscurity and economic emasculation... since the south east and south-south geopolitical zones share a lot in common they should harmonize their interests and goals for the first step unity that will usher in national leadership of their respective ethnic extractions (p.31).

It is expedient to emphasize that a common or near similar experience of deprivation by the peoples of the aforementioned ethnic nationalities in Nigeria can be collectively tackled by building a common front that mutually supports the agitations of each unit as these experiences have subsisted in the fourth republic.

## **Discussion of Results**

The Nigerian federalism obviously has characteristics that foster marginalization and these tendencies have remained potent even in the fourth republic which started on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999. The people of the Niger Delta and the Igbos of the South East Nigeria are undergoing these experiences in diverse ways. The experiences of marginalization have the resultant effect of creating underdevelopment in various dimensions. The Niger Delta people have suffered environmental degradation and demphasization of derivation to a point that derivation was entirely wiped out before the present scenario where the constitution provides for payment of not less than 13% as derivation. The underdevelopment of the area is akin to the creation of a core/metropole outside the oil bearing zone while the oil bearing zone is allowed to suffer a peripheral experience. These deprivations are prone to engender conflict and ethnic nationalism. The demands for more emphasis on derivation and indeed the restoration of the 1963 constitutional provision scenario as well as the later demand for resource control and restructuring are all calculated agenda of the Niger Delta to bargain for a better pay-off in the game. The federal dominance in the Nigerian politics which grew out of the dominance of the center for a long time by military officers of northern extraction, who built a framework that sustain northern hegemony is the root cause of the marginalization of the people of the South. The military regimes broke the backbone of the earlier Nigerian federal structure that was founded in regionalism by creating states that are not very effective to make any case against the center. Remarkably, during the era of the regional governments, derivation did not go below 50% and the regions were strong while the center was relatively weak.

The experience of marginalization that the Igbos are passing through stems from the Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967-1970 in which the Igbos were defeated but the Nigerian government under Gowon declared no victor, no vanquished. The aftermath of the war has been the formulation of policies that are against the Igbos, which is targeted at keeping them in a state of perpetual subservience and servitude in the Nigerian politics. The indigenization policy at a time the Igbos were emerging from war with the psychological low ebbs of defeat coupled with the financial/economic policy of the Nigerian federal government that sapped them of funds through payment of only twenty Nigerian pounds for any amount of Biafran pounds each Biafran possessed was a deliberate ploy to incapacitate the Igbos. State creation in Nigeria paints a good picture of the marginalization of the South East as the South East zone has the least number of states and local government in the present Nigerian federal arrangement. The structure and the politics of the Nigerian state has been deliberately crafted to keep the Igbo man out of contention hence the agitations from the Niger Delta people as well as the Igbos for the wrongs of the Nigerian federalism to be remedied is germane and an offshoot of their experiences of deprivation.

## **Conclusion**

Marginalization of the Niger Delta people and the Igbos is entrenched in the Nigerian politics. This variable has had a common characteristic of intricately retarding development and creating the feeling of alienation among the people which has found expression in the emergence of ethnic nationalism. The deprivations the people of the Niger Delta suffer is interwoven with the minority question in Nigeria which mostly affects the ethnic minorities of southern extraction while the Igbos are exposed to deprivations as a consequence of the civil war, which they lost to the federal side. Though these sections of the country share a common experience of marginalization in diverse dimensions, a desirable synergy is yet to be



built by them in order to provide a stronger voice to confront the northern hegemony in the Nigerian politics which has crystallize in a strong centre. The north use the instrumentality of a strong federal government to authoritatively allocate resources to the north at the expense of the south whether they are in power or not hence the emancipation of the people under discourse from the experiences of marginalization in the Nigerian politics rests on the restructuring of the Nigerian federalism to reflect strong federating units and relatively weak center. Consequently, the following recommendations are made.

### **Recommendation**

- That the South-South and South East geopolitical zones should build a strong synergy aimed at presenting a common formidable front to oppose the glaring issues of marginalization against them.
- That the Nigerian federalism should be restructured to reflect a federal arrangement with strong federating units and relatively weak centre.
- That considering the Nigerian peculiar experiences the six geopolitical zones as presently constituted should become the federating units, with governments similar to the regional governments constituted thereto and given constitutional powers to superintend the states while the states shall be a lower government under the zones.
- That there should be a balance in relation to the number of states and local government in the geopolitical zones.
- That the federating units should have the powers to harness the resources in their areas and pay an agreed percentage of royalty to the federal government.

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