Resurgence of Ethno-Nationalism in South-East Nigeria: Implications for Nigeria National Security, 2015-2023

ABSTRACT

This Paper is an investigation on the raison d'être for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South-East Nigeria and its implications for Nigeria national security, 2015-2023.It examined the factors responsible for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism and ascertains how it has impacted Nigeria's unity and national security. Data for the study was generated through secondary sources and direct observation. The data obtained was contently analyzed. Also, Elite-instrumentalist perspective on ethnic conflict was used as the intellectual framework of analysis. The paper argues that during Buhari administration there was deliberate systemic alienation, political and economic exclusion and marginalization of the South-East Nigeria in the allocation of national values. This led to resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region. The paper finds inability of the Buhari administration to deliver good governance, social justices, and protect the region from the violent activities of armed Fulani herdsmen made the people of the geopolitical zone to resort to self-help; that there is a co-relation between ethno-political mobilizations, insecurity, and method of allocation of public resources and resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region; that the exclusion of the region from key political appointments and in location of projects of infrastructural development made the people feel alienated and marginalized which generated ethnic consciousness and quest for self-determination. Also, the Paper finds that the repressive nature of the Nigeria state; executive recklessness, extrajudicial killings and high level of security sector violence against civilians and unarmed pro-Biafra agitators motivated many young men in the region to join militant groups and strongly contributed to resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region. The paper recommends among others: that the Nigeria run all inclusive government; treat all as equals in the Nigeria project, convocation of Sovereign National Conference to enable all the ethnic nationalities dialogue on the future of the Nigeria union.
Keywords: Geopolitics, Ethnicity, Ethno-nationalism, Ethnocentrism, Ethnic Politics, Politics of exclusion, Marginalization, National Security and Instrumentalist.

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I.   Introduction
Background to the Study

The problem of ethno-nationalism in Nigeria came with the advent of colonialism when the hitherto, autonomous and heterogeneous ethnic groups were forcefully merged together by the British colonial administration to form Nigeria (Kubiat, 2018). The country evolved as a colonial imposition. The method of creating the geo-political construction on largely artificial political formations marked the beginning of ethno-conflagrations across the Nigeria nation state (Ejiofor, 2000). The creation of Nigeria by British colonial administration was not based on a philosophy of common identity and

community. Nigerians, including the people of South-East Nigeria see themselves first as members of their ethnic nationalities. Rarely does Nigerians, see themselves as Nigerians except if the sharing of national cake occupies prime position in the agenda of national discourse (Nkemdilim, 20001). Nigeria's social structure is firmly anchored on the history of ethnic division (Dike, 2001). And the environment of ethnic consciousness, usually leads to the victimization, marginalization and political exclusion of the less powerful ethnic groups by the more powerful one, especially in terms of wealth distribution and power-sharing (Kenechukwu, 2021). According to Ajayi, (1992 p, 14) as cited in Gilbert (2013), since Nigeria's independence in 1960, the major problem have centered on how to order the relations between the different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groupings so that they can have the same rights and privileges, access to power and an equitable share of national resources. This made the country to continue to face problems emanating from its plural nature.

In this light, Professor Lysias Dodd Gilbert argues that:

Ethno-nationalism in contemporary Nigeria arose as a result of the Nigeria National Question which has been a major challenge to socio-political existence of the country. Fundamental to it is the clamor for paradigmatic restructuring of and redefinition of the defective colonially-configured Nigerian Federation so as to ensure the elimination of Fedro-centralism, hegemony, marginalization and injustice. Simultaneously, this would guarantee the rights of constituent ethnic nationalities, justice, equity and fair play in the framework of a congenial democratic environment (Gilbert, 2010a, p.157).

After the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari on May 29, 2015 as the fifth Executive President and Commander in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, the South-East Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented upsurge and progressive growth of aggressive ethno-nationalism, as the people of the geo-political zone felt alienated and marginalized in Nigeria power equation, and lacking in an appreciable influence within the Nigeria power structure (Ojinnaka, 2021). This has been heightened by politics of exclusion, injustice, socio-economic neglect of the region and insecurity.

The Buhari government had wittingly or unwittingly made ethnicity a determinant factor in the questions of who gets what, when and how in allocation of national values, as the nation's political and economic power was monopolized by the Hausa/Fulani led government who controlled the state power and used same to disproportionately allocate national resources to themselves, to the exclusion of the South-East Nigeria. Consequently, the articulation of their disapproval and dissatisfaction of injustices, political and economic exclusions, and marginalization of the region by the Buhari administration, found expression in the rise of ethno-nationalist movements championed against the Nigerian state by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) (Ojinnaka, 2021). This inevitably generated ethno-consciousness, hence the agitation for self-determination to restore the Sovereign State of Biafra.

Since 2015, the Buhari administration has consistently excluded South-East Nigeria from appointment into viable economic institutions, HeadS of military and paramilitary institutions, and other strategic security organizations, as well as projects of infrastructural development. In the early days of the administration, President Buhari remarked that constituencies that gave him five percent (5%) votes should not in all honesty expect to be treated equally as constituencies that gave him 97% (Business Hallmark News, 2018: p.18). In addition to the appointment of his cabinet, available statistics have shown that between 2015 and 2020, President Buhari made 77 strategic appointments, 55 positions to the core north, 6 positions to the North-Central, 9 positions to the South West, 7 Positions to the South-South and none to the South-East. Equally, the government appointed 15 persons into managerial positions in Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), ten of them from the North, five from the South: three from South-West, two from the South-South and non from the South-East (Akogun, 2013).

In the same vein, the Department of State Security Service (DSS) within the same period commissioned 479 new officers out of whom 331 were from the Muslim North. This in addition to the controversial recruitments of only Northern indigenes into the Nigeria Police Force in December 2015. Also, the South-East Nigeria was excluded from the national standard gauge railway projects in 2017; the region was also excluded from the multi-billion dollar gas pipeline project. These are key point's reference of policy of deliberate exclusion of South-East Nigeria by the Buhari administration in national scheme of things. As it stands, over 80% of key government ministries, agencies and

departments are disproportionately headed by Northern Muslims (Akogun, 2013). These appointments and location of key infrastructural projects of economic development were an emphasis on ethnicity and apparent political favoritism that pervades Nigeria political space since Buhari came to power in 2015 (Ojinnaka, 2021). These circumstances further uncovered the distortions and injustices intrinsic in the Nigerian polity, and clearly confirmed the failure of the Buhari's government to meet the aspirations of the people of the South-East geopolitical zone.

In recent times, South-East Nigeria has witnessed the activities of armed Fulani killer herdsmen leading to the death of many farmers and some other indigenous people of Biafra. The inability of President Buhari to show capacity as the Commander in-Chief of the Nigeria Armed Forces, and the failures of the Nigeria security forces to protect South-East from the killings of the Fulani herdsmen made insecurity a significant problem in the region. It put to question the integrity of the Nigeria security machinery and made the people of South East to resort to self-help, as the lacuna created by the inefficiency of the security agencies led to the formation of Eastern Security Network (ESN) by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), to protect the region from the killings of the Fulani Herdsmen (Nnameka, 2021). The formation of the Eastern Security Network resulted to greater insecurity in the region, "negated and confronted the status of the state as the sole legitimate monopolist of the instruments of force, violence and coercion, and exposed the weak loyalty of the populace to the Nigerian nation-building project" (Gilbert, 2013, p.157).

Again, there are records of high level of security sector violence by the Nigeria Police and military against unarmed civilians in South-East Nigeria. Human rights groups have documented Nigerian military and police using excessive force against unarmed pro-Biafra protestors (https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4452112016ENGLISH.PDF). Security and executive recklessness, and extrajudicial killings that took place in the region between 2015 and 2020 tremendously complicated the security situation in the region and threatened the continued existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity. Violence against civilians in the region has continued and due to repressive actions of the state security forces against innocent civilians many lost confidence in the Nigeria project (Ojinnaka, 2021). Violence against civilians in the region by Nigeria's security forces has contributed to motivating young men and women to join militant groups agitating for restoration of Sovereign State of Biafra (Mark, 2021). Accordingly, discontented expectations of the people of the geo-political zone with regards to the socio-economic development and protection of lives and properties led to the blossoming of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria (Ojinnaka, 2021).

Against this backdrop therefore, this research seeks to examine based on direct observation and grand narratives found in literature, the raison d'etre for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South-East Nigeria and its implications for Nigeria national security between 2015 and 2020.

II. Statement of the Problem

Since Muhammadu Buhari achieved power as the fifth executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on May 29th, 2015, he has mismanaged Nigeria's rich diversity, and his government has wittingly or unwittingly made ethnicity a determinant factor in the questions of who gets what, when and how in the authoritative allocation of national values. The government created an environment of ethnic consciousness which led to ethnic conflagrations across Nigeria, and made the country to continue to face problems emanating from its plural nature. Nigeria political and economic power was monopolized by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic-led government that controlled the state power and uses same to disproportionately allocate national resources to the exclusion of South-East region of Nigeria.

This inevitably generated ethno-consciousness and led to wide spread discontent in the region, hence the resurgence of ethno- nationalism. For instance, appointments into key political offices, heads of strategic security institutions and paramilitary agencies, as well as situating projects of economic and social infrastructural development was disproportionately in favour of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality to the detriment of the South-East Nigeria. This gave rise to the feelings of ethnic alienation, ethno-consciousness, and widespread discontent among the people. The people of South-East Nigeria felt marginalized in Nigeria power equation and lacking in an appreciable influence within the Nigeria power structure. The marginalization and political exclusion

of the geo-political zone by Buhari administration in terms of wealth distribution and power-sharing led to the progressive growth of ethno-consciousness, which became an important factor in the resurgence of ethno-nationalism and is at the root of agitations for restoration of the Sovereign State of Biafra (Kenechukwu, 2020).

President Buhari did not show capacity as the President and Commander in-Chief of the Nigeria Armed Forces. His government's inability to protect lives and property of the people of the South-East from the murderous activities of armed Fulani killer herdsmen (Nnameka, 2021) was a critical factor in the emerging security threat in the South-East Nigeria. Between 2015 and 2020 many farmers were killed, women and girls raped by armed Fulani herdsmen (HURIWA, 2021). The failure of Nigeria security agencies to protect the region from the killings of farmers and raping of girls and women by the Fulani herdsmen led to the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region and have raised some fundamental questions about the future, stability and continued corporate existence of Nigeria as one political entity. However, the value of this study is most apparent at this stage of Nigeria political and security crises. This research will certainly add to the pool of existing knowledge on the subject matter of ethno-nationalism and pave the way for further investigations on the subject matter in South-East Nigeria, in particular and Nigeria in general. On the other hand, a study of this nature will be useful to scholars and researchers on ethno-politics, and guide Nigeria government policy makers in their policy decisions.

Given that legitimacy of a modern nation state is derived from the consent of the people, the agitations for restoration of the Sovereign State of Biafra has since 2015 created a visible crack on the unity of the Nigeria Federation. This research is therefore focused on investigating and analyzing the factors responsible for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South-East Nigeria and its implications for the Nigeria national security, between 2015 and 2020: to ascertain how the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South-East geopolitical zone has impacted national security in Nigeria, and to determine the effects of the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East region on Nigeria's unity.

III.   Conceptual Review Ethnicity

Osaghae (1991, p.44) in his re-examination of the concept of ethnicity in Africa as an ideology of inter-elite competition notes that ethnicity is a derivative of the ethnic group which can be described as a group of people with a common identity based on cultural affinities, of language, customs, common ancestry, race and religion. Osaghae (1995,p.11) states that ethnicity has to do with the employment or mobilization of ethnic identity and difference to gain advantage in situations of competition, conflict or cooperation. Slack and Doyon (2001, p.140) posits that ethnicity relates to the identification of individuals by language, religion, geographical location, the sharing of common historical experience, or various other elements. Membership of the group is based on the presumption of a shared trait or traits that can be anything from genealogy to dressing habits.Tumin (1964, p.243) denote ethnicity as a social group which within a large cultural and social system claims, or is accorded a special status in terms of complex of traits (ethnic traits) which it exhibits, or is believed to exhibit. Such traits are diverse: prominent among them are those drawn from religious and linguistic characteristics of social group, their national or geographic origins or those of their forebears.

In the same vein, Nkemdilim (2001) states that ethnicity refers to the nature, content and focus of inter-ethnic relationship existing between different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society. It exposes the nature of interaction among the competing ethnic groups informed by ethnic prejudices and identity. Nkemdilim argues that in Nigeria this relationship is predominantly ethno-centric where members of an ethnic group exhibit group pride and indulge and glorify their culture to the total neglect, disdain and scorn of others way of life. Nkemdilim maintains that this subjective display of ethno-sentiments has led to mutual suspicion and hatred among ethnic grouping in Nigeria. Nkemdilim warn that if the multiple negative effects of ethnicity are not carefully handled, Nigeria may well be heading for another catastrophe after the disastrous civil war between 1967 and 1970. Palmberg (1999, p, 10) in his insightful book entitled National identity and democracy in Africa, highlights that ethnicity is predicted on cultural affinities which make it very difficult to be controlled

once mobilized. He notes that it is such commanding cultural sentiments that make the impact of ethnicity in society very enduring and corrosive.

Allport (1979, p.107) maintains that ethnicity refers to social and cultural ties. It refers to selected cultural and sometimes physical characteristics used to classify people into groups or categories considered to be considerably different from others. In the same vein, Nnoli (2008, pp.5-7) in his widely read book 'Ethnics politics in Nigeria' posits that the relevant factors of ethnicity may be language, culture or both. He argues that language is the most significant defining variable of ethnicity in Nigeria. Nnoli outlined the four attributes and characteristics of ethnic groups as :(i) ethnicity exists only within a political society consisting of diverse ethnic groups. (ii) ethnicity is characterized by a common consciousness of being one in relation to other relevant groups.(iii) ethnicity tends to be exclusive......acceptance and rejection on linguistic cultural grounds characterized social relations (iv) ethnicity is characterized by conflict. It is therefore a conflicting psychosocial phenomenon in which diverse ethnicity conscious groups are competitively engaged.

Sanda (1976) in agreement with Nnoli's postulations maintain that the common denominator of ethnic groups is the existence of a distinct consciousness of similarity that is normally predicted on same language, common religion and culture. Hence ethnic group can be seen as a community of people with distinct bio-social traits, an identifiable sub–culture, of shared feeling of people-hood and a consciousness of membership. Also, Gilbert (2013) argues that the existence of ethnic heterogeneity in a country does not necessarily foster ethnicity, but when the inherent differences between ethnic groups are strategically mobilized and activated for the achievement of certain individualized/collective goals, then it can be rightly adjudged that ethnicity has ensued. Gilbert argue further that multi-ethnic societies where there exists a high level of competition for scarce resources are always characterized by a specter of sustainable ethnicity. Furthermore, Yinger (1978) in his leading study on Ethnicity in Complex societies; Structural, cultural and characterological factors see ethnic group as segment of larger society whose members are thought by themselves and /or others to have a common origin and to share important parts of a common culture. They also share activities in which the common origin and culture are common ingredients. Yinger added that all these factors make a member of an ethnic group to develop a distinct cultural behavior from the society as a whole. Stone (1996) argue that psychological factors like prejudice and ethno-centrism are important explanation for the persistence of ethnicity. Cochran (1996), and Dike (2001) posits that where ethnic conflicts are common in multiethnic societies, commitment to democratic norms or national identity could be difficult under this situation. Group loyalty divides multiethnic societies, while undermining a common identity, national culture, or consensus on democratic values.

Lewis (2007) maintains that ethnicity is used by political leaders in Nigeria to frame their arguments as to how things should be accomplished. And ethnic identity in Nigeria is the most important and consistent basis of social identity in the country. Anatole and John (1990) contend that ever since Nigeria's independence strong ethnic and regional differences existed in the country, and ethnicity and regionalism have continued to be sensitive issues in Nigeria. Udogu (1994) notes that this situation of ethnicity becomes more sever in Nigeria polity where the politics of who gets what, when and how gravitates towards ethnic clash and antagonism. Wright (1993) argues that most ethnic conflicts have a background of domination, injustice or oppression by one ethnic group or another. Nwoye (2001) maintains that the unending spate of ethnic intolerance in different parts of the country (Nigeria) calls for serious and urgent concerns if the current democratic process will survive. Nwoye notes that the numerous ethnic and religious conflicts witness in some parts of the country points to a very gloomy image for the country's democratic process. Nwoye argue for mutual tolerance and respect among ethnic nationalities, without which it will be very difficult to forge ahead as a united and strong democratic society. The scholar posits that the secular and heterogeneous nature of Nigerian society poses a strong challenge to the survival of the Nigerian state and the future of democracy in the country. In the same light, Dike (2001) notes that those wishing to unite diverse ethnic groups into a single political system that is both stable and democratic faces an uphill battle.

Given the proceeding discussions on the concept of ethnicity, the study argues that ethnicity is the innermost and most powerful element in the development of nationalism. It is a social psychological factor that reinforces the manifestation of ethnic group loyalty through shared language,

common religion, culture and feeling of ethnic consciousness. Ethnicity strives in the negation of common identity and national culture in a multi ethnic society. This study conceptualizes ethnicity as the inmost and most powerful element in the development of nationalism. Thus, it is the position of this paper that ethnicity is a social psychological factor that reinforces the manifestation of ethnic group loyalty through shared language, common religion, culture and feeling of ethnic consciousness. Hence ethnicity strives mostly in a multi ethnic political system where loyalty to ethnic origin overrides national loyalty.

Nationalism

Hugh Section-Watson in his book "Nation and State' writes that nationalism is an ideology that creates national consciousness within a politically unconscious population. Its purpose is precisely the mobilization of the population for nationalist purposes (Hugh,2000). Also, Breuilly (2008) defines nationalism as the idea that the world is divided into nations which provide the overriding focus of political identity and loyalty, which in turn demands national self-determination. Breuilly contends that nationalism can be either civic or ethnic. It is civic when it is committed to a state and its values and ethnic when it is committed to a group of common decent. Osaghae (1991), and Mansbach and Rafferty (2008) view nationalism as a political cum ideological movement that is concerned with identity politics , and predicated on the conviction that a nation ought to have the benefit of equality of rights status, and political autonomy with other nations of the world. Equally, Connor (1994) posits that "nationalism denotes both the loyalty to a nation deprived of its own state and the loyalty to an ethnic group embodied in a specific state, particularly where the latter is conceived as a nation state. Smith (2013) and John (2017) define nationalism based on three generic goals namely national unity, national autonomy and national identity. The scholars see nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population. In another hand, Slack and Doyon (2001) defined nationalism as an extensive aggregation of individuals closely associated with each other by common descent, language or history, as to form a distinct race or people. Slack and Doyon posits that nationalism arises when the members of a nation demand that the nation be organized into a sovereign state.

Heineman (1996) see nationalism as the emotional attachment of citizens to their country as a primary loyalty. He writes that the institution of nation state has encouraged the growth of nationalism and nationalist fervor within a state. It can enable a government to act more effectively; it also has had the consequences of encouraging government to be more aggressive and rendering them less able to reconcile differences with other states. Alter (1994, p.18) as cited in UKEssays states that historically the roots of modern nationalism can be found in late eighteenth-century Western Europe and North America and it subsequently spread to all of Europe and eventually to all parts of the world. However, between 1918 and 1945, nationalism became synonymous with intolerance, inhumanity and violence. Cozic (1994) posits it was the spirit of ultra-nationalism that led to the outbreak of Second World War. Thus nationalism is a vehicle for stimulating national consciousness, pride, strength and unity and loyalty to the fatherland. (Asia, 20018) According to Egboh, (2001) it is the most tenacious ideological bond binding people together in political communities. Though values may vary, its particular content may change, but fundamentally, the nationalist feelings is described in terms of a common feelings of togetherness, common identity, loyalty of individual to the community, community values, common heritage, a common history, a common character, a common race and a cooperate will.

However, in the context of this study we conceptualize nationalism as a political cum ideological movement that is predicated on love and loyalty to the fatherland and feeling of great pride in one's country or nation. Nationalism engenders psychological and emotional attachment of citizens to their nation or country as a primary loyalty and makes them feel their country or nation is better than others. It is therefore the most persistent ideals that hold people together in political communities. In this Paper, nationalist feelings are viewed in terms of common feelings of togetherness, common history, common identity, common heritage and loyalty of individual to the political community.

Ethno-Nationalism

Ethno-nationalism is also known as ethnic nationalism. kubiat (2018) and Adeyanju (2021) argue that ethno-nationalism is a complex social phenomenon in contemporary political system which manifests in interactions among individuals of different ethnic groups within a political system, where language and culture are the most prominent attributes. Osaghae, (1991) states that ethno-nationalism is a combination of two words 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism; "ethnicity is a derivative of the ethnic group" which can be described as a group of people with a common identity based on cultural affinities of language, customs, common ancestry, race and religion, while nationalism is a political cum ideological movement that is concerned with identity politics , and predicated on the conviction that a nation ought to have the benefit of equality of rights status, and political independence.

Social philosopher Nagel Thomas in his illuminating book "Mortal questions" categorized contemporary ethno-nationalism into two: historical nationalism and secessionist movements. Nagel posits that historical ethno-nationalism was common after the Second World War (WWII), it eventually culminated in the political independence of several post World War 11 colonial territories in Asia and Africa (Nagel, 1982). Gilbert, et al (2009) note that soon after the political independence of post-colonial territories, secessionist ethno-nationalism that involved ethno-national movements became manifest due to the colonial partitioning of the African continent without due respect to the diversity and compatibility of divergent ethnicities. The scholars observe that this was the origin of ethnicity in African, indeed Nigeria political system.

Walker Connor, a foremost scholar of the origins and dynamics of ethno-nationalism, in his classics essays made thorough and inspiring attempts to establish a sound methodological foundation for the study of ethno-nationalism as the major cause of global political instability in an globalized international system. Walker stress the importance of the political implications of ethno-nationalism in a highly fluid international political system and observe that the end of Cold War in 1991, coincided with the surge of violent civil conflicts and the break of nations based on ethno-nationalism. Walker remarked that in ethno-nationalist violent conflicts also occur within established democracy, as was the case with the struggle between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. He maintains that ethno-nationalist violence is based on primordial human emotions and centuries of history. Walker contends that the 1990's witnessed a new surge of violent civil conflicts and the splintering of ethnic wars (Walker, 2021a). In the same light, Dan Smith the director of the International Peace Research Institution in Oslo (PRIO), (2021) as cited in Walker (2021a) has calculated "that of the 52 armed conflicts of various sizes that took place in 42 states in 1993, 36, in 30 states, had ethno-national characteristics. Richard, & Kirsten (2008) in their book "Introduction to Global Politics: A journey from yesterday to tomorrow' notes that ethno-nationalism is a focus on peoples and culture: identity politics, nationalism and ethnicity, ethnic and tribal identities, and religious identities for the benefit of equality of rights status of a nation, and its political autonomy with other nations of the world. Also, Oxford Dictionary (n.d) defines ethno-nationalism as advocacy of or support for the political interests of a particular ethnic group, especially its national independence or self-determination. In other words, ethno-nationalism is a form of nationalism in which the nation and nationality are seen from the perspectives of ethnicity, with stresses on ethnocentric approach to diverse political issues relating to a particular ethnic group (Smith 19878; Roshwald, 2000).

Walker (2021b), Muller (2008) and Alger (2002) share similar views on ethno-nationalism. Walker writes that the term "ethno-nationalism" refers to a politicized group affiliation based on inherent traits: ethnicity, race, clan, tribe, cultural heritage or religion that defines a group of individuals in the minds of its members. In the same vein, Muller (2008) argues that the central theme of ethno-nationalists is that "nations are defined by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry. Alger (2002) maintains that ethno-nationalism functions on the principle that a nation can only be defined by its ethnic connection which encompasses shared language, culture, territory, and often common ancestry. Also, Brass (2021) in his widely read book entitled "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and comparison" argues that both ethnicity and nationalism arise out of specific types of interactions. Nnoli (2008) agreeing with Brass, Walker, Muller and Alger argues that the relevant communal factor in ethno-nationalism may be language, culture, race, religion and/or common history. Thus they all notes that relevant

factors in ethno-nationalism are: ethnicity, race, clan, tribe, cultural heritage or religion affinities and customs, common Language , a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry.

Riggs (1994, p.599) as cited in Walker (2021b), and Breuilly (2008) share similar views. Riggs posits that ethno-nationalism is rooted in a sense of common origins, primarily ancestral, as manifested in shared linguistic, religious, and racial marker. Breuilly assert that ethno-nationalism is committed to a group of common decent. It invokes culture and values. Cultural factors like religion and language are integrative factors of ethno-nationalism. Equally, Kourvetaris, (1996) argue that ethno-nationalism is focused on the mobilization of ethnic solidarity for the achievement of politico-economic advantages Paul Collier in his analysis of ethnic politics and ethnically diverse society states that ethno-diversity generates conflicts among different ethnic groups in a muliti-ethnic society. Collier argues that a society can function perfectly well if its citizens holds multiple ethno-identities, but problems arises when those sub-national identities arouse loyalties that override loyalty to the nation as a whole (Collier, 2010).

In another hand, Tendayi Achiume, the Unite Nations Special Rapporteur on racism writes that ethno-nationalism denies millions their citizenship rights and that the most obvious driver of racial discrimination is prejudice rooted in ethno-nationalism that views the nation as defined in terms of assumed blood ties and ethnicity. Achiune note that the ideology of ethno-nationalism has found renewed traction with many populist political leaders. Achiume further says that ethno-nationalism undermines the rights of certain racial, religious and national groups, and ethnic, racial and religious groups have had to endure as a result of the hostile environment possibly created by ethno-nationalism (Achiume, 2018).

Against the background of the grand narratives of existing literature, we define ethno-nationalism as an observable complex ideology that invokes culture, language, religion, common history and ancestral ties, in articulation and aggregation of political and social economic interests of an ethnic group in an ethnically diverse society. Thus ethno-nationalism is an aftermath of interactions between different ethnic groups in a Multi-ethnic political system. It involves the propagation and defense of politicized interests of an ethnic-group in an ethnically diverse society.

Based on these narratives, this Paper conceptualizes ethno-nationalism as an observable complex philosophy that involves the propagation and defense of politicized interests of an ethnic-group in an ethnically diverse political system. It invokes sense of common origins, common values, primarily ancestral culture, shared linguistic, religious, and racial indicator, common history and ancestral ties in articulation and aggregation of political and social, economic interests of an ethnic group in an ethnically diverse society. In other words, ethno-nationalism is committed to a group of common decent and invokes culture and religious values as the integrative factors. Ethno-nationalism is therefore an aftermath of interactions between different ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic political system. Its known methodology is focus on the mobilization of ethnic solidarity for the achievement of politico-economic advantages.

Ethno-Nationalism in Nigeria

Kubiat (2018) and Adeyanju (2021) argue that ethno-nationalism is a complex social and political phenomenon which is apparent in interactions among individuals of different ethnic groups within a political system where language and culture are the most prominent attributes. Kubiat posits that the problem of ethno-nationalism in Nigeria came with the advent of colonialism when the hitherto, autonomous and heterogeneous ethnic groups were forcefully merged together by the British colonial administration to form Nigeria. Ejiofor (2000) writes that Nigeria evolved as a colonial imposition and the method of creating the geo-political construction on largely artificial political formations marked the beginning of ethno-conflagrations across the Nigeria nation states. Ejiofor, argues that the creation of the Nigerian State was not based on a philosophy of common identity and community. This made Nigerians to see themselves first as member of their ethnic community. Dike (2001) notes that due to ethno-nationalism the Nigeria's social structure is firmly anchored on the history of ethnic division. Nkemdilim (2000). argues that this made the country to continue to face problems emanating from its plural nature, and the environment of ethnic consciousness usually leads to the victimization, marginalization and political exclusion of the less powerful ethnic group by the

more powerful one, especially in terms of wealth distribution, wealth redistribution and power-sharing.

Slack and Doyon (2001) state that since Nigeria independence in 1960 there has been growing ethno-nationalism as ethnic groups voted in election along ethnic nationalist lines, even though they were unimpressed with the party leaders, out of fear that ethnic groups to which they did not belong would gain political ascendancy. Amatole & John (1990) contends that the strong ethnic and regional differences that existed in Nigeria in the immediate post independent era have continued to be sensitive issues in the contemporary Nigeria. Collier (2010) posits that the problems arising from sub-national identities arouse loyalties that override loyalty to the nation as a whole. Ojinnaka (2023) articulates that the political construction of ethno-nationalism had now begun to gain ground in Nigeria. The scholar observed that in 2015 in the general elections, Buhari gained votes through ethno-nationalist campaigns in his All Progressives Congress (APC) party that appeal to his Hausa/Fulani ethnic and religious group. Ojinnaka states that in the event of such a strong connection between religion and ethnicity, it is not surprising that religion became an important tool of identification of ethno-nationalism in 2014/2015 during Buhari's electioneering campaign, hence religion and ethnicity was used by Buhari as a tool for political ascendancy.

Ejiofor (2000) in his descriptive study of ethno-nationalism in Nigeria argue forcefully that ethno-nationalism in Nigeria has constituted a crux of political decision which will cement the country together, or else reduce it to incompatible particles. Agreeing with Ejiofor, Osaghae and Suberu (2005) writes that ethno-nationalism in Nigeria has led to conflicts about control of state power, unequal allocation of resources, citizenship issues, and ethno-religious clashes. Udogu (1994) notes that this situation becomes more sever in Nigeria as the politics of who gets what, when and how has gravitates towards ethnic clash and antagonism. In the same vein, Joireman (2003) argue that ethno-nationalism always manifest when an ethnic nationality experiences denial, exclusion, and marginalization or undergoes some form of intentionally devised oppressive policies in a multi-ethnic state as the Ibos are experiencing in Nigeria. Ojinnaka (2023) strongly argue that Nigeria has long history of ethno-religious rivalry and has proved to be a suitable laboratory for the study, evaluation and analysis of the dynamics and instability inherent in the manifestation of ethno-nationalism in a multi ethnic political system. Ojinnaka records that central to the Biafra war and Ibo pogrom of 1966/67-1970 is the concept of ethno-nationalism. Slack & Doyon (2001) agreeing with Ojinnaka states that the Biafra–Nigeria war of 1966-1970 was primarily, a war of ethnic survival which arose out of a deep-rooted rivalry between ethnic groups leading to a struggle for control of territory ending in an attempt at violent resolution.

Ojinnaka (2023) posits that ever since the emergence of Buhari as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on May 29th, 2015, ethno-nationalism has reached its peak due to his government mismanagement of Nigeria's rich diversity and its ethnocentric approach to national issues. The policies of the government have consciously made ethnic issues to be at the forefront of Nigeria politics. Ojinnaka contends that Buhari's politics of ethno-group mobilization has played out in the accentuation of division tendencies in the country. His body language and political power-play demonstrates an effort to ensure his Fulani/Muslim ethnic group dominates other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The scholar further states that Buhari official introduction of nepotism, tribalism and ethnicity into Nigerian government institutions, military and paramilitary organizations wittingly or unwittingly made ethnicity a determinant factor in the questions of who gets what, when and how in the allocation of national values, and made possible the monopolization and domination of the socio-political and economic benefits of the Nigerian state by some elements of Hausa/Fulani ethnic led government, who are in control of state power and uses same to disproportionately allocate national resources to the detriment of South-East geopolitical zone.

Ojinnaka consistently maintained that in the contemporary South-East Nigeria, ethno-national discriminations, unequal and differential economic opportunity, unequal access to political power and various forms of social injustice against the people by the Nigerian state under Buhari administration has made political construction of ethno-nationalism to became issue of serious concern , as the people of the geopolitical zone feel alienated, marginalized and excluded from allocation of national values, and lacking in an appreciable influence within the Nigeria power structure. Against this

backdrop, the scholar state that between 2015 and 2020, the South-East Nigeria witnessed progressive growth in ethno-nationalist consciousness that was aggravated by the government's policies of ethnicity, politics of exclusion, victimization and economic devastation of the South-East geopolitical zone. Equally Igboayaka (2021) and Isiguzoro (2021) are disenchanted by elevation of ethno-centric and primordial religious consideration as a state policy by Buhari administration. Igboayaka assert that the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria is as a result of the marginalization and repulsive political cum economic ordeal of the geopolitical zone in Nigeria ,which are the reasons the agitation for self-determination by 97% of Igbo new generation has gone out of control from the Igbo political elites. Isiguzoro posits that the Buhari's policy of winner take it all as demonstrated in his actions, appointments , and location of projects of economic development, are emphasis on ethnicity, nepotism and apparent political favoritism that pervaded the Nigerian political space while he was in power in 2015-2023. Isiguzoro narrates that the Buhari administration had not been fair to South-East Nigeria and have not treated the geopolitical zone as equals in the Nigerian project. Based on the fact that the government had perpetually excluded the region from all essential ingredients that promotes the continuous unity of the country, the people of South-East Nigeria feel they have been marginalized, estranged and shoved out of the corporate existence of Nigeria, Isiguzoro added.

Ojinnaka further states that under President Buhari administration ethnicity has was a crucial factor that determines national political behavior, and the question of who gets what, when and how in the Nigeria was noticeably influenced by ethno-national considerations. He notes that this aggravated ethno-nationalism in the South-East geopolitical zone , as the government emphasis on ethno-political identity over Nigeria identity was apparent of the political favoritism, economic competition, cultural and religious prejudice that pervaded and have continued to characterize Nigeria political space. Ojinnaka maintain that the exclusion of South-East Nigeria from key political appointments, Service Chiefs and in location of vital national economic assets (development projects) led to the feelings of ethnic alienation, marginalization, widespread discontent and become an important factor in resurgence of ethno-nationalism, hence at the root of the unprecedented agitations for restoration of the Sovereign State of Biafra championed by radical ethno-nationalist groups like Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB) among others.

Ojinnaka (2023) observed that under Buhari administration, ethno-national discrimination does occur in an atmosphere of ethno-national rivalries which generates hostile inter-ethnic relationship. It was this systemic and structured marginalization and ethno-national discrimination against the South-East geopolitical zone under Buhari administration that stimulated resurgence of ethno-nationalism and engendered the loyalty and allegiance of the people of the region to their ethno-nation rather than to the Nigerian state. Ojinnaka contends that the agitations by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has led to several forms of civil disobedience and sit at home called by the leadership of IPOB and resulted in social, political and economic disruption in the South-East Nigeria in particularly, and Nigeria in general. As it stands, the South East geopolitical zone feel they are unfairly treated by the Nigerian state under Buhari administration and want equality of status in all matters of political, social and economic concerns. Accordingly, Ojinnaka argue strongly that ethno-nationalism was fueled in the South east Nigeria by Buhari's government deliberate policy of political and economic exclusion of the region which led to deliberate policy of socio, political and economic injustice intentionally devised in a multi-ethnic Nigeria state, aimed at deliberate exclusion, denial, alienation and marginalization of Ibo ethnic nationality in the sharing or distribution of socio-economic and political benefits of Nigeria state.

National Security

Ekoko and Vogt (1990,p.xv) argues that events occurring within the international system have changed the perception of national security, so that security is now conceived as a comprehensive and total package with the social and economic security aspects assuming the center stage of importance. Ekoko and Vogt further argues that an understanding of the economic, social and cultural foundations of problems of any nation is an essential component of defense policy analysis, hence strategies for their containment have to be seen as a major addendum to the general national security strategy.

Walter, Lipmann's US Foreign Policy; Shield of Republic, as cited in Aja (2007) posits that national security presupposes the existence of a nation with share consciousness as people who have agreed to live and work together. Every organ in the society is used to promote security consciousness. And the nation and its survival are uppermost to individuals, associations, political parties and pressure groups, military and paramilitary bodies, hence national security is not an exclusive duty of the military and paramilitary bodies, but the shared concern of everyone.

Aja (2009) writes that every citizen is a national security asset and security provides the enabling atmosphere for good social and political order in a system. Every other sector of the system hinges on the functions of national security. Aja argue that when national security is a consciousness, citizens, associations, political parties, military and Para-military bodies are oriented to serve the nation, not persons, the state or regime. In the same vein, Njoku (1998) agree that for the reasons of national security, nations raise and maintain internal and external security policies and agencies. Adisa (1990) states that such national security policy is oriented towards the creation of social harmony, promotion of political understanding, provision and protection of the basic needs of the people.

Saeed (2021) writes that Nigeria has witnessed the rise in separatist militias in the South-East Nigeria, as insecurity has become a significant problem in a region where there are general feelings of threats to lives and property. Saeed contends that the various causes of insecurity in Nigeria are corrupt use of army funds, poor human right records of the security forces, the proliferation of weapons, the lingering trauma of previous conflicts and growing material impoverishment. In the same vein, Tendayi Achiume the Unite Nations Special Rapporteur on racism in her report writes that States all over the world uses national security and counter-terrorism as justifications to oppress and strip some members of their populations their rights as citizens. Achiume notes that in some countries, politicians have spread misinformation that portrays certain racial, national, ethnic and religious groups as inherent threats to national security (Tendayi, 2018).

Nnameka (2021) posits that the precarious security situation in the South-East Nigeria were encouraged by the attitude of the Federal Government of Nigeria towards the rampaging activates of the Fulani killer herdsmen. Nnameka argues that Buhari's inability to show capacity as the Commander in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces and his partiality in the issues of national security is the most effective factors that have been fueling security crises in the South-East Nigeria and have encouraged the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region.

Theoretical Framework: Elite-Instrumentalist Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict

The elite-instrumentalist theory of ethnic conflict is adopted for this study as the theoretical framework for analyzing the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria. It is the theoretical framework on which this Paper is predicated. The intellectual precursors of the elite theory are Gaetano Mosca (1939), Vilferedo Pareto (1848- 1923), Wright Mills (1916-1962).These scholars in their intellectual narratives on elitism share several fundamental assumptions on the elite-instrumentalist perspective on ethnic conflicts. Wright Mills (1916-1962) in the Power Elite (1956) as cited in Ojinnaka, (2002, p.52) argue that modern democracies like the United States has three major institutional orders: the political, military and the economic systems. Each of which are centralized under the control of a few powerful figures. Moreover, these individuals interact with each other as powerful elites. The interlocking nature of these elites enables them to make the most important decision for the nation (Heineman, 1996).

The theory of elite as presented by Mosca (1939) and Pareto (1961) systematically highlights the elite paradigm which subsequently became a key doctrine in the social sciences (Ojinnaka, 2002). The elite theory as popularized by Vilferedo Pareto an Italian sociologist is clear presumption of the inadequacies of the average citizen, as consequences, the political system must rely on the wisdom, loyalty and skill of the political leaders, not on the population at large (Hari & Choudhury, 2001). The political system is divided into two broad groups: the elites who are the political entrepreneurs, possessing ideological commitments and manipulative skills that enhance their domination of the political system, and the masses who are the much larger class but passive followers. Being apolitical

clay of the political system, they have little ideas about public affairs and less interested in politics (Ojinnaka, 2002).

Vilferedo Pareto (1961) conceived the elites as people in a society who possessed in marked degree qualities of intelligence, character, skill and capacity of whatever kind. Pareto's elite analysis further subdivided the elites into two broad groups: the political or governing elites comprising individuals, who directly or indirectly play some important part in government, dominate and occupies all important posts of political command and influences major political decision. This group is controlling the social, material and political resources of any given political system. In the other hand, non-governing elites are those that are at the top of nonpolitical structure, eg the Civil Servants, captain of industries, intellectuals, scientists and opinion leaders. Because the elite are more organized than the masses their domination of the political system becomes inevitable. Mosca observe that the power of any organized minority is irresistible as against each single individual in the majority who stands alone before the totality of the organized minority. Also members of the ruling minority have some attributes, which are highly esteemed and influential in the society (Mosca, 1939). However, on the basis of elite theories articulated by Mosca and popularized by Pareto, other scholars have developed theories regarding particular type of elites in different political systems.

Osaghae, (1991) as cited in Gilbert (2013) posits that ethnic identity is created and constructed by the ethnic elites, who play critical roles in ethnic mobilization. Gilbert (2013) maintain that the notion is that since the acquisition of political power is a sine qua non for access to socio-economic resources for the enhancement and reproduction of elites in most developing countries, elites resort to the politicization and mobilization of their ethnic groups for the capturing of state power. Gilbert argues forcefully that besides, the established elites and emerging or hopeful elites because of their relative organizational advantage, uses ethnicity as a mechanism for the mobilization of ordinary members of their ethnic group for the actualization of their personal/group interests. Gilbert note that more often than not, the personal interests of members of the elite are camouflaged as group interests., hence ethnicity is a major instrument in inter-elite competition for winning and retaining political power and accessing and exploiting other socio-economic resources. Osaghae (2001) consent that ethnicity is propagated and manipulated by elites aiming at either material advantages or power, or both.

On the Nigerian situation, Ejiofor (2000) notes that the political elites rather than see themselves in adventurous national service, identified patriotism with personal aggrandizement and promotion of opportunities to claim as much as possible for themselves and for their home power base, hence ethnicity followed as a natural expression of this misunderstanding by which the political (elites) actors emerged, developed and ossified as ethnic jingoes. Ejiofor argues that ethno-nationalism in Nigeria has constituted a crux of political decision which will cement the country together, or else reduce it to incompatible particle. Against this background, Osaghae (1991) as cited in Gilbert, 2013) posits that various ethnic "grievances and demands" in Nigeria are clearly "elite-begotten interests", and a function of the manipulations of the masses by the elite or privileged class. Lewis (2007) maintains that ethnicity is used by political leaders in Nigeria to frame their arguments as to how things should be accomplished. Lewis argues that ethnic identity in Nigeria is the most important and consistent basis of social identity. Dike (2001) argues that in a multiethnic society like Nigeria discrimination and nepotism often perpetuate inequality, injustice and corruption. Thus because of ethnic confrontations force and not rule of law has traditionally been employed to hold the component parts together.

Buhari ethnocentric approach to national issues resulted in high level of frustration and discontent in the South-East Nigeria. It inevitably generated ethno-consciousness, the quest for self-determination and led to the resurgence of some ethno-nationalist agitations for the restoration of the Sovereign State of Biafra (Ojinnaka, 2023). Gilbert (2013) observe that some members of the political elite, use ethno-national groups as strategic avenues of ethnic mobilization and solidarity against perceived marginalization and as a source of support against the politico-economic onslaught engineered by the Nigerian state.

The application of the elite-instrumentalist perspective on ethnicity to this study is anchored on the fact that in an ethnocentric state like Nigeria, ethnicity is the fundamental principle of

economic and social differentiation which leads to competition for material and social resources among ethnic groups. Against this backdrop therefore, the study uses the elite-instrumentalist perspective on ethnicity as the intellectual framework for analyzing, explaining and understanding the raison d'être for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South-East Nigeria and its implications for Nigeria national security between 2015 and 2020.

IV.   Research Methodology
Sources of Data Collection

Data for execution of this study is sourced through secondary sources like books, Journals, Periodicals, articles, academic papers, Seminars, thesis, and Conference materials etc. We also accessed contemporary media and news sites that are relevant to our study. Secondary sources of data provided us with in-depth accounts of resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria and enabled us to understand its implications to Nigeria's national security between 2015 and 2020.

In addition, data was also generated through direct observation. As a Nigerian citizen from the South–East geopolitical zone, I have spent a period of Eight (8) years (2016-2023) to consciously observe the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region with the sole aim of understanding the factors responsible for its rise and the implications for security and unity of Nigeria.

Method of Data Analysis

Data generated was analyzed through content analysis. They were intensively cross checked and subjected to thorough comparison to ensure the objective identification of specific characteristics inherent in them .In addition, as a qualitative research, the descriptive approach was also applied to the analysis of data.

The Factors Responsible for the Resurgence of Ethno-Nationalism in South-East Nigeria, 2015-2023.

After the inauguration Muhammadu Buhari as President and Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Force, the issue of power relations among ethnic nationalities in Nigeria became very critical to the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria. The Buhari administration mismanaged Nigeria's rich diversity and wittingly or unwittingly made ethnicity a determinant factor in the questions of who gets what, when and how in the allocation of national values. Nigeria's political and economic power was monopolized by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic led government who were in control of state power and uses it to disproportionately allocate national resources to the exclusion of the South-East Nigeria. This inevitably generated ethno-consciousness and led to wide spread discontent in the region. The people of South East Nigeria feel alienated and marginalized in Nigeria power equation, and lacking in an appreciable influence within the Nigeria power structure. Between 2015 and 2020, appointments made by Buhari government into key political offices, Heads of government agencies, military and paramilitary organizations, as well as location of projects of economic and social infrastructural development, was an excise on ethnicity and apparent political favoritism that pervaded Nigeria political space during Buhari administration. Buhari have through his policy of ethnicity, nepotism and political exclusion of South-East geopolitical zone polarized Nigeria along ethnic lines.

According to Ekweremadu (2018) the policies of Muhammadu Buhari-led administration had caused resurgence of ethno-nationalist agitations in the South-East Nigeria, as pro-Biafra groups, such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), have arisen to challenge the marginalization of the South-East geopolitical zone by the Nigerian state under Buhari administration. Evidences abound of some indisputable statistical data about the government politics of exclusion, ethnicity and injustice against the South-East Nigeria. President Buhari an appointment between 2015 and 2023 was disproportionately is favor of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality to the deliberate exclusion of the South-East Nigeria. He has appointed his relations and cronies into strategic positions and filled all strategic revenue collecting and security agencies with Northerners (Kukah, 2020). Apart from members of his cabinet, available statistics have shown that between 29th of May, 2015 and 29th of May, 2023, President Buhari made 77 strategic appointments; 55 positions to the core North, 6

positions to the North-Central, 9 positions to the South-West, 7 positions to the South-South and none to the South-East.

Again, the government appointed 15 persons into managerial positions in Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), ten (10) of them from the North, five (5) from the South; three (3) from South-West, two (2) from the South-South and non from the South-East. Also, with the same period under study the DSS commissioned 479 new officers out of whom 331 were from the Muslim North. This is in addition to the December 2015 controversial recruitments of only northern indigenes into the Nigerian Police Force. As it stands, over 80% of key government ministries, agencies and departments are disproportionately headed by Northern Muslims (Akogun, 2018). These actions of the Buhari administration was a violation of the principles of federal character, as enshrined in section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which states in part that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in the government or in any of its agencies {The Constitution of the FRN, 1999, section 14(3).

More so, in 2017 the federal government awarded and completed modern railway double gauge for the North and South-West regions of Nigeria and excluded the South-East Nigeria. Also, the federal government signed a contract off $2.8b gas project to Northern Nigeria yet the South-East that produces the gas has no single gas pipeline. (Nnameka , 2021). This created an environment of ethno-consciousness and made the people of South-East geopolitical   zone feel they have been shoved out of the corporate existence of Nigeria, based on the fact that the federal government had perpetually excluded the region from all essential ingredients that promotes the continuous unity and corporate existence of the country (Isiguzoro, 2021). It gave rise to feelings of ethnic alienation, ethnic consciousness, and widespread discontent among the people and led to progressive growth of ethno-consciousness and become an important factor in the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South East geopolitical zone. Nevertheless, it is the position of this paper that Buhari government policy of deliberately sideline of the region in terms of wealth distribution and sharing of national values was responsible for the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East geopolitical zone.

The Resurgence of Ethno-Nationalism in South-East Nigeria: Impacts on Nigeria National Security, 2015-2023

When Mr. Muhamadu Buhari assumed office as the President, and Commander in Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, he did not show capacity, and he displayed a great degree of tactlessness in managing Nigeria's diverse security problems. The South-East Nigeria witnessed multidimensional security challenges due to resurgence of aggressive ethno-nationalism in the geopolitical zone. Between 2015 and 2023, several incidents of ethno-motivated violence were witnessed in the region which undermined national security by threatening Nigeria corporate existence (Akinola &Uzodike, 2014).

The failure of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and other security agencies to effectively protect the people of South-East Nigeria from the criminal activities and killings of armed Fulani herdsmen led to the deterioration of the security situation in the geopolitical zone, and created a lacuna for the people to seek self-defense, as an alternative to reliance on State security outfits. It lent credence to the urgent needs for the formation of neighborhood vigilante groups by non-state actors and organizations for the purpose of protecting and safeguarding lives and properties (Gilbert, 2013). This made the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to establish what it calls the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 2020, to act as a paramilitary force to checkmate the activities of Fulani killer herdsmen (Mark, 2021), bandits, and Islamic terrorists whose activities in the region have grown ever more deadly. For the effective and efficient performance of their roles, arms were illegally acquired for the vigilantes with obviously infringement on the prosecutorial powers of the police and the adjudicatory role of the judiciary, It therefore became a ready pool of recruitment for the various militant ethno-nationalist movements in (the South-East) Nigeria (Gilbert , 2013).

Human Right Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA, 2021) documents that before the advent of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) the people of South-East Nigeria endured the agony of murder, rape and kidnapping in the hands of Fulani herdsmen. The armed Fulani herders and their cattle invade farmlands destroying crops planted by the poor village farmers and none of the

herdsmen was arrested and prosecuted by the Nigeria law enforcement agencies. The recent ESN experience in the South-East geopolitical zone indicate that insurgent ethno-nationalism worsen insecurity, de-legitimized the status of the state and threatened its continued existence as a corporate entity; with dire consequences (Gilbert, 2013b).

Between 2015 and 2023 armed Fulani herdsmen attacked: Enugu communities in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Council killing a whole family and a Catholic seminarian on apostolic work in Nkanu; attacked farmers at Ozuitem community in Bende area, Ndi Okereke Abam in Arochukwu council of Abia State, attacked farmers' settlement in Anambra West Council of Anambra State. Also attacked Umuawa-Ibu community in Okigwe council area of Imo State, in Oguta, Ohaji-Egbema, and the killing of Ozoemena Iriaka from Umuekpu in Agwa community in the same Oguta council area and Orlu, in Ebonyi State over 50 lives of Igbo villagers were lost as a result of the murderous activities of the Fulani herders (HURIWA, 2021). However, the clampdown on the Eastern Security Network (ESN) by the Buhari administration exposes the region to continued armed Fulani herdsmen attacks. The killings of farmers and destruction of farmlands by the herdsmen, which was curbed by the emergence of the ESN, have now restarted. The failure of Nigeria security agencies to protect the people and the inability of the Nigeria government to stop the herdsmen threats in the region led to escalation of the revived Biafra secessionist activities and rise in separatist militias (Mark, 2021). This undermined the confidence of the people of South-East geopolitical zone on the capacity of the Nigerian state to protect them. The atmosphere of fragmentation and ethno-nationalist militia movements generated by the herdsmen crises had damaging consequences for the Nigeria national security (Saeed, 2021). In the face of daunting security challenges, insecurity has become a significant problem in the South-East Nigeria, as there are general feelings of threats to lives and property in the region (Saeed, 2021).

The Nigerian security forces and ESN have clashed in a series of skirmishes in many cities in the South-Eastern Nigeria particularly, in Orlu. ESN is alleged to have killed police officers and military personnel at checkpoints in several locations in the South-East and South-South Nigeria. These backward and forward raids and attacks have continued unabated and inflamed tensions in the region. These developments portend increasing tensions with Nigerian security forces (Mark, 2021) and have had continuing ramifications for the Nigerian state as there are reported cases of high handedness and random violence on the part of the Nigeria Federal Government. Furthermore, executive recklessness and extrajudicial killings that took place in the South-East Nigeria between 2015 and 2023 tremendously contributed to the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region. There have been recent records of high level of security sector violence by the Nigeria Police and military against unarmed civilians in the region. Human rights groups have documented Nigerian military and police using excessive force against unarmed pro-Biafra protestors (https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4452112016ENGLISH.PDF). Punch Newspaper (2021, August 16), and Daily Trust Newspaper (2021, September 17) investigative reports found that within the period under study there were 117 killings and 26 abductions in the South-East Nigeria. In the same period, attacks attributed to Unknown Gun Men in the region led to the killings of 18 persons in 12 attacks (Fidelis & Idowu, 2021). There was also killing of 150 unarmed IPOB supporters and members in 2015 and 2016. On the 49th anniversary of the declaration of Biafra independence, in 2016, security teams that included members of the military, police and allied security agencies opened fire on a parade in Onitsha, killing at least 60 people.

Also, in 2020, nationwide End SARS protest which was a demand for an end to police abuses, particularly, the abuse by the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS) (Mark, 2021). There was killing of many armless protesters in October 2020 during the End SARS marches in the South East geopolitical zone. It is also on record that between 2015 and 2023, the Nigeria Directorate of State Security Service (DSSS) has regularly harassed and detained journalists with impunity, including invading courtroom to re-arrest defendants whom the judge had ordered be set free (Mark, 2021). Violence against civilians in the region by Nigeria security forces made many to lose confidence in the Nigerian project and contributed to motivating young men in the region to join militant groups (Mark, 2021). The Buhari regime introduced ethnicity, nepotism and clannishness into the Nigerian military and ancillary security agencies (Kukah, 2020). The president appoints only Northern

Muslims, particularly, his Fulani kinsmen to head almost all the military, paramilitary organizations, and intelligence agencies (Junaid, 2016, Obinna, 2018) thereby de-professionalizing and politicizing the institutions. It is indeed tactically a blunder and a hallmark of poor strategic thinking for Buhari to introduce nepotism, ethnicity, and religious sentiments into the Nigerian Armed Forces. The implication of this and its threat analysis indicates that Nigeria national security is highly endangered, and the ample consequences are the current deterioration of the security situation in the South-East Nigeria.

The exclusion of South-East Nigeria from Service Chiefs, Heads of paramilitary organizations and security agencies (Wale, 2021) made some people from the region to accuse the government of alienation and marginalization. This explains the relationship between national security, ethnic political mobilization and political instability in the country. The complex security situation in the South-East Nigeria and the emerging trend in the sophistication of the security crises resulting in colossal loss of lives and properties and have generated insecurity and threatened the corporate existence of the Nigeria state (Poroma, Deedan, & Igwe, 2019). However, the attitude of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) towards the rampaging activates of the armed Fulani herdsmen particularly, the inability of the security agencies to handle the security challenges resulting from herdsmen threats in the South-East indicate fundamental defects in the nation's security structure and have had multifaceted effects on Nigeria national security.

Thus given the apparent decline in the capacity of the Nigeria state to maintain law and order, particularly, the failure of the Buhari administration to stop the herdsmen killings necessitated the formation of the Estern Security Network (ESN) by the Ingenious People of Biafra (IPOB) in December 2020, to act as a paramilitary force to checkmate the activities of Fulani killer herdsmen, bandits, and Islamic terrorists whose activities in the region was becoming more deadly. The formation of the ESN meant that the Nigerian state was no longer in monopoly of instrument of coercion, and the resultant democratization of violence led to the deterioration of the security situation in the geopolitical zone. It made many to lose confidence in the Nigeria project and contributed to encouraging young men and women in the region to join militant groups. The paper argues that if the Nigeria state under Buhari administration had been pro-active, truthful, fair and able to live up to its constitutional responsibility of protection of lives and property of the people of the South-East Nigeria, there would not have been security challenges of such magnitude in the region. The implication of this and its threat analysis indicates that Nigeria national security is highly endangered, and the potential destabilizing effects of the Fulani Herdsmen activities in the country is very enormous.

How the Resurgence of Ethnonationalism in South-East Nigeria Undermined Nigeria's Unity, 2015 – 2023

From the time President Muhammadu Buhari came into office on 29th of May, 2015, he mismanaged Nigeria's rich diversity and had not ran an all-inclusive government. His policy of ethnic group mobilization gave rise to disunity which has played out in the accentuation of diversionist tendencies in the country. The introduction of nepotism, tribalism and ethnicity into government, military and paramilitary organizations made possible the domination of the socio, political and economic benefits of the Nigerian state by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group. The Buhari policy of winner take it all wittingly or unwittingly made ethnicity a determinant factor in the questions of who gets what, when and how in the allocation of Nigeria national values. Between 2015 and 2020 appointments made by Buhari administration as well as location of projects of economic development was emphasis on ethnicity, nepotism and apparent political favoritism that pervades Nigerian political space during his tenure as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

President Buhari political power-play and body language demonstrated an effort to ensure that his Fulani/Muslim ethnic group dominates other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. This made possible the monopolization of Nigeria political and economic power by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality at the detriment of the people of the South-East Nigeria. The Buhari administrations had not been fair and have not treated the South-East geopolitical zone as equals in the Nigerian projects. Based on the fact that the government had perpetually excluded the region from all essential

ingredients that promotes the continuous unity of the country, the people of South-East Nigeria feel they have been marginalized, estranged and shoved out of the corporate existence of Nigeria (Isiguzoro, 2021).

The exclusion of the region from key political appointments, appointment of Service Chiefs and location of vital national economic assets (development projects) led to progressive growth of ethnic consciousness, feelings of ethnic alienation, widespread discontent and become an important factor in resurgence of ethno-nationalism, and has been at the root of the agitations for restoration of the Sovereign State of Biafra. The structured and systemic marginalization of South East in the Nigeria state under Buhari administration, particularly in terms of power equation and wealth distribution (Kenechukwu, 2021) made many in the geopolitical zone to lose confidence in the Nigerian project and to feel they have no stake in Nigerian state. It stimulated resurgence of ethno-nationalism and engendered the loyalty and allegiance of the people of South East Nigeria to their ethno-nation, rather than to the Nigerian state.

The Buhari administration's nepotistic and selective attitudes to national issues, indeed, its discrimination against the South-East Nigeria created uninformed impression that the people of the region are either not part of Nigeria, and/ or not to be trusted with sensitive government position. This eroded Nigeria unity and has been the most effective factor that has undermined Nigeria unity and encouraged the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region. Buhari ethno-centricism has had far-reaching destabilizing effects on Nigeria unity, as the control of state power and its use by the Fulani ethnic led government to disproportionately allocate national resources at the detriment of South-East Nigeria, led to an unprecedented increase in the agitations for self-determination to actualize the Sovereign State of Biafra.

In the light of the foregoing, it is the position of this paper that ethnocentric policy of Buhari administration proved to be conflicting and paralytic. It marked the beginning of a new ethnic conflagration in Nigeria polity and possible leading to national disintegration. As the country's social structure is firmly anchored on ethnic division, the environment of ethnic conflagration created by Buhari's government policies have destroyed whatever program put in place by previous governments to promote national integration. It leads to the deterioration of the national unity and made the country to continue to face problems emanating from its plural and artificial nature. It further stress the fact that the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria is a response to the political exclusion, feelings of alienation, systemic marginalization and structured injustice perpetuated by the Buhari administration against the South-East geopolitical zone. Thus the resurgence of ethno-nationalism have made the people of the South-East to lose confidence in the Nigeria Project a situation that have undermined the Nigeria unity and threatened the corporate existence of the country.

V.   FINDINGS

In reference to our investigation on resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South-East Nigeria and its implications for national security between 2015 and 2023, the study made the following findings:

That during President Muhammadu Buhari administration from May 29th, 2015 to May 29t,h 2023, he did not run an all-inclusive government and mismanaged Nigeria's rich diversity. His politics of exclusion and sidelining of South-East Nigeria was a well thought-out plan to marginalize the region that gave him only 5% votes in 2015 Presidential elections.

The study discovers that there is a co-relation between ethno-political mobilizations, insecurity, and method of allocation of scares public resources and resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East geopolitical zone.

That exclusion of South-East Nigeria from key political appointments and location of federal projects made the people feel alienated, marginalized and lacking in an appreciable influence within the Nigeria power structure. This inevitably generated ethnic consciousness and the quest for self-determination among the people.

The study finds that under the Buhari administration, the repressive nature of the Nigeria state, executive recklessness, extrajudicial killings and high level of security sector violence against civilians and unarmed pro-Biafra agitators in South-East Nigeria made many to lose confidence in the Nigeria

project, motivated young men in the region to join militant groups and strongly contributed to resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region.

The study also finds that President Buhari the President and Commander in Chief of Nigerian Armed Forces did not show capacity. And his government inability to protect the people of South-East Nigeria from killings of the Fulani herdsmen made the people to seek self-help, which led to the formation of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) by IPOB to serve as a paramilitary outfit to checkmate the killings by the Fulani herdsmen.

The study discovers that Buhari administration introduced ethnicity and nepotism into the Nigerian Armed Forces, which de-professionalized, politicized and debased the Nigeria military institutions.

The study finds that insecurity in the South East Nigeria was engendered by the poor human rights record of the security forces, the proliferation of weapons, unemployment, poverty and lack of federal presence in the South-East geopolitical zone.

The study finds that the environment of ethnic conflagration created by Buhari government policies have undermined whatever program put in place by previous governments to promote Nigeria national unity and threatened the corporate existence of the country. Against this backdrop, the study finds that the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria between was a reaction to the political exclusion, feelings of alienation, systemic and structured marginalization and injustice perpetuated by the Buhari administration against the South-East geopolitical zone. Thus the resurgence of ethno-nationalism made the people of the South-East to lose confidence in the Nigeria Project a situation that have undermined the Nigeria unity and led to the agitations for self-determination.

VI.   Conclusion

Issues at the heart of the resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South East Nigeria includes the fears of domination by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality and their control of state power and its use to disproportionately allocate national resources to the detriment of the South-East geopolitical zone. Buhari's government ethnocentric approach to national issues and political and economic exclusion of the South-East geopolitical zone explained in part the origin of ethno-nationalism in the region. The appointment made by the Buhari administration was disproportionately is favor of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic nationality to the deliberate exclusion of the South-East Nigeria. The Buhari government appointed only his ethnic-brothers into key political offices, Heads of government agencies, military and paramilitary organizations. Equally, his location of projects of economic and social infrastructural development was an excise on ethnic considerations and apparent political favoritism that pervaded Nigeria political space during his regime as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Buhari appointed his relations and cronies into strategic positions and filled all strategic revenue and security agencies with people of Northerner Nigeria origin. Available statistics have shown that over 80% appointment made by his government were disproportionately in favour of Northern Muslims brothers. These indisputable statistical evidence of politics of exclusion, ethnicity and injustice against the South-East Nigeria inevitably generated ethno-consciousness and led to wide spread discontent in the geopolitical zone. Thus the people of South-East Nigeria felt alienated and marginalized in Nigeria power equation, and lacking in an appreciable influence within the Nigeria power structure.

Evidently, the Buhari's government mismanages Nigeria's rich diversity and polarizes the country along ethnic lines. The resurgence of ethno-nationalism in South East Nigeria was strategically deployed as instruments of struggle for equity, social justice and fairness. Accordingly, ethnic conflict takes place when mobilized identity groups struggle for greater power, whether for power in an already established state or a newly independent state. The South-East socio-political and economic ordeal in Nigeria state under Buhari administration is an affirmation of this. It confirms Joireman (2003) thesis which states that ethno-nationalism always manifest when an ethnic nationality experiences denial, exclusion, and marginalization or undergoes some form of intentionally devised oppressive policies in a multi-ethnic state. This justifies the explanations in this study that the subsisting conflicts in Nigeria since Buhari came to power are motivated by ethnicity,

as his (Buharis) ethnocentric approach to national political and economic issues have led to conflicts which threatens Nigeria corporate existence.

Based on our findings and the use of elite instrumentalist perspective on ethnic conflict as the intellectual framework of analysis, the study concludes that resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the South-East Nigeria is a reaction to the marginalization, alienation and political exclusion of the geopolitical zone by Buhari administration, as well as the killings in the region by armed Fulani herdsmen. The Buhari policy of winner take it all, wittingly or unwittingly made ethnicity a determinant factor in the questions of who gets what, when and how in the allocation of national values.

It created ethno-consciousness and made many people from South-East Nigeria to lose confidence in the Nigeria Project. The paper argues that if the Buhari administration was fair to all and treated the South-East Nigeria as equals in the Nigerian project, they wouldn't have been resurgence of ethno-nationalism in the region. The paper maintains that with the formation of the ESN, the Nigerian State ceases to have monopoly of the instruments of violence.

VII. Recommendations

The study makes the following recommendations:

The Federal Government of Nigeria should at all times run all inclusive government and treat every part of Nigeria as equals in distribution of political appointments and location development projects. The government must ensure that all the geopolitical zones are duly represented in the National Security Council (NSC).

The study argues for restructuring of Nigeria Federation through Sovereign National Conference (SNC), wherein all the ethnic nationalities, critical stakeholders and interest groups will come together to discuss the future of Nigeria union.

The study recommends for a referendum for any ethnic group or region that wants to exit from the Nigeria Federation to do so peacefully.

Nigeria government should not introduce nepotism and ethno-religious sentiments into the Armed Forces and other security agencies, but strengthen military sense of professionalism by working for military institutions that are professionally bound, highly qualitative and combat ready.

Again, Nigeria security challenges needs systemic approach to synergize with local dynamics of threats. The study therefore recommends a strategic focus on active citizen engagement and cooperation as an imperative national security strategy.

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