



Undead Past: What Drives Support for the Secessionist Goal of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in Nigeria?

Daniel Tuki*

HiCN Working Paper 374

November 2022

Keywords: Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB, Secession, Horizontal inequalities, Ethnic marginalization, Nigeria

JEL classification: J15, O17, Z13

Abstract

Although the secessionist conflict in Nigeria's Eastern Region has persisted for over two decades and become increasingly violent, no study has, to the best of my knowledge, examined the factors influencing support for secession using representative data for Nigeria. This study fills that gap. Relying upon the horizontal inequalities (HEs) theory, this study examines the effect of ethnic marginalization and socioeconomic condition on support for secession. Among members of the Igbo ethnic group, perceived ethnic marginalization was found to increase the likelihood of supporting secession. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, a unit increase in perceived ethnic marginalization increases the likelihood to "strongly agree" with secession by 13 percent. Socioeconomic condition was measured at the individual, household, and communal levels. The individual and household measures had no effect on support for secession, but the communal measure did. However, the results contravened the prediction of the HEs theory: improvements in socioeconomic condition at the communal level rather increased the likelihood of supporting secession. Belonging to the Igbo ethnic group was also found to increase the likelihood of supporting secession. Compared to non-Igbos, Igbos are 16 percent more likely to "strongly agree" with secession and 32 percent less likely to "strongly disagree" with it.

*Research Fellow, Migration Integration and Transnationalization Department, WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany (Email: daniel.tuki@wzb.eu)

I'd like to thank Prof. Dr. Ruud Koopmans and Hussaini Kwari for their helpful comments. An early version of this paper was presented at the Migration Integration and Transnationalization Department's colloquium at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. I thank participants for their feedback. Thanks to Afrobarometer for providing me with the survey data, and Roisin Cronin for editorial assistance.

1.0. Introduction

Since Nigeria's transition to civilian rule in 1999, it has contended with various groups agitating for the independence of the predominant-Igbo Eastern Region to form the Republic of Biafra. This sentiment is tied to the defunct Republic of Biafra, which was in existence from May 30, 1967 to January 15, 1970. The secession of the Eastern Region from Nigeria marked the beginning of the Nigerian Civil War, which is also known as the Biafra War. The collapse of Biafra and its subsequent reincorporation into Nigeria marked the end of the war. Pro-Biafra agitations have largely centered on the topic of marginalization faced by members of the Igbo ethnic group in post-war Nigeria. Although secession had been contemplated by the predominantly Hausa/Fulani Northern Region and the predominantly Yoruba Western Region prior to the Biafra War, these considerations never morphed into action (Imuetinyan, 2017, p. 216; Orobator, 1987). The Igbos were the first to challenge the entity called "Nigeria" by both words and action. Despite losing the war and being reintegrated into Nigeria, Achebe (1983, p. 50) warned that unless all Nigerians (especially the Igbo) were treated fairly, the polity risked retrogression and instability. Two prominent pro-Biafra groups are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), which was established in September, 1999 (Okonta, 2018, p. 361), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement, a splinter group of MASSOB, which was established in 2014 (BBC, 2017). Although both groups are still in existence, MASSOB has diminished in prominence compared to IPOB. IPOB was created to rejuvenate the drive for secession when the head of MASSOB, Ralph Uwazurike, was thought to have compromised in his commitment to the goals of the movement (Adangor, 2018, p. 144).

The Nigerian government has been resolute in its commitment to keep the country united, and has often employed brute force through its security agencies to quell pro-Biafra agitations (Amnesty International, 2016, 2021). The current President, Muhammadu Buhari, who fought on the side of the Nigerian military during the Biafra War, proscribed IPOB as a terrorist organization in 2017 (Ogbonna, 2017; Ezea & Olaniyi, 2017), a move that Adangor (2018) strongly criticized for its politicization of the fight against terrorism. The leader of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu, is currently in the custody of Nigerian authorities and has been charged with treasonable felony (Jalloh, 2021, The Cable, 2021). This is not the first time that he has been arrested on such charges. He was first arrested in 2015 and released on bail after two years of incarceration. The conditions of his release prohibited him from granting interviews,

participating in rallies, and being in gatherings of over ten people (Richards, 2017), conditions he flouted when he fled the country shortly after his release and continued his campaign from abroad (Ojoye, 2017; Nasiru, 2018). His lawyers and IPOB, on the other hand, contended that he did not defy his bail conditions, but was rather compelled to flee the country because his life was under threat (Nwachukwu, 2021; Yusuf, 2021; The Cable, 2017).

IPOB's first objective, as stated on its official website, centers on discrimination: "To promote human rights advocacy and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples in all parts of the world who are facing persecution and discrimination."¹ The relationship between the various ethnic groups in post-colonial Nigeria, especially the major three (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo) has been very competitive, and to some degree adversarial. The huge overlap between ethnicity and religion adds another layer of complexity to the mix. The Igbos are predominantly Christian, the Hausa/Fulani are predominantly Muslim, while both religions are almost equally represented among the Yoruba (Laitin, 1986, p. 8). After six decades of independence, the goal of national integration still continues to elude Nigeria. Commenting on the prominence of ethnic cleavages after Nigeria gained independence from British rule, Falola and Heaton (2008, p. 159) observed: "when Nigeria became an independent sovereign state in 1960, in many ways it was a state without a nation". In his little book entitled, *The Trouble With Nigeria*, Achebe (1983, p. 5) pointed out that "Nothing in Nigeria's political history captures her problem of national integration more geographically than the chequered fortune of the word tribe in her vocabulary." Whenever the topic of marginalization is mentioned in Nigerian public discourse, it often pertains to the Igbos and their relationship with the other two major ethnic groups (Adewole, 2021; Onyekakeyah, 2021; Ede, 2021; Njoku, 2019; Daniel, 2020). Ikepeze (2000, p. 90) observed: "As a people the Igbo have been systematically disempowered politically, economically, militarily and socially by the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba groups."

Although the state of Biafra ceased to exist in 1970, its memory persists in the minds of many, including those born after the war. Despite the government's heavy-handed approach in suppressing IPOB's activities, it has remained active and its ideology has kept spreading. The government's fixation on the group has enhanced its popularity and turned its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, into a "cult hero" (Maiangwa, 2021). Emphasizing the futility of the forceful approach adopted by the Nigerian government, Idachaba and Nneli (2018, p. 56) observed

¹ <https://www.ipobgovernment.org/our-mission/>

that it “only strengthens ethno-nationalist movements, radicalize some of her members and attract public sympathy to such groups.”

Many Igbos migrate from their homeland to other parts of the country. Such movement is driven by their competitive, individualistic, and entrepreneurial nature, which enables them to perceive and take advantage of opportunities (Ede et al., 2021; Nnadozie, 2002). Also, the infertility of the land in the Eastern Region, which makes it unsuitable for agricultural purpose, coupled with its scarcity and a high population density, further drives emigration from the region to other parts of Nigeria (Achebe, 2012, pp. 74-75; Ikpeze, pp. 105-106). Given such interregional dependence, not every member of the Igbo ethnic group would support the secession of the Eastern Region from Nigeria. This study seeks to answer the following three question:

- I. What is the effect of perceived ethnic marginalization at the group level on support for secession among members of Igbo ethnic group?
- II. What is the effect of socioeconomic condition on support for secession among Igbos?
- III. Does belonging to the Igbo ethnic group increase the likelihood of supporting secession?

The third question will be answered using representative survey data for Nigeria, since the reference category comprises of Nigerians who do not belong to the Igbo ethnic group. The former two questions will be answered using the subsample of respondents who belong to the Igbo ethnic group. Much research has been done on the demand for secession by pro-Biafra groups, but most of them are qualitative. The few that use quantitative data employ it descriptively (Idachaba & Nneli, 2018; Obi-Ani et al., 2019; Chiluwa, 2018). Furthermore, these studies tend to focus on the leadership of the movements and the response of the Nigerian government, while paying scant attention to the perceptions of the larger Nigerian population. To the best of my knowledge, no study has empirically examined the factors influencing support for IPOB’s secessionist goal using representative data for Nigeria and econometric techniques, a gap this study seeks to fill.

This study proceeds as follows: section 2 provides an overview of the relationship between Nigeria’s three major ethnic groups from the 1950s up to 1970 when the Biafra War ended. Section 3 discusses some theories of inter-group conflict. Section 4 operationalizes of the variables that will be used to estimate the regression models and justifies why some independent variables are measured at the local Government Area (LGA) level. Section 5

discusses the trend of Biafra-related conflicts in Nigeria. Section 6 presents the summary statistics and specifies the general form of the model to be estimated. Section 7 presents the regression results and discusses them. Section 8 summarizes the paper and concludes.

2.0. Ethnic competition and the Biafra War

Nigeria, like most African countries, plummeted into civil war after gaining independence from colonial rule. Nigeria was created by the British in 1914 when they merged the Northern and Southern protectorates, previously distinct entities administered by the British, on January 1, 1914. The amalgamation report written by Sir. Frederick Lugard, the first Governor-General of Nigeria, shows that the merger was driven by financial expediency and administrative convenience, with little consideration for the cultural differences between the peoples who were brought together (Lugard, 1919, pp. 7-8).

Despite the amalgamation, the British continued administering the Northern and Southern Regions differently. In the Northern Region, which was an Islamic caliphate until its capture in 1903, the British did not change much when they took over. They appropriated the existing institutions and even employed the local Hausa language for administrative purposes. This contrasted with the Southern Region where the strategies of Westernization and Christianization were pursued ardently, and English was adopted as the administrative language (Coleman, 1958, pp. 46-47). The division of the Southern Region into the Eastern and Western Regions in 1939 further entrenched ethnic consciousness in the minds of Nigerians. This is because the three administrative divisions were closely associated with each of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups: The Northern Region was dominated by the Hausa/Fulani, while the Eastern and Western Regions were dominated by the Igbo and Yoruba respectively (Ake, 1993, p. 3; Imuetinyan, 2017, pp. 208-209). This put the minority ethnic groups in the uncomfortable position of having to fit into the mold of the dominant ethnic group in the region where they resided (Achebe, 2012, p. 47).

The heterogeneous peoples who constitute Nigeria were able to transcend their differences to confront a common foe – European rule, but then turned against each other after the goal of independence had been achieved. This explains why Geertz (1973, p. 237) asserted that “removing European rule has liberated the nationalisms within nationalisms.” Coleman (1958, p. 45) observed that “the greatest contribution the British have made to Nigerian unity is the pacification of the country, the establishment of central police forces, and the maintenance of a minimum standard of justice”, which points to the fact that precolonial

Nigeria was not a haven of stability where the various tribes lived in harmony. Having established their dominance over the colony through brute force and demonstrated their willingness to employ violence in quelling dissent, the British created a superficial semblance of stability within the colony (Falola, 2009, pp. 1-25). In the middle of the twentieth century when Nigeria began taking bigger strides towards independence, the ethnic cleavages between the various ethnic groups that had been lurking beneath the surface became more prominent.

Besides the adversarial relationship between Nigeria's three major ethnic groups, the smaller ethnic groups also feared that they would be dominated by the larger ones (Nigeria comprises of 250 ethnic groups). As the time for independence drew nearer, the minority ethnic groups became apprehensive about their status under the majority ethnic groups in post-independence Nigeria. They appealed to the British government to create more states to mitigate their concerns about ethnic domination. The British Government set up the Willink Commission in 1957 to examine these concerns (Akinleye, 1996).

During the hearings that followed the establishment of the Willink Commission, the minority ethnic groups accused the majority ethnic groups of occupying most of the top positions in the civil service, using the institutions of the state for their benefit, and bias in the allocation of infrastructure and social amenities (Akinyele, 1996, pp. 77-78). Although the commission acknowledged that the minority ethnic groups had genuine concerns, its members did not support the creation of more states because they thought this would create new ethnic minorities, and thus fail to address the fundamental problem of ethnic domination. They rather recommended constitutional safeguards to protect ethnic minorities as a more viable solution (Imuetinyan 2017, p. 217). Nevertheless, more administrative regions were created after independence. Mid-west Region was created in 1963, which increased the total number of administrative units to four. In the wake of the Biafra War in 1967, the military government divided the four regions into twelve states. The number states increased to nineteen in 1976, twenty-one in 1987, thirty in 1991, and thirty-six in 1996 (Alapiki, 2005).

Nigeria gained independence from British rule on October 1, 1960. Politics in post-independence Nigeria was characterized by stiff competition between the three regions, and by extension the three major ethnic groups. This seriously undermined national integration. Each region had a major political party whose support base largely comprised of the dominant ethnic group in the region. Northern People's Congress (NPC), as can be

inferred from the name, was the main party in the Northern Region. It was akin to the party of the Hausa/Fulani. Action Group (AG) in the Western Region was closely associated with the Yoruba, and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) was closely tied to the Igbos (Akinyele, 1996, p. 75; Laitin, 1986, p. 6). The fear of domination was not peculiar to the minority ethnic groups. Such apprehension was also evident in the relationship between the three major ethnic groups. While the Northern Region feared that it would be dominated by the Eastern and Western Regions, especially because it lagged in the area of education and did not have an educated population capable of filling positions in the civil service, the Eastern and Western Regions feared domination by the Northern Region because of its influence in the political sphere (Falola & Heaton, 2008, pp. 165-166; Siollun, 2009, pp. 76-77; Diamond, 1988, pp. 49-50; Laitin, 1986, p. 6).

The dearth of Western education in Northern Nigeria could be traced back to 1903 when the British captured the Sokoto Caliphate. Upon their surrender to British forces, the Muslim rulers requested that their religion should not be tampered with. This explains why Lord Lugard, in his speech during the installation of the new Sultan of Sokoto on March 21, 1903, after the initial Sultan had been deposed of due to his reluctance to submit to British authority, clearly stated that “Government will in no way interfere with the Mohameddan religion.” (Kirk-Greene, 1965, p.6). The Northern rulers were hostile towards Christian missionary evangelization in the region, while the peoples in the Eastern and Western Regions (which at the time constituted the Southern protectorate) were more open to Christianity and Western influence (Coleman, 1958, pp. 136-137). Given that Christian missionary activity and Western education often went hand-in-hand, the people in the Southern Region had more access to Western education (Ogunsola, 1974, pp. 3-6). In 1959, a year prior to Nigeria’s independence from British rule, the Northern Region accounted for a meager 10 percent of children enrolled in primary school. The estimates for the Eastern and Western Regions were 40 and 50 percent respectively. Similar patterns were present in secondary school and university enrollments (Helleiner, 1966, pp. 434-435). The Northern Region’s dismal performance could be better appreciated when one considers the fact that it accounted for over half of Nigeria’s population at that time, and still does today. “Schooling always distinguishes individuals from the general mass of society, making possible the advancement of one person over others, not on the basis of inherited status but on the basis of personal achievement.” (Ryan, 2006, p. 201). The socioeconomic and religious differences

between the states that constituted the defunct Northern and Southern protectorates are still stark in present-day Nigeria.

Nigeria's first six years after independence were tumultuous. Like Falola and Heaton (2008, p. 159) concisely put it, "Official corruption, rigged elections, ethnic baiting, bullying and thuggery dominated the conduct of politics in the First Republic, which existed from 1960 to 1966." Frustrated with the inability of the civilian government to unite the peoples of the various regions and maintain stability over the polity, a group of army officers, mostly from the Igbo ethnic group, launched a coup on January 15, 1966, which toppled the civilian government. The coup resulted in the deaths of Nigeria's Prime Minister, who was from the Northern Region, the Premiers of the Northern and Western Regions, and some senior military officers, most of whom were from the Northern Region. However, the Premiers of the Eastern and Mid-West Regions, who were Igbos, were not killed (Falola & Heaton, 2008, p. 172; Achebe, 2012, p. 64; Siollun, 2009, p. 79). The coup succeeded in toppling the civilian government, but the plotters were arrested.

The most senior army officer at the time, Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, who was of Igbo ethnicity, took over power and appointed military governors to head the four administrative regions. Lt. Colonel Chukwuemeka Ojukwu was appointed as the Governor of the Eastern Region. Since the perpetrators of the coup were mostly Igbos, it was interpreted as an attempt by the Igbos to dominate the other ethnic groups (Achebe, 2012, p. 66; Siollun, 2009, p. 79). Arguiyi-Ironsi's regime lasted for only six months. He was killed in a counter coup orchestrated by soldiers from the Northern Region. This led to the ascension of Lt. Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Northerner, as Head of State. The Northern soldiers' thirst for revenge on the Igbos was not allayed by the killing of Arguiyi-Ironsi and the transfer of power to a Northerner. They systematically targeted their Igbo colleagues and killed them. Subsequently, they moved into the civilian sphere, alongside blood-thirsty hoodlums, and unleashed their barbarity on Igbo civilians. Tens of thousands of Igbos were killed and their properties looted and destroyed. This led to the mass exodus of the Igbos to their homeland in the Eastern Region (Siollun, 2009, pp.117-138). Between 80,000 to 100,000 lives were lost during the pogrom (Ekwe-Ekwe, 1990, p. 12). Conservative estimates put the death toll at 30,000 (Achebe, 2012, p. 82).

The Igbos no longer felt safe in a united Nigeria. "It was not until 1966-7 when it [anti-Igbo sentiment] swept through Northern Nigeria like 'a flood of deadly hate' that the Igbo first

questioned the concept of Nigeria which they had embraced with much greater fervor than the Yoruba or the Hausa/Fulani.” (Achebe, 1983, p. 45). This led to the Governor of the Eastern Region, Lt. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, proclaiming the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967. Although Ojukwu was at the forefront in the fight for secession, the decision to secede was a collective one that was supported by the Igbo people (Achebe, 2012, p. 91). Diplomatic attempts to forestall the secession were made but they all failed. This included the Aburi Summit in Ghana and a visit to the Eastern Region by members of the National Reconciliation Commission. The secession of Biafra was soon followed by the Biafra War, which was primarily about the reincorporation of Biafra into Nigeria. After 30 months of fighting and the deaths of over a million people, largely from starvation as a result of the economic blockade imposed on Biafra by the Nigerian military, the war ended on January 15, 1970 with the surrender of Biafra (Achebe, 2012, pp. 222-228).

The Biafrans and the Federal Military Government (FMG) viewed the conflict from different perspectives: The Biafrans saw the war as a fight for the continued survival of the Igbo people and an effort to resist the genocidal tendencies of the FMG. The FMG saw the war as a battle to preserve a united Nigeria. The dynamics of the war was influenced by external actors, especially the British and French governments. Nigeria may have gained independence from British rule in 1960, but it was not economically independent because Britain still played a central role in its economic life. The British had significant investments in the financial sector, oil sector, and extractive industries. Also, Nigeria was an important market for the manufactured goods from Britain. The close ties between the two countries made it difficult for Britain to remain neutral in the war, especially because its investments were at stake and the unity and stability of Nigeria was in its economic interest. The six-day Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in the closure of the Suez Canal, further threatened British oil supplies. These factors prompted the British government to renege on its initial decision to not sell ammunition to the FMG. British support skewed the war in favour of the FMG, leading to the eventual defeat of Biafran forces in 1970 (Ekwe-Ekwe, 1990, pp. 27-36). The duration of the war was also influenced by the support that the French offered Biafran forces, which enabled them to better resist attacks launched by the Nigerian military (Ekwe-Ekwe, 1990, p. 46).

3.0. Theoretical considerations

Not every multiethnic society is embroiled in conflict. The Horizontal inequalities (HEs)

theory attempts to explain why cultural diversity leads to conflict in some instances but not in others. The crux of the theory is that cultural differences among groups, say along ethnic or religious lines, do not lead to conflict. What causes conflict is the horizontal inequalities that exist among these culturally defined groups (Stewart, 2000). By portraying inequalities among groups as the source of conflict rather than cultural differences, this theory challenges the “Clash of civilizations” perspective which contends that conflict occurs when different cultural groups come into contact (Huntington, 1996). Horizontal inequalities could be economic, social, political or cultural. Social HEs constitutes inequalities in the access to services like education, healthcare, housing etc. Cultural HEs could emanate from discrepancies in the recognition ascribed to different languages, norms, customs, and practices (Stewart, 2000, p. 249; 2010, pp. 1-2). These inequalities, which have the capacity to cause grievances among marginalized groups, are crucial in the mobilization process that precedes the onset of conflict. For or a group to be cohesive, its members need to share certain characteristics like having a common language, tradition, ethnicity, religion, and the same source of hardship. The leaders of these groups often employ the strategy of “reworking historical memories” to accentuate the identity of the group and strengthen cohesion within it (Stewart, 2000, p. 247). The capacity of the marginalized group to cause conflict also depends on its size. “Where groups are small numerically, their potential to cause conflict on a substantial scale is limited, even when they suffer persistent discrimination.” (Stewart 2000, p. 254).

The HEs theory is hinged on the constructivist view that identity is malleable, socially constructed, and could change over time. Yet, it also acknowledges that some aspects of identity are quite stable and difficult to change. It is often on the basis of these difficult-to-change identities that grievances are usually stirred up in the mobilization process. These relatively stable aspects of identity also tend to make ethnic boundaries more prominent (Stewart, 2008, pp. 10-11). Sen (2006, p. 2) echoed this sentiment when he observed: “A strong – and exclusive – sense of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the perception of distance from other groups.” He also highlighted the tendency for identity to be exploited towards a violent end when he observed that “Violence is fomented by the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people, championed by proficient artisans of terror.” (p. 2). A crucial element in Sen’s view of identity is the attribution of responsibility to the individual. He pointed out that while an

individual could belong to several groups and have multiple identities, he or she had the capacity to decide on the amount of importance to attach to each of these identities (pp. 5-6). Nevertheless, he also acknowledged that people may encounter difficulty in disentangling themselves from certain categories that were ascribed to them by the larger society, take for instance the case of race (pp. 6-8).

While the existence of grievances – imagined or real – is crucial in linking horizontal inequalities to conflict, the capacity for grievances to cause conflict has been challenged. Collier and Hoeffler (2000, 2004), in their *Greed and grievance* series of publications, argued that most rebellions are driven by greed, and the narrative of grievances is merely a façade used by rebel leaders to conceal their ulterior motive of self-enrichment. Crucial to their argument is the role played by natural resources and the diaspora community in financing the rebel group. They contended that inequality, repression, and ethnic diversity do not increase the risk of conflict onset. A high dependence on primary commodity exports and ethnic domination which they defined as a single ethnic group accounting for 45 to 90 percent of a country's population were what caused conflict. In a later publication where they zoomed in on the determinants of secessionist conflicts, Collier and Hoeffler (2006) contended that secession can increase the risk of conflict. This is because it reduces the level of ethnic and religious fractionalization, while in turn increases the tendency for ethnic domination. A low level of ethnic fractionalization makes rebel recruitment less challenging for the rebel leader because it becomes easier to unite different peoples towards a shared objective. They concluded thus: “secessionist movements should not in general be seen as cries for social justice. Those few secessionist movements that are able to scale-up to being organizations with a serious political or military capability are likely to occur in rich regions and contain an element of a resource grab.” (pp. 52-53).

This study relies on the HEs theory and focuses specifically on its social and economic dimensions. The following hypotheses will be tested:

H₁: Perceived ethnic marginalization increases the likelihood of supporting secession among Igbos

H₂: Poor socioeconomic condition increases the likelihood of supporting secession among Igbos

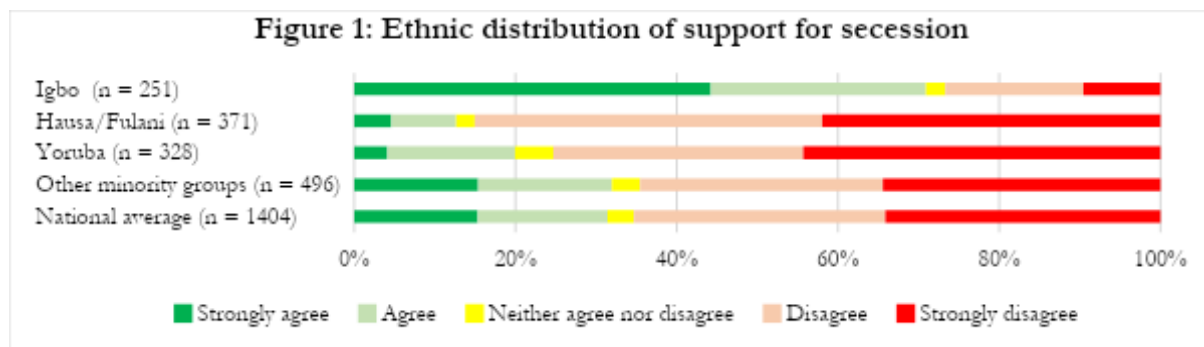
H₃: Belonging to the Igbo ethnic group increases the likelihood of supporting

secession.

4.0. Operationalizing the variables

4.1. Dependent variable

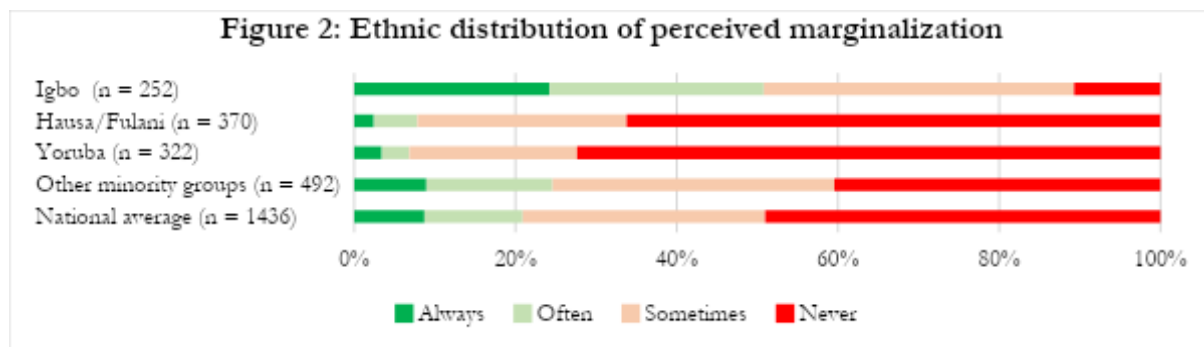
Support secession: This measures the degree of support that respondents have for IPOB's secessionist goal. It was derived from the question, "The Indigenous People of Biafra or IPOB, should be given the right to secede from the federation?", with response options on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". As shown in figure 1, Igbos are more supportive of secession than the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, the minority ethnic groups combined, and the national average. This data was obtained from the Round 7 geocoded Afrobarometer survey (BenYishay et al. 2017).²



4.2. Explanatory variables

Perceived ethnic marginalization: The measure for perceived ethnic marginalization was obtained from the question, "How often, if ever, are [*Insert respondent's Ethnic Group*] treated unfairly by the government?", with the response options on a 4-point scale ranging from "never" to "always". A strength of this variable is its focus on marginalization at the group level rather than the individual level, which fits snugly with the HEs theory. As shown in figure 2, Igbos have a higher level of perceived marginalization than the other ethnic categories and the national average.

² In the original Afrobarometer dataset, "1 = strongly agree" and "5 = strongly disagree". For easy interpretation of the regression results in this study, I have inverted the ordinal values assigned to the response categories by subtracting each of them from 6. This allows for higher ordinal values to denote higher support for secession and vice versa. To access the Afrobarometer dataset visit: <https://afrobarometer.org/>



Socioeconomic condition: This attribute is measured at three levels: individual, household, and communal levels. At the individual level, the respondent's educational attainment is used as a proxy for socioeconomic condition. This variable ranges from 0 to 9, with 0 denoting "No formal schooling" and 9 denoting "Postgraduate". Education is central to development, which explains why it constitutes one of the three components of the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI). At the household level, socioeconomic condition is measured using a deprivation index that ranges from 0 to 4 in incremental units of 0.25. Higher values denote a higher level of deprivation and vice versa. The index was derived by combining the responses to four survey questions: "Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your family: (a) Gone without food to eat? (b) Gone without enough clean water for home use? (c) Gone without medicines or medical treatment? (d) Gone without fuel to cook your food?", with response options on a 5-point scale ranging from "Never" to "Always." The ordinal values assigned to the response categories were added across the four items and the average was taken. The four items had a Cronbach Alpha statistic of 0.78, which shows internal reliability. At the communal level, socioeconomic condition is measured using the mean literacy rate (Bosco et al., 2017)³ and mean annual nighttime light (Ghosh et al., 2021)⁴ in the Local Government Area (LGA) where the respondents reside. Both datasets are gridded and the relevant statistics were computed using QGIS software. The mean annual nighttime light statistic was derived by dividing the sum of pixels in the LGA by the total number of pixels. For example: If Kaura LGA has a total of five pixels, three with a band of 50 and two with a band of 25, the mean pixels in the LGA would be derived thus: $\frac{3(50)+2(25)}{3+2} = 40$. The pixels range from 0 to 63. I used the 2016 data because the survey was conducted in 2017. This serves as a lag. Literacy rate, which is expressed in percentage,

³ The literacy rate data could be accessed at: <https://hub.worldpop.org/geodata/summary?id=1266>

⁴ To access the nighttime light data visit: <https://eogdata.mines.edu/products/dmsp/>

measures the number of men and women between the ages of 15 and 49 in the LGA who were literate in 2013. Since the raw data is gendered, I computed the estimates for males and females separately and then took the average. Higher values for both literacy rate and nighttime light indicate a better socioeconomic condition and vice versa.

4.3. Control variables

Two control variables, a perceptive measure for institutional quality and an objective measure for political instability, will be considered while estimating the regression models. The measure for institutional quality is derived from the survey question, “How often in this country, are people treated unequally under the law?”, with the response options on a 4-point scale ranging from “Always” to “Never”. The rationale for adding this control variable to the model is underpinned by the crucial role that impartial and inclusive institutions play in the process of economic development (Rothstein, 2011; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Political instability is measured using the total number of violent conflicts in the LGA where the respondents reside. Based on the Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) (Raleigh et al., 2010), I define violent conflicts as incidents that fall under the categories of Battles, Violence against civilians, and Explosions/Remote violence. The ACLED data is available starting from 1997 and is updated in real time. Only incidents from 1997-2016 were considered in this study.⁵

4.4. Why associate respondents with statistics computed at the LGA level?

Measurement at the LGA level allows for more variation, since the LGA is a smaller unit compared to the state or senatorial district.⁶ Moreover, ethnicity was considered in the state-creation process in postcolonial Nigeria. Ethnicity is closely associated with the spatial area occupied by members of an ethnic group (Toft, 2003).

⁵ To access the ACLED data visit: <https://acleddata.com/>

⁶ Nigeria comprises of 36 states, plus Abuja, the federal capital territory. Each state comprises of three senatorial districts, which amounts to 109 senatorial districts, including Abuja also doubles as a senatorial district. The senatorial districts further comprise of 774 LGAs.

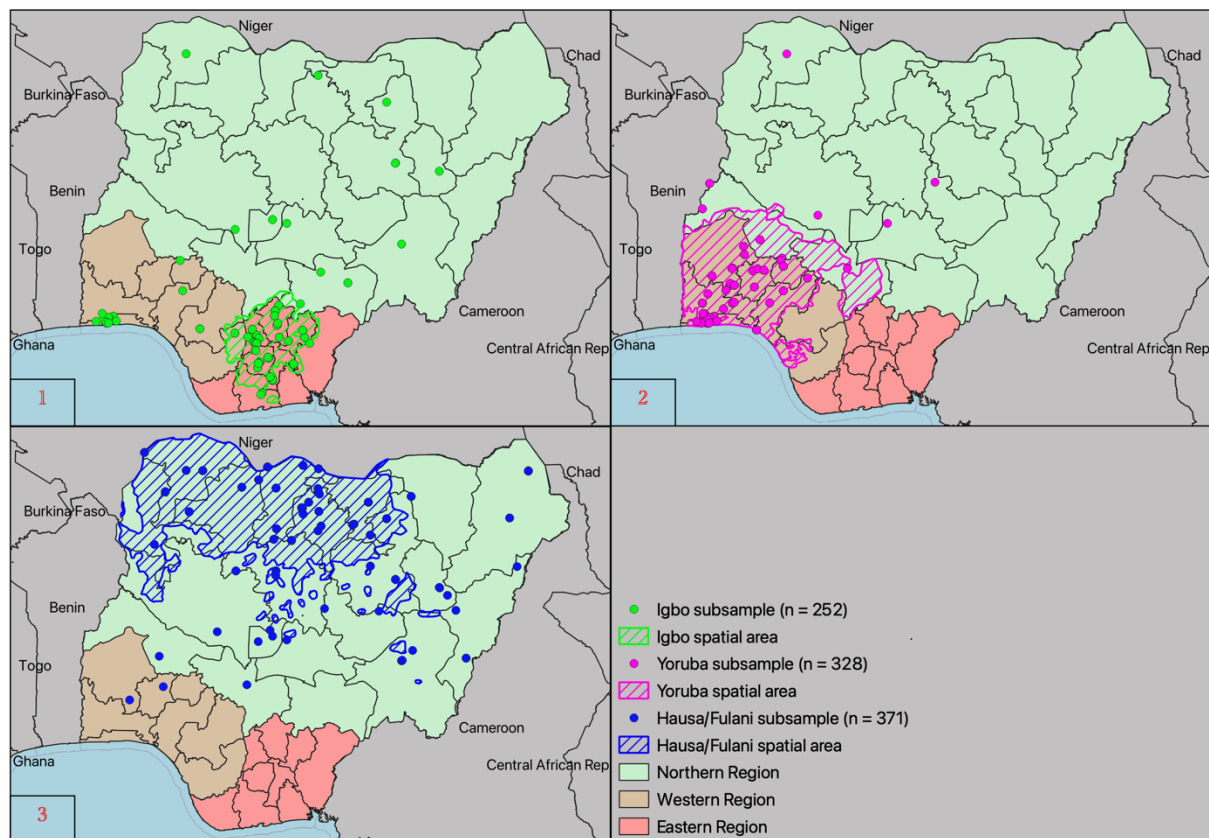


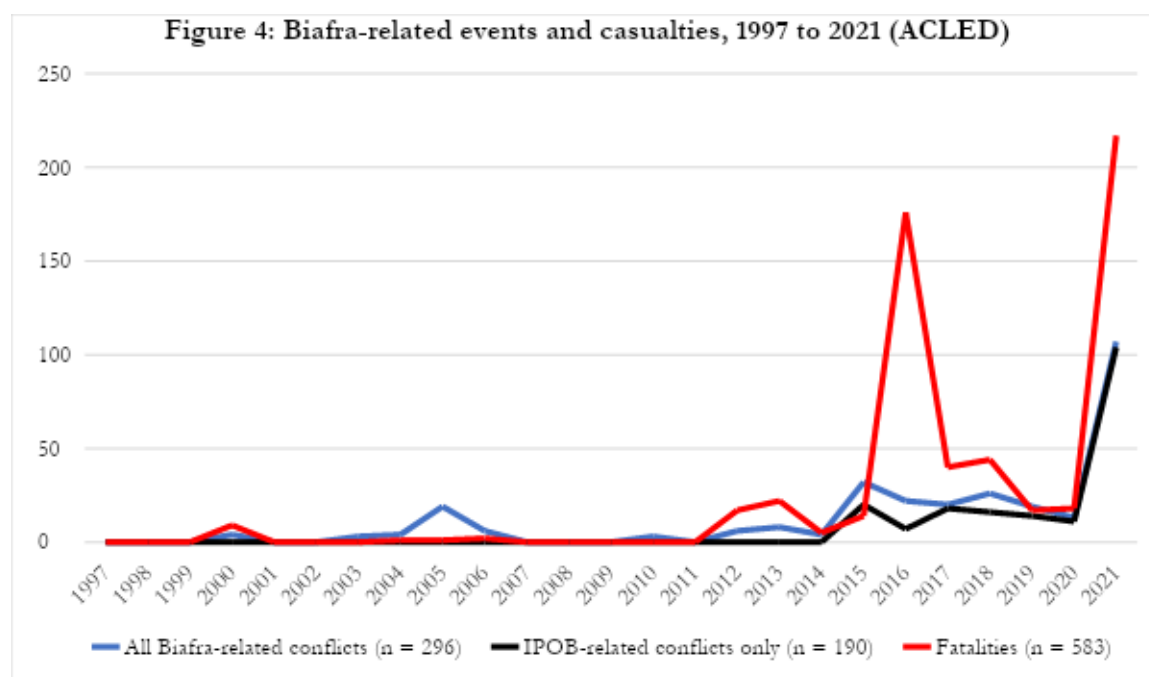
Figure 3: Ethnicity and settlement patterns

In figure 3, I render the geolocations of the survey respondents who belong to the three major ethnic groups on a map of Nigeria⁷ alongside the Georeferencing of Ethnic groups (GREG) dataset (Wiedmann et al., 2010).⁸ Settlement patterns among ethnolinguistic groups in Nigeria have persisted over time. The first panel in figure 3 shows the geolocations of the 252 survey respondents who belong to the Igbo ethnic group. Besides showing Nigeria's three major regions, the administrative boundaries of Nigeria's 36 states and the federal capital territory are also shown. 83 percent of the Igbos reside in the Eastern Region or the spatial area occupied by their ethnolinguistic group. As shown in panel 2, 95 percent of the Yoruba respondents reside either in the Western Region or the Yoruba spatial area. Panel 3 shows that 99.5 percent of the Hausa/Fulani respondents reside in the Northern Region. The relatively higher number of Igbos residing outside the Eastern Region compared to the members of other ethnic groups mirrors the tendency for the Igbos to move to other parts of the country.

⁷ The shapefiles for Nigeria's administrative boundaries was developed by UNOCHA, Nigeria. It can be accessed at <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/nga-administrative-boundaries>

⁸ Relying on maps and data obtained from the 1960s Soviet *Atlas Narodov Mira*, the GREG dataset matches the ethnolinguistic groups across the world with the spatial area they occupy.

5.0. Trend of pro-Biafra agitation



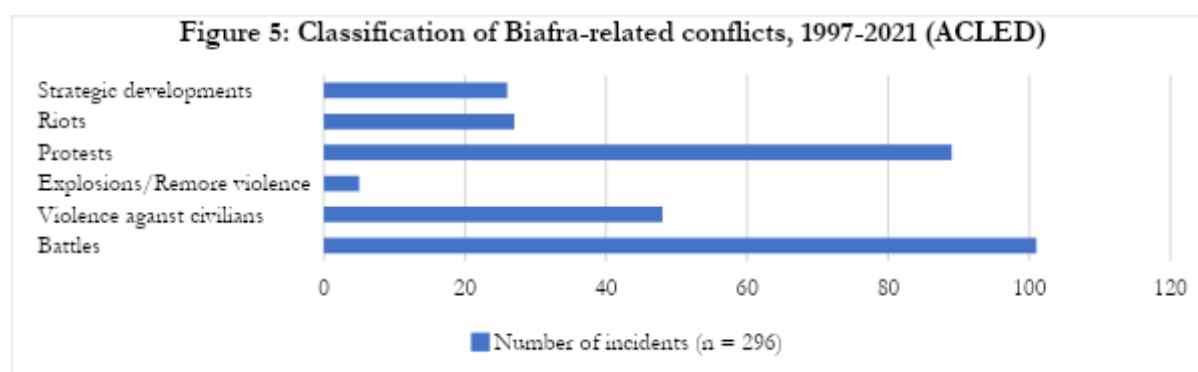
Except for the rule of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, which lasted from 1979 to 1983, and the 83-day rule of Chief Ernest Shonekan in 1993, Nigeria was ruled by military dictators from 1970 when the Biafra War ended until May 1999 when the military officially handed power to a civilian government.⁹ Nigeria has remained under civilian rule since then. The transition to civilian rule marked the beginning of pro-Biafra agitations. The absence of such agitations prior to 1999 may be explained by the repressive nature of the military governments and their willingness to employ brute force in keeping the polity under control. Moreover, the way the Biafra War ended – with the defeat of Biafran forces, the Biafran leader fleeing to Ivory Coast, coupled with the material and psychological carnage that the war caused, the resolve of the Igbos must have been shaken. The transition to civilian rule probably created a semblance of expanded freedoms, which allowed pro-Biafra sentiments that had been simmering beneath the surface to erupt.

Figure 4 shows the trend of Biafra-related conflicts and the accompanying fatalities from 1997 to 2021. A limitation of the ACLED dataset is its heavy reliance on media reports. It is possible that pro-Biafra agitations were present when Nigeria was under military rule, but they were not reported in the media because press freedom was stifled. Nevertheless, the ACLED dataset still remains invaluable in understanding the trend and nature of pro-Biafra

⁹ Both civilian leaders were deposed through military coups.

conflicts because of its disaggregated nature and the fact that it is updated in real time. The blue curve shows the annual distribution of the conflicts where at least one of the actors was a pro-Biafra group, while the black curve shows only the incidents involving IPOB. The latter curve is a subset of the former. The red line shows the annual distribution of fatalities accompanying the Biafra-related conflicts.

A total of 296 Biafra-related conflicts occurred between January 1 1997 and December 31, 2021, with 583 associated fatalities. IPOB accounted for 64 percent of the total Biafra-related conflicts. The first incident, which involved MASSOB, was recorded in February, 2000. Prior to 2015, MASSOB was the major pro-Biafra movement, but this changed with the advent of IPOB, whose first incident was recorded in 2015. The advent of IPOB appears to be associated with an increase in the number of fatalities. In 2016, a year after IPOB entered the scene, 176 fatalities were recorded. This corresponds to a 1,157 percent growth rate in the number of fatalities when the 14 casualties recorded in 2015 are used as the base year. 2021 was the most violent year, both in terms of the incidence of conflict and the number of fatalities. There were 104 conflicts and 217 fatalities. The proximity between the blue and black lines, especially from 2019 to 2021, shows that IPOB alone accounted for virtually all the Biafra-related conflicts during this period.



As shown in figure 5, Battles (35%), Protests (30%), and Violence against civilians (16%) were the main categories under which the Biafra-related conflicts fell. 32 incidents were recorded in 2015, 24 of which were protests. 107 incidents were recorded in 2021, 74 percent of which were either categorized as Battles or Violence against civilians. There were only 3 protests in 2021. This shows that Biafra-related conflicts have become increasingly violent.

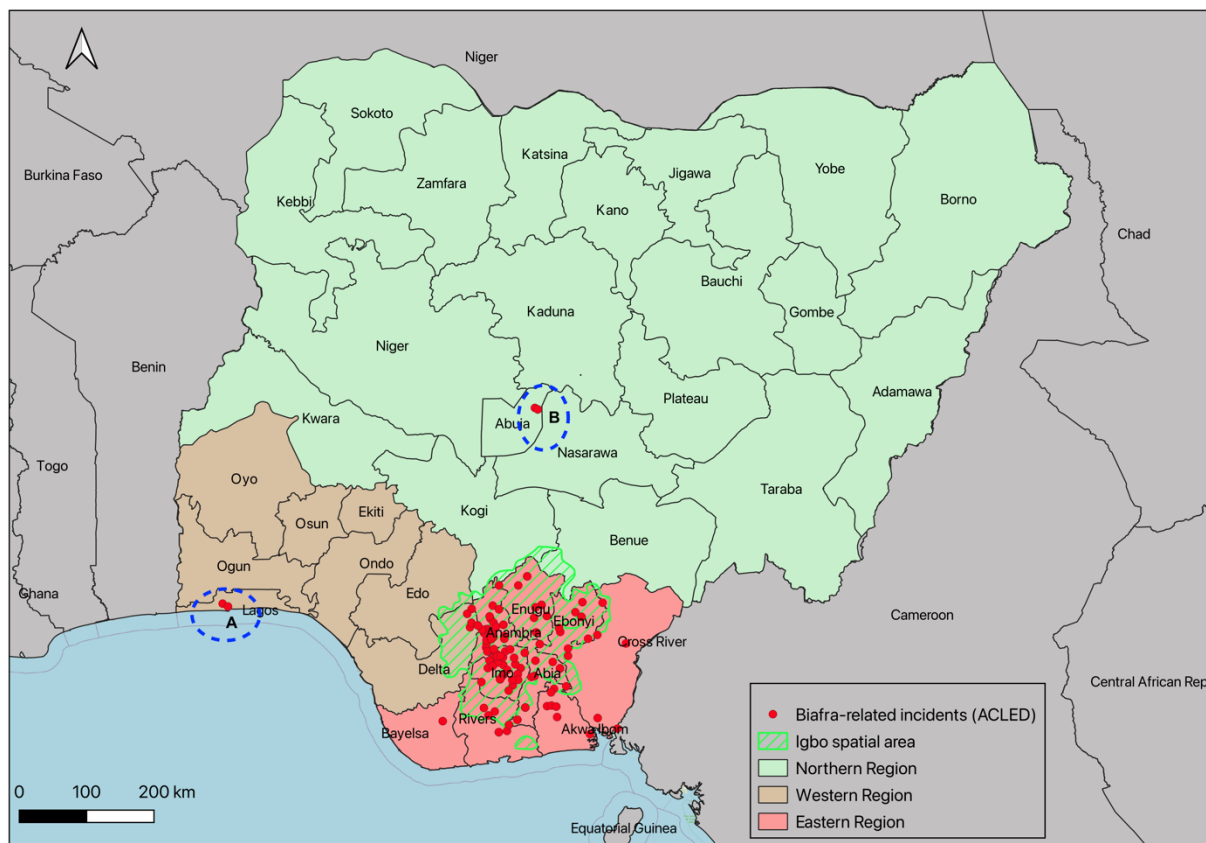


Figure 6: Biafra-related conflicts across Nigerian states (1997-2021)

The ACLED data is geocoded, so I rendered the geolocations of the Biafra-related conflicts on a map of Nigeria to see the exact places where they occurred. As shown in figure 6, the incidents are concentrated in the Eastern Region and the Igbo spatial area. There were five incidents in Abuja, which is not surprising, since it is the seat of the federal government (See point B on map). Four incidents were recorded in Lagos State (see point A). This may be explained by the concentration of Igbos in the state (See panel 1 in figure 3).

6.0. Data and methodology

The study relies on the Round 7 Afrobarometer geocoded survey data for Nigeria which was collected in 2017. Unfortunately, the question on secession was not asked in the recent Round 8 survey conducted in 2020. The Round 7 dataset contains 1600 observations and is representative for Nigeria. Observations were drawn from each of Nigeria's 36 states, plus Abuja. The respondents resided in 147 of Nigeria's 774 LGAs. The dominance of Nigeria's three major ethnic groups was reflected in the data, with the Hausa/Fulani (22.78%), Igbo (17.22%), and Yoruba (23.19%) accounting for 63 percent of the total respondents. Respondents were at least 18 years old. The data also contains information about the ethnic

group to which the respondents belong, which makes it possible to break the data based on ethnic affiliation. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the full data and the subsample of Igbo respondents.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	
Igbo	1447	0.174	0.379	0	1	
Educational level	1445	4.513	2.155	0	9	
Educational level ^w	252	5.333	1.582	0	9	
Deprivation index	1445	0.853	0.846	0	4	
Deprivation index ^w	252	0.782	0.802	0	3.5	
Literacy rate	1584	0.644	0.25	0.124	0.976	
Literacy rate ^w	252	0.855	0.114	0.251	0.963	
Nighttime light	1584	6.684	13.267	0	57.985	
Nighttime light ^w	252	7.902	12.467	0	57.985	
Political instability	1584	11.241	24.939	0	184	
Political instability ^w	252	9.067	16.436	0	184	
<i>IPOB, should be given the right to secede from the federation</i>						
		<i>Strongly agree</i> (5)	<i>Agree</i> (4)	<i>Neither</i> (3)	<i>Disagree</i> (2)	<i>Strongly disagree</i> (1)
Support secession	1404	15.32%	16.1%	3.28%	31.20%	34.12%
Support secession ^w	251	44.22%	22.69%	2.39%	17.13%	9.56%
<i>How often are members of your ethnic group treated unfairly?</i>						
		<i>Always</i> (3)	<i>Often</i> (2)	<i>Sometimes</i> (1)	<i>Never</i> (0)	
Ethnic marginalization	1436	8.70%	12.19%	30.08%	49.03%	
Ethnic marginalization ^w	252	24.21%	26.59%	38.49%	10.37%	
<i>How often in this country are people treated</i>						
		<i>Always</i> (3)	<i>Often</i> (2)	<i>Rarely</i> (1)	<i>Never</i> (0)	

unequally under the law?

Poor institutions	1438	31.5%	27.47%	23.02%	18.01%
Poor institutions ^ψ	252	38.10%	30.95%	15.08%	15.87%

Note: All values are for the country-level data, except for those with the symbol ψ which are for the subsample of Igbo respondents. The numbers in parenthesis are the ordinal values assigned to the response categories.

The general form of the model to be estimated could be expressed thus:

$$Y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X'_{1t} + \beta_2 X'_{2t} + \varepsilon_t$$

Where Y_t is the dependent variable which measures support for secession, β_0 denotes the intercept, X'_{1t} is a vector of explanatory variables measuring belonging to the Igbo ethnic group, socioeconomic condition, and ethnic marginalization. X'_{2t} is a vector of control variables measuring the quality of institutions and political instability. β_1 and β_2 represent the coefficients of the explanatory and control variables respectively. ε_t is the error term, while t represents the year in which the variables are measured. “Don’t know” and “Refused to answer” responses in the survey were treated as missing observations. Since the dependent variable is measured on a five-point ordinal scale, the model was estimated using ordered logit regression.

7.0. Results and discussion

Table 2 presents the regression results. I estimated models 1 to 4 using the subsample of Igbo respondents, models 5 and 6 using the full data for the Nigeria, and model 7 using the subsample of non-Igbo respondents. Since some explanatory variables are measured at the LGA level, I clustered the standard errors at the district level. In the Afrobarometer dataset, a district is akin to an LGA.

Table 2: Determinants of support for secession

Support	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
secession ^o	Ologit	Ologit	Ologit	OLS	Ologit	OLS	Ologit
	Igbo	Igbo	Igbo	Igbo	All	All	Non-Ig

							bo	
Igbo							1.511*	1.135***
							**	
							(0.231)	(0.154)
Deprivation index	-0.028		-0.001	-0.039	0.14*	0.086*	0.201*	
							*	
							(0.206)	(0.081)
Educational level	-0.084		-0.088	-0.079	-0.023	-0.009	0.002	
							(0.073)	(0.029)
Literacy rate	4.513*		4.292*	2.898***	1.109*	0.899***	0.843*	
							**	*
							(1.072)	(0.335)
Nighttime light	-0.011		-0.004	-0.002	-0.005	-0.003	-0.004	
							(0.009)	(0.005)
Ethnic		0.57**	0.51**	0.307***	0.348*	0.25***	0.292*	
marginalization		*	*		**		**	
							(0.132)	(0.087)
Poor institutions			0.192*	0.142	0.111*	0.076**	0.099*	
							*	
							(0.116)	(0.054)
Political instability			-0.004	0.001	0.002	0.002	0.003	
							(0.005)	(0.004)
Intercept 1	0.924	-1.436*	1.841*		0.65**		0.594*	
							**	*
							(0.99)	(0.244)
Intercept 2	2.239*	-0.165	3.187*		2.139*		2.101*	
							*	**
							(1.039)	(0.232)
Intercept 3	2.365*	-0.041	3.318*		2.314*		2.287*	
							*	**
							(1.053)	(0.234)
Intercept 4	3.552*	1.166*	4.592*		3.46**		3.413*	

	**	**	**		*		**
	(1.037)	(0.27)	(1.172)		(0.239)		(0.25)
Constant				0.995		1.315***	
				(0.794)		(0.16)	
Observations	251	251	251	251	1371	1371	1120
R-squared				0.134		0.227	
Log	-323.59	-323.24	-313.24		-1795.3		-1472.0
pseudolikelihood	2	4	7		49		24

*Notes: Clustered robust standard errors are in parentheses, ϕ is the dependent variable, and *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.*

Model 1 was estimated using only the measures of socioeconomic condition. All, except for literacy rate, were statistically insignificant. Literacy rate carried a positive sign which suggests that a higher level of socioeconomic development at the communal level increases the likelihood of supporting secession. This is incongruent with prediction of the HEs theory. A closer inspection of this variable shows that the Igbos had a mean literacy rate of 86 percent, which exceeds the estimates for the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and the national average, which are 35, 80, and 64 percent respectively. A similar pattern is apparent when the educational level of the respondents is considered. The Igbos had a mean educational level of 5.33, which exceeds the estimates for the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and the national average which were, 2.96, 5.06 and 4.51 respectively. The positive relationship between literacy rate and support for secession among the Igbos might be because the Igbos feel that their association with Nigeria holds them back and they could do better if they secede. After all, they already outperform the other ethnic categories and the national average in the areas of educational attainment and literacy rate.

I estimated model 2 using only the measure for perceived ethnic marginalization. It carried the expected positive sign and was significant at the 1 percent level. This implies that a higher level of perceived ethnic marginalization increases the likelihood of supporting secession. 51 percent Igbos think members of their ethnic group are either “always” or “often” treated unfairly by the Nigerian government. The estimates for the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and the national average are 8, 7, and 21 percent respectively. In model 3, I added all the explanatory variables alongside the control variables for institutional quality and political

instability. Literacy rate and ethnic marginalization both remained significant at the 1 percent level and retained their positive signs. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, the analysis showed that a unit increase in perceived ethnic marginalization increases the likelihood to “strongly agree” with secession by 13 percent.¹⁰ Of the two control variables, only Poor institutions was significant. It carried a positive sign which indicates that poor institutions increase the likelihood of supporting secession. To check for the robustness of these results, I treated all the variables as continuous and re-estimated the model using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. As shown in model 4, the results were consistent with those from the previous models that are based on maximum likelihood estimation (MLE).

I estimated model 5 using the full data for Nigeria. I also added a dummy variable that takes the value of 1 if the respondent belongs to the Igbo ethnic group and 0 otherwise, alongside the other independent variables. Igbo carried a positive sign and was significant at the one percent level. This is congruent with the a priori expectation that belonging to the Igbo ethnic group increases the likelihood of supporting secession. Keeping all covariates at their mean levels, the analysis showed that Igbos are 16 percent more likely to “strongly agree” with secession and 32 percent less likely to “strongly disagree” with it when compared to non-Igbos.¹¹ Deprivation index was significant at the 10 percent level indicating that among Nigerians, being economically deprived increases the likelihood of supporting secession. Ethnic marginalization was significant at the one percent level and carried a positive sign, indicating that among Nigerians, perceived ethnic marginalization increases the likelihood of supporting secession. Literacy rate and the measure for institutional quality were also significant and their signs were consistent with those from the previous models that are based on the Igbo subsample of Igbo respondents. As a robustness check, I treated all the variables in models 5 as continuous and re-estimated the model using OLS regression. The results, which are shown in model 6, are consistent with those from model 5. As was shown in subsection 4.2, Igbos report very high levels of ethnic marginalization compared to members of the other ethnic categories. It is thus possible that the effect of ethnic marginalization on support for secession in models 5 and 6 was driven by the Igbo respondents. To check if this is indeed the case, I estimated a model using the subsample of non-Igbo respondents. As shown in model 7, Ethnic marginalization remained significant at the 1 percent level and its positive sign persisted. An explanation for this finding could be that non-Igbos who feel that

¹⁰ The marginal effects for model 3 are reported in Table 4 in the appendix.

¹¹ The marginal effects for model 5 are reported in Table 5 in the appendix.

members of their ethnic group are treated unfairly by the government have a lot of sympathy for the plight of IPOB, and thus are more supportive of its secessionist goal.

While models 5 and 6 test for a direct relationship between belonging to the Igbo ethnic group and support for secession, the relationship between these two variables might be indirect. Igbos might support secession because they feel that members of their ethnic group are marginalized by the government. Ethnic marginalization could thus serve as a mediating variable between belonging to the Igbo ethnic group and support for secession. This relationship is expressed in figure 7.

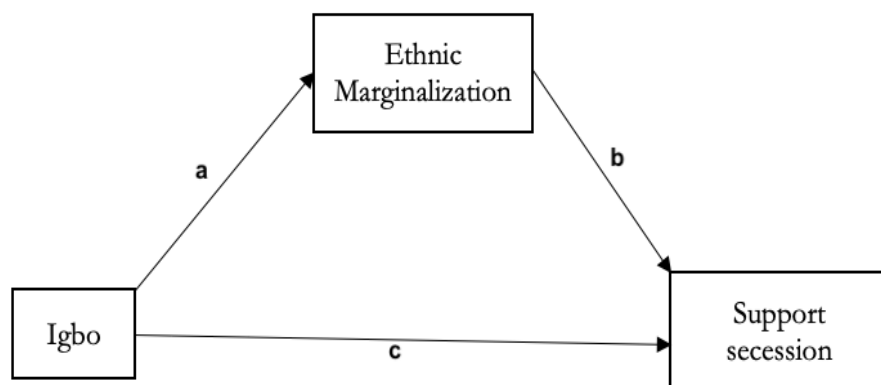


Figure 7: Pathway for direct and indirect relationships

To check for this indirect effect, a decomposition model was estimated. For easy interpretation of the results, I treated all the variables as continuous. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Using ethnic marginalization as a mediator variable

Support secession ^o	(8)	(9)
	Without control variables	With control variables
Indirect effect (a x b)	0.296*** (0.048)	0.222*** (0.04)
Direct effect (c)	1.303*** (0.108)	1.135*** (0.106)
Proportion of total effect mediated	19%	16%
Observations	1393	1371

*Notes: Robust standard errors are in parentheses, ϕ is the dependent variable, and ***
 $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$*

Model 8 is the baseline model where no covariates were included. If these results were to be taken at face value, then 19 percent of the total effect that belonging to the Igbo ethnic group has on support for secession occurs through the mechanism of ethnic marginalization. In model 9, I added covariates for socioeconomic condition, institutional quality, and political instability. The proportion of total effect mediated by ethnic marginalization decreased by 3 percentage points.

8.0. Conclusion

Relying upon the framework of the HEs theory, this study examined the effect of perceived ethnic marginalization and socioeconomic condition on support for secession among members of the Igbo ethnic group. Perceived ethnic marginalization at the group level was found to increase the likelihood of supporting secession. Socioeconomic condition was measured at the individual, household, and communal levels. The individual and household measures of socioeconomic condition had no effect on support for secession, but the communal measure did. However, it carried a positive sign which suggested that improvements in socioeconomic condition at the communal level rather increased support for secession. This contravenes the predictions of the HEs theory. Even though the Igbos perform better than the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, and the national average in the socioeconomic sphere, they report much higher levels of ethnic marginalization. Compared to Non-Igbos, Igbos were 16 percent more likely to “strongly agree” with secession and 32 percent less likely to “strongly disagree” with it.

It is likely that the strong feeling of ethnic marginalization among the Igbos is caused by political HEs, a dimension of HEs that is outside the scope of this study. Since Nigeria’s transition to civilian rule in 1999, presidential elections have been held six times. Members of the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba ethnic groups have held the offices of President and Vice president, but never a person of Igbo descent. For the most part of Nigeria’s history, political power at the center has been controlled by the Hausa/Fulani (Mustapha, 2009; Ukiwo, 2013, pp. 182–184). Some commentators have attributed the secessionist conflict in the Eastern Region to the political marginalization of the Igbos (Uroko et al., 2022; Ojoko, 2022; Njoku et al., 2022; Akubo, 2021).

It is unlikely that the Nigerian government would allow the Eastern Region to secede. It houses much of Nigeria's oil reserves, and the Nigerian government relies heavily on oil exports for its sustenance. Moreover, the secession of the Eastern Region could spur other groups to make similar demands. The persistence of IPOB despite the government's heavy-handed approach towards the group highlights the necessity for a non-violent approach to be adopted. Proscribing IPOB as a terrorist organization, which puts it at par with radical Islamist groups like *Boko Haram*, is counterproductive. This cuts off the channels for dialogue, which could be a precursor to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

References

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. (2003). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity and poverty*. London: Profile Books.
- Achebe, C. (2012). *There was a country: A personal history of Biafra*. London: Penguin Books.
- Achebe, C. (1983). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Essex: Heinemann Educational Books
- Adangor, Z. (2018). Proscription of the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) and the politics of terrorism in Nigeria. *Journal of Jurisprudence and Contemporary Issues*, 10(1), 143–156.
- Adewole, S. (2021, June 15). Igbo'll feel less marginalised if they produce next president, says Ngige. *Punch Newspaper*.
<https://punchng.com/igboll-feel-less-marginalised-if-they-produce-next-president-says-ngige/>
- Ake, C. (1993). What is the problem of ethnicity in Africa? *Transformation*, 22, 1-14.
- Akubo, J. (2021, April 22). No amount of killings, intimidation will stop Igbo presidency in 2023. *The Guardian*.
<https://guardian.ng/news/no-amount-of-killings-intimidation-will-stop-igbo-presidency-in-2023/>
- Alapiki, H.E. (2005). State creation in Nigeria: Failed approaches to national integration and local autonomy. *African Studies Review*, 48(3), 49-65.
- Akinyele, R.T. (1996). States creation in Nigeria: The Willink report in retrospect. *African Studies Review*, 39(2), 71-94.

Amnesty International (2021, August 5). Nigeria: At least 115 people killed by security forces in four months in country's Southeast. *Amnesty International*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/08/nigeria-at-least-115-people-killed-by-security-forces-in-four-months-in-countrys-southeast/>

Amnesty International (2016). *Nigeria: 'Bullets raining everywhere': Deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists*. Nigeria: Amnesty International. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AFR4452112016ENGLISH.pdf>

BBC (2017). Biafran leader Nnamdi Kanu: The man behind Nigeria's separatists. *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39793185>

BenYishay, A., Rotberg, R., Wells, J., Lv, Z., Goodman, S., Kovacevic, L., & Runfolo, D. (2017). Geocoding Afrobarometer Rounds 1-6: Methodology & Data Quality. AidData. <http://geo.aiddata.org>.

Bosco, C., Alegana, V., Bird, T., Pezzulo, C., Bengtsson, L., Sorichetta, A., ... & Tatem, A. J. (2017). Exploring the high-resolution mapping of gender-disaggregated development indicators. *Journal of The Royal Society Interface*, 14(129), 1–12.

Chiluwa, I. (2018). A nation divided against itself: Biafra and the conflicting online protest discourses. *Discourse and Communication*. 12(4), 357–81.

Coleman, J.S. (1958). *Nigeria: Background to nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Collier, P., & Anke, H. (2006). The political economy of secession. In Hannum, H., & Babbitt, E.F. (Eds.). *Negotiating self-determination* (pp. 37–60). Oxford: Lexington Books.

Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4), 563–595.

Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2000). *Greed and grievance in civil war* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, No. 2355). Washington DC: World Bank.

Daniel, S. (2020, March 6). Igbo still marginalised in Nigeria – Gowon. *Vanguard Newspaper*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/03/igbo-still-marginalised-in-nigeria-gowon/>

Diamond, L. (1988). *Class, ethnicity and democracy in Nigeria: The failure of the first republic*. London: Macmillan Press.

Ede, R. (2021, June 22). No amount of threat will stop Igbo from demanding rights – Abaribe. *Punch Newspaper*.

<https://punchng.com/no-amount-of-threat-will-stop-igbo-from-demanding-rights-abaribe/>

Ede, R., Okeoma, C., Nnachi, E., Okafor, G.A.T. (2021, September 10). Ohanaeze laments marginalisation, Buhari says Igbo control economy. *Punch Newspaper*.
<https://punchng.com/ohanaeze-laments-marginalisation-buhari-says-igbo-control-economy/>

Ekwe-Ekwe, H. (1990). *Conflict and Intervention in Africa: Nigeria, Angola, Zaire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ezea, S., & Olaniyi, S. (2017, September 16). Military declares IPOB terrorist group. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/military-declares-ipob-terrorist-group/>

Falola, T. (2009). *Colonialism and violence in Nigeria*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Falola, T., & Heaton, M.M. (2008). *A history of Nigeria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Ghosh, T., Baugh, K. E., Elvidge, C. D., Zhizhin, M., Poyda, A., & Hsu, F. C. (2021). Extending the DMSP Nighttime Lights Time Series beyond 2013. *Remote Sensing*, 13(24), 5004.

Helleiner, G.K. (1966). *Peasant agriculture, government, and economic growth in Nigeria*. Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc.

Huntington, S.P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of World order*. New York: Simon & Schuster

Idachaba, E.U., & Nneli, T.J. (2018). Re-invented abroad: Agitation for self-determination by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement in South-Eastern Nigeria. *Journal of African-centered Solutions in Peace and Security*, 3, 39-59.

Ikpeze, N. (2000). Post-Biafran marginalization of the Igbo in Nigeria. In Amadiume, I. & An-Na'im (Eds.). *The politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice* (pp. 90-109). London: Zed Books.

Imuetinyan, F.O. (2017). Federalism, ethnic minorities and national integration in Nigeria. In Usuanlele, U., & Ibhawoh, B. (Eds.). *Minority rights and the question of Nigeria* (pp. 207-226). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jalloh, A. (2021, June 30). How Nigeria arrested secessionist leader Nnamdi Kanu. *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/how-nigeria-arrested-secessionist-leader-nnamdi-kanu/a-58111474>

Kirk-Greene, A.H.M. (1965). *The principles of native administration in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press.

Laitin, D.D. (1986). *Hegemony and culture: Politics and religious change among the Yoruba*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lugard, F.D. (1919). *Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, and administration, 1912-1919*. Britain: HM Stationary Office.

Maiangwa, B. (2021, July 12). What drives the Indigenous People of Biafra's relentless efforts for secession. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/what-drives-the-indigenous-people-of-biafras-relentless-efforts-for-secession-163984>

Mustapha, A.R. (2009). Institutionalising ethnic representation: How effective is affirmative action in Nigeria? *Journal of International Development*, 21(4), 561-576.

Nasiru, J. (2018, October 22). DSS: We didn't help Nnamdi Kanu escape. *The Cable*. <https://www.thecable.ng/dss-we-didnt-help-nnamdi-kanu-escape>

Nnadozie, E. (2002). African indigenous entrepreneurship determinants of resurgence and growth of Igbo entrepreneurship during the post-Biafra period. *Journal of African Business*, 3(1), 49-80.

Nwachukwu, J.O. (2021, July 16). Nnamdi Kanu didn't jump bail in 2017 – Igbo lawyers vow to free IPOB leader. *Daily Post*. <https://dailypost.ng/2021/07/16/nnamdi-kanu-didnt-jump-bail-in-2017-igbo-lawyers-vow-to-free-ipob-leader/>

Njoku, L., Nzeagwu, U., Akp, N., & Nzor, E. (2022, February 2). Igbo presidency will end agitations, ensure peace, say Ohanaeze, Nwobodo. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/igbo-presidency-will-end-agitations-ensure-peace-say-ohanaeze-nwobodo/>

obodo/

Njoku, L. (2019, September 17). Igbo take alleged marginalisation by Federal Government to United Nations. *The Guardian*.
<https://guardian.ng/news/igbo-take-alleged-marginalisation-by-federal-government-to-united-nations/>

Obi-Ani, N.A., Nzubechi, O.J., & Obi-Ani, P. (2019). The resurgence of Biafra: Another perspective. *Journal of History and Military Studies*, 5(1), 108–124.

Ogbonna, A. (2017, September 19). IPOB stands proscribed, terrorist group – FG. *Vanguard Newspaper*.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/ipob-stands-proscribed-terrorist-group-fg/>

Ogunsola, A.F. (1974). *Legislation and education in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press.

Ojoko, I. (2022, January 14). Igbo presidency? Not when Nigeria is at the mercy of the north. *The Cable*.
<https://www.thecable.ng/igbo-presidency-not-when-nigeria-is-at-the-mercy-of-the-north>

Ojoye, T. (2017, September 17). Terrorism charge: Nnamdi Kanu flees, goes into hiding. *Punch Newspaper*.
<https://punchng.com/terrorism-charge-nnamdi-kanu-flees-goes-into-hiding/>

Okonta, I. (2018). ‘Biafra of the Mind’: MASSOB and the Mobilization of History. In Moses, A.D., & Heerten, L. (Eds.). *Postcolonial conflict and the question of genocide: The Nigeria-Biafra war, 1967-1970* (360-386). New York: Routledge.

Onekakeyah, L. (2021, April 6). Okupe on why Igbo can’t be president. *The Guardian*.
<https://guardian.ng/opinion/okupe-on-why-igbo-cant-be-president/>

Orobator, S.E. (1987). Nigeria: From separatism to secession 1950-1970. *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente*, 42(2), 301-314.

Raleigh, C, Andrew L., Håvard H., & Joakim K. (2010). Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(5), 651–660.

Richards, O. (2017, April 29). Nnamdi Kanu finally released on bail. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/nnamdi-kanu-finally-released-on-bail/>

Rothstein, B. (2011). *The quality of government: Corruption, social trust, and inequality in international perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ryan, P. (2006). In my end is my beginning: Muslim and Christians traditions at cross-purposes in contemporary Nigeria. In Soares B. (Ed.). *Muslim-Christian encounters in Africa*. Leiden: Brill (187-220).

Sen, A. (2006). *Identity and violence: The illusion of destiny*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company

Siollun, M. (2009). *Oil, politics and violence: Nigeria's military coup culture (1966-1976)*. New York: Algora Publishing.

Stewart, F. (2010). *Horizontal inequalities as a cause of conflict: A review of CRISE findings*. World Development Report 2011 Background Paper.

Stewart, F. (2008). Horizontal inequalities and conflict: An introduction and some hypotheses. In Stewart, F. (Ed.). *Horizontal inequalities and conflict: Understanding group violence in multiethnic societies* (pp. 3-24). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stewart, F. (2000). Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities. *Oxford Development Studies*, 28 (3), 245–263.

The Cable (2021, July 21). UK asks Nigeria to explain how Nnamdi Kanu was arrested. *The Cable*. <https://www.thecable.ng/uk-asks-nigeria-to-explain-how-nnamdi-kanu-was-arrested>

The Cable (2017, October 8). Army again raids Kanu's home, seizes 'technical items'. *The Cable*. <https://www.thecable.ng/army-searches-kanus-home-technical-items>

Toft, M.D. (2003). *The geography of ethnic violence: Identity, interests, and the indivisibility of territory*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Ukiwo, U. (2013). Managing Horizontal Inequalities and violent conflict in Nigeria. in Mine, Y., Stewart, F., Fukuda-Paar, S., & Mkandawire, T. (Eds.). *Preventing violent conflict in Africa: Inequalities, perceptions and institutions* (pp. 178–207). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Uroko, C., Obinna, E., & Iniobong, I (2022, January 16). 2023 presidency: Who goes for the

Igbo nation? *Business Day*.

<https://businessday.ng/lead-story/article/2023-presidency-who-goes-for-the-igbo-nation/>

Weidmann, N. B., Rød, J. K., & Cederman, L. E. (2010). Representing ethnic groups in space: A new dataset. *Journal of Peace Research*, 47(4), 491–499.

Yusuf, K. (2021, July 27). Timeline: Nnamdi Kanu's long battle with Nigerian government continues. *Premium Times*.

<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/475923-timeline-nnamdi-kanus-long-battle-with-nigerian-government-continues.html>

Appendix

Marginal effects at the mean for selected models

Table 4: Marginal effects at the mean for model 3

Support secession [¶]	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Deprivation index	0.00 (0.015)	0.00 (0.023)	0.00 (0.003)	-0.00 (0.011)	0.00 (0.051)
Educational level	0.006 (0.005)	0.01 (0.008)	0.001 (0.001)	0.004 (0.004)	-0.022 (0.018)
Literacy rate	-0.302*** (0.085)	-0.482** (0.142)	-0.052* (0.029)	-0.219** (0.094)	1.06*** (0.256)
Nighttime light	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.002)
Ethnic marginalization	-0.036*** (0.009)	-0.057** (0.017)	-0.006* (0.004)	-0.026** (0.013)	0.126*** (0.034)
Poor institutions	-0.014 (0.009)	-0.021 (0.013)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.01 (0.008)	0.047* (0.028)
Political instability	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-0.001

(0.00) (0.001) (0.00) (0.00) (0.001)

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses, ϕ is the dependent variable, and *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$. The numbers below the response categories denote the numerical values assigned to each of them.

Table 5: Marginal effects at the mean for model 5

Support secession ^φ	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Igbo	-0.318*** (0.048)	-0.022 (0.016)	0.02*** (0.006)	0.158*** (0.023)	0.162*** (0.162)
Deprivation index	-0.03* (0.016)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.002* (0.001)	0.015* (0.008)	0.015* (0.008)
Educational level	0.005 (0.006)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)
Literacy rate	-0.234*** (0.07)	-0.016 (0.012)	0.015*** (0.005)	0.116*** (0.033)	0.119*** (0.04)
Nighttime light	0.001 (0.001)	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.001)
Ethnic marginalization	-0.073*** (0.015)	-0.005 (0.004)	0.005*** (0.001)	0.036*** (0.008)	0.037*** (0.009)
Poor institutions	-0.023** (0.011)	-0.002 (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)	0.012** (0.006)	0.012** (0.005)
Political instability	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)

Notes: Standard errors are in parentheses, ϕ is the dependent variable, and *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$. The numbers below the response categories denote the numerical values assigned to each of them.