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EMERGENCE OF THE TINUBU PRESIDENCY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR YORUBA NATION AGITATION: A CONTEXTUAL APPRAISAL

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Abstract

The study offers a thorough contextual analysis of the Tinubu Presidency and its probable implications for the Yoruba nation's struggle. The rise to power of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a prominent political figure from Nigeria's south-west region, is a historic event with far-reaching implications for both national and regional dynamics. The study takes a multidisciplinary approach, merging political science, history, and sociology, to analyze the complex dynamics that led to Tinubu's rise to power and their impact on the Yoruba nation's political aspirations. The study begins by analyzing Bola Ahmed Tinubu's political trajectory, assessing his strategic relationships, ideological orientations, and policy ideas that led to his presidential bid. He was involved in coalition-building, both within the All Progressives Congress (APC) and across the Nigerian political landscape; this converged to catapult him to the forefront of national politics. The study assesses the impact of Tinubu's presidency on Yoruba aspirations for self-determination and regional autonomy. It explores potential changes in power relations, resource allocation, and policy priorities that may occur under his leadership, as well as how these changes may affect the Yoruba ethnic group's collective identity and socio-political trajectory. The study provides insights into the broader implications of Tinubu's presidency for Nigeria's federal structure and inter-ethnic relations. Finally, the study concludes with policy recommendations and strategic insights for parties interested in Nigeria's stability and prosperity. It makes recommendations for strengthening inclusive administration, resolving regional inequities, and ensuring that the Tinubu Presidency contributes positively to the broader national fabric while respecting Nigeria's ethnic communities' different ambitions.

Keywords: Tinubu Presidency, Yoruba Nation, Regional Autonomy, Self-Determination, Inter-Ethnic Relations.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is a country with several ethnic groups. According to Odum (2016), prior to the colonialists' entrance, various communities existed separately inside the wide territory that eventually became part of the Nigerian project. Mimiko and Adeyemi (2005: 57) agree, describing Nigeria as "a union of diverse, largely autonomous ethnic nationalities that had existed under distinct political arrangements such as empires, kingdoms, chiefdoms, city-states, and caliphate." According to Aderemi (2008), the lands that later became known as Nigeria were 'wedded' together in 1900 to form a colonial state under British administration. And, like most other multi-ethnic African states that went through colonial experience,

colonialists did not seek the approval of the diverse groups before fusing them into one entity. However, as Falola (1999:68) points out, each of these ethnic groups mobilized in a unique geographical zone that roughly paralleled colonial administrative boundaries. The Yoruba are a large ethnic group in Nigeria, with a strong presence in the south-western region. Tinubu's election to the presidency heralds a substantial shift in Nigeria's political power dynamics. His presence in the south-western region has the potential to strengthen the Yoruba political base.

According to Suberu (1994:57), when Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, the constitution affirmed existing regional differences by providing a

strong institutional base for group sentiments that secured autonomy and hegemony for the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, respectively, in the northern, western, and eastern regions. The First Republic was administered by ethno-regional groups, with each region having robust and relatively autonomous governance while the central administration concentrated on national issues such as foreign policy, international trade, and defense (Thomson, 2000:67). Despite the noble goals of the coalition, the imbalanced character of the federal system quickly became unsustainable. With somewhat more than fifty percent of the landmass and over half of the inhabitants, the North was well positioned to control the two southern regions. The weight of ethno-regional power proved too great for the federal framework to bear. According to Balogun (1983), Nigerian leaders who acquired power from colonial overlords exacerbated the problem. They not only failed to build actual unity among constituent groups but also committed measures that exacerbated the polity's perception of disunity. Nigeria has various secessionist movements, including parties fighting for Yoruba independence. Tinubu, as president, will either calm or exacerbate such movements. Some may regard his administration as a means of resolving Yoruba problems within the Nigerian state, while others may argue that the demand for an independent Yoruba nation remains urgent. Tinubu's presidency has consequences for Nigeria's general unity and cohesiveness, as it can be viewed as a move toward greater inclusivity and representation, or it can worsen existing ethnic and regional problems. Furthermore, according to Babawale (2007), the creation of political parties along ethnic lines caused real tensions among ethnic groupings, which were frequently expressed independently of national political goals. This is supported by Aderemi (2008), who claims that political elites in Nigeria developed mutual hostility among contending communities and captured political power through ethnic subjectivity-based political violence. Nigeria's foreign policy has been influenced by Tinubu's presidency, particularly in its ties with neighboring nations and international organizations.

Tinubu's political ideology and foreign policy approach have influenced Nigeria's attitude on a variety of global issues. The Tinubu presidency is regarded as advantageous to the Yoruba Nation movement. The majority of the Yoruba elite considered his victory a chance to address some of the grievances and demands expressed by advocates of Yoruba independence or self-determination. Tinubu's policies and approach to regional and ethnic issues may have an effect on the dynamics of this movement. Tinubu, who hails from the South West, is likely to boost Yoruba political dominance in the Nigerian political landscape, resulting in increased representation of Yoruba interests at the federal level.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Basis of Yoruba Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity has been viewed in terms of a group context and related to the concept of nationhood since ancient times. This viewpoint is supported by Peterson, Novak, and Gleason (1982:1), who state that the word "ethnic" is derived from the Greek *ethnos*, which signifies nation or race, via Latin. Various definitions of ethnicity expand on this by introducing the concept of a shared denominator that underpins this conception. Further, Thomson (2000:58) defines an ethnic group as "a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate based on issues of origin, kinship, ties, traditions, cultural uniqueness, a shared history, and possibly a shared language." While agreeing with the preceding, Toland (1993:3) extends the notion to include an individual sense of belonging: "[ethnicity is] the sense of peoplehood held by members of a group sharing a common culture and history within a society."

Diamond and Plattner (1994), for example, see ethnicity as a "highly inclusive (and relatively large-scale) group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily through kinship, and typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness." So defined, ethnicity easily encompasses groups distinguished by color, language, and religion; it encompasses "tribes," "races,"

"nationalities," and "castes." In that way, "an ethnic group is much like the 'imagined community' of the nation." Thomson (2000:58) explains the concept of ethnicity by emphasizing sentiments of origin and descent rather than geographical considerations of a state. "The Yoruba ethnic group could be understood within the context of the Nigerian state in this manner.

As previously stated, the Yoruba, like other ethnic ethnicities in Nigeria, existed as separate kingdoms, empires, and independent enclaves prior to the arrival of colonialism. According to Aderemi (2008), the Yoruba are made up of approximately 20 sub-groups that utilize approximately eight separate versions (dialects) of Yoruba languages that are not totally mutually intelligible. While these dialects are frequently referred to as Yoruba dialects, some of them that are not mutually intelligible may be referred to as separate languages, despite the fact that all of them are recognized to belong to the same language group, the Kwa division of Niger-Kordofanian.

According to Barber (1981), while some of them, such as Igbomina, Oyo, Egba, Ilorin, Ibolu, Ijebu, Remo, and others, have a high degree of mutual intelligibility, others, such as Ijesha, Owo, Ondo, Ilaje, and Awori, that are not mutually intelligible, may not be regarded as such. While it is likely that the various ethnic sub-groups in Yoruba land share common ancestors, the creation of a nation became necessary as a cultural and political project in which, according to Adeniran (1998), a creation of history linking all Yoruba to a common ancestry became expedient. This historical creation can be traced back to the Yoruba ancient historical source, Ifa. Indeed, Aderemi (2008) attributes the first mention of the Yoruba people as a group with shared values to Johnson (1921).

Birth of Yoruba Nationalism

Yoruba nationalism is divided into three stages, according to Aderemi (2008). The first was cultural nationalism, which was centered on the display of Yoruba cultural pride and the formation of a national unity among numerous Yoruba sub-groups that existed in distinct kingdoms or chiefdoms before colonialism. Beginning in the 1880s, the new Yoruba colonial-made

intellectuals and clerics formed cultural nationalism to build a common myth of origin, language, philosophies, faiths and beliefs, craft, and popular cultures in colonial Nigeria, with the goal of establishing pan-Yoruba pride and cultural superiority. Until the 1940s, early Yoruba intellectuals and clergy involved in cultural nationalism were not interested in the establishment of a politically autonomous Yoruba state; rather, they were interested in British colonial administrative recognition of their unique culture, particularly the Yoruba language, and the unity of the Yoruba people.

The second was the conversion of this traditional pride into a program by Yoruba colonial politicians in colonial Nigeria beginning in the 1940s. It entailed appropriating cultural nationalism's legacy in order to negotiate inclusion in colonial administration and achieve political control of Nigeria in the ensuing post-colonial Nigeria that had emerged since the late 1940s. The Yoruba origin myth was re-invented to unite all Yoruba tribes as a political constituency with a sense of collective consciousness of being Yoruba (as a pride group), through which a set of "perceived" traits of being superior to other ethnic groups in Nigeria was formed. All of these were translated to political actions such as the formation of political parties and socio-cultural groups, used in accessing political power and negotiating for political dominance in Nigeria.

Between 1900 and 1960, the third phase of Yoruba nationalism saw a number of political activities in the form of civic nationalism, which were initially based on fraternal links with other ethnic groups that comprised colonial Nigeria. According to Arifalo (2001), the EgbéOmoOdùduwà, created in 1949 and evolving into a political party known as Action Group (AG) in 1951, was the political strength of the Yoruba nationalist movement. The party dominated Western Region politics, creating the subsequent regional administration under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo, until it was plagued by intra-party squabbles that weakened its position. Even so, the party managed to maintain its political control in the region until the military overtook Nigerian politics in 1966.

According to Ajala (2008), when the ban on political organizations was repealed in 1979, it was the Yoruba led by Obafemi Awolowo that announced the formation of a political party called the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). However, as Adesoji (2008) points out, the party was founded on ethnic grounds, as many of its key figures were Yoruba politicians. The UPN, like the Action Group before it, controlled the whole Southwest in the two national elections held during the Second Republic (1979 and 1983), but did not have a sizable following outside the Yoruba political realm. At the onset of the ill-fated Third Republic, the military regime of the time created two political parties, thus ensuring that the political class had no choice but to join either of them. The Yoruba supported en masse the liberal-leaning Social Democratic Party (SDP) as against the conservative National Republican Convention (NRC). And it was on the platform of the SDP that the Yoruba illustrious son, Moshood Abiola, contested for the presidential election.

Abiola was deemed to have won the election, and the subsequent annulment of the poll, as stated earlier, brought the Yoruba to the forefront of challenging the military regime in a fight against what was perceived as gross injustice and a plot by a section of the military and the Hausa-Fulani power bloc to perpetuate itself in power at the expense of other ethnic groups. Sessay (2003) alludes to the feeling of the average Yoruba man that the election annulment was like a repeat of the jailing of Awolowo and the splitting of the old Western Region during the First Republic, two acts that were enacted by a central government controlled by the Northern Hausa-Fulani leaders with the active support of the Igbo of the Eastern Region. The 1993 annulment was therefore seen as another assault on the Yoruba ethnic nationality and as clear evidence of the plot to reduce the Yoruba race to the status of subservient people.

Further observing the development, Duruji (2008) recalls that on the eve of the advent of the Fourth Republic, the Yoruba again floated an ethnic-oriented political party named the Alliance for Democracy (AD). The party featured ideologies similar to those of the AG

and UPN and, between 1998 and 2003, acted as the Yoruba political force for the ethno-nationalist movement in southwestern Nigeria. As acknowledged by Arifalo (2001), during this period, the Yoruba, in their nationalistic consciousness, formed many socio-cultural associations such as the O'odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Afenifere, and the Yoruba Council of Elders (YCE), all linked together by a common Yoruba identity and ancestry. All these groups perceived the political contrivance and affront against the Yoruba as unbearable and thus re-created the Yoruba struggles against political marginalization. This struggle was spearheaded in the main by Yoruba political activists, who are of progressive political ideology. Of all the groups championing the cause of the Yoruba at that time, the most ferocious was the Oodua Peoples Congress, which was formed in 1994 as a socio-cultural group to promote the Yoruba people and their culture. After confronting the military regime of General Sani Abacha in a running battle, the group continued its struggle for Yoruba emancipation into the Fourth Republic, even with Obasanjo as President. Brerman et al. (2004) allude to the fact that the militant style of Gani Adams, the leader of the group, made him very visible and thus an irritant to the government. According to Suleiman et al. (2001), Adams was subsequently declared wanted by Inspector General of Police Musiliu Smith, himself a Yoruba who had been appointed into office by President Obasanjo. The OPC leader was accused of being involved in violent clashes, and a financial reward of N100,000 was offered for information leading to his arrest. He was ultimately arrested on August 22, 2001, and was held in prisons for several months in Lagos, Abeokuta, and Abuja before being released.

2.2 Empirical Review

Aniobi et al. (2011) evaluate the submissions of several notable experts on the subject, drawing conclusions on how the notion has influenced the history and trend of the Yoruba people's self-determination drive within the setting of the Nigerian state. In this context, Weller (2009) defines self-determination as the people's right to determine the status of their politics while also monitoring the evolution of their economy, social well-

being, and culture. This term encompasses the economy, politics, and socio-cultural aspects of people's lives. Carley (1996) goes on to define self-determination as a struggle to abolish colonialism and establish new republics.

Similarly, Anna'im and Deng (2006: 202) consider self-determination to be tied to the right of people in colonized areas to achieve independence. However, a number of ethnic or religion-based internal conflicts suggest that the idea should be extended to ethnic, religious, and linguistic sectors. As can be seen, delicate variables such as religion, culture, and linguistics are not exactly the same in conflicting countries due to variances in politics and historical origins. The preceding can thus be said to form the basis of Umzurike's (1997) and Aladekomo's (2021) submissions, which argue that the principle of self-determination honors the freedom of the people to arrange their future in political areas, which may be a unitary system, a federal system, a confederal system, or other formation that the people will be satisfied with. Thornberly (1997) supports this viewpoint, arguing that self-determination signifies people's right to control their own future.

In a similar vein, Akanji (2012) contends that a simple definition of self-determination refers to the right of the people to have their own state, enjoy self-government, and have self-management or home rule. Pei-linghu (2014), claimed that the word "right to self-determination" is defined as a people's right. A deeper examination of the concept of self-determination highlights the issue of human homogeneity. Scholars have pondered whether people pursuing freedom share common interests or whether there are significant internal disparities that will likely present challenges to the freedom obtained. Ojukwu (1989) responds that sinking and alienation in the state of a group that already has a partial or total sense of belonging to the state might lead to demands for independence from the nation. Some of these organizations may have had their needs met, while others may be fighting to prevent such a heinous occurrence.

It should be emphasized that the right to self-determination is universally acknowledged and must be maintained. As emphasized by Cristecu (1981), each state has the right to freely choose and develop its political, social, economic, and cultural systems. From the foregoing, it is apparent that the United Nations' position has bolstered people's freedom as they desire self-determination, whether it is about social, political, or economic liberties. These three criteria encompass nearly every area of a man's life. In light of the aforementioned, this study bases the Yoruba's desire for self-determination on their sense of frustration and marginalization within the greater Nigerian country. According to the proponents, leaving Nigeria will provide the ethnic group with the necessary atmosphere to develop and progress faster than it is doing within the Nigerian state arrangement.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In order to gain a better understanding of the topic at hand, this research employs the frustration-aggression theory to empirically explain the influence of insecurity on agitation and the urge for self-determination, notably among the Yoruba of southern Nigeria.

The frustration-aggression model was devised in 1939 by John Dollard and colleagues, but it was enlarged and improved by Yate in 1962 and Berkowitz in 1963, particularly on the psychological basis of motivation and conduct (Aniobi et al. 2011). The concept explains powerful behavioral inclinations caused by people's incapacity to meet their basic human wants. It is predicated on the broad idea that all humans have basic needs that they attempt to meet, and that any impediment to meeting these needs by individuals or organizations provokes aggressive responses.

The frustration-aggression idea is based on a person's impression of injustice and their sense of being shortchanged and denied what they naturally believe is theirs. The bottom line is that anger is a natural reaction to frustration. Thus, when an individual or group believes that their legitimate desires are being denied, either directly or indirectly, by the way a society is structured, that person or group may feel compelled to

express their frustration through violence directed at those perceived to be responsible for their misfortune or others who are indirectly related to those frustrating their expectations.

The frustration-aggression theory's relevance to this study is best highlighted in the context of the current spike in self-determination movements by a number of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Following the rise of the Biafran agitation in the country's southeast, the Yoruba of the Southwest's desire for the establishment of the Oduduwa Republic demonstrates the people's displeasure with the way the Nigerian state treats them. Other ethnic groups' perceptions of injustice and sentiments of dominance have consequently left a large number of Yoruba with no choice but to embrace the idea of leaving the country. This much was ascertained by Agbajalike (2016) with his argument that frustration and a sense of inadequacy are the primary factors that fuel ethnic agitation in Nigeria.

3. Methodology

In order to gain empirical knowledge of the subject of discourse, this research employs a qualitative case study methodology. A case study, according to Gustafsson (2017), is an exhaustive study of a person, a group of people, or a unit with the goal of generalizing across several units with a concentration on a specialty unit. Yin (2003) divides a case study into two types: single studies and multiple studies. This work adopts the single case study approach for the sake of this analysis, which Gerring (2007:1) identifies as more valuable than studies that seek transitory knowledge from a vast variety of situations. In this vein, he postulates the idea of gaining a better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part.

The struggle for a Yoruba nation is discussed in the context of the preceding, against the backdrop of several agitations by diverse ethnic nations in Nigeria. In light of this, this paper narrows the discussion to the election of Bola Tinubu, a Yoruba man, as President of Nigeria and how this development may alter the

ensuing course and dimension of the Yoruba nation-building movement.

4. Result and Discussions

A Clash of Ideologies

The significance of this paper is premised on the need to highlight the nexus between the drive for self-determination among some ethnic nationalities, particularly the Yoruba, and the evolution and application of state power in Nigeria. In this regard, the study aims at drawing attention to the unbalanced nature of Nigeria's political structure and the need to restructure it, if not for anything, to wade off the agitation for a total disembodiment of the entire state. To this end, there have been two different ideological postulations. While one school of thought is pushing for a complete cessation of the Yoruba people from the nation called Nigeria, another is calling for a restructuring of the country.

Prior to the victory of Tinubu as President of Nigeria, ethnic agitations took on a new dimension. The Igbo in the Southeast are using the resurgence of the Biafra project to pursue self-determination through force, whereas the Yoruba in the Southwest are doing so through a negotiated ultimatum. The pronouncement's rigidity by Buhari's led administration was largely based on misinterpretation, misunderstanding, and misjudgment of the relevant articles of the Nigerian Constitution (Akinterinwa, 2017).

Ihonvbere (2003) traces the rigidity of political leaders to the issue of ethnic tolerance in the First Republic, when, according to him, the actors were mainly preoccupied with the desire to gain political relevance and win votes, and by so doing, resorting to the whipping up of ethnic sentiments at the expense of the pursuit of nationalistic goals. It was no surprise, therefore, that ethnic nationality agitation soon reared its head on the political stage. And it has since been a recurring phenomenon in the country. According to Odum (2016), whether real or imaginary, agitations for separatism are indicators of disunity, and whenever they occur, a serious-minded government ought to find immediate answers to the problems being raised

by the agitators instead of remaining persistent in its declaration that the unity of the country is non-negotiable.

Perhaps this was the basis that informed a section of the Yoruba leadership to convene a conference in September 2017 in Ibadan, the political capital of the Southwest, to discuss the way forward in achieving a Yoruba nation. The summit came up with what became known as the Ibadan Declaration. Shedding light on the import of the summit, Akinterinwa (2017) posits that though self-determination remains the central goal of the Yoruba, a restructuring of the Nigerian political structure has been adopted as a viable fallback. The Declaration can be considered significant in many ways. First, all the Yoruba leaders appeared to be more united than ever before on the issue. The Afenifere and the Afenifere Renewal Group, the Oodua People Congress, the Yoruba Council of Elders, leading Yoruba traditional rulers, academics, etc. were there. Second, other Southern leaders were represented. They included delegations of the OhanaezeNdigbo and the south-south delegation. The two delegations lent support for the Yoruba standpoint on restructuring.

The Ibadan Declaration indeed comprised many interesting points, especially with the emphasis placed on the need to return to the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions and amend them where necessary to respond to current challenges. One of the resolutions was that a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria can only know real peace and development if it is run only along federal lines. Besides, the greatest imperative of restructuring Nigeria is to move from a rent-seeking and money-sharing anti-development economy to productivity by ensuring that the federating units are free to own and develop their resources. They should pay agreed-upon sums to the federation purse to implement central services.

The unfolding spate of insecurity across the Southwest, particularly against the background of an increasing invasion of Yoruba farmlands by Fulani herdsmen, brought about renewed agitation for an outright session of the Yoruba from Nigeria. At the forefront of the renewed

agitation were new firebrands that were ready to take up arms in the defense of Yoruba interests, while the Assembly of all Yoruba Groups Worldwide set aside June 12, 2021, as the day of the referendum for Yoruba on self-determination. This was among the resolutions reached at the meeting held at the Oyo State Secretariat, Ibadan, on March 18, 2021, with the theme “The Paramountcy of Yoruba Unity in Tackling the Insecurity Menace in Yorubaland.” As contained in the memoranda titled ‘Yoruba Peoples of Nigeria Memoranda for Yoruba Nation Independence’, read by OtunbaDejiOsibogun, the meeting held that Yoruba self-determination is non-negotiable. The meeting also urged Yoruba groups to organize relief materials for victims ravaged by Fulani attackers.

In the memoranda, 27 categories of people are identified in Yorubaland, and it was noted that a modern state in international relations since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia is believed to exist when there is a union of government, territory, and people or population. Consequently, by first going through the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), the Yoruba leaders have, in advance, secured the solidarity of all other peoples in similar situations. The memorandum which was copied to 43 people and other traditional rulers in Yoruba land, had three main points that are noteworthy. First, the memorandum wears the toga of the Yoruba people, but the founding of the ethnic Indigenous Nationalities Alliance for Self-Determination (INAS) from the South-West, South East, South-South, and Middle Belt clearly suggests that the Yoruba are not alone in the quest for self-determination.

The INAS held a meeting on December 18, 2020, and issued a sovereignty dispute to the Government of Nigeria on the fears of possible extermination. In fact, many reasons for seeking to exit the Republic of Nigeria were given by the Yoruba leaders. The reasons clearly show that the current situation of insecurity in Nigeria only aggravated the grievances of the Yoruba, not the originating factor of their grievance. The visible protection of the Fulani by the Buhari administration to the detriment of other ethnic groups, and particularly

the horrible and heartless killing of Yoruba people in their own homes, on public roads, on their own land, and on their own farms, surely hardened their decision to pull out of Nigeria.

In furtherance of action by the Yoruba, another group, the Yoruba Strategy Alliance, petitioned the International Criminal Court at The Hague on July 8, 2021. They dragged federal government officials, including President Muhammadu Buhari and his top security aides, to the ICC for violating the court's articles as regards: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about physical destruction in whole or in part; murder; genocide deportation or forcible transfer of population; torture; rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity, etc.

According to the group, Yoruba people are suffering a slow-moving genocide at the hands of Fulani herdsmen who seek their ancestral lands. Of all the recent Yoruba leading agitators, two of them gained the most consciousness among the people, though they differed in age and intellectual prowess. The first is Octogenarian Banji Akintoye, an Emeritus Professor of History, and the other is Sunday Igboho, a young firebrand widely reputed for his inclination towards native spiritual powers. An exposition on the two personalities and their respective struggles for the Yoruba caused the coordination and publicity that the struggle received under their respective unprecedented leadership (Ojo, 2022).

Akintoye became leader of the Yoruba nation, courtesy of the Assembly of All Yoruba Groups Worldwide, on Thursday, August 22, 2019, at a conference of Yoruba leaders in Ibadan. However, the Yoruba World Assembly under Akintoye crumbled barely one year after his emergence. He renamed the organization Ilana OmoOodua. This name change attracted wide criticism, and many foundation members of the Yoruba World Assembly left the group. Akintoye nevertheless forged ahead. He assembled a new set of people to embark on

the self-determination drive for the Yoruba nation. It was at this point that he brought in the younger firebrand activist, Sunday Adeyemo, fondly called Sunday Igboho. It was thus, with the support of Igboho, that the Ilana OmoOodua organized rallies, held in Abeokuta in Ogun State, Ibadan in Oyo State, Osogbo in Osun State, Akure in Ondo State, Ado-Ekiti in Ekiti State, and Ojota in Lagos State.

But security agencies seriously clamped down on the participants in the rally that took place in Lagos State on Saturday, July 3, 2021. It was widely reported in the media that the rally in Lagos would be the grand finale of the struggle. But the security agencies ensured that the rally in Lagos was not successful. Barely two days before the grand finale of the rally in Lagos, combined security forces raided Igboho's residence in Ibadan on the grounds that he allegedly stockpiled arms to destabilize Nigeria. The duplex was damaged, along with many expensive cars in the compound. Two people were killed, while more than 10 people who were met in the house, were arrested and taken to the headquarters of the Department of State Security (DSS) in Abuja. The arrested persons were later taken to court. Igboho, who was reportedly in the building when the combined security forces raided the house, mysteriously escaped being killed or captured alive.

Adejumo (2021) recalls that Igboho's whereabouts remained unknown until the news came some weeks later that he was arrested at an airport in Cotonou, Benin Republic, while trying to travel to Germany. He was taken to court in Cotonou, and after much fireworks, he was admitted to bail on health grounds. The court ordered that he not move out of Cotonou, pending the determination of the case. Akintoye joined Igboho in Cotonou and mobilized legal support for him. He coordinated the activities of Ilana OmoOodua from Cotonou for many months and also mobilized Yoruba people in the Diaspora to stage peaceful protests and demands for the Yoruba nation at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.

Akintoye is said to have received the support of some Yoruba people for the actualization of self-determination for the Yoruba nation. Some Yoruba

leaders, who could not support the struggle openly, also supported the movement with confidence. Incidentally, to the surprise of many observers, cracks again emerged in the ranks of the agitators. The development made Akintoye dump the Ilana OmoOdua for the foreign-based Yoruba Self-Determination Movement (YSDM), a move that further reduced the cohesiveness of the Yoruba struggle. From that point on, the tempo of the agitation for the Yoruba nation started dwindling. It was in this atmosphere of disunity among the top leaders of Yoruba ethnic agitators that the country gradually approached the 2023 general election. From the onset of the campaign, a Yoruba man, in the person of Bola Tinubu, emerged as the leading candidate for the presidential election. While Tinubu may not have the support of every single Yoruba man, he is reputed to have the largest followership among the Yoruba people.

Presently, many Yoruba leaders are already drifting from the Yoruba nation's agenda to that of restructuring the country. Again, the Ibadan Declaration of 2017, which espoused the Yoruba Standpoint on Restructuring, began to regain ground hitherto lost to the Akintoye-Igboho separatist agenda. It is now the belief of many stakeholders in the Yoruba project that for the nation to move forward, it must be restructured. Though this group of people still subscribes to the entity called Nigeria, they have lost faith in the present ethno-political configuration of the country. To them, it is not about the ethnic background of who becomes the president of the country but the willingness of the government to discuss the basis of the country's unity. These people adamantly opposed the idea that the unity of the country is non-negotiable.

Implications of the Emergence of the Tinubu Presidency on Yoruba Nation Agitation

The emergence of a Tinubu presidency has signaled a significant political mobilization effort in the south-western part of Nigeria. This could indicate a consolidation of political power within the region, potentially led by Tinubu. This era is seen as a milestone for Yoruba representation at the highest

level of government, which would surely lead to increased political engagement and participation among the Yoruba population. It's plausible that the presidency might prioritize policies that directly address the socio-economic needs and challenges of the Yoruba region, potentially leading to targeted development programs.

Depending on the political climate and Tinubu's approach, there could be shifts in the balance of power between the federal and state governments, which could influence the Yoruba region's autonomy and resource allocation. If the Yoruba people feel adequately represented and their needs are being addressed, there might be a decrease in support for secessionist movements or agitation for a Yoruba nation, as the presidency might prompt a reevaluation of the Yoruba nation's political strategy. Instead of focusing solely on agitation, there might be a move towards political negotiation and engagement within the existing Nigerian framework.

The emergence of a Yoruba president could either unify the Yoruba people around a common political goal or it could potentially lead to internal divisions if there are disagreements over his policies or methods. Depending on the political climate, a Tinubu presidency might influence how the Yoruba people are perceived nationally. It could also present opportunities for reconciliation and dialogue between different ethnic and regional groups. Even with a Yoruba president, there might still be segments of the population advocating for increased regional autonomy or even secession. This could be driven by factors beyond political representation, such as economic disparities or cultural preservation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

In the run-up to the election of Bola Tinubu as Nigerian President, the notion of his presidency dousing the flame of Yoruba agitation for restructuring was talked down by no other person than Gani Adams, the leader of the OoduaPeoples Congress (OPC), who had by now become the Aare Onakakanfo of Yoruba land, one of the most respected traditional titles in the land. Adams (2022) asserts: "If we don't want Nigeria to break, we

must restructure it into regions. This is what everybody has been clamoring for, so that everyone will have a sense of belonging. We can't, because of the interest of one person or a few individuals, continue to destroy our future."

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that the central goal of the Yoruba agitators is to have an Oduduwa Republic, and failing in that, to have a restructured Nigeria that would return to the regional basis of the post-independence First Republic. Thus, the fact that Tinubu, a Yoruba, has emerged as President of Nigeria does not really count much in the calculations of many of the agitators. The support of this group of agitators for Tinubu is clearly based on the grounds that he is ready and willing to deviate from the long-standing position of successive Nigerian leaders, that the status quo remains, and that the unity of the country is non-negotiable.

In fact, Bolawole (2023) is emphatic about the position of the agitators on the issue of the Yoruba nation. According to him, "We would not say that because Bola Tinubu has become president, therefore, we abandon our agitation for the Yoruba nation. Our agitation is not because we want a Yoruba president. We are agitating because we want a restructured Nigeria; we want a Nigeria where Yoruba will be free to develop at their own pace. We believe we are being held down; we believe we are not able to demonstrate

our talents. We believe if we were allowed to progress at the pace set by Awolowo, we would have been far better off by now. That's why we want a Yoruba nation, failure at which we'll settle for a restructured Nigeria. A Yoruba president will come and go; if the structures are not made okay, there will be no development for any ethnic group. We want a restructured Nigeria like we had in 1960 so that each region can develop at its own pace. That is what we are fighting for."

Before becoming president, Tinubu is known to have identified with the progressive camp of the political class, which has been at the forefront of the call for the restructuring of the country. To what extent would Tinubu, now as president, pursue the restructuring agenda? One thing is certain: as a sitting president, the last thing Tinubu would allow is the disembodiment of the country. So, it can safely be said that his emergence has automatically put a lid on the agitation for a Yoruba nation. The best that the agitators could, therefore, hope for in the present circumstances is the restructuring of the country. In light of the above, this paper is advocating that President Tinubu take urgent steps to begin the process of restructuring the country. This is a fundamental agenda that would calm the spate of separatist agitations, not only among the Yoruba people but with other aggrieved ethnic nationalities across the country. And it is one sure remedy that would save the country from the dangers of disembodiment.

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