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# THE CHURCH AND AGITATION FOR POLITICAL SELF DETERMINATION IN NIGERIA UNDER PRESIDENT TINUBU'S ADMINISTRATION

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## ABSTRACT

*The agitations under Tinubu's government represent a significant challenge that intersects with Nigeria's broader issues of governance, national unity, and regional autonomy. Tinubu's managerial approach to this issue has left a lot to be desired and will be closely watched both within Nigeria and internationally. This has to impress the Government to balancing security measures with political dialogue, economic development, job creation, and respect for human rights, establish justice, egalitarianism and fair play. Following the trends of events in Nigeria, can one say that the Church has done well as regards agitation for political self determination in Nigeria? The answer is no. The Church in Nigeria has no strict separation from the State, because there are Christians both in politics that are operating state governance and, of course, there are politicians in the Church. The Church should work with the Tinubu administration to reduce tensions in the regions and strengthen Nigeria's cohesion. However, the success of these efforts will depend on the government's ability to implement policies that genuinely address the concerns of the people while upholding the principles of justice and equity across the country.*

**Keywords**: Church; Agitation; Political Self Determination.

## Introduction

In this paper, Political self-determination is seen as the process by which a group of people, usually possessing a certain degree of national consciousness, form their own state and choose their own government. As a political principle, Aladekono (2021) states that the idea of self-determination evolved at first as a by-product of the doctrine of nationalism, to which early expression was given by the French and American revolutions. Costa (2024) affirms that in the World War I, the Allies accepted self-determination as a peace aim and in his Fourteen Points—the essential terms for peace—U.S. President, Woodrow Wilson listed self-determination as an important objective for the postwar world; the result was the fragmentation of the old Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and Russia's former Baltic territories into a number of new states.

According to Costa (2024) after World War II, promotion of self-determination among subject peoples became one of the chief goals of the United Nations. The UN's predecessor, the League of Nations, had also recognized

the principle, but it was in the UN that the idea received its clearest statement and affirmation. The UN Charter clarifies two meanings of the term self-determination. First, a state is said to have the right of self-determination in the sense of having the right to choose freely its political, economic, social, and cultural systems. Second, the right to self-determination is defined as the right of a people to constitute itself in a state or otherwise freely determine the form of its association with an existing state. Both meanings have their basis in the UN's charter (Article 1, paragraph 2; and Article 55, paragraph 1). With respect to dependent territories, the charter asserts that administering authorities should undertake to ensure political advancement and the development of self-government (Article 73, paragraphs a and b; and Article 76, paragraph b).

**The Agitation for Political Self Determination in Nigeria**

These agitations in Nigeria reflect the complex and often contentious nature of Nigeria's federalism, with groups across the country seeking greater control over their political and economic destinies. The effect on the Nigeria society is very huge. Pei-linghu (2014) states that the word, "right to self-determination", is defined as a people's right. His assertion agrees with the UN chatter that offers every people the right for self determination. 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 is obvious 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 desire for self-determination on the sense of frustration and marginalization within the greater Nigerian country. According to the agitators, leaving Nigeria will provide the ethnic groups with the necessary atmosphere to develop and progress faster than it is doing within the Nigerian state arrangement.

As Bola Ahmed Tinubu assumed office as Nigeria's president in 2023, Vanguard News Online (2024), reports that he (Tinubu) inherited a complex and tense relationship between the federal government and agitators for political self determination in Nigeria. Tinubu, a seasoned politician and former governor of Lagos State, is said to be known for his pragmatic approach to governance. His administration's handling of agitators is being closely watched as it reflects broader

issues of national unity, security, and governance, the paper reports.

However, it has been observed that under President Bola Tinubu, there have been several notable agitations for political self-determination in Nigeria. According to Vanguard News Online (2024), these movements, rooted in historical grievances against past Nigerian Governments and fueled by contemporary socio-political dynamics, reflect the ongoing challenges of managing Nigeria's diverse and often divided populace. Here are the key agitations as recorded by Vanguard News Online (2024**).**

**1. Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)**
IPOB, led by Nnamdi Kanu, is an organization that advocates for the secession of the southeastern region of Nigeria to form an independent Biafran state. This movement traces its roots back to the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), when the southeastern region attempted to secede as Biafra**.** Under Tinubu, IPOB has continued its activities, including organizing protests, sit-at-home orders, and occasionally clashing with security forces. The group's demands are driven by perceived marginalization, economic deprivation, and cultural preservation, Vanguard News Online (**2024).**

**2. Yoruba Nation Agitation**
The Yoruba Nation movement, according to Vanguard News Online (**2024)** championed by leaders like Sunday Igboho, seeks the creation of an independent state for the Yoruba people, who predominantly occupy southwestern Nigeria. The agitation gained momentum due to concerns over security, economic marginalization, and the alleged domination of Nigerian politics by northern interests.While the movement experienced a surge before Tinubu's presidency, it remains a significant political force. Tinubu, being of Yoruba descent, has a complex relationship with this movement. Some agitators see his presidency as an opportunity to address Yoruba grievances within the Nigerian federation, while others continue to push for full independence.

**3. Niger Delta Agitations**
Vanguard News Online (**2024)** states that the Niger Delta region, rich in oil, has historically been the site of significant unrest due to the environmental degradation, economic underdevelopment, and perceived exploitation by the central government. Groups like the Niger Delta Avengers have demanded greater control over the region's resources or outright independence. While militancy has decreased compared to previous years, there are still underlying tensions. Under Tinubu, there have been sporadic demands for more significant political and economic autonomy for the Niger Delta.

**5. Northern Autonomy Movements**
Lastly, Vanguard News Online (**2024)** maintains that while the North has traditionally been seen as politically dominant in Nigeria, there are internal factions that push for greater autonomy, particularly in the context of growing insecurity (e.g, BokoHaram insurgency) and economic challenges. Some groups advocate for a return to the old Northern Region or even a separate northern state**.** These movements are less about outright secession and more about seeking greater political and

economic control within a federal system. Tinubu's approach to these demands, especially given his southern background is very uncertain.

For instance, the issue of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB), remains a polarizing figure. Thisdaylive (2024) points out that his arrest and detention have been a point of contention, with IPOB members demanding his release. How the Tinubu government handles Kanu's case has significantly impact the level of agitation in the region, the paper reports. A potential option could involve a political solution, such as conditional release or a negotiated settlement, but this would require delicate handling to avoid emboldening secessionist sentiments.

The IPOB agitation under Tinubu's government is a complex issue that intertwines historical grievances, regional marginalization, and national security concerns. Thisdaylive (2024), reports that the Tinubu administration's approach will likely involve a combination of dialogue, economic intervention, and security measures. However, Costa (2024) believes that the success of these strategies will depend on the government's ability to address the root causes of discontent and foster a sense of inclusion and belonging among the people of the southeastern region. In the long term, addressing IPOB agitation will require a holistic approach that goes beyond military action and tackles the socio-economic and political issues at the heart of the Biafra question.

Thisdaylive (2024), reports, 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 Ojo (2022), 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, (Ojo, 2022).

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.

**The Remote and Immediate Causes of Agitation for Political Self Determination in Nigeria.**

**Colonial Legacy**:

Agunwa (1993) says, Nigeria's borders were drawn by colonial powers without regard for the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the population. This has led to longstanding tensions between different regions and ethnic groups, with each feeling either marginalized or dominated by others. Federalism and State Creation: Nigeria's federal structure, with 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), was supposed to manage this diversity. However, the process of state creation has often been politically motivated, exacerbating ethnic tensions and leading to demands for further subdivision or greater autonomy for existing states.

**Resource Control Movements:** Beyond ethnic-driven agitations, Akanji (2012) infers

that there are movements focusing on the control of resources, especially in regions rich in natural resources like the Niger Delta. These movements often argue that the central government unfairly exploits local resources without adequate compensation or development of the regions where the resources are located.

**Economic Marginalization:** Edeh (2022) states that economic factors also drive agitations. Regions that feel economically marginalized often push for more control over local resources and greater fiscal autonomy. This is particularly evident in the Niger Delta and parts of the North, where poverty and underdevelopment are stark despite the regions' contributions to the national economy.

**Religious Differences:** In his view, Danladi (2009) claims that Nigeria's population is roughly split between Christians and Muslims, with significant religious diversity within regions. In the North, where Islam predominates, there have been calls for the implementation of Sharia law, leading to tensions with Christian minorities and contributing to calls for greater regional autonomy.

**Cultural Preservation:** Some self-determination movements in the view of Aladekomo (2021) are also driven by the desire to preserve and promote cultural heritage, languages, and traditions that they feel are under threat from the dominant culture or state policies. This is particularly strong among the Yoruba, Igbo, and other minority ethnic groups.

**Regional Implications:** According to Costa (2024) Nigeria's agitations for self-determination have implications for West Africa as a whole. Neighboring countries, many of which have similar ethnic and political challenges, watch Nigeria closely. A successful secession in Nigeria could inspire similar movements in other countries.

**International Community:** Costa (2024) also maintains that the international community generally supports Nigeria's territorial integrity but has expressed concerns over human rights abuses in the government's handling of self-determination movements. International bodies like the United Nations have occasionally called for dialogue and peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

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## 4. Government Strategies and Responses

Agitations for self-determination in Nigeria have been ongoing, with these various groups seeking greater autonomy or independence and their agitations have strained their relationship with the Nigerian government. Aniobi et al (2011), states that the government's response has been characterized by security measures, which has further increased tensions. Weller (2009)

highlights other factors contributing to the agitations to include ethnic and religious intolerance, as well as the country's distributive politics. The lack of inclusivity and representation in Nigeria's government has led to feelings of marginalization among certain groups, fueling the desire for self-determination.President Bola Tinubu yesterday warned ethnic agitators that there is a price to pay for threatening Nigeria's sovereignty, Vanguard News Online (**2024).**

He also said his administration remains undeterred in pursuing comprehensive economic security for the country while addressing foundational challenges and creating a fair and equitable system in which all Nigerians can thrive. The President, who gave the warning while hosting leaders of the Pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere, was reacting to the attack on the office of Oyo State governor last weekend. Tinubu said: "I am irrevocably committed to the unity of Nigeria and constitutional democracy. Constitutional democracy has been reflected greatly here since we assumed office. "What we face now is the challenge of terrorism. Security of life and property is essential for development. I can tell you we are achieving success. We have degraded terrorism to a level that they cannot threaten the sovereignty of Nigeria any longer. "Banditry and kidnapping will be defeated. And there is no payment of ransom whatsoever. We are taking the battle to them. We are getting results more rapidly than before, Vanguard News Online (**2024),** reports**.**

"We are working hard on intelligence gathering. Those who think they can threaten the sovereignty of Nigeria will have themselves to blame. **They have a price to pay**. And we are not going to relent." He said his administration is re-engineering Nigeria's finances and seeking to boost the purchasing power of citizens and spread prosperity down the line, by instituting a credit system where the element of cash does not impede to a significantly enhanced standard of living for all citizens Vanguard News Online (**2024),** concluded**.**

**Military Responses:** Agunwa (1993) argues that historically, the Nigerian government has often responded to secessionist and self-determination movements with military force. Vanguard News Online (**2024**), reports, under Tinubu, there has been a continuation of this approach, particularly in dealing with IPOB and other groups that engage in violent protests or activities.

**Judicial Measures:** The government has used legal measures to suppress self-determination movements, including banning organizations, arresting leaders (like Nnamdi Kanu), and prosecuting agitators under anti-terrorism laws, Vanguard News Online (**2024**).

**Political Dialogue:** While dialogue has been used in some cases, particularly in the Niger Delta, it has not been a consistent strategy under Tinubu. Many agitators criticize the government for failing to engage in meaningful discussions about the root causes of their demands Costa (2024).

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successful secession in Nigeria could inspire similar movements in other countries.

**International Community:** The international community according to Adejumo (2021), generally supports Nigeria's territorial integrity but has expressed concerns over human rights abuses in the government's handling of self-determination movements. International bodies like the United Nations have occasionally called for dialogue and peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

**The Effects of The Agitation for Political Self Determination in Nigeria Under Tinubu's Administration**

Among many consequences of the agitation for political self determination in Nigeria, under president Tinubu's administration is insecurity. Insecurity according to Nweke (2022) can be defined as uncertainty or anxiety about oneself, lack of confidence. It can further be described as the state of being open to danger or threat, lack of protection. Insecurity is a state of societal habitate in which citizens are persistently afraid of interference on their wellbeing by unauthorized fellows like bandits, unknown gunmen, herdsmen and bokoharam insurgents. It has multifaceted manifestations such as bombing, kidnapping/hostage taking, destruction of property and creation of fear, to mention but a few. This has been the experiences many citizens in some parts of Nigeria.

In Nigeria, according to Edeh (2023), earlier states that insecurity is increasing exponentially with each passing day. Insecurity and terrorism have been a major challenge for the Nigerian Government lately, each of which leads to the loss of life and destruction of properties. As a result, insecurity has taken different forms in several parts of the country, armed robbers have taken position within the south-west, cross-border bandits operate in the north, while kidnapping issues are widespread in the south-south, Nigeria.

Nigeria is among the world most terrorist countries. The rate at which evil is growing in Nigeria and the ruthless manner in which the lives of innocent people are being wasted daily with emotional and psychological trauma as a result of the death of their loved ones who had fallen victim, especially students of various institutions, (Edeh, 2022).

In a study of effect of insecurity on education, Isaactamson (2022) inferred that for education to occur, it must take place in a setting with variable features such as space, culture, people and infrastructural facilities that make it unique but similar to environment that support learning. He noted also that sustainable education thrives better in a healthy environment.

Generally, one could say that nothing goes well in an insecure environment and particularly, learning environment that is characterized by insecurity would not only threaten effective learning by affecting the behavior and interaction of both learners and teachers but it is also liable of exacerbating other factors such as the destruction of available facilities, scaring of qualified teachers/trainers and learners away and causing shortage of resourceful materials. Insecurity in Nigeria which affect the education system so deeply must have got some remote and immediate causes.

**The roles Of the Church on Agitation for Self Determination in Nigeria.**

The Church which Nweke (2018) regarded as faithful believers and followers of Christ, has played a significant role in the agitation for political self-determination in Nigeria, particularly during the colonial era and post-independence period till date. In the early days of Colonial rule, Aguwa (1993) observes that "a common source of conflict between the missionaries and the secular authorities was based on the inhuman treatment meted out to the local people. Officers, in their anxiety of speed to create the basic structure needed for effective administration, often resorted to brutal acts of flogging and maiming elders who came to negotiate on behalf of the people."Aguwa (1993) again notes, "the missionaries on the other hand detested and denounced such inhuman tendencies and thus got the support of the people through the exercise of an opposite policy based on kindness, patience, sympathy and friendliness. The mutual trust that grew between the missionaries and the nationalists dwarfed the relationship between the missionaries and the political administrations.

The Bible has warned that "when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan (Proverbs 29:2)."JFO (1993) stresses, this is why the church did not fold her hands and watch. She participates and influences the politics of the day. The assumption that politics is a dirty game is absolute and outlandish. Politics is not dirty; it is the politicians (not all of them) who make it dirty. And if politics is dirty, Jesus Christ has called the church i.e. the Christians to flush out the dirtiness.

The Church involves itself in politics more directly by denouncing what is wrong in the society but also enable individual Christians to fulfill their prophetic role in society." Also, a one-time Borno State CAN Chairman, Rev. Daniel Yusuf Mbaya asserted:

I call on you Reverends, pastors and leaders to encourage your members to be actively involved in politics and political activities. Gone are the days when politics is regarded as a dirty game. As Christians, even if politics is truly a dirty game, let's get involved and clean it (Mbaya, 2007, cited in Haruna, 2009).

Mbaya (2007) continues, we are optimistic that there is a sign of hope being initiated by Christians and the Christian clergy in Nigeria towards responding to the call to be involved in active partisan politics. Christians that live by the tenets of Christianity have an immense capacity for injecting the high values of integrity, transparency, organization, and empirical education into the Nigerian body politics, which should naturally lead to the galvanization of development in all sectors of national life including the economic, social, legal, educational and civic organs, among others. In this way every region will get equal share in the national developmental program and there will be no need for agitation for political self determination in Nigeria.

**Encouraging participation in politics:** Danladi (2009) proves, the church is expected to assist members of the church to identify their gifts of leadership. Such people should be encouraged to go into politics to

enable them use their gifts to serve people especially those that are marginalized and oppressed. The main aim of having Christians get involved in politics is not just for them to represent the church in the government, but more importantly to address the issues of injustices, corruption and bribery in the country which engender agitation for political self determination in Nigeria.

**Promoting Values Transformation:** Danladi (2009) urges, Christian politicians should be made to realize that they must up hold Biblical values above all other values. Any value that goes against the Bible must be discarded. It is a choice they must make if they want to be effective and to glorify God. Our values must be positively transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit. This should be done through consistent and in-depth Bible Studies specifically organized for the Christian politicians and preaching on various themes related to values and how they affect our attitudes and behavior.

Julius Nyerere, according to Okullu (2003) says that "Everything which prevents a person from living in dignity and decency must therefore be under attack from the church and its workers.

In trying to describe the new servant role of the church, Haselbarth (1976) notes, "we must stress once more the role of the peace-makers and intercessors in the conflicts of the world." In this case the statement refers to the agitation for political self determination in Nigeria. Okullu (2003) believes, the church's role in the society is to pray for the government and to help the people to keep peace.

**Economic Development and Job Creation:** The Church assists then government in job creation to solve the problem of unemployment which is one of the factors that engender agitation for political self determination in Nigeria. Obi (2024) reports thus:

> September 21, 2024 will be my fifth-year anniversary as the Anglican Bishop of Nnewi. Looking back, I can testify that our Diocese has Agricultural Farms in Okija, Ozubulu, Anaku, Igbariam and we are moving into Akpugoeze and Ufuma before the end of this year. In Okija, we have harvested large quantities of Cucumber, Water Melon, Pineapple, green pepper as well as cassava, yam etc. In Ozubulu, we have 40 large Fish ponds, a piggery section, a Poultry, a Snail section and we harvest different types of vegetables as we used irrigation system to provide constant water to the farm. We have large numbers of Palm Trees in both Okija and Ozubulu thus inspiring

us to establish Palm Oil mills in both farms through which we sell our DONAC Palm Oil. We also have Garri Processing Machines in both Okija and Ozubulu wherein we process our cassava into Garri, thus our DONAC Garri in the market. The Plantain plantations in both farms gave birth to our DONAC PLANTAIN FLOUR.

In the next five years, surely, we will continue our human capacity development and employment of our youths while impacting the spiritual lives of many. Our Diocese has its own Television Station, Alive Unto God TV and through it, we shall continue to preach this gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Our Alive Unto God Printing Press is one of the most equipped Printing Press in the state. Our ADON Glorious Tissues is one of the best in terms of quality in the market. Just to make the point that the Church is still very relevant today as it was yesterday and contributing massively to the development of our society. "Onye nwere nti, ya nuru."

Agunwa (1993) makes the following observations:

- The Church provides spiritual guidance and strength to Nigerians, encouraging them to demand their rights and fight for independence.
- Missionary schools and churches helpes spread education and awareness about political issues, inspiring Nigerians to seek self-determination.
- The Church offeres moral support to political leaders and activists, legitimizing their cause and providing a sense of justice.
- Church leaders often mediated between the government and political activists, advocating for peaceful resolution and political reforms.
- The Church mobilized Nigerians through religious networks, helping to organize protests, rallies, and other political events.

Some notable examples according to Agunwa (1993) include:

- The Catholic Church's support for the Nigerian nationalist movement in the 1940s and 1950s.
- The Anglican Church's role in the 1970s and 1980s, advocating for human rights and political reform.
- The Pentecostal movement's influence in modern Nigerian politics,

with some pastors actively engaging in political activism.

**The Paradox and Dilemma of the Church that helps agitation for political self determination in Nigeria**

Following the trends of events in Nigeria today, can one say that the Church has done well as regards agitation for political self determination in Nigeria? The answer is **no**. The Church in Nigeria has no strict separation from the State, because there are Christians both in politics that are operating state governance and, of course, there are Christians in the Church.

However, Haruna (2009), maintains that the problematic dilemma is located in the attitude of the Church dogma and leadership to the state and politics. Yet, taking control of the state apparatus is what you always need to transform the Church for good. The Church has so often opted out of participation in governance of the state, which is left to 'so-called Christians', made up of school drop-outs, ordinary Church goers, 'nominal Christians' and people who are generally neither serious with Christianity nor are they known to the Church leadership.

According to Haruna (2009), the Church has shot itself in the foot when they allow the clergy say no to partisan politics. To possess political power is to have participation, representation, delegation, and to have a voice. However, to refuse to be actively interested and participate in politics is to assume the position of powerlessness, and that is the silly poverty-stricken condition the Church has resigned its fate and has consigned the lives of millions of Christians to in Nigeria (Haruna 2009). This situation breeds agitation for political self determination because, corruption, injustice, inequality among ethnic groups, and regions have become the order of the day due to the caliber the political practioners.

For most Nigerians, politics is what takes place in government circles that has to do with stealing, lying, cheating, getting rich quick and engendered by all sorts of dubious dealings during electioneering campaigns. Hence the general public believe that the politician is not to be believed or trusted – which may be true of many politicians in our country. The majority of Christians regrettably shy away from politics and political position because of this typical Nigerian mind set and mentality of the politicians (Haruna 2009: 6). If we go back to the original meaning of *polilike* we find that it possesses utilitarian values that deals with the people's happiness and well-being in a given state. It deals with the fair 306 and equitable sharing of power and wealth of the country to all her citizens. Therefore, the Church must not shy away from *polilike*.

Imagine, in a country where we are at the throat of one another, along the line of ethnic, religious status and the settler *vs.* indigene, for the Church in Nigeria to prove who she is, the Church must be seen as one "indivisible body of believers"—only then can the Church serve as "Light and salt of the world". I think I will not be wrong to say, for the Nigerian Church to be 'Light and salt", it must encourage as many as are gifted in governance to go into active politics and be card carrying party members without the Church being partisan.

**What is expected of the Church:**

**Engagement with Regional Leaders:** One potential strategy for Tinubu through the

Church in Nigeria could involve greater engagement with political and traditional leaders in the agitating regions. By involving these stakeholders in dialogue, the Church will impress Tinubu to build bridges and reduce the sense of alienation felt by the regional people. Such engagement could also help isolate agitators' more radical elements by providing a political outlet for grievances.

**Economic Empowerment and Infrastructure Development:** Economic disenfranchisement is a significant driver of agitatiors. The agitating regions have long complained of neglect in federal infrastructure projects, limited job opportunities, and a lack of industrial development. The Nigerian Church can also encourage Tinubu's government to focus on addressing these concerns by prioritizing infrastructure development in the region, such as improving road networks, expanding the power grid, and investing in industrial zones. These efforts could not only boost economic activity but also help reduce the appeal of secessionist movements by demonstrating the benefits of remaining within a united Nigeria.

**Security Reforms** Security operations in the regions have often been criticized for human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests. The church could make Tinubu's administration seek to reform the security apparatus to ensure that operations are conducted with greater respect for human rights. This approach could involve retraining security personnel, improving intelligence operations to target only those involved in violence, and establishing oversight mechanisms to hold security forces accountable.

**Increased Decentralization:** One potential outcome of the efforts of the church in the present dispensation could be greater decentralization of power, with more autonomy given to states or regions. This could address some of the grievances fueling self-determination movements but might also lead to increased demands for secession. This can be achieved through constitutional amendments.

**Constitutional Amendments:** There have been calls for constitutional amendments to address issues of regional autonomy, resource control, and fiscal federalism. Tinubu's administration by the church to consider these, but they would require broad consensus, which is difficult to achieve in Nigeria's polarized political environment.

**Continued Repression:** The church should make Tinubu's administration know that if the government continues to rely heavily on repression without addressing the underlying issues, it could lead to more violent confrontations and possibly increased international pressure on Nigeria to reform its approach to self-determination movements.

**National Cohesion:** The ongoing agitations pose a significant challenge to Nigeria's national cohesion. The Church assist the government's ability to manage these movements will be critical in determining whether Nigeria can remain united or if it will face further fragmentation. This can be done through direct or indirect participation in politics.

**Political Stability:**

Political stability is at risk if these agitations are not managed carefully. Persistent unrest in various regions could undermine Tinubu's administration and have broader implications for the future of democracy in Nigeria. Therefore, prayers, seminars, conferences

can be organized by the church which will boarder on equity and good governance.

**Economic Development and job creation:** The outcome of these agitations will also impact Nigeria's economic development. Regional instability can deter investment and hinder economic growth, particularly in resource-rich areas like the Niger Delta. For this reason the church should engage the youth in various regions value driven reorientations and seminars and can also create jobs like we could observe above in the report of the Anglican Bishop of Nnewi.

**Long-Term Implications for Nigerian Unity:** The church should discourage ways in which Tinubu handles the agitations which have profound implications for Nigeria's unity. If Tinubu's administration can successfully address the socio-economic and political grievances that fuel agitators' demands, it could set a precedent for how the federal government manages other secessionist movements and regional discontent across Nigeria and beyond.

Furthermore, if the agitation is met with further suppression without addressing the root causes, it could exacerbate tensions and lead to a cycle of violence that might threaten Nigeria's stability in the long run. The Tinubu administration's handling of agitations will be a litmus test for its commitment to national unity, inclusive governance, and respect for human rights.

**Judicial Measures:** The government has used legal measures to suppress self-determination movements, including banning organizations, arresting leaders (like Nnamdi Kanu), and prosecuting agitators under anti-terrorism laws. The church should speak up and issue for justice and fair play in such cases.

**Political Dialogue:** While dialogue has been used in some cases, particularly in the Niger Delta, the church has to encourage Tinubu's government to make it a consistent strategy. Many agitators criticize the government for failing to engage in meaningful discussions about the root causes of their demands and it has to be addressed.

## Conclusion

The agitations under Tinubu's government represent a significant challenge that intersects with Nigeria's broader issues of governance, national unity, and regional autonomy. Tinubu's approach to this issue has left a lot to be desired and will be closely watched both within Nigeria and internationally. The has to impress the Government to balancing security measures with political dialogue, economic development, job creation, and respect for human rights, establish justice, egalitarianism and fair play. The Church should work with the Tinubu administration to reduce tensions in the regions and strengthen Nigeria's cohesion. However, the success of these efforts will depend on the government's ability to implement policies that genuinely address the concerns of the people while upholding the principles of justice and equity across the country.

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