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**POVERTY OF LEADERSHIP AND IDENTITY CRISIS AMONG IGBO PEOPLE OF NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Nigeria's southeast zone which is populated by the Igbo ethnic nationality or stock is currently faced with a fundamental challenge: the manifestly debilitating absence of outstanding political leadership among the people. As a result, the people indulge in the fragmentation and dissolution of the Igbo agenda. The people are inclined to work at cross purposes and wander aimlessly in the wilderness of political choices. The consequence of poverty of leadership has been colossal in terms of costs to Igbo solidarity, interest aggregation and articulation, consensus building and goal attainment within the Nigeria's political establishment. This paper is essentially focused on the travails of poor leadership among the current Igbo political elite class. A leader with an encompassing sense of mission and vision, a true man of the people, with requisite charisma to inspire, mobilize and galvanize the people into worthy action is needed in Igbo land. In the same vein, this paper posits that lack of authentic leadership among the Igbo contributes to the political isolation of the zone at the national level. The research method adopted is the historical qualitative process, within the theoretical framework of

Transformational leadership. The study therefore recommends the emergence of a unifying Igbo political leader to serve as a rallying point for the people, to restore the dignity of the zone and return the Igbo people to Nigeria's socio political and economic mainstream.

**KEYWORDS: LEADERSHIP, IDENTITY, CRISIS, IGBO.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria is one of the three major ethnic nationalities that constitute the greatest population of the country. The other two are the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba ethnic groups. There are also many other smaller ethnic groups numbering over two hundred which together make up Nigeria's population estimated at 230 million by 2021. With a population of about 31million, the Igbo represent a formidable group within Nigeria's geopolitical space. However, the absence of a sustained tradition of political leadership among the Igbo had been symptomatic of the Igbo political trajectory especially since after the civil war in 1970. It had remained a disturbing weakness in the history of Igbo political experience within the Nigerian polity. The leadership vacuum among the Igbo people has given vent and impetus to the misleading and indeed false notion that the Igbo people neither have kings nor defer to an organized authority structure. This assertion has been proved to be incorrect because the Igbo had a peculiar system of government where power and authority reside in a group of elders in a decentralized setting. For instance in the Igbo pre-colonial society, power and authority devolved through the various levels of the leadership groups. According to Agbogu (2006), among the Igbo, political power was not concentrated on any particular individual, but rather it was in the hands of groups or individuals within a settlement or village.

Awa (1985) asserted that the Igbo people had a political system characterized by the separate existence of town/village states and this meant that the town or village was in most cases the terminal political boundary of each group of people. Essentially, the Igbo political structure is built around the village and town environment. Individuals are known for what they can do and functions are assigned as such. The Igbo culture recognizes as leaders strong and selfless individuals who have natural flair for sacrifice on behalf of the community collectives. As a result, the Igbo vision of leadership cannot be discussed in isolation of the peoples' cultural patterns and world view. This leadership conundrum must be captured and analyzed within the context of the peoples' values and cultural imperatives. The typical Igbo man or woman does not believe that any man is greater than another. He does not fear anyone, except the Supreme Being. Even then, he reserves the right to question all things, even the things of God. He believes that the only might there is, is the might of right: right action and right judgment, justice and fairness to all. He respects his elders, seniors and leaders but he fears no one and can never give in to intimidation (Acholonu-Olumba, 2009) Yet the hiatus of a strong leadership persists among the Igbo.

## **VIEWS ON LEADERSHIP**

Leadership connotes a certain level of controlled guidance over a group of people or community or a given society or country as the case may be. It may be regarded as a condition of directing people and events with superior perception of reality. A true leader commands popular trust. Leadership comes in multiple forms: political, business, moral, religious, social, professional or otherwise. A leader is seen as the symbol of the group he leads. He represents the best in their lives and dreams and encapsulates the entirety of their essence. Some analysts contend that every society gets the type of leadership it deserves. This is debatable because some others believe that leaders are born and not made otherwise known as the 'the great man' concept of leadership. According to Silva (2016, citing Mcklesky, 2014 and Bass, 2008), the search for a single definition of leadership may be in vain since the correct definition of leadership depends on the interest of the researcher and the type of problem or situation being studied. Leadership is therefore relative to a given society and prevailing conditions. It is borne out of existential realities and informed by the challenges of the times. Pratt (2020) argues that leadership is the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to influence and guide followers or other members of an organization. Leadership involves making sound and sometimes difficult decisions, creating and articulating a clear vision, establishing achievable goals and providing followers with the knowledge and tools necessary to achieve those goals.

The concept of leadership is multifaceted and connected between the leader and the led. It is indeed a process driven by some vision of a desired outcome. Kruse (2013) noted that leadership is a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others towards the achievements of a goal. A leader is a signpost of direction and purpose. A committed leader uses the power of imagination and innate or cultivated sense of mission to galvanize the people into action for positive change. Surji (2015) citing Mills, (2005), observed that leadership is the ability to get other people to do something significant that they might not otherwise do. It is energizing people towards a goal.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

In order to properly situate the vexed Igbo leadership issues, with a view to project into the future, one needed to facilitate the process through the context of a leadership theory. This

helps to identify the type of leadership which could redeem the deterioration of Igbo political fortunes since 1970. The theory must be such that would explain how the people of south east Nigeria could rise from the state of apparent rejection, perceived marginalization and seething discontent within the Nigerian conditions. It is against this backdrop that we chose the theory of transformational leadership as analytical instrument to turn things around for the Igbo people of Nigeria. According to Khan, Nawaz & Khan (2016) transformational leadership distinguishes itself from the rest of the previous and contemporary theories, on the basis of its alignment to a greater good as it entails involvement of the followers in processes or activities related to personal factor.....and a course that will yield certain superior social dividend. It is considered that transformational leaders 'engage in interactions with followers based on common values, beliefs and goals,' Khan et al, (2016, citing Bass, 1994) noted that "transformational leaders attempts to induce followers to reorder their needs by transcending self interests and strive for higher order needs"

Transformational leadership directly confronts the most fundamental negative trait of the Igbo which is aggressive individualism. It encourages a drift to higher ideals and communal spirit for collective success. In a related argument, Khan, Bath and Hussanic (2017) reiterated that transformational leaders urge followers to go beyond their self interests. They help followers to realize and develop their potentials. These leaders identify the needs of their followers and then consider those needs to enhance development. They gather their followers around a common purpose, mission or vision and provide a sense of purpose and future direction. Transformational leadership is a game changer.

#### **IGBO LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE**

It is against this backdrop that one can now situate the Igbo political leadership experience. The glorious era of modern Igbo political leadership began with the emergence of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1949 as the president of Igbo state union. His towering and larger than life image coupled with his prepossessing charismatic personage was celebrated. He remains the greatest Igbo leader of all time In addition to his status as the indisputable father of Nigeria's nationalism. Another Igbo leader of mass appeal and commanding presence was Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu- the war time Head of state of Biafra. The Igbo also revered him as a Charismatic leader. After these two dispensations, the Igbo nation sank into what may be described as a long season of leadership drought. The post civil war Igbo political elite tended to manifest unusual culture of cold passivity, measured timidity and aggravated subservience to external political forces especially the over bearing influence of politicians of northern Nigeria extraction. The post civil war Igbo political elite appeared to have lost their bearing and unique identity. There has been no outstanding and unifying figure from the Igbo ethnic group with mass appeal to articulate, mobilize and galvanize the collective Igbo interest with a view to creating the needed momentum for inward looking strategies to build a strong political Igbo presence within Nigeria's political space.

As a result, the emergent Igbo political elite presents the sad image of orphans, beggars of some sorts, as they wander in the wilderness of political servitude and dependency within Nigeria's political space. According to John Onwe (2019), Igbo politics became transactional: a cocktail of short fixes, anything goes, based purely on what one gains as opposed to committed and principled vocational political struggle to achieve group/public interests as opposed to individual gains. In essence the purported or self styled leaders in Igbo land have no agenda of collective aspirations of the people. Rather they strive to out shine each other in the pursuit of personal and limited political and economic aggrandizement at the expense of their people. The problem has become systemic and fundamental. There is a certain level of amnesia or sense of political abdication which appear to have enveloped and taken captive Igbo political class from 2015 and beyond. A situation where politicians of Igbo extraction hold official positions and yet yield to some strange culture of fear, ineptitude, non performance and subtle rejection of Igbo identity. The tendency by current Igbo politicians to always ingratiate with the dominant ruling power elite represented by the Northern politicians has tainted and disfigured the Igbo political relevance.

The impact of this dereliction of political responsibilities to the people by majority of the Igbo political actors introduced a new brand of political culture in the south east: a culture of personal ruination and group immolation, a tendency to pander and hanker after external forces in order to be accepted at the federal level and a strident cold resolve to vitiate the Igbo interest. Consequently, most state governments in the south east are characterized by poor governance, destruction of public service by nonpayment of workers' salaries and pension of retired workers and general climate of insecurity and crippling underdevelopment.

Being republicans and democrats by nature coupled with a dominant tendency for individualism, the Igbo believe in consensual leadership or one produced through popular endorsement. Individuals on their own engage in all kinds of trades, professions, businesses or formal education to realize their life potentials. This inclination to work and thrive by individual prowess induces competition among the people and promotes superiority of individual achievements and advancement. It also diminishes the relevance of a political leader, though the vacuum is always there. The fact remains that the place of a leader among the Igbo is not necessarily sacrosanct. Anybody with the right opportunity or endowments can rise to become a leader with the active support of the greater majority as long as the leader does not try to lord it over any other person because it is an axiom among the Igbo that one man is as good as the other. Anyone holding a leadership position does so at the instance and pleasure of the collective. Obi (2013) asserted that for the Igbo, the individual not the collective is what matters. To be relevant then, the individual has to, on his own stand tall. He should not expect props from his environment. The principle of personal effort, through hard work, creative enterprise and unparalleled drive to succeed is a distinct and defining character of the average Igbo. Leadership comes with achievement. It is not just given but earned. For one to be deserving of leadership among the Igbo, one must be uniquely outstanding and prepared to

lead by consensus. According to Achebe (2011), the rise of the Igbo in Nigerian affairs was due to self confidence engendered by their open society and their belief that one man is as good as another, that no condition is permanent.

The average Igbo believes in himself. For him nothing is impossible because an Igbo proverb states that *onye kwe chia ekwe*, loosely translated to mean that when one is determined, his God also affirms. This kind of creature, fearing no god or man was custom made to grasp the opportunities such as they were. And the Igbo did so with both hands,(Achebe, 2011). Among the Igbo, age is respected but achievement is revered.

However, the political leadership trajectory of the Igbo took a downward trend after the defeat of Biafra in 1970. It would be recalled that Biafra was populated mainly by the Igbo people of the present south east Nigeria. The defeat affected the pride, humanity and even identity of the Igbo people in Nigeria. Although the victorious Federal Government of Nigeria under General Yakubu Gowon declared a policy of 'no victor and no vanquished', there was no doubt as to who suffered defeat. That innate streak of 'individualism first and the collective later' tendency assumed a hideous slant with intra ethnic rivalries and sabotage of the common goal. The principle of 'survival of the fittest' became a common instinct of self preservation. As a result outside influences and external political forces infiltrated the Igbo geopolitical zone with empty promises of bringing the Igbo back into national mainstream of power. Politicians of Igbo extraction fell for the bait and scrambled over some crumbs of power. According to Onwe (2019), it was this problem that conditioned the politics of the Igbo and made it reactive instead of assertive. Every Igbo politician is coming from a position of weakness. In the first place, he is a product of a system of which he is an outsider and has no control. This is because between August 2, 1966 and 1999, the political recruitment and tutelage has been under a political system in which northern military and civilian politicians have been in control and as such those recruited and empowered became clientele of these northern/civilian aristocrats.

In 1979, barely nine years after the Nigeria-Biafra war, Dr Alex Ekwueme became the Vice President of Nigeria under the then ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Alex Ekwueme was an Igbo icon, an outstanding Architect with cerebral intellect and massively successful. Yet the Igbo declined to accept him as a leader despite the fact that he was then the occupant of the high office of the vice president of the federal republic of Nigeria. On the contrary, the governors of the south east Igbo states continued to deride him as a sell out to the Hausa-Fulani power bloc. Indeed he had an endless running battle with Jim Nwobodo the governor of Ekwueme's home state of Anambra. At the end of the day the iconic Ekwueme who later founded the G34- a formidable group that helped to wrestle power from the hands of the military regime of Abacha in 1998 was again humiliated during the PDP presidential primaries in Jos. The detractors who stood against Ekwueme's historical attempt of winning the PDP presidential nomination were mainly Igbo led by Jim Nwobodo, the governor of his home state of old Anambra. And so the politics of 'divide and rule', of 'me first,' and the audacity of greed

became the denominator of Igbo political process. According to Obi (2013), in 2003, northern elite held that south east governors betrayed Dr Alex Ekwueme who was described as very patriotic Nigerian and a fine gentleman, in favour of a western Nigerian candidate (Obasanjo). For the northerners, Igbo politicians are self seeking and this explains why none of their own is acceptable to them. This inherent contradiction among the Igbo speaks volume of their perception of leadership. The benchmark for attaining or meriting the title of Igbo leader in its true and unembellished form is a very tall order. Only Nnamdi Azikiwe and Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu have achieved and attained that dream status in the history of Igbo political experience. Many other notable Igbo political gladiators had remained on the fringe of leadership. Indeed leadership in the mould and character people expect of the Igbo is alien to them. According to Nwabueze, (1985, citing Achebe, 1984), the real problem with the Igbo since independence is precisely, the absence of the kind of central leadership which their competitors presume for them. This lack has left them open to self seeking, opportunistic leaders who offered them no help at all in coping with a new Nigeria in which individual progress would no longer depend on the rules set by a fairly impartial colonial umpire. Nonetheless however, the Igbo still believe in some form of leadership. A leadership that allows the expression of individual initiatives and creative ingenuities-a leadership that allows freedom of thought and action without encumbrances that subordinate self will to collective agenda. No. The Igbo believe that the world is large enough for all to realize their potentials. The Igbo society is structured in such a way that the individual does not look up to any institution or government to attain whatever height or goal he has set for himself. He simply throws his heart into the ring and sets sail Obi,(2013). Here lies the heart of the matter as everyone relies on his individual ability as against the umbrella of a central coordinating leadership paradigm.

The bottom line of this unfolding perspective is simply the fact that for the Igbo, central leadership is not recognized as an instrument of social mobility or political ascendancy. Rather it is perceived as a veritable necessity for forging common identity at the appropriate time, a rallying point for social action in the context of communal development and an insurance against inter ethnic adversities. This is exactly where the Igbo missed the mark in failing to use leadership as a bargaining instrument for political existentialism within Nigeria. Until Igbo leadership is configured to appreciate and actively participate in the national dynamics of balance of power through sustained inter-ethnic negotiation from a position of common agenda, the Igbo would continue to circulate on the periphery of power equation in Nigeria. The cry of Igbo marginalization has lost its taste. The recourse to self help through separatist agitations is akin to the mistakes of 1967 civil war which saw the Igbo pitched against the rest of Nigeria and indeed the entire world in a terrible thirty months of internecine genocide. Echeruo (2021) had lamented that the pattern of Igbo civil discourse, the quality of Igbo leadership at state and national levels, even the quality of our pride in ourselves and inheritances as Igbo people-these still left much to be desired.

The Igbo leadership argument has generated lively debate regarding its significance, necessity and role within Nigeria's political space. However, it must be appreciated that the Igbo people are carrying some imposed political baggage from the civil war experience. It has not been easy for the people. The age long stigmatization as a people with a habitual propensity to dominate others has become an albatross. The Nigerian system tries to cage the Igbo who are perceived as unstoppable and capable of reenacting their pre war overwhelming influence in Nigeria. As a result, some political decisions, legal articles and government policies seem to target the Igbo and their interests. This makes the average Igbo think inwards on how to survive in an environment fraught with open resentment against the Igbo ethnic stock.

### **HOW OTHER NIGERIANS PERCEIVE THE IGBO PEOPLE**

There exist some shared feelings of unease about the Igbo among other Nigerian ethnic nationalities. They usually complain about the competitive spirit and inherent tendency of the Igbo to dominate any environment they found themselves in, especially among their host communities. The Igbo portray the image of a people who appear to have embraced modernity, education and other ways of western civilization rather late and decided at the outset of this realization to embrace and grab the new culture with consuming determination and a sense of utmost urgency. Ayandele (1979) observed that the Igbo, smarting under a sense of loss that western civilization had come to them too late, the desire to catch up with the rest of the south, particularly with the Yoruba, was very strong indeed. By 1948, one of their leaders, Mazi Mbonu Ojike, could boast that the Igbo had caught up with their Yoruba rivals. Within the Igbo mindset, nothing was allowed to stand between them and the zeal to make their mark in the unfolding opportunities in the colonial and post colonial Nigeria up to 1966. Given their natural inclination to confront any known barrier with accustomed energy and unparalleled creativity, the Igbo seem to have excelled in virtually all fields where they have engaged. This has unfortunately produced a backlash of intolerance and animosity among other ethnic groups in Nigeria. They began to view the Igbo as overweening, arrogant and contemptuous of other ethnic groups especially those among whom the Igbo live as itinerant people.

During the colonial era and up to the period leading to 1966, the Igbo constituted a very high percentage of civil servants in the federal and even other regions' civil services most especially in the north. They were also found in huge numbers in the Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government, the universities and among the Nigerian Army Officers corps. Having embraced education massively the moment it came to them through missionary activities, the public school system and community efforts, the Igbo produced numerous and assorted types of quality manpower ready for employment. While some parts of the country especially the northern region were rather slow to acquire western education, the Igbo grabbed the opportunities with two hands. According to Achebe, (2012,citing Anber, 1979), with unparalleled rapidity, the Igbos advanced fastest in the shortest period of time of all Nigeria's ethnic groups. It was not long before the educational and economic progress of the Igbos led to



their becoming major source of administrators, managers, technicians and civil servants for the country, occupying senior positions. This led to accusations of an Igbo monopoly of essential services to the exclusion of other ethnic groups. This total misreading of the objective reality and false and callous stigmatization of the Igbo as aggressively domineering was simply a case of giving a Dog a bad name in order to hang it. The phenomenal progress made by the Igbo over time is simply and squarely a product, a logical outcome and an unfailing reflection of their innate ingenuity and enterprising fecundity. It was against this background that a sordid and horrendous pogrom of genocidal proportion was carried out against the Igbo in the wake of the failed January 15<sup>th</sup> 1966 coup and the counter coup that was subsequently mounted in July of the same year. Igbo phobia thereafter became a national article of faith, an abiding ideology to annihilate and summarily decimate the Igbo as a people and ethnic nationality. This vicious genocidal attack against the Igbo ultimately culminated in the Biafra- Nigeria war of 1967-1970- a war fought with anger and venom.

To prove the indestructibility of the Igbo spirit, her natural gift to rise and overcome crippling inertia and barriers of history, the Igbos rose from the ashes of defeat and humiliation, of total bankruptcy, to return to the commanding heights of Nigeria's economy. Recall that at the end of the war, the Federal Government initiated some policies that seemed to target and whittle down the propensity for Igbo socio-economic and political advancement. These included the payment of only N20,000, (irrespective of the amount of money in ones account) to any Igbo person who had money in any Bank in Nigeria prior to the war, the principle of Federal character, the hasty implementation of the indigenization decree, the lopsided state creation structure, the deliberate policy of lack of equitable Federal presence in terms of infrastructure in the south east and admission policy to Federal institutions. Nwabueze(1985) had observed that so intense indeed is the fear, resentment and hatred of the Igboman in Nigeria that no Igboman, however good his credentials, not even Zik,(Nnamdi Azikiwe) the widely acknowledged father of Nigerian nationalism can expect to command a nationwide acceptance as a leader in the Government and politics of the country. His every action and utterances will be misunderstood and misinterpreted. He would be hounded from pillar to post until he is got rid of. In reality, Igbo phobia has become a national ethos, a belief system with the result that other ethnic groups in the attempt to be politically correct strives to avoid anything linking them with the Igbo people. Indeed some minorities in Rivers and Delta states continue to vigorously reject and deny their Igbo heritage. Some Igbo communities have repudiated their Igbo identity. I know of no other group in Nigeria so repudiated by some of its members. (Nwabueze,1985). It is a matter of grave concern that a group of people who ought to be celebrated for their stupendous capabilities should now be singled out for annihilation. No country was ever built on a foundation of gross injustice and barefaced discrimination against one of its constituent parts.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE IGBO PROBLEM

A close analysis of the Igbo problem in Nigeria reveals an intriguing contradiction. The issues are deep rooted. In the face of antagonistic and acrimonious relations with other Nigerians, the Igbo themselves have not helped matters. Somehow their strength has turned out the source of their weakness. The success story and unusual great achievements of the Igbo people across Nigerian cities have been accompanied by a sense of provocative hubris, lack of tact, discretion and open demonstration of ostentatious materialism. As they arrive and settle in any part of Nigeria, the next step the normal Igbo businessman or entrepreneur would do as the business grows is to buy up landed property, establish a chain of branches, invites close relations from home to seek out a fortune in the sojourned town. And before long the Igbo will not only taken a chieftaincy title from his host community, he will equally aspire to be the 'king of the Igbos or Eze Igbo' of that town, thereby giving the impression that the town is invariably an extension of the Igbo raj in the Diaspora. Not that something is fundamentally wrong with this cultural affinity and investment outside the Igbo enclave. However as Nwabueze (1985) noted, his success in education and trade has inclined the Igbo towards "noisy exhibitionism, over assertiveness, over confident and too-know air, an overweening pride and to a patronizing and condescending attitude towards the less successful communities among whom he settled. The latter are despised and mocked to their face for not being as successful.

Another corollary to the Igbo tragedy is the incurable desire and consuming tendency to seek for success mainly outside the Igbo states or region. There is this suffocating obsession or even consuming attraction among the Igbo that one can only succeed outside the south east. This explains the fact the early Igbo business moguls made their wealth from the Transport business because no group of people in the World travels more frequently as the Igbos of Nigeria. They are found everywhere in Nigeria and indeed the world. While the Igboland remain desolate and underdeveloped in real terms, the Igbos are scattered all over Nigeria developing and massively investing in every other part of Nigeria. As a result, the streets of virtually all the towns in the 31 states of the Federation, less 5 Igbo states are dotted by mind blowing Igbo investments roughly estimated at a whopping \$100 trillion and still counting . Yet the Igbo enclave is abandoned to retirees, civil servants and motley of patriotic hardcore investors. Another hideous and inexplicable dimension of the Igbo contradiction is the readiness and cold desire to

embrace the suicide option. While one is not against patriotism and national integration, it still boggles the sane mind how the Igbo completely forgot the massacre of their kiths and kin in the north in 1966, the civil war lessons, abandoned property issues. Since after the war, there have been several attacks on Igbo lives and investment in some parts of the north and yet the Igbo have continued to redouble their investments in that part of country with unimaginable sense of fiendish zeal. Riots and sectarian violence had severally broken in different parts of the north with the Igbo and their business interests as prime targets. This has not been able to elicit some measure of compulsion and a rethink among the Igbo who appear to be hell bent to embrace Golgotha in the fullness of time. Ndujihe (2019) lamented that for several decades, within the Nigerian federation, Ndigbo can be described as a nation in desperate search for acceptance as full citizens, a people deprived of the basic appreciation of their sacrifices in the task of founding and nurturing the Nigerian state. The problem of how to accord Ndigbo their rightful place in the scheme of things in Nigeria persists and has continued to grow in intensity with each succeeding government.

On a more sad note, the Igbo ethnic nationality is recently witnessing a rapacious and endless cycle of insecurity in the form of sporadic shootings either by a faceless horde of armed gangs or the so called unknown gun men or by agents of the state in pursuit of armed non state actors prowling through the south east zone, unleashing horror and mayhem in the communities. Cases of abductions, sponsored assassinations, kidnapping for ransom and imposed long days of curfew are rampant and indeed characterize existence in the five Igbo states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. The enforcement of the sit at home order by diverse separatist groups struggling for supremacy at cross purposes has completely destroyed the once vibrant economy of the south east. The ultimate effect of this galloping insecurity is mass exodus of prominent Igbo people from the south east to other parts of Nigeria. Given this palpable culture of raging violence and attendant fear in the south east, the Igbo in spite of their famed intelligence appear to have been systematically boxed to a corner of self and group destruction.

## **CONCLUSION**

By all empirical indices and available historical evidences, it has been proven that there is a yawning lacuna of leadership within the Igbo political system. The failure to fill this gap has been largely responsible for the crises of leadership among the Igbo political class. The Igbo are naturally endowed with outstanding skills and talents in diverse areas of human endeavour and have striven against suffocating odds to hold their own within Nigeria's economic space. However they have not been able to translate this unique great enterprising and industrious capacity to their sociopolitical and economic advantage. Rather, they divert their great wealth to developing other regions which later turn around to accuse the Igbo of domination. From investments in heavy industries, commercial conglomerates and manufacturing outfits, the Igbo usually choose to site these big businesses outside their zone, thereby developing other parts of the country other than their own. The Igbo as a group appears to have learnt nothing from history and they continue to repeat history. They travel out in droves from their ethnic home base to other towns and villages across Nigeria in search of the proverbial greener pastures even when the towns and villages they left behind would provide them with equally good opportunities. Before long their host communities would see them as ostentatious and pompous irritants and begin to accuse them of dominating them thereby provoking hostility against them. From one section of the country to the other, the story is the same as the Igbo are regarded and treated by other ethnic groups in Nigeria as strangers in their own country. Due to the absence of a centrally coordinating leadership, the Igbo are left with only individual efforts which more often than not fail to protect the collective interest of the beleaguered people. As a result they tend to seek succor in the hands of other better organized non Igbo compatriots at the cost of their dignity. Within the Igbo group especially with respect to members of the political class, the struggle to ingratiate with the ruling elite class of the other ethnic group becomes competitive. For instance, those who are closer to the ruling or governing power elite of either the northern or western extraction tend to lord it over the others. The ultimate outcome of this divide and rule situation is that the Igbo, on account of poor leadership are marginalized, hated and subjected to perpetual subjugation in Nigeria, in spite of their famed intelligence and enterprising prowess.

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