



World Scientific News

WSN 60 (2016) 26-39

EISSN 2392-2192

The Citizenship Question and Neobiafranism in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an examination of the relationship between the citizenship question in the Nigerian state and the tendency that has been denoted as neobiafranism in the work. The study subsequently found that despite the constitutional provisions on citizenship in the Nigerian nation, the question of who is a citizen has continued to remain in empirical terms, unsatisfactorily answered. Furthermore, it was found that the tendencies that define citizenship in Nigeria are ambivalent and the predispositions that encumber the giving of serious attention to citizenship in the country consequently belong to leadership incapacities. This gives rise to the case of a state that has to remain united by compulsion. It is concluded in the paper that until the citizenship question is fully settled, the affairs of the Nigerian state will continue to oscillate between the incidences of grounded take-offs and only-hopeful landings.

Keyword: Citizenship; Citizenship Question; Neobiafra; Neobiafranism; Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian state has unquestionably remained a curious work in progress. The disconnected nature of this ostensive progress has undeniably continued to give concerns to different generations of scholars and lay commentators (at the international level and the domestic scene). But one area of the Nigerian danger that has possibly not been given

adequate attention (in the existing literature) is the citizenship question. Incidentally, this is the issue that is likely to be at the root of all the other controversies and cataclysms that have historically characterized the Nigerian experimentation. It has led to the tendencies that have been researched in this study as neobiafranism. It has in this regard been opined that in order to understand the society in which we live, the question of citizenship needs to be taken seriously and furthermore, that achieving the ultimate goal of most political theories - an equal and well functioning society - is difficult if the concept of citizenship is not given the serious attention it deserves [1]. The central research question of this study therefore has to do with how the citizenship issue in the Nigerian state has currently led to neobiafranism (in the country). The reechoing questions that informed the study are consequently (i) who is a Nigerian citizen (ii) what are the tendencies that define citizenship in Nigeria and (iii) what are the predispositions that encumber the giving of serious attention to the citizenship question in the country?

2. CONCEPTUAL ELUCIDATION(S)

2. 1. The Citizenship Question

Citizenship has indeed been described as an elaborate concept [1]. It is a concept that is very much at the centre of policy debates within and across national borders, either explicitly or implicitly [2]. But generally, citizenship denotes the status of an individual as a full and responsible member of a political community [3]. In Alubo [4] citizenship is defined as a relationship between the individual and the state, in relation to mutual rights, duties and obligations and also a form of participation in the running of the state and society, and in this sense an agency and subject. Citizenship is accordingly conceivable as a given, of one's membership of any nation state. In this regard, it is not something to be struggled for, by the very same citizen. But citizenship is not merely a state of being; it is also describable as an expectation from the citizen. Thus, the citizenship question in extant literature has largely been treated along the lines of identity struggles. In this work however the citizenship question is treated holistically and essentially centers on the worth and quality of citizenship.

Veera [1] thus further contends that the meaning of citizenship in contemporary society is far from clear. VeneKlasen & Miller [5] also have since posited that the meaning of citizenship is open to debate. This gives rise to what they have subsequently depicted as the changing views of citizenship but not without adding that in all contexts, the changing views of citizenship are marked by battles that determine whose concerns get incorporated as legitimate and whose get excluded. The outcomes decide who is considered a full citizen and who is not. This study is about these battles that determine whose concerns get incorporated as legitimate and whose get excluded. It is about the outcomes of the battles that decide who is considered a full citizen of Nigeria and who is not. Veera [1] also posits:

There are many different aspects to citizenship and all of them have influence on how the concept is perceived. There is the old, exclusive ideal of citizenship (citizens as male patriarch-warriors) that haunts in the background of contemporary discussions on citizenship. In addition, there is the influence of culture and the debate on the importance of nationalism and nation-states and the relation between these two debates. And last, but not least, there is the multicultural discourse on universal human rights that

shapes the understanding of citizenship. These are all very different ideas that arise from different backgrounds and discourses, and although they all have an effect on how the concept of citizenship is understood, in most cases it seems hard to reconcile these different elements in a discussion about what constitutes citizenship.

Veera [1] indeed highlights that citizenship may be discussed from three different viewpoints. These are the legal (one's legal status as a full member of society), social (concerning groups and the rights of groups) and the political (concerning participation in the affairs of society) viewpoints. He additionally argues:

The full concept of citizenship should be seen as containing legal, political and social dimensions. The concept can be viewed from all of these three angles. The first means that citizenship is connected with certain rights, like the right to vote or stand for election, the right to property and so on. In most societies, the law guarantees these rights to every citizen. Then there is also the social dimension, which can be said to be as important as the legal one: the recognition of equality and identities of others...Finally, there is the political dimension, meaning the importance of citizens' participation in the society...The challenge with these three aspects of citizenship is, however, that they are difficult to discuss under one heading. Different theories or discourses of citizenship each approach the subject from different starting points, which make reconciling them sometimes hard.

Still according to Veera, citizenship is not merely about legal status or rights and duties; it is also about being recognized as an equal member of one's community. Participation and recognition he argues are therefore essential elements in all kinds of groups. What then makes citizenship so important, he further asks in the study? Then Phelan in the same work argues that what makes citizenship so unique is its scope. Citizenship is thought to cover the fair treatment both in the home country and the protection abroad [6]. That makes it the most important category of membership in the contemporary world, as it used to be something acquired by your status in society, when nowadays it is citizenship that guarantees the status [1,7]. The current meaning of citizenship should include the freedom to act under the law, and to be protected by the law [1]. This of course implies that when breaches are recorded it is a critical responsibility of the state (and its relevant agencies) to decisively deal with offenders as a deterrent to future possibilities of such lawless acts.

The state and its relevant agencies are accordingly obligated to protecting all other citizens against all those who might be prone to violating the laws of the land. Veera further (and finally) posits as follows:

The concept of citizenship includes the legal status and the political recognition as a member of a community as well as the specific rights and obligations associated with the membership. The political ideal is that every citizen is equally entitled to the same rights and duties. The idea of rights is inseparable from the idea of duties. If a person has a right, then there has to be someone who has the corresponding duty to fulfill that right. If I have a right not to be injured, other people around me have the duty not to violate

or hurt me. Human rights – or more precisely, the implementation of human rights – are closely connected with the concept of citizenship.

But the challenge of citizenship is ultimately the challenge of the citizens. It is not a matter of (for instance) claiming that the institutions are not working. According to Marina Liborakina in VeneKlasen & Miller [5] therefore, as citizens, we are responsible for how we are governed. The main issue is . . . to broaden citizens' participation . . . especially in decision-making on crucial issues of security, peace, and military [5]. The critical question therefore becomes, should citizens wait for government to broaden their own (citizens') participation? In other words, should citizens wait for government to engender citizenship? These are the dicey issues in the citizenship question, more so in the Nigerian state.

Furthermore, it is implicit in the citizenship question that if one was not a citizen of your country and does not wish to become one of your own members, you cannot forcefully confer citizenship on this person. There is accordingly an implication of choice or chance on citizenship but certainly not compulsion. Neobiafranism in Nigeria thus translates in its manifold trajectories to the rejection of citizenship by coercion. This makes the neobiafran tendency a continuing development that must be studied, understood and definitively addressed in the Nigerian state.

2. 2. Neo-Biafranism

Biafra was the name of the Nigerian breakaway state which incidentally had its secessionist bid decisively crushed by the mightier military forces of the Nigerian state in January 1970. But what gave rise to the Biafran secession was also seemingly inevitable. The Nigerian state and its so-called federal structure stood and currently stand on a tripod of three large ethnic groups, (the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo). At the time of the Nigerian independence in 1960, the Igbos, even though they were the least populated of the three major tribes, had by virtue of their cultural non-encumbrances (cultural encumbrances were [negatively] affecting the other two tribes) and share determination, were holding commanding positions in absolutely all walks of the Nigerian life. In the larger Nigerian political setting, tribalism was rife, corruption was monumental and the young Nigerian state was largely perceived to be headed toward the leadership unknown. Then when some radical elements of the Nigerian military took it upon themselves in January 1966 to bloodily do away with the assumed tribal and corrupt pioneer Nigerian political leaders, and restore order and sense of direction to the new nation, the leaders of the putsch were also preponderantly Igbos. The Nigerian political leadership forerunners have herein been described as assumed tribal and corrupt leaders because, what their successors have since left as legacies rather transformed their predecessors into apparent leadership saints and selfless nationalists.

At the time of Independence, the ostensible Nigerian federation was made up of a Northern Region (largely inhabited by the Hausa-Fulani), the Western Region (mostly populated by the Yoruba) and the Eastern Region (home to the otherwise ubiquitous Igbos). It is noteworthy that at this point in Nigerian history, even though the Igbos outnumbered the Hausa-Fulani at the officer cadre of the Military, the latter were more in number than the former in general terms. Yet there were an appreciable number of Northern officers in the then Nigerian army. Before long therefore the January coup was squarely interpreted by the North (the military and political elite in the North) as having mainly affected leaders of Northern extraction).

After the January coup in which these leaders were killed, the most senior Nigerian army officer who became Head of State of Nigeria, Major General Thomas Umunnakwe Aguiyi Ironsi, was again an Igbo man. There is no evidence in any case, to suggest that Ironsi was part of the January putsch. He invariably became Head of State by virtue of his indisputable position as the most senior Nigerian army officer at this time.

What followed in July 1966 however was a counter coup that was overtly masterminded by the North, in which the Igbos were the full targets. And General Ironsi was killed and Igbos (civilian and military Igbos) were being freely murdered in different parts of Nigeria, particularly in the Northern Region. An estimated number of thirty thousand Igbos were massacred in the bloodthirsty orgies. And these migrant Nigerian denizens (the Igbos) had no other choice than to begin to return to their Eastern homeland. Then after the July Coup, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon (a Northern-Minority officer) was chosen as the Head of State. Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who had been Military Governor of Eastern Region under the late Ironsi's regime, retained his position. But in attempting to sort out the occasioning nation-building challenges entailed by these bloody circumstances, both on the Nigerian Federal side and from the Eastern government's angle, the peripatetic Igbos were convinced to go back to their abandoned homes in the other parts of Nigeria, especially the Northern region. But that was when the finishing touches were applied to the Igbos' seemingly intended extermination, which has been variously called a pogrom. The migrant Igbo nationals who were lucky to leave alive, had to finally go back home to be squeezed into their Eastern Nigerian aboriginal homeland.

Under the leadership of Lt. Col. Ojukwu, the Igbos then started the struggle for a redefinition of their Nigerian citizenship. They subsequently threatened to pull out of the Nigerian state. The remainder of the Nigerian federation, under the headship of Lt. Col. Gowon also decided to let their Igbo irritant-compatriots know that they would take none of such threats - that the unity of the composite Nigerian peoples under the existing dispensation and invariably their continuing to live together as One Nigeria was not negotiable. What followed was the Nigeria-Biafra war, after Ojukwu on May 30, 1967 declared the Eastern Region as the Republic of Biafra. It was a war Gowon, the Nigerian head of state, acknowledged that it claimed over one hundred thousand military servicemen and women and over three million Biafrans [8]. The Biafran dead were estimated to be made up of one million children who died of starvation, and two million others who were killed in battle. The cost of the war in human lives made it one of the bloodiest civil wars in human history [8].

But essentially, Biafra represented a demand, akin to the following: explain to me what makes me a member of this union. It also symbolized an effort - to re-establish the full status of one's citizenship. In recent times therefore, these same demands and efforts have reappeared, following the frustrations of the Nigerian citizens, in the face of the failed promises of the Nigerian failing state. From the erstwhile Eastern Region of Nigeria (the birth place of the defunct Biafra) have emerged groups of organized agitators, also making again, these demands and these efforts (which other groups are also bringing up from different directions). The most notable of these groups from the former East are the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the group's alter ego, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOD). From the current South-South description of the Nigerian geo-political divisions have emerged several groups, the most current of which is the Niger Delta Avengers. There is the *O'odua People's Congress* (OPC) from the Yoruba West and of course the unrepentantly murderous Boko Haram Sect from Northern Nigeria. At the

root of all these groupings and regroupings is the lingering question of what makes me a member of this union – the citizenship question?

And so the interrogators from the former Biafran side (arguably non-violent in their dispositions) have been variously depicted as neobiafrans [9-13]. Consequently, to the extent that the extant interrogations are not peculiar to the aboriginal Biafrans, it logically follows that the citizenship-status questioners from the other agitated sections of the current Nigerian experimentation are also describable as neobiafrans. Hence we arrive at the construct of neobiafranism as the phenomenon that characterizes the manifold dimensions of the demands and efforts to (re)define who is a Nigerian citizen – to reassess the worth of Nigerian citizenship. Therefore, neobiafranism as analytical construct and research variable is conceptually related to the implied thesis of Chido Onumah in *We Are All Biafrans* [14]. But the empirical trajectories and research questions of the two positions are quite different. Onumah's work is essentially and largely about the National Question in Nigeria. The current contribution on the other hand is specifically on the citizenship question in the same troubled country.

3. THE NIGERIAN STATE: A CONTEMPORARY CHARACTERIZATION

3. 1. The Niger Delta Question

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is one of the most blessed deltas in the world, in both human and material resources [15]. It is also one of the most acrimonious places in the country (perhaps on the planet). The core of the animosities indeed center on the irreconcilable differences among peoples who have been forcefully brought together under a federal structure that remains disputable and increasingly disreputable? It occasions a massive and incredible exploitation of the resources of the Niger Delta peoples by the state and its elite-agents for the self-evident creation of developmental infrastructure in only the other sections of the country. There is then an apparent chicanery by the elite-collaborators, when it comes to the provision of amenities for good living for the peoples of the Niger Delta.

Hence, the history of protests and conflicts of acrimony by the Niger Delta peoples against forced union and exploitation dates back to the period before 1957 when testimonies were made in respect thereof before the Willink Commission of Inquiry into Minority Fears [15]. The place has remained a theater of thunderous explosions and the blowing-up of oil-pipelines. The question is: what manner of Nigerian citizens, engage in these atrocious agitations? They are of course people whose overarching wishes are not to be called Nigerians any longer. According to Williams [16] therefore, the occurrence of conflict over access and control of oil resources in the Niger Delta can be traced to the inherent contradiction that exists in Nigeria's federal set up. This set of internal contradictions he argues can be traced to the existence of disparate attitudes to Nigerian citizenship and the related component of alienation. Williams further declares:

In contention in the Niger Delta is the oil-rich environment, the manner of distributing its wealth and the survival of its inhabitants who depend on the ecosystem for their basic needs and livelihood. The host communities of the Niger Delta are of the view that since oil is mined in their land, and they suffer from the pollution and environmental degradation attendant to oil production, they have the right to adequate compensation, a clean and safe

environment, and a fair share of oil rents, while the state and its partners, the multinationals, insist on the optimization of rents and profits on the basis of the modalities defined exclusively by the partnership. An obvious deduction from the scenario is the factuality of domination of power and politics in Nigeria by the ethnic group in control of the state since independence and the alienation of other groups as marginalized groups

The issue of the survival of the Niger Delta inhabitants who depend on the ecosystem for their basic needs and livelihood should be underscored. The question of possession of right to adequate compensation for suffering from pollution and environmental degradation attendant to oil production, is also important. What then are the counter arguments? Whatever they are, they profoundly border on the citizenship question.

3. 2. The Fulani Herdsman and His Obdurate Invasions

The Hausa-Fulani constitute one of the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Fulani are notably nomads. The incidence of Fulani herdsmanism is accordingly not a historically curious occurrence. But there is a contemporary brand of the weltanschauung of the Fulani nomad that ferociously adds to the citizenship question in Nigeria. The new breed of herdsman roams the Nigerian nation space with audacity, armed with sophisticated weapons, with his group of cattle at the rear or in front, as he protects his cows, he kills (murders), vandalizes, annihilates, sacks entire villages, rapes and easily walks away in continuation of his business. The debates have been ongoing on how to provide for the Fulani herdsman and his cattle in the template of Nigeria's modern development. The Fulani nomad contends that he is a Nigerian citizen with the rights to do his nomadic business on Nigerian soil. The rest of his contemporaries counter him by arguing that in the course of this his business, he has no right to leave his cows to destroy the farmlands of other non-Fulani in search of grazing. And government merely watches in ostensive incapacitations. At the root of this problem is a citizenship question.

3. 3. The Case of the Religious Crusader

Among the most pronounced of the religious sects that engage in the nature of campaign under description is the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the Shi'a Muslim organization led by Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. They are also usually armed and could block Nigerian highways in the course of professing their faith. And the Nigerian state and its apparatuses would respond with vehement brutalities. But the sect members fundamentally claim citizenship and its attendant privileges for their ostensible religious actions while government and the opposing citizens conclude that this concept of citizenship and its claims are bewildering and potentially (currently) destructive [17-21]. But the Shi'a Muslims are Nigerian citizens – citizens of the current Nigerian amalgam. In his submissions on behalf of his father (Ibrahim El-Zakzaky) and the Shi'a Muslim crusaders Zakzaky [20] deposed that he regretted ending up as a Nigerian. A conflict between members of the group and the Nigerian Army in December 2015 had left many dead and resulted in the arrest and detention of its leader Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. The Kaduna State Government (in Nigeria) had declared the Shiite group (the Islamic Movement of Nigeria) an illegal society and banned it from existence. The Kaduna state executive council approved the making of the order. Government

said the group does not recognize or respect the laws of the country. The conflict with the Nigerian army claimed 347 lives [21].

3. 4. The Boko Haram Conundrum

The Boko Haram calamity in the country has already received consummate international notice. It is among other matters, the insurgency of a largely Nigerian group of citizens who are questioning the meaning of their Nigerian citizenship. Some scholars have already perceived the Boko Haram challenge from the standpoint of relative deprivation, which is not a positive attribute of citizenship. Among the most bizarre audacities of the Boko Haramists so far, besides their horrendous bombings and bestialities must be recorded the kidnap of nearly three hundred school girls in Chibok, North East, Nigeria. The girls were also Nigerian citizens; their piecemeal rescues and the possible un-rescues of the remainder-majority of these female citizens have remained parts of the larger citizenship question in the country. As a matter of fact, the Nigerian state and the rest of her citizens did not give (have not given) profound indications to the outraged international community (at the time of this incident) that the development was a national shame impugning the quality of citizenship in the country.

3. 5. The Indigene-Settler Distinctions

The indigenes-settlers problems in Nigeria had become protracted due to the narrow definition of citizenship both in theory and practice, among other factors [22]. This is illustrated in this study with the Tiv-Jukun conflicts in Wukari Local Government Area, Nigeria's Taraba State. According to Adesoji & Alao [22] the Jukun saw themselves as the indigenes of the region having been firmly established there by the 17th century.

Their contention therefore has been that while other groups in the region like the Tiv as well as the Hausa-Fulani have other places to go to, the Jukun have only Wukari as home. Whereas the Tiv had arrived in the region as far back as the 1840s when the present Wukari was established and notwithstanding the efforts made by the colonial government to recognize them as being part of the society where they lived, the Jukun essentially saw them as settlers [22]. There are currently no definitive mechanisms in the country for decisions by the state over such other (numerous) indigenes-settlers imbroglios [22] in the country. Indigene-settler disputes and their integral identity issues are also intertwined with the citizenship question in Nigeria

3. 6. The Narrative of Sundry Criminalities

Above all, all over contemporary Nigeria, people rape, kidnap others, butcher them in such mindless manner that it begins to raise questions on why this is so. Are the perpetrators of these acts also Nigerian citizens? Are their victims seen by them as co-citizens? Then added to this scenario are the monstrous cases of sheer banditry masterminded by the Nigerian elite over state resources. Do these thieving elites also claim citizenship and its attendant rights in their marauding financial perfidies? Then who is left as the Nigerian citizen?

4. THE CITIZENSHIP QUESTION AND THE NEOBIAFRAN THESIS: FURTHER ELUCIDATIONS

Neobiafranism in Nigeria is also exhibited in political / voter apathy. These are not only the tendencies of discontented citizens but also reactions by a citizenry whose statuses as citizens have not been manifestly and uniformly guaranteed by the state. Political apathy, argues Yakubu [23] is the deficiency of love and devotion to a state. It is the indifference on the part of citizens of any state as regards their attitudes towards political activities such as elections, public opinions, and civic responsibilities. Political apathy is therefore absence of interest in, or concern about, socio-political life. Thus, an apathetic person lacks interest in the social and political affairs of his country [23]. Voter apathy is a subset of political apathy. Several studies have proved that Nigerian elections have always been characterized by voter apathy. In addition to being possible features of many democracies, recent trends in voter apathy in Nigeria are fall-outs from the neo-biafran tendencies in the country. In this regard, the two principal organs of Neobiafranism in the Igbo section of the country (MASSOB and IPOD) have always called upon their members not to take part in Nigerian elections.

According to Alubo [4], as spelt out in the 1999 constitution, one is a citizen of Nigeria provided such as person:

- Was born in Nigeria before the date of independence either of whose parents or any of grandparents belong or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria. Provided a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria
- Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria
- Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria (Chapter 3, section 1).

There are also provisions for naturalization and for foreigners to apply for Nigerian citizenship [4]. But the question is: what has these lofty constitutional provisions translated to? Alubo therefore further posits:

The constitutional provision also spells out rights and privileges in a fairly comprehensive manner as to ensure rights of all citizens. The problem is not however, the constitution but the translation of its provisions to reality. Part of this complication is the division of Nigerian citizens - in daily experiences - into *indigenes* and *settlers*. As used in common parlance, an indigene is synonymous with native, autochthon and “son/daughter -of-the soil”, and refers to ascribed identity of being born in a particular location into a specific ethnic group considered to have a “homeland” within the locality. To be an indigene of a place therefore means that the ethnic group can point to a territory as “native land” where such native land is in a local council or state.

Citing Marshall in Egwu [24], Nwanegbo, Odigbo and Ochanja [25] posit that it is much easier to define citizenship as a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. It is then in the determination of this fullness of citizenship that sundry crises

arise. Neobiafranism is a manifestation of the frustrations arising out of an endless wait by very many citizens of the Nigerian state (in their individual and corporate forms) for the fullness of their citizenship of Nigeria to be acknowledged by the Nigerian state actors. The truth remains that despite the constitutional provisions, the question of who is a Nigerian citizen remains in empirical terms, unsatisfactorily answered. Hence, from the Niger Delta militant, Fulani herdsman, the invidious religious crusader, the Boko Haram nihilist, the indigene-settler belligerents, to sundry Nigerian criminals, the pervasive issue is the citizenship question.

What the former Biafra (July 6, 1967 - January 15, 1970) represented was (after all said and done) a spirited questioning of the basis, for the continuity of the Nigerian state, as a forceful amalgam of dissenting peoples. Is there anything ingenious in this continuity? Neobiafrans on the other hand are all those Nigerians (irrespective of their current tribal make-ups) who have awakened the concerns about the unimagination of the subsisting Nigerian amalgamation. Invariably, the central issue to the neobiafrans is the quality of their citizenship. Their interests are not in abstract structures but in how these structures impact on their own lives. The question of citizenship is after all also a question of belonging [1]. Then, Ladepo [26] has in a highly indignant and grave thesis submitted that the lethal terror group, Boko Haram is only in contemporary times attempting to do with a rather heinous and destructive attitude, what the Biafrans tried to do in 1967 but were greeted with a civil war by the Nigerian state. This Ladepo's position conceptually but curiously depicts the Boko Haramists as neobiafrans.

The citizenship question in Nigeria and the concomitant neobiafranism are equally not unrelated to the conundrum of corruption in the country. Since independence in 1960 to the period of this study in 2016, each of the succeeding regimes in the volatile Nigerian narrative (in military or civilian eras) has obviously succeeded in outdoing the other on the scorecard of sleaze. One of the implications of the gargantuan incident of corruption in Nigeria is thus the heightened wave of inequality. While the corruption-benefiting citizens lived like financial czars in opulent displays, their undoubtedly hardworking compatriots rather lived like modern Nigerian refugees in their contradictory poverties. Hence, at the height of the Nigeria-Biafra war, there were well over three thousand refugee centers and camps in Biafra, a number that was still considered grossly inadequate for the tragic challenges of the time [8]. The witnesses to these citizenship absurdities were in their lifetimes envisioning humiliating repetitions of such circumstances, arising from the apparent leadership perfidies on the part of the Nigerian elite. From the former Nigerian divide of the Nigeria-Biafra belligerence, the neobiafran converts have become profoundly disappointed with what the inheritors of the lucrative side of their anti-Igbo sentiments have done with power. In generic terms therefore, neobiafranism is a reaction to these leadership disappointments and their highly ominous outcomes.

5. CITIZENSHIP AS ENDURING QUESTION IN NIGERIA

The enduring question thus remains: who is a Nigerian citizen? According to Williams [16], citizenship status is ensconced on three essential propositions: individual human rights, political participation and socio-economic welfare. It is however contended in this work that the ostensive Nigerian citizenship is deficient on all the three scores, except for only a few

privileged individuals. The citizenship question in the Nigerian state thus remains enduring and unsettled.

Hence Imam, Bibi & Abba [27] have highlighted that in the contemporary Nigerian context, the discourse on citizenship and the application of citizens' rights often generate political tension and violence because it is intricately tied with the issue of ethnic identity, ethnicity and religion. But why should this be so? Why should matters of individual human rights, political participation and socio-economic welfare [16] in a modern nation state remain tied to ethnic identity, ethnicity and religion? It is consequently the unholy alliance among these variables that breed the tendencies that translate to neobiafranism in the Nigerian polity.

A critical aspect of the citizenship question in Nigeria is therefore conceivable in the following regard: The Nigerian state is more territory-dependent than citizenship focused. Before the recent divine devaluation in the worth of the country's oil resources, the territory-dependence of the state was invariably petroleum products-propelled. Therefore when Nigerian leaders talked (talk) about the greatness of their country, the reference is merely to the land mass of the place and her mineral deposits. They do not in truth reckon with the possible citizenship-factor in such imaginations of greatness and their mirage realities.

How are the Nigerian minorities treated by the majorities of the country? And indeed, it has also been posited that the questions of citizenship are intimately connected with the questions of identity, and therefore the citizenship question refers also to the minority / majority debate as the social confirmation of identity is increasingly seen as essential to human flourishing [1,28,29]. And as a matter of fact, citizenship becomes devalued whenever the reminder-value remains the truth that one belongs to the minority. The tendencies that define citizenship in Nigeria are consequently ambivalent. And accordingly the predispositions that encumber the giving of serious attention to the citizenship question in the country belong to leadership incapacities.

Let us briefly return to the case of the religious crusader and the inherent citizenship question. And so, in the course of concluding this study, hundreds of members of the Shiite Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), defied the government and its orders banning the group, and decided to march in the city of Kaduna to demand the release of their spiritual leader, Ibrahim El-Zakzaky. The protesters closed down the popular Ahmadu Bello way in the city, causing heavy traffic on the road. As they walked through the busy Gumi market, in the town, they sang praises of Mr. El-Zakzaky and called on the government to release him from detention. Their most portent message was: we are not terrorists, we are Nigerians, free our leader, El-Zakzaky [30]. Now, are they not Nigerian citizens? It is accordingly such a citizenship question bordering on neobiafranism (being raised by a prohibited group), in defiance of their prohibition, that political leadership in Nigeria has remained incapacitated to answer. So what is the essence of such leadership?

6. CONCLUSIONS

The essence of every government is to realize the political, social and economic interests of its people [31]. The essence of every state also is to realize the political, social and economic interests of its citizens. This is the matter that is at the heart of the citizenship question in Nigeria. Under these scenarios, no animal is assumed more equal than others. The citizenship question in Nigeria has indeed been heightened by a curious assumption that some

animals are more equal than others. It has become the case of a state that has to remain united by compulsion. It is a vast area of land with disparate peoples but where only a few have fully conferred on themselves the status of citizenship. In this regard, sundry agents of the state and strange officials perceive their roles in the Nigerian union as that of maintaining a fully weird status quo ante. It is these apparent absurdities and their challenges that have given rise to the current incidence of neobiafranism, which in consummate manner is the agitations by an unimaginably large segment of Nigerians, inclusive of gargantuan numbers of the non-Igbo, for a redefinition of who is a Nigerian citizen. And until the citizenship question is fully settled, the affairs of the Nigerian state will continue to oscillate between the incidences of grounded take-offs and only-hopeful landings.

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(Received 08 November 2016; accepted 21 November 2016)