

Monday Sit-at-Home in Southeastern Nigeria: A Contradiction to the Objectives of the Indigenous People of Biafra

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Abstract— Among the strategies through which the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has sought to express its grievances against the Nigerian state, the Monday sit-at-home order in the southeastern region has emerged as the most contradictory to the movement's stated objectives. IPOB is a separatist movement whose principal aims are to secure the independence of the defunct Republic of Biafra and to promote the welfare of the predominantly Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. This study critically interrogates why the movement initiated a protest strategy that has manifested as a self-inflicted wound upon the very population it claims to protect. While some scholars view the Monday sit-at-home as a legitimate tactic for achieving the movement's goals, and others interpret it as a protest against the marginalisation of the Igbo in Nigeria, this paper argues that it constitutes a self-imposed economic and social burden on the people, frustrating their livelihoods and damaging their political standing. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on primary and secondary sources analysed qualitatively. Findings reveal that the sit-at-home order has resulted in substantial economic losses, disruption of educational activities, increased insecurity, and the erosion of the movement's non-violent credentials. The paper proposes alternative strategies more aligned with IPOB's objectives, including stakeholder engagement, the establishment of regional orientation institutions, and sustained educational campaigns. It concludes that any strategy which violates the welfare of the people it purports to serve demands discontinuation.

Keywords: sit-at-home; Southeastern Nigeria; Indigenous People of Biafra; self-determination; marginalisation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Monday sit-at-home strategy instituted by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in southeastern Nigeria was designed to demonstrate dissatisfaction with and protest against the marginalisation and ill-treatment of the Igbo and other peoples of the region (Echeng, 2021). However, the implications of this strategy for the economy and lives of the people have raised serious questions regarding its alignment with the objectives of the movement. The core objectives of IPOB include promoting and protecting the welfare of the people of the Southeast and pursuing the realisation of self-determination through the restoration of the defunct Sovereign State of Biafra (Nwangwu et al., 2022). By disrupting socio-economic and political activities in the region, the protest has provoked debate on its suitability as a strategy for a movement ostensibly committed to protecting the people and their welfare.

This paper examines the Monday sit-at-home strategy as a contradiction to the mandate and objectives of IPOB, exploring its implications and proposing alternative strategies that could prove more effective for achieving the goals of the movement. It unveils the havoc wrought on the economy, welfare, and lives of the people whom the movement declares it seeks to protect. On this basis, alternative strategies are proposed, strategies that must be connected to more effective means of bringing the movement's goals to fruition.

The significance of this study lies in its critical interrogation of a protest strategy that has received considerable attention in Nigerian public discourse but limited scholarly analysis regarding its consistency with the stated objectives of the movement that initiated it. While existing literature has documented the economic impact of the sit-at-home order (Osita et al., 2024; Ikpozu et al., 2024), few studies have systematically analysed the contradiction between the strategy and IPOB's foundational objectives. This paper addresses that gap by placing the sit-at-home order within the broader framework of the movement's goals and evaluating its effectiveness as a tactic for achieving self-determination.

THE CONCEPT AND ORIGIN OF IPOB

IPOB, an acronym for the Indigenous People of Biafra, is a movement pursuing the realisation of independence for southeastern Nigeria (Odey, 2026). The movement further aims to protect and defend the people and their welfare within the country, bearing in mind the increasing rate of marginalisation and violations suffered by the people over time. The term “indigenous” captures the original inhabitants of the region, mainly the Igbo and other ethnic groups including the Ijaw, Ogoni, Efik, Ibibio, Annang, Eket, Ndoni, Urhobo, Isoko, and Ogba (Ezeani, 2013; Edor et al., 2025). It is, however, important to remark that not all persons from those ethnic groups support IPOB or its objectives. Some people, particularly wealthy and influential individuals

whose resources are spread across the country, alongside political leaders and activists from those ethnic groups including the Igbo, mount strong opposition against the movement and its objectives (Okoye, 2025; Odey, et al., 2025). Yet, the fact that such stiff opposition exists does not neutralise the reality that membership of IPOB cuts across most of those ethnic groups.

Essentially, the map of the movement covering the areas identified as Biafran territories encompasses multiple ethnic groups. In the Niger Delta, the map captures Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Rivers, Delta, and Edo States (Ezeani, 2013). Undoubtedly, the population of people who believe in or support IPOB and its objectives is higher among the Igbo ethnic group and states than others in the region. Perhaps this explains why the movement's activities in Igboland are often more pronounced and impactful than in other areas. The emphasis on “the people” derives from those with a common or collective identity and shared experiences.

Biafra is conceived as the proposed sovereign state which IPOB pursues to establish. It is understood as an ancient kingdom in Africa, covering the then Eastern Region and part of the Western Region of what later became Nigeria. It is further known as the name used to describe the region that is now southeastern Nigeria, inhabited by various ethnic groups including the Igbo, Ibibio, Efik, and many others. The name is derived from the Bight of Biafra, a curved section of coastline in the Gulf of Guinea located in the southeastern part of Nigeria (Ezeani, 2013). In the context of the Nigerian Civil War, the name Biafra is synonymous with the secessionist movement dominated by the Igbo people who sought to create an independent state from Nigeria (Smith, 2011).

The establishment of IPOB in 2012 under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu represents a logical consequence of the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970. The factors responsible for the declaration of the Sovereign State of Biafra by Chukwuemeka Ojukwu in 1967, and the subsequent outbreak of the war, cannot be wholly disconnected from those that led to the formation of other organisations advocating Biafran independence after the war. The critical fact is that those factors remained unaddressed by the Nigerian government. Consequently, their effects persist and remain undeniable in the country. Some of the post-war organisations include the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF), and the Biafran Liberation Council (BLC). The focus here, however, is on IPOB and its Monday sit-at-home strategy, examining how contradictory and counterproductive it is to the movement's objectives.

In 1999, Ralph Uwazurike founded MASSOB with the aim of achieving Biafran independence without violence. In the early 2000s, Nnamdi Kanu joined the activities of MASSOB. He subsequently detected what he considered leadership, strategic, philosophical, and tactical weaknesses in MASSOB and exited to establish IPOB in 2012.

Kanu's objection to MASSOB's willingness to engage in negotiations with the Nigerian government was a significant factor in his departure. Kanu believed that the government would always be insincere and deceptive. He further felt that MASSOB's increasing focus on Igbo rights and interests within Nigeria and its local and regional approaches to the movement represented a philosophical and tactical shift from the primary pursuit of achieving independence for Biafra to addressing broader Igbo issues, which he believed would always be manipulated or frustrated by the Nigerian government (Eze, 2021).

What is common among most post-Nigerian Civil War pro-Biafran organisations is the belief in and pursuit of independence for Biafrans through non-violent means. The Nnamdi Kanu-led IPOB is no exception. Kanu emphasised the importance of Biafran identity and the need for a distinct Biafran state. He argued that the liberation and independence of Biafra would better succeed with non-violent and more radical approaches. For him, local campaign and mobilisation were as important as internationalising the Biafran struggle (Eze, 2021).

OBJECTIVES OF IPOB

The objectives of IPOB were shaped by the same factors that were responsible for the declaration of the Sovereign State of Biafra by Ojukwu in 1967. Ojukwu sought to institutionalise efforts and programmes that would promote respect for human rights and development through revolution. The principles of the revolution, according to him, included belief in the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the human person, firm opposition to genocide and any attempt to destroy a people's security and right to life, property, and progress, the promotion of patriotism and devotion to the fatherland, recognition that all Biafrans were bound together by ties of geography, trade, inter-marriage, and culture, and the principle that sovereignty and power belong to the people, entailing public accountability (Ahiara Declaration, 1969, pp. 35–39).

The objectives of IPOB are designed to give effect to these principles as formulated by Ojukwu, yet they capture a more broadened emphasis on the restoration of the defunct Republic of Biafra, welfare, justice, and development. The goals cut across all spheres of life. Politically, IPOB aims at the restoration of Biafran independence. The movement advocates the people's right to self-determination, which it believes would succeed better with a separate state from Nigeria. Economically, it aims to promote economic prosperity and self-sufficiency for the people of Biafra. This could be achieved through, among other things, sufficient use of the entrepreneurial, technical, and intellectual prowess of the people and resource control. The organisation advocates the control of Biafran resources, such as land, oil, gas, and other natural resources of the region. It is believed that through this means, equity, fairness, and

accountability would be adequately achieved in the interest of the people (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2021).

Socio-culturally, IPOB aims to preserve and promote the people's values, culture, and identity. The movement is equally concerned about the protection of lives and property in the area. It seeks to promote and protect the rights of people in its territories from violation and infringement (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2021). Inasmuch as the organisation pursues these goals, the expected fairness, justice for the people, and protection of the lives and properties of the Igbo and the entire people of the Southeast have, however, been lacking in Nigeria. Earlier commentators, such as Philip Effiong, Adedapo Adeniran, and Wole Soyinka, have reinforced this position, believing that anti-Igbo and anti-East programmes in Nigeria resulted in pogrom or genocide against the people, leaving them with no viable option other than to demand secession. According to Effiong (1970), "throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self-defence where peaceful negotiations failed. We are no exception. We have fought in defence of that cause" (as cited in Ezeani, 2013, p. 46).

The Igbo and people of the East were violated and massacred in different parts of Nigeria, especially in the North. Chukwurah (2015) uses his personal experiences and those of his parents regarding the killing of the Igbo and easterners in Jos to strengthen this position. According to him, "Rwang Pam, the then-Gbom Gwom Jos, worked very hard to safeguard the lives of the easterners living in Jos. He openly opposed the killing of Igbos and easterners in Jos. But in the end, despite his best intentions, something gave way and the massacre of the easterners living in Jos began" (p. 30).

Chukwurah's account of genocide against the Igbo and easterners, and other anti-Eastern activities and programmes in Nigeria since 1960, is supported by Soyinka (2006), who argues that "it would be a distortion of history and an attempt to trivialize the trauma that the Igbo had undergone to suggest that it was the lure of the oil wealth that drove them to seek a separate existence. When a people have been subjected to a degree of inhuman violation for which there is no other word than genocide, they have the right to seek an identity apart from the aggressors" (p. 101). In view of this insistence, the outright repudiation of the terms of the Aburi Accord led to the Eastern Region and Ojukwu's demand for a separate state from Nigeria in 1967. Undoubtedly, these unaddressed circumstances that resulted in the declaration of the Sovereign State of Biafra, and subsequent cases of marginalisation of the Igbo with anti-Igbo conspiracies, policies, and programmes in the post-Nigerian Civil War era, eventually precipitated the emergence of other pro-Biafran organisations among the marginalised, violated, and oppressed people of the East. IPOB, as one of those organisations, could hardly achieve its objectives in a country like Nigeria without initiating and adopting uncommon strategies.

STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES ADOPTED BY IPOB

Recognising that IPOB believes in the restoration of the defunct Sovereign State of Biafra, the preservation of the values, culture, and identity of the people, and the protection of their lives and properties through non-violence, the movement was left with the choice of injecting new and uncommon strategies and approaches into the pursuit. The organisation adopted a grassroots mobilisation strategy, organising youths, women, and communities to engage in public and peaceful protests and rallies condemning the protracted marginalisation and violation of the people of southeastern Nigeria and demanding their independence as a separate state (Chukwudi et al., 2019). It is through this approach that IPOB was able to build grassroots support for the movement.

The movement further adopted media and propaganda strategies to gain widespread support for its mission. In this practice, IPOB established and utilised Radio Biafra, social media, print media, and online platforms to disseminate pro-Biafran messages and news (Ebeze & Emenike, 2022). This approach was also used to counter Nigerian government narratives and to project southeastern Nigeria's case for independence internationally. IPOB publishes newspapers, magazines, online articles, Radio Biafra broadcasts, and social media messages that promote its mission of actualising Biafran independence.

The movement adopted a strategy of boycotting Nigerian elections, appointments, and goods. IPOB has consistently called on the people of the Southeast to boycott Nigerian elections, goods, and appointments as clear demonstrations of their rejection of the Nigerian state (Premium Times, 2017). Adherents of IPOB refuse to obtain Nigerian voter cards and reject, among other things, appointments in Nigeria. All these actions demonstrate that they do not believe in Nigeria, which they regard as a failed state.

International diplomacy has been adopted by IPOB more extensively than by any other pro-Biafran organisation in Nigeria. The movement has formed synergies with pro-Biafran organisations in the diaspora and engages in international lobbying efforts to raise awareness about the Biafran cause and gain support from overseas and international organisations (The Nation, 2018). IPOB has sent several delegations to foreign governments, including the United States, Britain, and Russia, and has engaged with the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Union to earn a foothold, backing, and recognition in international environments.

To foster economic development and prosperity in the region, IPOB initiated and sustained a Biafran currency, referred to as the Biafran Pound, and established a Biafran National Council for economic development planning. These measures are intended to promote import substitution industrialisation in the area. To keep the struggle alive, IPOB announced the establishment of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in 2020. The

primary objective of the ESN is to protect and defend the Southeast and its citizens from the increasing cases of insecurity perpetrated by Fulani herders in the area. This branch of IPOB was charged with warding off Fulani herders, kidnappers, and bandits who have infiltrated southeastern bushes and forests, terrorising, kidnapping, maiming, and killing innocent farmers and residents of the Southeast (HumAngle Media, 2021).

The Monday sit-at-home order was introduced in 2021 as one of the strategies and approaches of IPOB. It was initially intended to serve as a means to vent anger and protest against the re-arrest of Nnamdi Kanu on 29 June 2021. As a way of demonstrating consistent solidarity with Kanu, who has been under detention by the Nigerian government, IPOB expected the Igbo and the entire people of the defunct Republic of Biafra to embrace and participate in the protest. The sit-at-home was originally intended to be a one-day protest, but it later became a recurring, weekly protest observed every Monday in the region (THISDAY, 2021). The economic, political, and social effects of this recurring sit-at-home and its enforcement in the region strongly contradict numerous objectives of the organisation. This contradiction and its related effects remain central to the study.

THE DEBATE: CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE SIT-AT-HOME AND IPOB'S OBJECTIVES

Among what is pronounced in the objectives of IPOB are the realisation and restoration of the defunct Sovereign State of Biafra, ensuring economic development, and the promotion, preservation, and protection of the welfare, culture, norms, and identity of the people. The Monday sit-at-home has emerged as a means of frustrating lives and increasing difficulties among the people of the Southeast (Osita et al., 2024). Disappointingly, it is neither initiated nor enforced by aliens, nor by the government of Nigeria or its mercenaries. Members of IPOB introduced and enforce it. Investigation reveals that the strategy and protest impugn the movement's objectives.

Whether the sit-at-home is sometimes manipulated and hijacked by enemies of the region to unleash mayhem (Okoroafo, 2024) has not yet received wide acceptance. In any case, the insensitivity of the initiators to the stiffness and degree of repulsion to its objectives must take responsibility. For the researchers, it represents another version of the twenty-thousand-naira policy of the Nigerian government against the Igbo in the post-civil war era. Regrettably, this version has become a self-inflicted injury on the people. The restriction of business-oriented people of the Southeast from their businesses every Monday genuinely questions the objectives of IPOB.

This circumstance further questions the genuineness and sensibility of IPOB in clamping down on the economy, lives, and properties which it professes to protect, defend, and promote. The order results in enormous losses for enterprises, entrepreneurs, and artisans, especially among the Igbo. This disruption in the area is

clearly ruinous to the regional economy, frustrating lives and destroying properties (Osita et al., 2024). Why is IPOB adopting a strategy that is injurious to the southeastern people? Is the sit-at-home order being manipulated by agents of the Nigerian government as a means to continuously leave the people in economic shock? How can the people achieve their desired objectives of economic development and prosperity amidst these violations? Does IPOB believe that the Nigerian government primarily feels its effects? The truth is that the Nigerian government and those opposing the restoration of the defunct Sovereign State of Biafra are not troubled by the order. They see the sit-at-home order as a self-inflicted injury on, especially, the Igbo. Consequently, they have consistently demonstrated an unconcerned attitude toward the issue since 2021.

Socially, the order and its enforcement cause inconvenience and environmental fear for the citizens and residents of the area. They are, dishearteningly, forced to abandon their normal duties and movements every Monday. The order has also impacted negatively on the education sector, resulting in the loss of learning hours and the disruption of academic calendars (Osita et al., 2024). Politically, the order and its enforcement attributes are increasingly causing IPOB to assume violent characteristics, contrary to its earlier belief in non-violent approaches. This increases the rate of crime and insecurity in the region, affecting its image in the international environment and tending to justify why the Nigerian government adopts a crushing and grinding approach to any movement for the actualisation of Biafran independence (Okoroafo, 2024). Apparently, the Nigerian government has always stopped at nothing to eliminate any force seeking the realisation and restoration of the defunct Sovereign State of Biafra.

Some argue that it is the Nigerian government that uses its agents and enemies of the southeasterners to manipulate and hijack the sit-at-home enforcement (Okoroafo, 2024). However, this argument is weak. If IPOB knows that it cannot have full control of the order and its violence-free enforcement, it should have eliminated it from its list of strategies. The federal government and IPOB's opponents in all parts of Nigeria cannot fold their arms as IPOB struggles to restore a defunct state. It is the duty of the government to uphold the oneness of Nigeria. Bearing in mind that the government and its agents could engage in illegal and unlawful activities to keep Nigeria as an indivisible political entity, IPOB should have learned its lessons from history. IPOB needs to be more tactful in its activities to avoid giving way for unwarranted destruction of the lives and properties of the people of the Southeast.

ALTERNATIVE AND MORE SUITABLE STRATEGIES

If the movement must continue with the struggle, certain strategies and approaches are required to be injected into the movement. Insofar as other well-meaning strategies for the realisation of the core objectives of IPOB exist, the Monday

sit-at-home should be invalidated and extinguished in the region. This should be done with due consideration to its damaging effects on the economy and people of the Southeast. Calling the attention of IPOB members, suggestions and recommendations are submitted here for their consideration.

Engagement with critical stakeholders of the region should be incorporated into the approaches to actualising the Sovereign State of Biafra. The researchers are not ignorant of betrayers and strong opponents of IPOB among the stakeholders. Such people could stop at nothing to take advantage of IPOB members to enrich themselves or for political positions. Yet, as they meticulously and defiantly intensify the approach alongside other piercing strategies, such as stopping politicians of the region from accepting and occupying political positions, issuing ultimatums to stubborn stakeholders, and demanding the relocation of anti-Biafran stakeholders from the region, progress could be made. Even serving as an employee or political office holder under the Nigerian government, alongside consuming its goods and services, should be prohibited in southeastern Nigeria. These steps would strongly promote the rejection of the Nigerian state and facilitate growth and development in the economy of the region. It might not be easy, but with time, it would begin to impact significantly and negatively on the politics of Nigeria.

Adopting a strategy that affects only the people of the Southeast as a means to achieve a separate state from Nigeria is a clear means of ruining the region, not Nigeria, in all spheres of life. Any effective strategy must send constant messages to the government of Nigeria and Nigerian stakeholders. If what happens affects the Igbo only, other parts of the country will unanimously feel unconcerned. To some, it is God answering their prayers. To others, the southeasterners should continue to destroy themselves and their land. The government and its key players, who have been pursuing the neutralisation of the region and IPOB, obviously have no interest in addressing what is devastating the people. It is invariably a means of supporting the efforts of the federal government to weaken the people of the Southeast from their stronghold, preventing them from emerging politically and economically firm enough to challenge the government on the issue of restoration of the defunct Republic of Biafra.

The establishment of a Biafran education and awareness campaign in the region would facilitate the injection of the values and identity of the people into their practices and activities from infancy. This would enable the people to pass through the stages of life, from infancy through adolescence to adulthood, gaining full knowledge of their people and shaping themselves toward the prevailing circumstances in the area in relation to Nigeria. IPOB should lobby southeastern leaders to establish a Southeastern Orientation College (SOC) and advocate making history a compulsory subject at all levels of education in the region. Through such a college and the study of the history

and culture of the people, southeasterners would be raised with adequate consciousness of their experiences in Nigeria over time. One would believe that, at a certain point, the consciousness of the people's experiences, culture, and identity would form parts of family education and orientation.

In the words of Chukwuemeka Ojukwu (Ahiara Declaration, 1969), "it is quite clear that to attain the goals of the Biafran revolution will require extensive political and civic education of our people. To this effect, we will in the near future set up a National Orientation College which will undertake the needful function of formally inculcating the Biafran ideology and the principles of the revolution. We will also pursue this vital task of education through seminars, mass rallies" (pp. 55–56). This was part of Ojukwu's manifesto on 29 May 1969. He was optimistic that the Republic of Biafra under his leadership could survive the violations of the Nigerian government; unfortunately, they lost to Nigeria in 1970. Yet, his idea of training and education through the establishment of an orientation college can be enforced and strengthened by learning and making history a compulsory subject at all levels of education in the region.

If the pursuit of the restoration of the defunct Republic of Biafra must persist, all institutions and agencies of socialisation, including families, markets, religious bodies, pressure groups, and civil societies, should be lobbied to embrace and encourage the orientation and re-orientation of the people from infancy. This practice could constitute inseminating the norms, values, culture, experience, and history of the people into all citizens and residents. The processes should incorporate the establishment of a Southeastern Orientation College in all the states in the identified territories for creating a separate state from Nigeria. This will help the people to develop and reawaken their consciousness of the experience, values, identity, culture, and ideology of the people in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Creating conditions for the emergence of a Nigeria where fairness, equity, justice, respect for human rights, values, culture, and identity, and development could form the standard of operation through true federalism should have been an effective response to the question of division. Alternatively, the terms of the Aburi Accord of 1967 should be resuscitated and implemented. If the country continues to deceptively address the issues that brought about the ruinous civil war between 1967 and 1970, it implies a lack of genuine interest in guarding and upholding the peace and unity of Nigeria. Consequently, the calls for separation from different quarters of the country will stubbornly persist.

Efforts to eliminate secessionist movements in Nigeria will always end in futility. Although each government may often consider its efforts to keep the unity of Nigeria a

success, the fact remains that such success is momentary, not a lasting solution. In that regard, IPOB, as one of the secessionist bodies, can hardly be eliminated but could be pressured to change its nomenclature and progress with its objectives and strategies. It has been discovered here that the Monday sit-at-home order in the Southeast, initially intended to demonstrate solidarity and support for IPOB and its objectives, is not appropriate. Its ruinous effects on economic activities, its violation of social stability and mobility, and its mutilation of the livelihoods of innocent citizens of the Southeast contradict and repudiate the goals of the movement.

Among the strategies of IPOB, the sit-at-home order remains a self-imposed agony on the economy, politics, and socio-cultural life of southeastern Nigeria. The government of Nigeria and other regions of the country feel unconcerned and demonstrate a lack of interest in addressing the root cause of the problem. To get it right, IPOB should pursue the restoration of the defunct Republic of Biafra as a long-term mission achievable through perseverance, resilience, training, and education. This training and education could be achieved through the establishment of orientation colleges, the orientation and re-orientation of people in all institutions of socialisation, and the study of history at all levels of education in the region. The effective addition of these approaches to the earlier identified viable strategies would see IPOB soaring in achieving its objectives.

In the light of the goals of IPOB, any strategy or programme that tends to violate any sphere of life in the area deserves discontinuation and outright elimination. It speaks to the obvious that the order remains helpful to the desire of the Nigerian government to perpetually neutralise the people from garnering further economic and political potency to challenge the country toward the realisation of a Sovereign State of Biafra. It undoubtedly justifies the claim that the Monday sit-at-home in the region is too injurious to the people of the Southeast in all ramifications. It negates the core objectives of promoting efforts toward the restoration of the defunct Republic of Biafra, economic development and prosperity, social justice, and human rights.

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