

AKU RUO UNO (THINK HOME) PHILOSOPHY AND THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF SOUTHEAST NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Igboland contains the highest percentage of persons who typify the classical capitalist myth of rags to riches in Nigeria. They have the ability to convert hopeless adversity to astounding wealth or success within a very short time without depending on government patronage and handouts. Overtime, especially after the civil war the Igbo man has suffered and is still suffering the consequences of the war which include amongst others, marginalization both in political and economic integration, lack of federal government presence in the region, and to make matters worse, the Igbo is forced to migrate outside his region in attempt to survive from the hardship caused by government neglect of Igboland. The Igbo man, out of sheer ingenuity, entrepreneurship and adventurous spirit have prospered, blossomed and advanced their economic fortunes in the midst of daunting challenges and stark marginalisation in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the Southeast does not have a functioning and operational industrial cluster. Unfortunately, most of the industrial layouts have been converted to estates. This paper examines the transformative role of the Aku Ruo Uno philosophy in the industrialization of the Southeast Nigeria with particular focus on Issues and challenges such as the unity, political will, infrastructure, security, etc., in the region. The paper is exploratory and qualitative in nature, while descriptive in analysis. Anchoring our discourse on the developmental state theory, findings amongst others revealed that; in terms of private contribution to national wealth, the Igbos all over the country account for a far greater percentage of the non-oil Gross National Product than any other ethnic group in Nigeria; 'with little or no government assistance, the Igbo have moved from trade to industry since the end of the civil war' and has contributed to the development of other regions of the country except the Southeast regions where they are from. The paper equally recommends that; the successes that have been achieved by the Igbo people through their entrepreneurial achievements can be replicated in the Southeast region under the Aku ru Uno philosophy, by engaging in massive industrialization of the region in partnership with the government and other critical stakeholders within and outside the Southeast states.

Keywords: Aku Ruo Uno Philosophy, Industrialisation developmental state, Security, the Igbo man

Introduction

Igboland contains the highest percentage of persons who typify the classical capitalist myth of rags to riches in Nigeria. They have the ability to convert hopeless adversity to astounding wealth or success within a very short time without depending on government patronage and handouts. Overtime, especially after the civil war the Igbo man has suffered and is still suffering the consequences of the war which include amongst others, marginalization both in political and economic integration, lack of federal government presence in the region, and to make matters worse, the Igbo is forced to migrate outside his region in attempt to survive from the hardship caused by government neglect of Igboland. The Igbo man, out of sheer ingenuity, entrepreneurship and adventurous spirit have prospered, blossomed and advanced his economic fortunes in the midst of daunting challenges and stark marginalisation in Nigeria.

In excelling in entrepreneurship the Igbo man has contributed to development in Nigeria in no small measure in the areas of commercial and industrial activities. The role of industrialisation as a catalyst in the development of any economy cannot be overemphasised (Ekesiobi & Ibekilo, 2010). It took centre stage during the industrial revolution of the seventeenth century and kick-started a gyration process still evident till date (Ekesiobi, Kalu & Nwokolo, 2018). Industry has always played a vital role in development. It boosts economic activity along value chains, from raw materials to finished products. It lifts productivity by introducing new equipment and new techniques, increases the capabilities of the workforce, and diffuses these improvements into the wider economy.

Industry also tends to generate formal employment, which in turn creates social stability. It improves the balance of trade by creating goods for export and replacing imports. Industrialisation, including the encouragement of manufacturing and processing capability, makes for strong and sustainable economic development, creating wealth in the economy (Chete, Adeoti, Adeyinka & Ogundele, n.d.).

Unfortunately, the Southeast does not have functioning and operational industrial clusters which can drive development of the region and the country generally as most of the industrial layouts have been converted to estates. Many of the Igbo entrepreneurs have established their industries in towns other than Igbo towns and on many occasions these businesses have been exposed to danger whenever there is any insurgency. Thus, this action has stagnated the development of Igbo towns and villages. There is also lack of activities in some Igbo communities because those industries built in other towns, have not only increased unemployment, but have equally encourage migration of able young men and women out of Igboland, thereby necessitating the call to come back home in order to help developed our ancestral homeland through the philosophy of “*Aku ruo ulo, O kwuo onye kpatara ya*” (Chudi-Duru, n.d.). It is however noteworthy that inspite of the above virtues of the South Eastern part of Nigeria, the zone has tremendously suffered a setback in the last few years because of kidnappings which have smeared it with untold terrorism and business closures. The South East, which is popularly referred to as the “China of Nigeria” because of its beehive of commercial activities, is gradually losing its relevance in that direction due to incessant kidnappings which do not only affect entrepreneurs and traders, but also traditional rulers and the likes (Onyeizugbe & Igbodo, 2016).

Deriving from the above, this paper examines the transformative role of the *Aku Ruo Uno* philosophy in the industrialization of the Southeast Nigeria with particular focus on issues and challenges such as the unity of the Igbo people, political will, infrastructure, security, etc., in the region. The paper is exploratory and qualitative in nature, while descriptive in analysis.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Review

2.1 *Aku Ruo Uno (Think Home) Philosophy*

“*Aku ruo uno*” in the true Igbo spirit means, people helping their people to succeed. The philosophy means taking one's wealth home where it is most needed, from the diaspora, and letting one's kinsmen and larger community benefit from the wealth and resources that God has blessed one with. There is a proverb in Igboland that says, ‘*Aku Luo Uno, Okwuo Onye Kpataluya*’, it is when one's wealth reaches home that the source of the wealth and the individual so blessed with the wealth manifests” (Okuhu, 2022). The Igbo have a saying that; *aku ruo uno, amalu onye kpatariya* (when wealth gets home, then we will know who created it). If a person is known all over the world but not known in his home town then he is not known. If a person does not make an effort to return home, he or she is referred to as an *efuru efu* (the lost one) (Ikerionwu, 2013).

After the Nigerian Civil War, when the property and wealth of the Igbo in states outside of Igboland were seized by the Nigerian government, the Igbo philosophy of *Cheruo Uno*, (think home) became more important (Kanu 2014a). No matter where the Igbo travel to and the number of houses he builds elsewhere, he ensures that he has a home in his village. The Igbo think-home philosophy, According to Kanu (2019) this ideology accounts for the main reason wealthy Igbo business personalities always go back to the village and select some young person and equip them with knowledge of trade secret. They do come back every festival period- especially Christmas to invest back in their communities. This is in line with the Igbo phrase “*Aku ruo ulo*”- which means the wealth should reach home (Iwueke, Alhassan & Oparaku, 2020). Home is home for them and so they are at home for the celebration of festivals like Christmas, New Year, Easter, New Yam Festival, etc. More interesting is that many who are not able to travel during these seasons have one association or the other to which they belong in the city where they live. Even when he dies, the corpse must be taken home. The corpse needs to get home to rest well (Kanu 2014b). Every true Igbo abhors idleness and tangibly contributes to the welfare and growth of the community. In order to be part of this reality, Igbo people everywhere struggle to transform economic resources within their control from an area of lower to an area of higher productivity and greater yield deriving strength from Igbo philosophy of life reflecting in the expression *Onye ruo, O rie* (He who works must enjoy the wealth) (Chinweuba, Ezeugwu & Chukwudi, 2017).

For instance, Onyeama of Air Peace could be praised all over the world for his entrepreneurial acumen and philanthropic dispositions, but if this his successes and wealth did not get to his home and touch the lives of the his community which is his root, then he is not known to the Igbo people, especially those from his immediate community.

Another instance is Maduka Onyeshi who owns Peace Mass Transit who has not created employment opportunities for thousands of Igbo people, and some business opportunities for thousands more around his business premises nationwide, he has also invested in the educational sector with the completed Maduka Onyeshi schools which include primary, secondary and tertiary institution along the Enugu-Nsukka high way in Enugu state. one can imagine the number of jobs and other forms of economic and commercial activities that would be generated by a single individual in Igboland

2.2 *Industrialisation: Conceptual and Theoretical Review*

Industrialisation has been conceptualised as the process of transforming raw materials, with the aid of human resources and capital goods into (a) consumer goods, (b) new capital goods which allows more consumer goods, including food, to be produced with the same human resources and (c) social overhead capital, which together with human resources provides new services to both individuals and businesses (Effiom & Udah, 2014). Industrialization is about the introduction and expansion of industries in a particular place, region or country (Obioma & Ozughalu, 2005). It is a situation where many industries are established in different parts of the country. As many industries are established in a country many different types of products are produced. Industrialization therefore, is a process of building up a country's capacity to produce many varieties of products – extraction of raw materials and manufacturing of semi finished and finished goods (Ekpo, 2014).

Industrialization enhances the utilization of productive inputs (labour, capital and raw materials), given the country's technology, to produce non-durable and durable consumer goods, intermediate goods and capital goods for domestic consumption, export or further production. Thus industrialization could be described as the process of transforming raw materials, with the aid of human resources and capital goods

into (a) consumers goods, (b) new capital goods which allows more consumers goods (including food) to be produced with the same human resources, and (c) social overhead capital, which together with human resources provides new services to both individuals and business (Ekpo, 2005; Ekpo, 2014).

Kirkpatrick et al (1985) posited that industrialization involves a number of changes in economic structure of a country such as a rise in the relative importance of manufacturing industry; a change in the composition of industrial output; and changes in production techniques and sources of supply for individual commodities (Ekpo, 2014).

Anyanwu, Oyefusi, Oaikhenan and Dimowo (1997) described industrialisation as the process of building up a nation's capacity to convert raw materials and other inputs into finished goods and manufactured goods for other production or final consumption. According to Black (2003), industrialisation explains and represents the process of moving resources into the industrial sector and also establishing many industries in different parts of a country to suit an already established policy objective. Tracing the development of industrialized nations like America, Britain, Germany, France and recent entrants China and Japan, industrial growth served as a propeller that fast-tracked their economic ascendancy (Todaro & Smith, 2006) (Ekesiobi, Kalu & Nwokolo, 2018).

A society develops economically as its citizens jointly increase their capacity to deal with the environment. This capacity depends on the extent to which the people understand the laws of nature (Science), the extent to which they put such understanding into practice by devising technology and on the manner which work is organized (Effiom & Udah, 2014).

Models or theories of industrialization are essentially intertwined and related to economic growth and development. An industrializing economy is basically one which experiences continuous economic growth, which is why industrialization is regarded as an imperative for growth.

Currently, emphasis has shifted away from the more fundamental neoclassical paradigm of capital-labour combinations to endogenous models which underscore the primacy of institutions and a knowledge-driven economy as the basis of industrial and economic development (Effiom & Udah, 2014). The relevance of industrialization is enormous for developed and developing countries alike. Industrialization generally raises productivity, creates employment, reduces exposure to risk, enhances income-generating assets of the poor and helps diversify exports (Iwuagwu, 2011). The quest for industrialization to facilitate economic development has remained a focal issue of successive administrations in Nigeria since independence (Ekpo, 2004; Adamu and Iyoha, 2015). This is demonstrated by the multiplicity of industrial policies and strategies, initiated and implemented by the country over the period. Beyond this, successive governments (including the present) seem unable to exploit the critical role of industry in economic development (Ekesiobi, Kalu & Nwokolo, 2018).

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2.3 *The Igbo Man*

Igbo land is densely populated at Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi States. Some Igbo people live in parts of Rivers and Delta States. Igbo people speak the Igbo language as their mother tongue, although with variety of dialects. Igbo is used to refer to them as a tribe, as a people and as a language and their territory. Igbo people have a lot of communalities because of their shared cultural identities. Their shared identities were also seen in their political institutions and family ties. Igbo people are traditionally farmers; they produce different farm produce and domestic animals. Some also engage in different occupations (Isidienu & Nneke, 2019).

The Igbos who live predominantly in the southeast region of Nigeria are very individualistic, enterprising, achievement-oriented, competitive and have a strong belief in free market economy. The Igbo spirit of enterprise, innovativeness, initiative and individualism are potent factors which, to a considerable degree, account for the rapid pace of development in Igboland (Ajaegbo, 2014). The Igbo man possess a strong spirit of resilience which was and remains evident after the civil war in Nigeria when twenty pounds each was given to the Igbos who lost all their assets in other parts of the country. They were able to rise from the ashes through high level of commitment, optimism, lack of fear etc. (Iwueke, Alhassan & Oparaku, 2020).

In all circumstances therefore, Igbo people give meaning to prevalent socio-economic reality, achieving performance by harmonizing their existence with the difficulties and contradictions prevalent in the environment. It is based on this entrepreneurial gallantry that Igbo people have excelled more than their counterparts in Nigerian socio-economic context. Consequently, most entrepreneurial initiatives, commercial centers, and structures in major Nigerian cities are managed by the Igbo people (Chinweuba, et al., 2017).

The Igbo are usually known to be enterprising in nature. The Igbo people are also very intelligent, patient, egalitarian, and resilient with a great deal of intellectual ability. These qualities give the Igbo race an edge over other races in Nigeria. They struggle to survive in any condition in which they find themselves. Although they are not favoured when it comes to recent trends in the distribution of power as well as the socioeconomic resources of Nigeria by the Nigerian government, the Igbo man is creative, innovative and makes the best out of any condition he finds himself in, these and more of the natural and learned qualities make the Igbo people tick in any environment in which they find themselves. They are great travellers and possess a great quality to integrate and mix with people of different races, cultures, religions, etc. (Agbionu, 2018).

The Igbo man has made overwhelming entrepreneurial advancement and economic prominence inspite of all odds. Based on this, Anyanwu (1999) observes that Igbo people no longer look up to benevolent government for salvation but are working towards self reliance, and even contributes up to 80% of Nigeria's economy while receiving the lowest decreasing allocation from the federal government. Glaring therefore is that Igbo people believe in purposeful hardwork, and personal effort filled with communal colouration. This stems from their worldview which is inculcated in them from birth as a guiding principle and a drive towards entrepreneurial performance (Chinweuba, et al., 2017).

For the Igbo man, life is a continuous struggle towards socio-economic excellence and perfection. Economic struggle is therefore of paramount importance because Igbo society has no room for failures and able bodied Idlers that merely exist, depending on others for sustenance (Chinweuba, et al., 2017). One major and unique trait of the Igbo entrepreneurs as opined by Ikerionwu (2013) is the courage, perseverance, and determination in which they carried on despite their bad experiences and losses during the Nigerian Civil war from 1967 to 1970.

The Igbo people are often referred to as secessionists who wanted to break up Nigeria; but in the real sense of it, it is the Igbo man that is the only true and patriotic Nigerian, who sees Nigeria as his only home, given the following few facts as enumerated by (Nwafor, n.d.), namely:

- a) It is only the Igbo man who is found and lives in every state of Nigeria.
- b) He is not only found in every part of Nigeria, he resides and trades freely there.
- c) He acquires plots of land and builds PERMANENT structures there as his home.
- d) He interacts freely with the indigenes of his host community.
- e) The Igbo man has no other country other than Nigeria, and hence, their massive investments all over the states of Nigeria.
- f) The Igbo man inter-marries more than any other in Nigeria, etc.

3. Theoretical Framework

Our discourse in this paper is anchored on the 'Developmental State' theory propounded by Johnson (1982). This theory argued that for any country to become industrialization, the State must not only be involve but must instigate and propel this venture because in most cases, the process of industrialisation has always been the driving force of the developmental objectives of the country. Among the prominent scholars who advanced Johnson's thesis are Peter Evans (1995), Linda Weiss (2000) and Adrian Leftwich (1998). The theory of the developmental state has four essential propositions such as; development oriented political leadership; an autonomous and effective bureaucracy; a production oriented private sector, and performance oriented governance. A developmental state to exist when the state possesses the vision, leadership and capacity to bring about a positive transformation of society within a condensed period of time. The developmental state was associated with rapid processes of industrialisation and/or the adoption of new technologies – that is, moving into higher value-added activities relative to the starting point. Typically, there was a shift from subsistence agriculture to more commercial, export-oriented farming, or to textile processing, or to tourism, or a mixture of these.

In applying this theory to our study, we observed that the failure of the Nigerian state to engender industrial revolution by driving the process especially in the Southeast region. The Nigerian state over the years refused to carry the Southeast along in implementing her development policies of which industrialization is key, knowing full well that the Igbo man is entrepreneurial in nature. He is fearless and takes a lot of risks to succeed. He is therefore; known to be industrious, committed and hardworking in anything they decide to do. The Igbo people through their resilience had operated under harsh economic conditions and have emerged as the greatest contributor to the growth and development of small and medium scale enterprises not only in Nigeria, but in the West African sub region (Ezeajughu, 2021). Having achieve the dominance of commercial and economic activities especially at the individual level and wanting to give back to their ancestral homeland through the “*Aku ruo uno*” philosophy, it is still very pertinent for the government at least at the states to not only be involve but to drive the process through providing a conducive environment of which security is key.

4. Industrialisation in Igboland: A historical Overview

The most visible skills among the Igbo in the past were smithing, weaving, pottery, and carving. Afigbo (1981) in Isidienu (2014:177) states that the “Igbo produces a wide range of baskets, cloths, earthen jars, household furniture.” Isidienu (2014) notes that some of these crafts can be practised by anybody or at any place but there are some people who are talented in different kinds of crafts. Generally speaking, most communities and families in Igbo were gifted in one skill or another. In other words, the Igbo African families train their young ones to acquire these skills (Isidienu & Nneke, 2019). Manufacturing industries boosted the economic life of Igbo African families.

There were some evolving developmental, industrial and economic forces and opportunities that could have been identified and exploited for the collective good of the country after the War ended (Effiom & Udah, 2014). But the Nigerian State, blinded by the prevailing chauvinistic sentiments of that time, failed to notice or deliberately ignored a foreboding crucial ingredient necessary for any nation wishing to go the industrial path.

Successive Governments at the centre (who justifiably felt unsafe at the prospect of harnessing the foreboding technological prowess of the Igbos who were largely the major victims of the War, and consequently creating in them a monopoly of Nigeria's industrial power in a climate of mutual ethnic distrust) consistently frittered away opportunities like this by not systematically evolving industrial policies to mobilise these potentials at the micro levels. It is a fact that presently, the East of the Country is the home of all sorts of industrial fabrication, whether in auto spare parts, industrial machines, household items, clothes, etc (Effiom & Udah, 2014).

Paradoxically, 'Aba made' goods has become a common epithet describing any good or fabricated product not imported into Nigeria. The town of Nnewi, for instance, controls approximately 80 to 90 percent of the motor-parts trade in Nigeria. The industrialists of Nnewi are adapting foreign technology to local needs, providing employment to thousands, and making available goods and services which are relevant to the actual needs of Nigerians. This natural proclivity, we reiterate, is a pointer that given the right policies and relevant social capital, the East of the country could be transformed into one vast industrialization hub whose influence would have ultimately diffused to other parts of the country (Effiom & Udah, 2014).

Iweala (2011) “the South East zone has also seen an increase in industrial activities in recent years with the development of industrial clusters in various axes of the region. These clusters include the Onitsha plastic cluster, Umuahia/Aba Garment cluster, Aba leather cluster, Nnewi automobile cluster, to mention a few, are the flag-bearers of the 'made in Nigeria' goods and in many cases, the only competition to foreign products. Again, the South East has one of the best Human Development Indicators in Nigeria. It has the lowest poverty levels in the country, and the quality of human capital - specifically adult literacy roles and gender development indicators are the highest in the country” (Iweala,2011). According to Iweala, “the South East is well known for wholesale and retail trade”. In a paper titled: “Nigeria: one Country, four Economies Discussion Point” by Falalu, (2014) asserts that “the South Easterners control commerce in all parts of Nigeria and are largely employed” (Onyeizugbe & Igbodo, 2016).

Some have invested in factories especially along the Nnewi industrial corridor, Chicason Group, Innoson Group, Ibeto Group etc. In shopping malls (Roban stores, Everyday Supermarket, Zara Stores, Radopin etc). Cubana Group is also developing a mall at Ogbunike. There are also rising activities in real estate development championed by Igbo entrepreneurs in the Diaspora (Nworah, 2022).

Enugu state has witnessed a lot of such investments (Enugu Centenary Golf Estate, Helios Estate etc), Owerri has witnessed a lot of real estate activities too (Orient Garden Estate by Homes and Homes etc).

Homes and Homes is also developing the 5,000 shops Ukwa International Market, in Aba, Abia state. At the moment, available data suggests that such social and economic investments are still very low in Igbo land, compared to the inflows going towards the maintenance of family members. It is estimated to be in the ratio of 70:30 at the moment, although some analysts argue that 30% is a much high figure to be quoting (Nworah, 2022).

5. Aku Ruo Uno (Think Home) Philosophy and Industrialisation in the Southeast

The Igbo social construction of reality means that the Igbo does not see himself or herself as an individual without noticing immediately the need of the others. That is the reason why successful Igbo business personalities often pick their relatives and people from their localities equip them with requisite skills, knowledge and abilities required to set up and operate a business successfully. No wonder an Igbo adage says no man is wealthy whose kinsmen are poor (Chinweuba, et al., 2017). According to Kanu (2019) the ideology of *Aku ruo ulo* accounts for the main reason wealthy Igbo business personalities always go back to the village and select some young person and equip them with knowledge of trade secret. They do come back every festival period- especially Christmas to invest back in their communities. This is in line with the Igbo phrase “*Aku ruo ulo*”- which means the wealth should reach home (Iwueke, et al., 2020).

Every true Igbo abhors idleness and tangibly contributes to the welfare and growth of the community. This economic gesture is what Igbo people prizes most as *aku ruo uno* (wealth that reached home). In order to be part of this reality, Igbo people everywhere struggle to transform economic resources within their control from an area of lower to an area of higher productivity and greater yield deriving strength from Igbo philosophy of life reflecting in the expression *Onye ruo, O rie* (He who works must enjoy the wealth) (Chinweuba, et al, 2017).

That Southeastern Nigeria has been blessed with the potentials to turn the economy of Nigeria around for good is indisputable. Based on the above, creating a successful outcome would be beneficial and a welcome development. The framework for encouraging the manufacturing sector in Southeast Nigeria is a task that is vital. (Agbionu, 2018)

The Igbo understands entrepreneurship as a potent economic force, and a core element in the development efforts of an individual and the nation at large. For the Igbo therefore, comparative advantage among individuals has dynamically moved towards increasing competitive and qualitative entrepreneurial advancement which is the fulcrum of personal and national development. This is why despite the dynamic multiplying socio-political and economic challenges in the modern world, the Igbo exhibit overwhelming entrepreneurial strides.

Igbo people view entrepreneurship as self-employment of any sort, which bothers on continuously identifying, evaluating and taking advantage of business opportunities and initiating sustainable action to ensure success. Indeed, every entrepreneurial endeavour, for the Igbo, is also a veritable answer to the questions elicited from their experiences in their special world. It is as well understood as a search for profit based on innovation, creativity and efficient utilization of resources in a consistent Igbo cultural pattern, which is filled with vision and enthusiasm and is result driven (Chinweuba & Ezeugwu, 2017; Adim, 2020).

In all circumstances therefore, Igbo people give meaning to prevalent socio-economic reality, achieving performance by harmonizing their existence with the difficulties and contradictions prevalent in the environment. It is based on this entrepreneurial gallantry that Igbo people have excelled more than their

counterparts in Nigerian socio-economic context (Adim, 2020). Consequently, most entrepreneurial initiatives, commercial centres, and structures in major Nigerian cities are managed by the Igbo people. This is why Olutayo (1999) cited in Adim (2020), argues that of the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Igbos are the most energetic parvenus in entrepreneurship, who has challenged and surpassed the established economic order of supremacy occupied by other Nigerian tribes.

However, for anything positive to happen in Igboland, the Igbo elite must change their uncritical attitude of external investments by hearkening to the quality advice articulated by Chief Amaechi. The principle of fiscal federalism would require that federating units fend for themselves economically. Such a practice would compel the regions to exploit their own resources. The Lugardian philosophy of using resources from the Eastern region to administer the other parts must be jettisoned. It is in the light of the aforementioned realities that Igbo businessmen, political actors and youths are realizing the need to think home and invest home (*aku ruo ulo*) (Onyike, 2023).

Part of the reason for which the 1967 secession of Igbo people from Nigeria which led to civil war was foiled according to Adichie (2014) as cited in Adim (2020), was out of fear that Nigerian economy may collapse with the exit of the Igbo entrepreneurial touch. But the same government either by omission or commission has failed to create the same environment that enabled the Igbo man to excel outside Igboland in the Southeast. This is why it is very important for the Igbo man to activate the spirit and philosophy of *Aku ruo uno* in conjunction with the government of the five Southeastern States. Just like the proverbial lizard that fell down from the great Iroko tree, nodded its head and said, “if nobody praise me, I will praise myself”, the Igbo man has to take up the challenge of helping to develop its homeland even when it is apparent that the central government has and is still exhibiting lacklustre attitude toward the industrialisation of the Southeast.

The Igbo man is believed to have made excellent achievement in the area of entrepreneurship and wealth creation individually and collectively, and some of these achievements could be seen in their personal life styles and acquisition of personal belongings and collections in their communities and places of residence. The issue now is to maximise the wealth Igbo people possess to essentially and purposively work for their good in their businesses, their social lives as well as their political relevance in this country. In the words of Okuhu (2022): “and this is why I speak of the re-dimensioning of *Aku Lue Uno* into a much more all-encompassing *Ka Aku Muo N'ulo*”. That is the wealth of the Igbo should not only get to his home, but the wealth should and must be put into effective use to generate more wealth in Igboland. There is no better ways to create and recreate this wealth other than supporting the development of entrepreneurship through industrialization with the full support of at least the states government by building industrial clusters and funding them all through. Like Okuhu (2022), further suggested, the Igbo wealth must be invested towards procreation, it must not just be to get the wealth home for commercial and other business purposes, it must be intentionally invested in all enterprises and interests, including political leadership in the larger Nigerian space.

In buttressing the importance of the Igbo “think home” philosophy of *Aku ruo uno*, Nworah (2022), quoted the Obi of Onitsha, Igwe Nnaemeka Achebe, CFR, (Agbogidi), who spoke on the importance of Ndigbo thinking home by adopting the *Akuluouno* model. According to Nworah (2022), the Obi of Onitsha advised entrepreneurs of Southeast extraction, to diversify their investments and assets into the region to develop the area. Furthermore, Igwe Achebe observed that no people can achieve greatness and respect in the comity of nations, based solely on their prowess in the Diaspora and urged them to make the Southeast region their economic power-base to underpin their business interests all over the world. In his words:

You have to be strong in your home base. Ndi-Igbo have a beautiful God-given homeland, let us develop it and be proud of it". "We are not saying that you should pull out and come home, no, diversify back home and ultimately let us make Ala-Igbo the power house to support and underpin our interest all over the world. If you are strong in your home base, they cannot insult you in their land (Achebe, cited in Nworah, 2022).

Igwe Achebe however advocated for equitable and egalitarian Nigeria to protect the interest of all Nigerians, despite their tribe and religion (Nworah, 2022).

6. Processes involve in bringing the Aku ruo Uno Project to Manifestation in Igboland

The following processes should be put in place for the Aku ruo Uno project to come to full manifestation in Igbo land:

6.1 The Establishment of International Development Fund for the Industrialisation of the Igbo Homeland

The Igbo leaders of thought should launch the Igbo Development Fund (IDF), for the Industrialisation of the Igbo Homeland. It has to be a public-private venture with shares sold to Igbo people and run by experts and even expatriates. The Fund should be headquartered outside of Nigeria where the central government will not have control or undue influence on its usage. The fund should be modelled after international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank). All members of the Igbo Diaspora must be convinced to buy into the IDF as shareholders (Ihejirika, (n.d.)). The IDF would not only identify and supervise the real reconstruction of Igbo land to remedy the devastations of the civil war and the post-war neglect, including the rampant erosion menace, but also provide the needed capital that would support the state government of the Southeast to fund the industrial clusters and help engender entrepreneurial development in the region.

6.2 Establishment of Special Directorate of Aku Ruo Uno Project

The government of the five south eastern states has to establish or setup a Directorate of Aku Ruo Uno Project which will coordinate the government effort in conjunction with the Igbo Diaspora in generating and disbursing the needed funds that will kick-start the creation of the industrial clusters not only in the five South eastern states but in the neighbouring states that has large percentage of Igbo population. The states government can also assist in incubating these industrial clusters through appropriate legislations and provision of a conducive environment for the ventures to thrive. Some of the functions of the Directorate of Aku Ruo Uno Project will be to take inventory of all the industrial clusters that will be scattered all over the Southeast, taking into cognizance the types of production process (whether capital intensive or not) involved, the nature of the products, where will the particular cluster(s) be located, and the expected amount involved in setting up the cluster in that area. The states government will also take up the challenge of paying about 50% of whatever is required for the capital needed for the creation of these industrial clusters, it will definitely go a long way to improve industrial development in the Southeast.

As aptly noted by Nworah (2022);

the Southeast region requires 'booths on the ground' in critical areas. Investments in the South-East by Ndigbo tend to go only to the states-of-origin of the investors. There should be more cross-border investments if we truly believe that the South-East are one people. We are already

beginning to see signs of this, with the massive project at Ukwu International Market, Aba, Abia state by Homes and Homes, a company owned by an Anambra indigene. We encourage business and professional linkages between diasporas and those living in the homeland. This will lead to exchange of ideas, mentorships and partnerships that will help to sustain businesses operating in the homeland, and professionals working in the homeland. The idea is to discourage more people from migrating from the South-East. Many will stay if they are encouraged and supported to stay back. 'Ndi no na ezi nolu ndi no na uno, ndi no na uno nolu ndi no na ezi'.

For Okuhu (2022), Ka Aku Muo N'ulo simply suggests that we must invest our wealth towards procreation. The Igbo wealth must not just be caused to reach home for business and commercial purposes, it must be intentionally invested in all enterprises and interests, including political leadership in the larger Nigerian space. This paradigm shift, in my view, will bring about conscious political incubation, result-oriented, centripetal engagement with the Nigerian state, and deliberate, united participation that will bring our voice (not the cacophonous voices we presently muster) to the Nigerian dialogue. The items in the Nigerian political leadership basket have continued to be apportioned and shared without regard to the Igbo people as important factors, and there is no way this has to continue (Okuhu, 2022).

6.3 Provision of Adequate Security by the Government of the Various States in the Southeast

As stated in our other paper that is presented in this conference, the government of the five south eastern states must put in more effort towards solving the rising security challenges bedevilling them. Like we also stated in our first paper, the Ebube Agu security outfit has not been living up to expectations due to been ill-equipped or are not fully prepared to tackle the security challenges in the region. The Ebonyi state sector of the Southeast security outfit has even been outlawed by a court ruling because of their high handedness. The government of states should pay more attention to these challenges and cooperate within and among themselves in order to resolve the menace.

6.4 Providing a Regulatory Framework and Proper Legislations

The government of the five South eastern states must unite through cooperation and come up with appropriate legislations and proper regulatory framework to will transform the Aku ruo uno project into Aku muo nulo, which has to do with the proper utilization of the funds that will be generated to not only initiate the creation of the industrial clusters but also to bring about full industrialization of the Southeast region of Nigeria.

6.5 Involvement of Stakeholders in the Political, Economic and Traditional Sectors

The major and critical stakeholders in Igboland which cut across traditional, economic and political environment must be brought together to help bring this wonderful project of Aku ruo uno and Aku muo nulo into fruition. This can be done with proper coordination and organization of the major stakeholders through the harmonization of their ideas and coming up with a common front under the spirit of "Igwebuike". The Igbo through their entrepreneurial skills have impacted heavily and positively in the economy of other regions in the country and even in the economies of the West African sub region and beyond, but the Igbo heartland has not fully benefited for what she gave birth to, therein lies our argument for a new Igbo renaissance which is also a wakeup call to all the stakeholders to come together and invest in the Aku ruo uno which will likely give birth to Aku muo nulo in order to development the Igbo homeland through industrialisation.

6.6 The Provision of Critical Infrastructure across the Southeast Region

For a proper industrialization of the Southeast to take root and grow, there place of critical infrastructure like power (electricity), good road network, adequate water supply and effective and efficient water transport system must be taken seriously into cognizance. The government of the five South eastern states must put in place a workable plan that would provide the needed critical infrastructure that will drive the industrialization process in Igboland. Apart from coming up with a master plan of the layout of infrastructure in the Southeast, there is also the need to involve the Igbo political and business class including the Igbos in Diaspora in order to generate funds for the provision of these critical infrastructures that will drive the industrialisation of the region.

7. Challenges of Industrialisation in Southeast Nigeria

7.1 Electricity and Infrastructural Development

Poor generation and supply of electricity is seen as a major obstacle in the growth and development of the Southeast region in particular and Nigeria in general. Only about one in every three households in rural areas has electricity and even when it is available, the supply of electricity is often unreliable. About Sixty percent of electricity is generated privately in the Southeast and at a cost that is three times higher than electricity supplied from the grid. Cities like Onitsha, Aba, Nnewi, Awka, Enugu, Owerri, Abakaliki, Umuahia, etc., have all suffered serious power shortage and this has invariably affected their entrepreneurial and industrial development and productivity. According to Azojiri and Nzube (2020), the nature of infrastructure in the Southeast can be deemed to be a nightmare to both entrepreneurs and industrialists, with the cost of doing business becoming very high due to the deteriorating infrastructures and the failure of the government to remedy them. Also, poor access to critical infrastructure such as good road network, access to clean and pipe-borne water and steady power have also affected a large percentage of the population.

Lack of critical infrastructure in the Southeast greatly deterred industrial development because of many economic costs such as direct cost of production and production delay associated with it. These costs lead to high cost of production and under utilization of existing production capacity. Inadequate and inefficient infrastructure services has also raised capital costs of manufacturing firms since in most cases, it requires the users to invest in alternative source. Hence, there should be massive investment in the provision of infrastructure in the country (Ekpo, 2014).

7.2 Non-Completion and Functioning of Industrial Core Projects (ICPs)

As stated by Ekpo (2014), industrial core projects such as steel plants, the paper plants, the fertilizer plants, the petrochemical plants, liquefied natural gas (LNG) project, the Nigerian machine tools company, etc embarked upon by the government are the bedrock for Nigeria industrialization. They were meant to provide industrial raw materials, spare part, components, etc which will help industrial sector to be self sustaining and ensure long run growth. None completion/or proper functioning of these outfits constitute one of the greatest obstacle to Nigeria's industrial development. Unless these industrial core projects, especially the steel plants, are completed or rehabilitated and make to function effectively, there will be continuous importation of necessary machinery, spare parts and industrial raw materials from abroad at high cost which is inimical to Nigeria's industrial development. This has equally effected the development of the industrial sector in Igboland because some of the small industrial clusters could not sourced out raw materials that they need for further manufacturing (Ekpo, 2014).

7.3 Unfavourable Business Climate in Igboland

Despite some effort made by individuals in bringing investments into Igboland not minding the rising level of insecurity, the region has remained largely unattractive to investors, but for some hotels which have berthed in major capital cities such as Awka, Owerri, Enugu, Abakaliki, etc, and a few shopping centres/malls, not much could be counted by way of either FDIs or IDIs. Many point to frustrations experienced by investors through administrative bottlenecks while trying to set up a business. As clearly noted by Nworah (2022), “during my time as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Anambra Broadcasting Service (ABS), I convinced an investor, Kene Mkpuru, then of Filmhouse to bring home his cinema project to Awka. The project was frustrated by public servants who alleged that they were not cut in on the deal, alleging that I alone, had settled myself in the transaction.

Kene Mkpuru cited in Nworah (2022), has this to say on Diasporas and investments in Igbo land. “Lots of folks, including Ndigbo, living outside of Igbo land do not believe in the economic viability, disposable income size and spending power within Alaigbo (outside of market trading). There should be intentional market insights and reports published by those that have set up successful corporate, hospitality and modern businesses, so the world will get performance data and information on the viability of business in Alaigbo.

7.4 Insecurity such as Robbery, Kidnapping and Ritual Killings

Crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, advance fee fraud (419), bribery and corruption, communal conflicts, youth restiveness and political thuggery and violence, and most recently, unknown gunmen are some of the major manifestations of the security challenges facing the region (Otu, 2012). Over the last few years, had its own share of the evil effects of kidnapping which is an instrument of terrorism. Kidnapping as a terrorist act has not only devastated the traders in this zone, but has also reduced the beehive of trading activities in the zone. Many big-time traders (businessmen and women) have fallen victims of kidnapping incidences hence environmental insecurity. The resultant problem, therefore, is mass exodus of businessmen and women from this zone to other parts of the country or other parts of the world. This causes low investments in the region, low patronage and low trade volume (Onyeizugbe & Igbodo, 2016). Some of them are discussed briefly below:

7.5 Separatist Agitations from the Southeast

There have been agitations for a sovereign state of the Igbo speaking people of Nigeria which led to the civil war and has been on even after the war. This is due to the central failure to address the perceived marginalization of the Igbo people. There have arisen several groups that have always call for the independence of the Igbo people, however, the call by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is the most recent. The government at the centre have rather responded more with military actions than negotiation with this group thereby creating and heightening the security tensions within the Southeast which has not only affected the lives and properties of the Igbo people, but also economic activities in the region. More recently, IPOB have been accused of launching deadly attacks on government offices, prisons, homes of politicians and homes of community leaders of which the group have denied repeatedly (Aliyu, 2021). Despite these developments, the separatists claimed that their militant operations were mainly aimed at defending local communities from armed herders and bandits instead of fighting the Nigerian government (Chidi, 2021 cited in Asita, 2022)

7.6 Unknown Gunmen or Criminal Gangs

The economy of south east has been battered following the coming in force of a militia group known as Unknown gunmen who's major target are mostly the security agents either at the Check Point, or Police

Barracks and other Military Formations, leading to deaths, arsons and destruction of properties. This type of insecurity has created fear and premonitions among the people who have refused to visit home and some have relocated their businesses to other regions of the country. The fear of being killed for no reason has made well meaning Igbo sons and daughters to not only stay away from home but have also kept their businesses away from the region. Instead of the governments but at the centre and the states to put permanent stop to this, they have rather engaged themselves in blame-games in fruitless attempts to implicate Eastern Security Network (a security group set up by the IPOB to help tackle the rising security in the southeast due to the failure of the government).

7.7 The Declaration of Sit-at-Home in the Southeast of Nigeria

The Sit-at-Home declaration of the IPOB in protest to the arrest and continuous detention of their leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu at the facilities of the department of state services (DSS) against court order on the order of their spokesperson Emma Powerful from 8th of August 2021 in all states in Biafra land has been a serious cause of concern as this has generated security tensions all over the region. The sit at home order was initially for the days Kanu will be appearing in court, but has since become a weekly thing whereby every Monday people in the Southeast are forced to stay at home mostly against their wish. Markets and other commercial and economic activities are forced closed in obedience to the sit at home order. Since the declaration of sit-at-home, the South east has experienced all these resultant to hardship and economy breakdown. Reputable groups, prominent Igbo leaders, government agencies and businessmen operating within south east have expressed serious concern. This has grounded the economy of south east as business and establishments are not allowed to open on Mondays and some of these businesses have all relocated out of the region.

7.8 Communal Conflicts/Clashes among Communities in the Southeast

The incidents of communal clashes among communities in the Southeast especially over boundary disputes or control over markets or motor parks, which most of the times have always lead to killing of people and destruction of properties running into billions of Naira. These clashes equally affect businesses and other forms of economic activities including farming. For instance, in Ebonyi State, the crisis between the Ezzas and Ezillo, and the Ezza-Effium and Effium people. In Anambra state, we have the Aguleri and Umuleri communal conflicts with its attendant impacts and effects on governance and economy of the states.

7.9 Lack of Cooperation or Sense of Unity among the States Government of the Southeast

There is also the lack of cooperation among the government of the five Southeastern states as every state government within the region have chosen to operate alone without recognizing the importance of cooperation with other states in the region in order to address a common challenges of insecurity and infrastructural decay that cut across the region. The menace of kidnapping, communal conflicts, unknown gunmen, unemployment, rising level of poverty among the people and lack of critical infrastructures are all challenges impact the whole region. Therefore, there is the need for cooperation among the government of the states within the region in order to tackle these challenges head-on.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Igbo philosophy of *Aku ruo uno* has proven to be a catalyst for industrial revolution in Igboland if seriously and well developed and implemented with the help and assistance of the states government and other critical stakeholders in the Southeast, as has been shown in our discourse above. In the midst of the

crisis of the national question and the attendant politics of quit notices, most people of Igbo extraction believe that Igboland and the territories around it can be transformed to become the industrial hub of the West African sub-region. As recently noted by Nigeria's first Minister of Aviation, Chief Mbazulike Amaechi "the only reasonable thing to do is for the Igbo to use what God has given them, the gift of hard work, the gift of entrepreneurship, trading expertise and the gift of their technological superiority to exploit and look inwards and develop Igboland industrially and technologically to such an extent that Nigerians will be forced to depend on Igbo technology, expertise and industry".

Our discourse in this paper has shown that the successes that have been achieved by the Igbo people through their entrepreneurial achievements worldwide can be replicated in the Southeast region under the *Aku ru Uno* philosophy, by engaging in massive industrialization of the region in partnership with the government and other critical stakeholders within and outside the Southeast states. The Igbos stand to gain a lot if most of the professionals and entrepreneurs trained in various fields should come home and invest in their homeland rather than setting up their business outfits outside Igboland. We equally recommend that all qualities of the Igbo people as enumerated above, must be brought to bear on the need for the development of the Igbo homeland through the prism of the *Aku ruo uno* philosophy. That is, the Igbo should help to develop their original homeland with wealth, education and skills acquired from abroad.

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