

**A STUDY OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR AND ITS IMPACT ON IDAH
AREA, 1966-1986**

BY

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FEBRUARY, 2020

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Dissertation titled “A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and its Impact on Idah Area, 1966-1986” has been written by me independently. It has not been presented in any previous application for a higher degree. All quotations are indicated and the sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of footnoting and references.

Ugbojah Jeremiah Ichife

Date

CERTIFICATION

This Dissertation, titled “A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and its Impact on Idah Area, 1966-1986” by Ugbojah Jeremiah Ichife, meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree in History in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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In loving memory of my mother, Mrs. Anumeje Iwoba Ugbojah, your love and encouragement took me this far. Rest well in the Lord.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Praise be to God Almighty, the King of Glory who guided and assisted me throughout my studentship in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and whom with His mercy, I was able to complete this important segment of my programme safely.

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PREFACE

Most literature on the historiography of Nigerian Civil War centred on the dilemma of the Igbo in the defunct Biafra Republic of Eastern Nigeria. In the discourse, the plights of the border socio-linguistic communities were neglected. This therefore created a vacuum which this research is out to fill using Idah area: as a case study given her proximity to Igbo speaking people of Nsukka, Anam, and Onitsha. This dissertation covers two decades to examine the impact of the war on the people of the area.

Chapter One discusses the background to the study, ranging from the introduction, statement of research problem, aim and objectives, scope and limitations of the study justification of the study, research methodology, theoretical framework, review of related literature and conclusion. Chapter Two explains among other things, the geographical location, physical environment, tradition of origin and economic activities of the people.

Chapter Three examines the post-colonial Nigeria which includes the following; Regionalism and Division, Parliamentary Opposition in the First Republic, Action Group crisis of the West in 1962, the creation of Mid-West 1963, 1964 General elections, 1963 Census Crisis and the Tiv Crisis, 1960-1964.

Chapter Four highlights the January 15 coup de'tat and the establishment of military rule in Nigeria masterminded by Five Majors under the Ringleader of Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and his involvement, causes, failures and the consequences. While, Chapter Five emphasises General Aguiyi-Ironsi's government and the aftermath which includes his emergence to power as Head of State, his reform policy, the counter-coup of July 29, 1966.

Chapter Six outlines and examines the factors responsible for the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970, which encompasses the following: the killings of the Easterners in Northern Nigeria, 1966, Aburi Accord, 4–5 January, 1967, and its consequences, the creation of 12 buffer states structure, 27 May, 1967, the Federal blockade, June, July, 1967 and the police action 6 July, 1967.

Chapter Seven analyses the escalation of the Civil war 1967-1970. This includes the invasion of Mid-West, 9 August, 1967, Biafra resistance 1967-1970, Biafran social economic challenges, the issue of alleged genocide, the role of Biafran propaganda in the war, and war economies and the role of indigenous technology in the Civil war.

Chapter Eight examines the role of foreign elements in the Civil War. The factors responsible are listed as follows: the role of the European Nations, Organisation of African Unity (OAU, now, AU), the role of Nigeria Neighbouring countries, United States of America (USA), China, Israel and Arab State. Chapter nine examines the economic impact of the war on the people of Idah area, 1966-1986. This includes the following: trade and commerce, agriculture, infrastructure and employment.

Chapter Ten examines the socio-political impact of Nigerian Civil War on the people and society of Idah area, 1966-1986. The following are listed as the impact of the war: the idea of cultural integration and reintegration, perception of the Igbo after the Civil War, ethnicity and Nigerian politics, environmental pollution, educational setbacks, civil military relations, social problems, socio-political justice of the Igbo on the national integration, the position of Igbo in the local and national politics, termination of democratic experience and revival of cultural identity among the Igala speaking people of Idah. The chapter also summaries the entire study and demonstrates that based on the

historical development of Nigeria as a nation has a lot to learn from the Civil War, especially the plights of the border communities neglected in the historiography of the Nigerian Civil War.

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is on the impact of the Nigerian Civil War on Idah Area. The methodology adopted for the study was a historical method which encompasses the use of primary and secondary sources which have been collected, interpreted, evaluated and analysed for harmony and accuracy, corroboration and consistency. The research also employed interdisciplinary model or approach with a view to arriving at historical reality by interrogating interface of phenomenon, issues of societal significant of these disciplines. The rationale behind employing this method is to achieve the objective of the study. Equally important, the research is anchored on the premise of conflict theory which revolves around conflict of interest and crisis ridden situation which may be product of egocentricity, ethnic chauvinism, a desire to seize state power and also a desire to maintain the territorial status quo. In other words, a group perceiving themselves as neglected or excluded from the terrain of political power, the sharing of benefits of the resources and wealth of the country. The work in no small measure has contributed to the historiography of Nigerian Civil War. For instance, the impact of that war on the border communities using Idah Area: as a case study has been a neglected theme in the Nigerian historiography. One of the findings indicated that the study took dissimilar stance from the general literature of the Nigerian Civil War, for example, whenever the Nigerian Civil War is mentioned, what really comes to mind is that the agonies and victims were the Igbo speaking people. This study dispels this claim because the study area also suffered same fate with their Igbo speaking neighbours.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.B.U.	-	Ahmadu Bello University
A.G.	-	Action Group
D.O.	-	Divisional Officer/District Officer
F.M.G.	-	Federal Military Government
FEDECO	-	Federal Electoral Commission
M.B.	-	Middle Belt
M.D.F.	-	Mid-West Democratic Front
N.A.	-	Native Authority
N.A.K.	-	National Archives Kaduna
N.C.N.C.	-	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
N.E.P.U.	-	Northern Elements Progressive Union
N.H.R.S.	-	Northern History Research Scheme
N.N.A.	-	Nigerian National Alliance
N.N.D.P.	-	Nigerian National Democratic Party
N.P.C.	-	Northern Peoples Congress
O.A.U.	-	Organisation of African Unity
U.M.B.C.	-	United Middle Belt Congress
U.P.C.	-	United Peoples Congress
U.P.G.A.	-	United Progressive Grand Alliance

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

English		Igala
Igalaland	-	<i>Anę-Igala</i>
Igala people	-	<i>Abo-Igala</i>
Dry season	-	<i>Uwo</i>
Wet season	-	<i>Qloji</i>
Harmattan	-	<i>Qwe</i>
Group hunting	-	<i>Qkpa</i>
Raffia palm	-	<i>Offolo</i>
Wine tapped from matured raphia trees	-	<i>Qte'follo</i>
Palm Tree	-	<i>Ękpę</i>
Oil Palm	-	<i>Ekpo'oje</i>
Silk Cotton Tree	-	<i>Agwu'agwugwu</i>
Baobab	-	<i>Obobo</i>
Coconut	-	<i>Unoba</i>
Sandy Soil	-	<i>Anę-Elanyi</i>
Alluvial Soil	-	<i>Anę-aruwa</i>
Loamy soil	-	<i>Anę-eyele</i>
Granite soil	-	<i>Anę'okuta</i>
Clay soil	-	<i>Anę-ama</i>
Ibaji Rice	-	<i>Igbalę Ibaji</i>
Swap rice	-	<i>Igbalę-omni</i>

Homestead	-	<i>unyi</i>
The patrilineage	-	<i>Efunyi</i>
Uterines	-	<i>Amu'Onobulẹ</i>
In-laws	-	<i>Ama'ana</i>
Domestic slaves	-	<i>Ama'adu</i>
Clan	-	<i>Ọlọpu</i>
Earth Priest	-	<i>Onu-Anẹ</i>
Large Settlement	-	<i>Ewo</i>
Small Scale Settlement	-	<i>Od'oko</i>
Settlement Leader	-	<i>Onu-ewo</i>
Head Priest	-	<i>Atebọ</i>

NOTES ON SOURCES

This study employed different historical sources for the reconstruction of the impact of the Nigerian Civil War on Idah Area, 1966-1986. However, relevant literature, oral interviews, textbooks, seminar papers, theses, dissertations, projects, published and unpublished works were critically analysed.

The method employed for this study is the historical method. It implies that both chronological and thematic approaches were combined and it is also based on description and critical analysis of events based on information and material available. The work relies on primary and secondary sources, and it adopted a multi-disciplinary approach. This method was essential in assembling the various sources that were needed in order to attempt an objective and scientific research, especially through corroboration of sources so as to establish internal consistency in the analysis.

Primary Sources

The researcher interviewed elders and soldiers from the locality who were either eye witnesses or direct victims of Nigerian Civil War. The Igbo of Eastern Nigeria residents in Idah and its environs were also interviewed to corroborate the narratives. Ninety seven persons within the age bracket of 60 years above were interviewed. Nevertheless, persons below that age were also interviewed. The major methodology for the collection of this information was taking of short notes in jotter and note books which were later developed but without distorting the originality of the information gathered. The dissertation relied heavily on the huge amount of information that was gathered through the oral sources as the interviews were carried out and information was granted without any reservations or inhibition, although in some cases the researcher was suspected to be on a spy mission.

Oral sources are critical in reconstructing the history of the Nigerian Civil War and with particular reference to its impact on Idah Area. This is because it assisted in corroborating or checkmating other sources. It was in respect of this that up to ninety seven people were interviewed, they included, men and women. Many difficulties were encountered ranging from disappointment from the identified informants to the suspicion and fear of the researcher being on espionage mission.

Archival Sources

The archival materials were the reports written by British colonial officials in the course of discharging their imperial duties. The officials included the High Commissioners, Governors – General, Residents and District officers. The researcher generally made use of reports that are relevant to this study which included Annual Reports on *Igala Area* in an effort to pick out some of the historical issues of the area. Intelligent reports to the Nigerian Civil War were also a significant source material.

Secondary Sources

Another category of source material used are the secondary data materials. This category which consist of published works and articles in journals and unpublished works, such as theses, dissertation, seminar/conference papers and monographs that contain some general but useful information on the area of our study and the subject of the study. Mostly theses are located in Northern History Research Scheme (Ahmadu Bello University Zaria), Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka (Biafran Section), Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Published Works

To acheive the validation of the objectives of this research work, this dissertation made use of fragments of information that have been extracted from books, scholarly and

military journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Reports, Articles and columns, seminar and conference papers, internet sources and limited archival materials. From 1966-1986, the major sources of written information has been books, periodicals such as magazines, newspapers, journals, Government publications, seminar and conference papers. A substantial amount of empirical data used in the study is in large measure based upon these sources. The strength and validity of these sources lie in their collaborative evidence by various scholars as related in the historical reconstruction of the research work. Archival source material in this field of study has been a source of concern, some have suffered mutilation, theft or indiscriminate removal and misplacement.

Unpublished Works

The number of published works that were written directly on the main theme of the study are limited and their focus differs in relation to this dissertation. A few suffices here such as Ogozie, N. N. “A study of Nigerian Civil War and its impact on Mbaise area, 1967-1977 (B.A History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria); Rosita, O. “The Impact of Nigerian Civil War: A Case Study of Owerri, 1967-1977”, (B.A History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2006); Igwe E. C.” The impact of Nigerian Civil War on Nsukka, 1967-1983”, (B. A. History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2004); Emenike, S. L. “A Failed Republic: The Case Study of Biafran 1967-1970”, (B.A. History, University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2010); Mark, I. O. Nigerian Civil War: Its Aftermaths in Nsukka Area”, (M.A. Dissertation, University of Nigeria Nsukka, 1999); Okorie, I.N, The Post Civil War policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria and Biafran Veterans”, 1970-2000, (M.A Dissertation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1998). As noted from the above, apart from the general theme – Nigerian Civil War and its Impact, the area under study has not

been researched. To fill this vacuum, further research was extensively carried out. It should be recalled that majority of the sources used explained the causes of the Nigerian Civil War, the actors, victims and the theatres of war. It is interesting to note that the information gathered from these sources served as fortress which built this study.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Although, various studies on the Nigerian Civil War have been undertaken, hardly any exists on the impact of that war on the communities living on the border lands. The focus of this study is on the neglected theme of the historiography of Nigerian Civil War with particular reference to Idah Area in the defunct Kabba Province in Northern Nigeria. We may pause to ask ourselves? Why do nations go to war? Scholars have cautioned that causation of war is a multifactor phenomenon.

Ziegler identifies and criticised the human nature factor such as trouble makers, power groups, merchant of death, wicked states.¹ While Stoessinger observes that he was less interested in the role of abstract forces such as nationalism, militarism or alliance or even economic factors perse as being vital in precipitating wars. He posits that the most important single precipitating factor in the outbreak of war is misperception. Such distortion may manifest itself in four different ways: in a leader's image of himself, a leader's view of his adversary's character, a leader's view of his adversary toward himself and finally a leader's view of his adversary's ability.²

Wars have profound effects on every aspect of the society waging them. Nations mobilize all their resources in an effort to gain victory. In that situation, the liberty of the individual may be curtailed at least for the duration of the conflict. The economy would be put on a war footing as the industries which used to produce goods are reorganized to

¹ D.W. Ziegler, *War Peace and International Politics*, Little Brown Company, Boston, 1987, Pp. 110-123.

² J.G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations go to War*, Macmillan Press, London, 2001, P. 260.

produce military necessities resulting to acute shortage of some commodities and economic difficulties for the citizens. Certain welcome developments in national life can be brought to an abrupt end by war which can also give rise to vast changes in social values and customs detrimental to society.³

The Nigerian Civil War, which is also known as the Biafran war, took place between July 6, 1967 to 15 January, 1970. Millions of people died as a result of the war, which was between the Eastern Region and the rest of Nigeria. The Eastern Region was declared an independent state of Biafra, but this was challenged by the Federal Government, thereby leading to war. The borderlands that is, the areas having borders with Eastern Nigeria (Biafra) experienced a lot of hardship, death and dislocation. Idah Area in the then Northern Region was one of such areas.

1.1 Statement of Research Problem

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, one of the most pressing problems facing the new nation was that of nation-building. The problems centred on government inability to unite various ethnic groups estimated at over two hundred, into a cohesive whole to form a united nation. Military intervention in 1966 and the subsequent civil war was a manifestation of the problem of nation building.

The war broke out because the initial attempt to settle the problem of ethnicity, regionalism and religious bigotry failed. Being located in the Northern region, the fate of Idah Area was tied to that of the North. Given its repercussion, the following questions were raised:

- (i) Was there any relationship between the Idah Area and Eastern Nigeria in the pre-war period?

³ J.G. Stoessinger, *Why Nations go to War...*

- (ii) What was the state of affairs between the Igala and the Igbo during the civil war?
- (iii) To what extent did the proximity of the Idah Area to the Eastern state have any significance on the area of study?
- (iv) How did the people of Idah Area react to the civil war?

The Igala-Igbo relations before the Civil War were cordial. There was evidence of commercial interactions and intermingling of cultures. The state of affairs between the two parties, (Idah Area and Eastern region) deteriorated considerably during the Nigerian Civil War. At the beginning, the Igala saw the Igbo as their kinsmen but this mentality turned out to be reversal as the war progressed. For instance, Igala speaking people were loyal to the Federal Republic of Nigeria while the Igbo were mostly loyal to Biafra. This drew a battle line between the two communities and as one would expect, the relationships and state of affairs soared. However, the people of Idah Area were not destroying and claiming the Eastern property during and after the war.⁴

The proximity of Idah Area made them vulnerable to Biafran soldiers incessant attacks, especially the border districts such as Ibaji, Oḍolu, Akpanya and Ofu had remained a neglected theme as far as the impact of Nigerian Civil War was concerned, hence, this study.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is the Nigerian Civil War and its impact on Idah Area and the objectives are as follows:

- a) to demonstrate the harmonious relationship between the Igala-speaking people and their Igbo neighbours and other factors prior to the Civil War;
- b) to explain the sudden change of relationship between the people in the course of

⁴ Fieldwork Interview with Joel Ukwumaka, Place: Uchuchu, Age: 70, Date: 13 July, 2016.

- the war, especially with respect to the border communities;
- c) to debunk the notion that the Igbo people were the only ones affected by the war;
- and
- d) to show that the area under study was a theatre of war by virtue of geographical proximity.

1.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The research covers the period 1966 to 1986. 1966 was a significant landmark in the political history of Nigeria. It marked the emergence of coups and counter-coups in Nigeria triggered by deeper ethnic and regional sentiments. For instance, the first coup d'état of January 15, 1966 was characterised by assassination of prominent Nigerian leaders and politicians, army officers, mostly of Northern extraction. For the first time in the history of Nigeria, the military ethics (esprit de corps) was violated as soldiers began to eliminate their fellow soldiers. This shattered the solidarity of the Nigerian army. The period also marked the termination of the First Republic as well as the suspension of her constitution. The period heralded the genesis of military intervention in Nigerian governance. Equally important, Nigeria was made a unitary state although short-lived, because of its unsuitability to Nigerian state, such as abolition of regionalism, abolition of federalism, introduction of uniform civil service structure among others. Unarguably, 1983 marks the second phase of military intervention in Nigeria which led to the overthrow of Alhaji Shehu Shagari's administration, while 1986 as the terminal period marks a high watershed of military politics of transition to democratic governance in Nigeria.

The study area covers the Idah Area which comprises Idah, Ibaji, Ofu, Igala-Mela, Oḍolu. Idah, the capital of Igala Kingdom is situated on the bank of River Niger. It lies

on the eastern bank of the river linking Lokoja to the north and Onitsha to the south, Nsukka to the east, Agenebode across the river Niger to the west. It lies on latitude 07°43, longitude 06°43.⁵ It would be recalled that Federal Government of Nigeria created twelve states which paved way for the creation of eleven local Government Councils in the state (Kwara).⁶ The former Igala Native Authority Council Area was divided into three Local Governments: Ankpa, Dekina and Idah respectively. According to the 1963 population census, the total population of Igala speaking people was 684,800.⁷

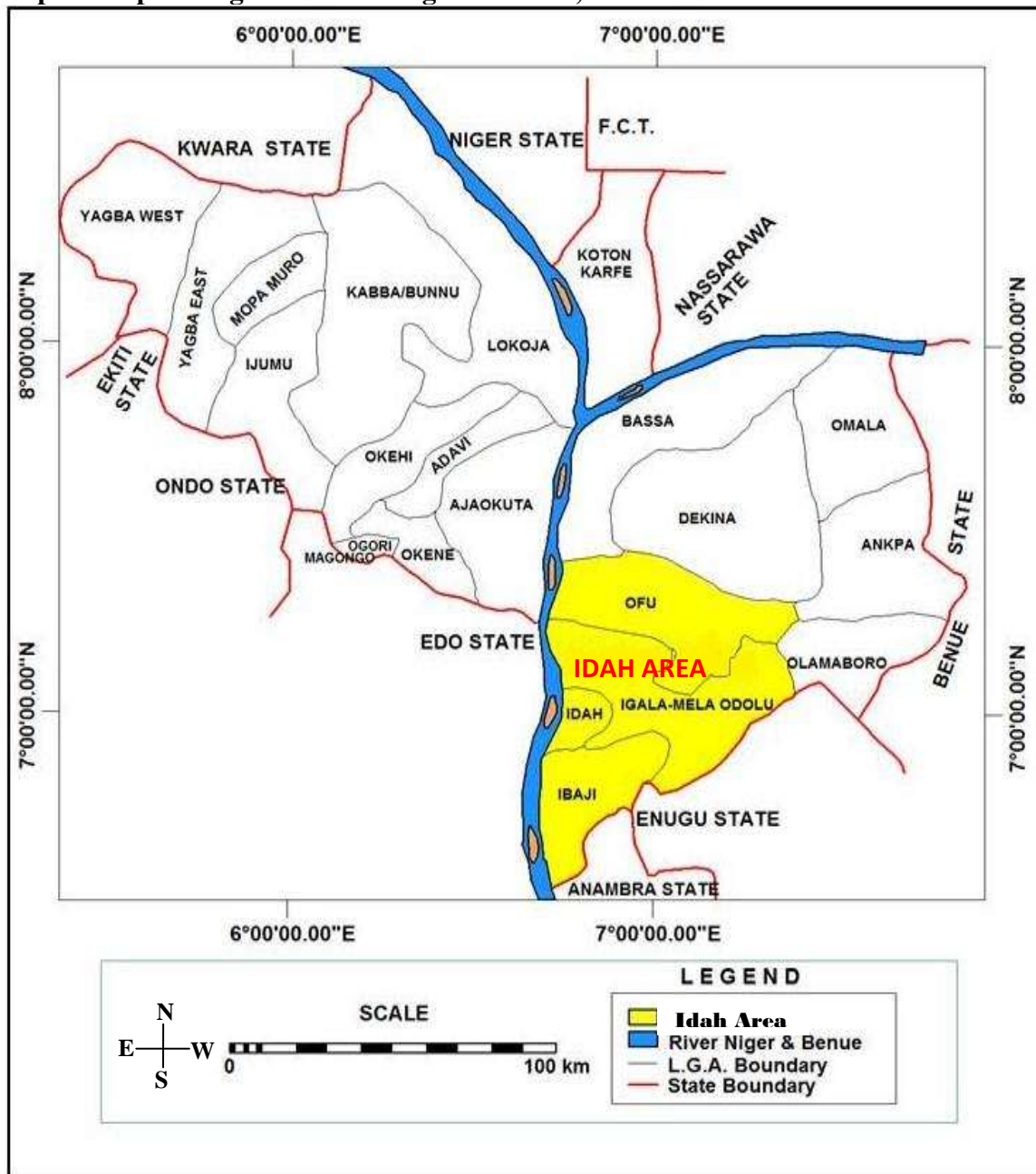
No research in any part of the world is problem free. Given this state of affairs, this research work cannot claim to be an exception. For example, divergent views arising from different literature and oral interviews. The topic of the research raised tensions and emotions in some quarters. For instance, the informants were direct victims of the Nigerian Civil War and as such related to the events of narration with emotions which may have created some gaps that need to be filled.

⁵ S. F. Dadson (ed), *Gazetter of Nothern Niegria*. Vol. II, Municipality Press, 1965, P. 78.

⁶ P.E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala, Alhaji Aliyu Ocheja Obaje 1956-2006*, Snap Press, Enugu, 2006, Pp. 74-75.

⁷ Population Census of Nigeria, 1963, *Federal Office of Statsitics*, Lagos.

Map 1: Map of Kogi State showing Idah Area, 1991



Source: Adapted from Political Map of Nigeria, Kogi State Ministry of Education, Lokoja, 1993, P.19.

1.4 Justification of the Study

A lot has been written on the effects of the Nigerian civil war, but hardly any exist on the border communities. Idah Area by virtue of its geographical location was one of these neglected areas hence this research. Most literature portrayed Eastern Region as the most affected. This study is contending that Idah Area was also adversely affected. Topographically, the *Area* is riverine and its proximity to Igbo speaking people and therefore not easily accessible by Nigerian soldiers except by engine boats which only anchored on the bank of the river Niger. Moreover, the engine boats could not sail through the tributaries to the interior. Similarly, some parts of the area were not motorable. Hence, the Biafran soldiers exploited this to their advantage by unleashing incessant attacks on the communities living at the borderland. The informants also maintained that many persons were slaughtered, other wounded. Also proving that, part of Northern Nigeria was not least affected. Without any doubt, the proximity of the area to Igbo speaking people of Nsukka, Ibagwani, Adani, Enugu Otu, Anam, Otuocha and Onitsha made the area vulnerable to incessant Biafran attacks. It is significant to note that its geographical location made Idah Area one of the theatres of the civil war.

1.5 Research Methodology

The researcher used historical method for the study. The method implies that chronological and thematic approaches were combined. In addition, it was based on description and critical evaluation of events on information and materials at the disposal of the researcher. It is against this background that the work relied on both primary and secondary sources and interdisciplinary approach or model. The use of sources in the reconstruction of historical events is very critical.

The primary sources that this work utilised include the participants' account and oral interviews. The researcher identified informants who were mostly elders in Idah Area. This area refers to the Southern axis of Igala speaking people. The people interviewed were of proven integrity. Most of them were participants, or eye witnesses or victims of the war. Other primary sources are reports of both national and international observers and commentators. Most of these are available in the National Archives Enugu, Kaduna, Ibadan, Military Archives Lagos. Arewa House, Kaduna. Northern History Research Scheme (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria), Kashim Ibrahim Library (Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria), Nnamdi Azikiwe Library University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Biafran Section). Oral sources are transmitted verbally from one person to another and from one generation to another. Oral sources are very critical in historical research because they assist in corroborating or checkmating other sources. One of its principal weaknesses is that it is subject to distortions arising largely from prejudice of the informant and traditional historian. Y. B. Usman identifies the general assessment of primary sources on the condition that it is consciously done on five criteria, namely; distance from the event, veracity of the recorder of the information, form of preservation, feasibility and corroboration.⁸

It is important to note that, this does not assess the basis and nature of perspectives and concepts. It is becoming universally acclaimed that oral tradition and traditional written histories must be scrutinised in terms of the world outlook which produces them. This, therefore, must take into cognizance the cultural, intellectual

⁸ Y. B. Usman, "Assessment of Primary Source", Heinrich Barth in Katsina, 1851 in *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Yusufu Bala Usman*, Vol. 1, *Abdullahi Smith Centre for the Historical Research*, Zaria, Nigeria, 2006, P. 1.

background and the environment.⁹ Another category of source materials employed were secondary data which consists of published works, articles in journals, unpublished works, such as theses, seminars/conference papers and monographs among others that contain useful information on the area under investigation and the subject of the study. Most of this information are located in Nigerian Archives and universities as earlier mentioned. Its greatest advantage is that it is documented, durable, conserve, preserve and corroborate other sources. This, however, does not exonerate it from distortion, manipulation and prejudice.

History as a discipline cannot be studied in isolation of other disciplines like Archaeology, Anthropology, Linguistics, Zoology, Botany, Sociology, Political Science to mention but a few. In view of this, this research work employed inter-disciplinary approach or model as well. The historical research is an uphill task since it intends to reinterpret the past faithfully almost in all its ramifications. This, therefore, calls for the use of multidisciplinary approach since a single discipline cannot provide all the necessary information about the memorable aspects of the past. Historical research needs assistance of specialists of various disciplines to explain certain theories, models, concepts and research methods which assist historians to present not only a comprehensive but clear image of the past.¹⁰

Interdisciplinary approach may lead to a discipline spreading itself too thin, to the

⁹ Y. B. Usman, "Assessment of Primary Source," Heinrich Barth in Katsina, 1851 in *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Yusufu Bala Usman*, Vol. 1...

¹⁰ Y. B. Usman, "Assessment of Primary Source", Heinrich Barth in Katsina, 1851 in *Beyond Fairy Tales: Selected Historical Writings of Yusufu Bala Usman*, Vol. 1...

neglect of the essentials in its domain, thus preventing work in depth in an attempt to broaden one's horizon by studying other disciplines.¹¹ It may also ignite chaos in historical research. The onus is now on us to disabuse the mind of those contrary opinion to organize good research activities to avoid chaos. This encompasses logical synthesis of all individual methods in the cognate disciplines. Moreover, the data must be subjected to thorough scrutiny, critical analysis and interpretation especially where contribution from other disciplines corroborate the historical data. In a situation where the data from other disciplines are contradictory to historical evidence, further research must be conducted to obtain more data and evidence in order to gain the utilization of other borrowed data.¹²

Finally, the lacuna of interdisciplinary approach relationship is also evident in social sciences in relation to conceptual, theoretical and research preoccupation as well as process of interrogating activities. These disciplines: Social Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Anthropology, History, Geography and Economics have their respective interfaces that are shared with other disciplines and their variables and problems. Historians can borrow theories, concepts and models from social disciplines not because they are more prestigious, but for the purpose of fruitful research.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The importance of employing theory in historical research cannot be overemphasized. Many theories exist to explain historical phenomena. These are as follows:

Underdevelopment Theory

Dialectical Materialism Theory

¹¹ A. A. Lawal, "Interdisciplinary Approach in Historical and Practical Problems."in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* Vol. 1, No.1, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, 2004, P. 13.

¹² A. A. Adejo, "History Conflict Resolution and National Unity in Nigeria", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*. Vol. 3, No. 1, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, 2004, P. 3.

Imperial Theory

Cyclical Theory

Conflict Theory

The research is anchored on the premise of conflict theory since war is not unconnected with violence, crisis and conflict. Its proponents are Stagner, Lewis Coser, Donald Kagan, Kalevi H. Hosti, Max Weber among others. Stagner defines conflict as:

A situation in which two or more human being desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other, but not both. Each party is mobilising energy to obtain a goal, a desired object or situation and each perceives the other as a barrier or threat to that goal.¹³

On the other hand, Lewis Coser observes that: Conflict comes from an incompatibility of goals, a struggle over value and claims to scarce status power and resource in which the aims of the opponent are to nationalise, injure or eliminate their rivals.¹⁴

It is argued that conflict is a means of resolving disputes, even though the mechanism devised may be catastrophic to either or both parties involved and to their neighbours alike. It is often considered as universal phenomenon. Adojo cites Stedman who believes that:

When individual or group turns to violence to solve problems, conflict takes a second dimension ---- Security and survival, conflict resolution becomes multifaceted as conflict itself, solution must look to satisfy the hunger of individual for justice, must also obey the fears of the participants, conflicts become prolonged because the antagonists came to fear the consequences of settlement in which parties choose mutual security arrangement over the individual pursuit of security more than the consequences of continued violence.¹⁵

In summary, violence can be categorised by type and scale. The forms of violence

¹³ A. A. Adejo, "History Conflict Resolution and National Unity in Nigeria"...P.13.

¹⁴ R. Stagner, *Psychological Aspect of International Conflict*, Balmont Books, 1967, P. 16.

¹⁵ Lewis Coser, *The Function of Social Conflcist*, London, Tree Press, London, 1956, P. 8.

may be riots, party clashes, political demonstration, looting, arson and political assassinations. At one end of the scale, violence may involve thousands of people as in demonstrations and riots, at another individual isolated incidents involve handful of people. This also involves revolution, military coups, civil war which presents them as an attempt to seize state power or throw it out.¹⁶

Kalevi J. Hosti in his study of wars between 1448 and 1988 identifies twenty four variables that ignited wars. He indicates that factors that use to cause wars are rise and fall in importance overtime. According to his analysis territorial dispute is responsible for over 1/3 of all wars between 1648-1914 but have caused less than 1/3 of all wars since then. The casual factors have increased in importance, various national drives (liberation, unification, secession) have increased the most, up from an average of 3% (1648-1814) to an average of 13% (1815-1989)¹⁷. In a related research, Grieve in 1925 conference on the causes and cure of conflict and war summed up that there were more than 250 causes of war listed under four general categories political, economical, social, psychological.¹⁸ It must be mentioned at this juncture that analyses of conflicts and war are usually based on three level dimensions; the system level, which generally talk about the nature of the world's political system, the state level which is treated under the broad factors of the political and the economic due to internal political dynamism in countries, that is whether it is a capitalist, dictatorial, undeveloped etc or the economic resources and wealth which could determine the level of aggression of a state.¹⁹

For the purpose of this research conflict theory revolves around conflict of

¹⁶ A. M. Adejo cited Muzaffer *et'al* (eds), *Interdisclinayr Relationship in the Society*, Aboki Publishers, Makurdi, 2004, P. 4.

¹⁷ A. M. Adejo *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991 in *Journal of Historical of Nigeria*. Vol. 1, No. 1, 2004, 10

¹⁸ A. M. Adejo, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989*, 11.

¹⁹ A. M. Adejo, *Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order 1648-1989*, 11.

interest and crisis ridden situation which may be a product of egocentricity, ethnic chauvinism, a desire to seize state power and also a desire to maintain the territorial status quo. In other words, a group perceiving themselves as neglected or excluded from the terrain of political power, the sharing of benefits of the resources and wealth of the country. It was the crises of the post independent Nigeria that were not properly handled by the politicians that contributed to Nigerian Civil War. The party in power wanted to maintain dominance at all cost through state machinery. Conflict of interest therefore pervades the whole scenario. The Federal Government of Nigeria vowed to preserve the territorial integrity of the nation, while the Igbo wanted to pull out of the country, hence the declaration of sovereign state of Biafra. This scenario degenerated into Civil War, because the interests of the parties involved were at variance. Ojukwu declared the secession of the Ndi Igbo and Eastern Region on 30 May, 1967.

Coming to this study area, the Igala people have the motion that the turmoil was between the Hausa and Igbo and that the war would not extend to their own locality. This frame of the mind was informed by their close affinity with the Igbo speaking area through intermingling of cultures among others. However, the reverse was the case with Igbo speaking people who perceived the Igala as Hausa and that they must avenge the killings in the North on them. In spite of the peaceful gesture of the Igala towards the Igbo, they latter attacked them killing indiscriminatingly the Igala speaking people at Onitsha market and this continued unabated between August and September, 1966. This research employed conflict violence model to explain the political reality of Idah Area in the Nigerian State during the civil war. Despite the proximity of the area to Igbo speaking territory, the Igala became more convinced of their Northern extraction than ever before.

1.7 Literature Review

A lot have been written on the Nigerian Civil War either as eyewitness accounts, media reports, administrators or professional historian's accounts but none exist on the area of the research. Nevertheless, the researcher reviews the general literature on the subject-matter.

Raph Uwechue in his book, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*²⁰ was unique in many respects. The flood of books now appearing on the Nigerian Civil War tends to fall within one or two categories: partisan propaganda or historical reporting. Uwuchue is rather different. It is interesting to note that the author pleads reconciliation and he transferred his allegiance to Biafra because of the killings of the Igbo in the North.

It is however, a paradox of history that in December, 1968, Raph resigned when it became apparent to him that, for Ojukwu's secession bid and the pursuit of personal power ambition had become ends in themselves rather than merely means to attain guarantees of Igbo security. Raph was of the opinions that two wars were fought simultaneously. The first was for the survival of the Igbo as a group. The second was for the survival of Ojukwu's leadership. Ojukwu's error which proved fatal for millions of Igbo was that the latter came first. This is the background to the first edition of this book which appeared in 1969 under the subtitle "A call for realism", arguing a case for negotiated settlement. The revised edition is substantially unchanged, apart from the addition of two important chapters analysing the failure of Biafra leadership.

As a matter of fact Uwechue argues that "the cause for which Igbo fought and

²⁰ R. Uwechue in his book, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War: Facing the Future*, African publishing, P.50.

died was and still remain a just one.” Nevertheless, secession was neither inevitable nor a solution to its problem. It was principally the product of “bitterness born of misunderstanding.” Raph is at the same time emphatic that “the personality of Odumegwu Ojukwu more than any single factor determined much of the course and certainly the character of the end of Biafra adventure.” Significantly, in explaining how one managed to “impose his will for so long on some fourteen million people among whom is to be found one of the highest concentrations of the intelligent and educated elite of black Africa.” The author lends credence to the federal claim that secession was a one man affair or show. His plan of action for a return to civilian regime corresponds broadly to that subsequently announced by the Federal Government. He also recommends two specific constitutional proposals as prerequisite for post war political stability. The first is a nationally elected executive president with “ultimate control of the armed forces to serve as guardian of nation” and “umpire in interstate disputes.” Secondly, he argues in favour of increased local autonomy as a realistic necessity during a transitional period:

What is required is an arrangement which first of all guarantees the overall unity of the country but which avoids making the centre too attractive politically and economically to force conflicting interest and ambitions into fierce and unbridled competition to secure control of it.

Given his portfolio as a career diplomat sympathising with “Biafran plight” at the initial stage was unstatemanship. His advocacy for loose federalism was an indication of pro-Igbo solidarity, because his option was unitary in disguise.

Joel P. Dada, in his article titled, “Historiography of The Nigerian Civil War: An Analysis of Existing Literature by Combatant Officers,” asserts that 1967 to 1970 has attracted the attention of a lot of writers from the end of the war till now. Several books have been published on it. Some of those books were written by seasoned journalists, administrators, academics and combatant officers. Yet many more writers are still interested in writing on the Civil war. He cites, Akinjinde an authority on Civil War, that writing on the Nigerian Civil War has become a thriving industry and has attracted motley array of writers with various motives.²¹

It is quite true that some former military officers have written on the Nigerian Civil War. The first combatant officer to publish a book on Nigerian Civil War was Major Fola Oyewole. His book titled, *The Reluctant Rebel* published in 1977.²² The book is an exposition of the author’s experience in the Biafran Army throughout the war. It would be recalled that before the Civil war, Major Fola Oyewole, Victor Banjo, Adewale Ademoyega and Ganiyu Adeleke had been imprisoned in the East for either actively participating in the January 15, 1966 coup d’etat or for plotting to overthrow Ironsi’s government. At the beginning of the war, they were released by Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu who was the Biafran arrowhead. To show appreciation to Odumegwu Ojukwu, Fola Oyewole and his colleagues reluctantly joined the newly formed Biafran Army. As soon as they joined the army problems erupted between the Biafran regular officers,

²¹J. P. Dada, “Historiography of the Nigerian Civil War: *Analysis of Existing Literature on Combatant Officer*”, 1993, Pp. 30-35.

²² B. Gbulie, *Nigeria’s Five Majors Coup D’etat of 15 January, 1966: First Inside Account*, Nigeria: Africana Educational Publishers, Pp. 1-50.

Sandhurst trained had previously served in the Nigerian Army, who were acting in contrast with the Biafran Field Commissioned officers with little or no military experience. There were discrimination, mutual suspicion and antagonism between the two parties involved. It was indeed this unwelcome or ugly development that eventually led to the collapse of the united front in Biafra. The author summed up his book by telling the Nigerian public the feelings of both the Nigerians and Biafran soldiers when the war ended. The book concludes with the discussion of the ceremony that marked the end of Civil War.

Captain Ben Gbulie's, *Nigeria's Five Majors Coup D'etat of 15 January, 1966: First Inside Account*, Major Adewale Ademoyega's,²³ *Why We Struck*, Alexander A. Madiebo's,²⁴ *The story of the First Coup, The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War and Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu*, the author of Biafran's selected speeches with *Journal of Events*,²⁵ *Biafra, Random Thoughts and Because I am involved*. All represent what Sam Jones describes as "Authors in the witness Box". Each of them tried to justify his case before the judge - Nigerian readers and the entire world. Importantly, Ben Gbulie, Adewale Ademoyega and Alexander Madibo, ringleaders of January 15 Coup d'etat deal extensively with the reasons for embarking on the coup. The three claim that it was because of economic decadence, political gerrymandering and economic brigandage that confronted the nation at that time that they had to step into "sanitise" the nation.

²³ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck: The Story of the First Nigerian Coup*. Nigeria. Evans, Ibadan, 1981, Pp.10-75.

²⁴ Alexander Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Nigeria, Enugu, Fourth Dimension, 1980, 10-95.

²⁵ O. C., Ojukwu, *Biafran Random Thoughts*, Harper and Row, 1969; *Biafran Selected Speeches with Journal of Events*, New York 1968.

Accordingly, they made passionate appeal to their readers not see Nzeogwu as a traitor but true nationalist who was not riding on ethnic horse.

On their proposed government, they claimed that they were to set up a nationalist (socialist oriented) government that would guarantee Nigerians full participation. However, a critical examination of these books reveals doubtful authenticity of their nationalist ideals. In the words of Yusufu Bala Usman, indeed, the statements made by Ademoyega and Gbulie and earlier Nzeogwu would indicate that the political programme of these army officers was just to establish a government around Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was imprisoned at that time in Calabar and had been persecuted by NPC, closely supported by the NCNC.²⁶

Basically, Alexander Madiebo differs slightly from Ben Gbulie and Adewale Ademoyega's books. The difference lies in the fact that Alexander Madiebo talks about secession and the attempt by the Igbo to build a new nation for the 'persecuted' Easterners. The author demonstrates at length how the Biafran leaders tried to build from the scratch, for instance, new armed forces with hardly any weapon required by an army. What is most thrilling in this book is an account of the tactics and strategies employed by the Biafran forces in the Civil war. At any rate, one may accuse him of not mentioning the trial of Brigadier Njoku and his colleagues by Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu who accused them of planning to overthrow him.

My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil war, 1967-1970,²⁷ written by General Olusegun Obasanjo is one of the vital documentations on Nigerian Civil War. The book essentially revolves around the author's command of the Third Marine

²⁶ O. C., Ojukwu, *Because I am Involved*, Ibadan: Spectrum Press Limited, 1982, Pp. 1-80.

²⁷ S. Jones, *Authors in the witness Box. The Bayonet, A Journal of Infantry, Vol.2*, 1982, P. 55.

Commando, A Division *Area* of the Nigerian Army formerly commanded by Benjamin Adekunle, alias Black Scorpion (Majaja). Like most of the books under review, Obasanjo starts his argument by providing background information on the political atmosphere prior to the Civil War. Thereafter, he moves on to discuss the Civil War; the change of command by Federal Armed Forces under his exploits which he claims led to the unconditional surrender of the Biafran Armed forces on 15 January, 1970. However, his claim of military expertise undoubtedly incurred the wraths of some of the military officers who felt that their roles in the Civil War had been seriously undermined and neglected in the book. However until recently Godwin Isama Alabi countered most of his claim in the book titled, *Tragedy of Victory* as it will be shown in the subsequent discussion.²⁸ The work of Major Joe Garuba, *Revolution in Nigeria*,²⁹ a counterview to debunk some of the assertions made by Major General Alexander Madiebo's book, *Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran war* which has been examined above. It is an exposition of the role played by ethnic minorities in keeping the country together during the Civil war. To be precise, the author dwells on the numerical superiority of the ethnic minorities in the Nigerian Army and their martial qualities. But he does not say anything on the role played by other ethnic groups who were not Nigerians but fought on the side of the federalist during the Civil war. The author does not however spare Madiebo's assertion that promotion rules in the Army were bent by the Northern politicians to take care of intellectually inferior army officer cadets from their region.

The contribution of the combatant officers to the historiography of Nigeria Civil war

²⁸ O. Obasanjo, *My Command: An Account of the Nigerian Civil war, 1967-1970*, Ibadan: Heinemann Published, 1980, Pp.1-80.

²⁹ J. Garuba, *Revolution in Nigeria: Another View*, Africana, London, 1982, Pp. 8-16.

cannot be dismissed with the wave of the hand. The aforementioned books are samples of the work done by combatant officers on the Nigerian Civil War. They tried to present an account of the events they witnessed between 1966-1970. In their presentation, the writers supplied information that no other persons could have supplied or provided. The officers attempted to throw light on action, omission or commission of persons either close to them, their superiors or subordinates. In the process of doing that, these writers present their own beliefs, ideas, interpretations which were crucial in shaping their own action. For instance, it was the belief of late General Murtala Mohammed as revealed by General Obasanjo that Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu and his rebel forces could be captured in a day, made the General to take the initiative of crossing River Niger in his planned attack on Onitsha. His belief however turned out to be a costly failure.

Similarly, it was the belief of Nigerian five majors as stated earlier on that the First Republic and its national leadership were at the point of collapse as a result of the political turbulence that assailed the nation at that time. Since the army which they belonged to was still the only truly national institution in the country, they decided to step in to save the country from total collapse. Whatever the validity of their beliefs, ideas and interpretations of the events of those tragic years, they succeeded in triggering off not only interest in Nigeria of the Civil War but also responses from those active participants who might not have spoken. The first people to react to the works of these writers were D. J. M. Muffet *Let The Truth Be Told*.³⁰ A. M. Mainasara in the book titled, *The Five Majors: Why They Struck*,³¹ the authors reacted to the narratives of Adewale Ademoyega, Madiebo, Gbulie. In these books, the two authors debunked some of the assertions made

³⁰ D. J. M. Muffet, *Let the Truth Be Told: The Coup De'tat of 1966*, Hudahuda, Zaria, Kaduna, 1982, Pp. 8-10.

³¹ A. M. Mainasara, *The Five Majors: Why They Struck*, Hudahuda: Zaria, 1982, Pp. 1-20.

by the aforementioned authors by making available statements and letters they claimed to have obtained from some of the active participants in the events that led to the war.

Beside the debate triggered off by the works of these combatant officers, is a welcome development to the historiography of Nigerian Civil War. These works have no doubt enriched materials available on the Civil War. They made available documents that historians may have found difficult in laying their hands on. The more materials available the better the chances of historian getting nearer to the truth from these materials.

Chinua Achebe in the novel titled, *There Was A Country* raised his literacy prowess to express in varying degree, the quantum of disappointment experienced by Nigerians due to ethnic cleavages. Nigeria's story and his personal story were told to inspire in future Nigerians the spirit of nationalism, a value to know where we are coming from.³²

The veritable themes in "*There was a Country*" are politics of nationhood, ethnic nationalism and national integration. These can be described as the sum of the causes of Nigeria-Biafra War. There is also the psychological trauma caused by the struggle and sufferings during the war. Furthermore, tradition versus modernity and the influence of colonialism were not left out by Achebe. The conflict between tradition and modernity, as seen in "*There was a Country*" sets the pace for future conflicts that culminated in the Civil War. This struggle still exists in the conception and understanding of ethnic nations and Nigeria's nationhood within Nigeria as a multi-nation State. There had been hardly any discourse on the war that does not expose the psychological malaise suffered during the war as an enduring remnant of the war. The bitterness in an ethnic group deters their conviction of true nationalism in Nigeria since the war. Therefore, these factors could be

³² Chinua Achebe, *There Was A Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, Allen Lane, London, 2012, Pp.1-50.

considered as some of the banes to national integration since the Civil war. They constantly reaffirm our lack of confidence in the Nigerian nation and sympathy for ethno-nationality. All these have served as veritable encumbrances, to Nigerianism and national integration, brewed from the Civil war.

In appraising the views advanced by some reviewers of the book titled, *There Was A Country*, there are indications that the controversy stirred up by Achebe is an endless debate not intended. But there is a course of direction. Achebe's poignant expressions have attracted different reactions, for instance in “*We Remember Differently*”, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie notes:

History and civics, as school subjects, function not merely to teach facts but to transmit more subtle things, like pride and dignity. My Nigerian education taught me much, but left gaping holes. I had not been taught to imagine my pre-colonial past with any accuracy, or pride, or complexity. And so Achebe's work, for me, transcended literature. ...his long-awaited memoir of the Nigerian-Biafra war, is both sad and angry, a book by a writer looking back and mourning Nigeria's failures. I wish *THERE WAS A COUNTRY* had been better edited and more rigorously detailed in its account of the war. But these flaws do not make it any less seminal: an account of the most important event in Nigeria's history by Nigeria's most important storyteller.³³

This implies that if Achebe were ethnocentric in *There Was A Country*, it does not debar the credence of this memoir as one vital contribution to Nigeria's nationhood. Achebe looks back and mourns for a promising nation crippled by the failure of its leadership to integrate the people before and after the Civil war, till date. However, other reviewers like, Kadiri S. calls it “...*Igbo before others fairy tale*” and not a Nigeria tale for Nigerians (Kadiri, 2013). Also, Ishola Omodunni states that, “if There was a country, let them have it.” He presents a mock challenge to the Igbo people to exist in isolation from other Nigerians (Ishola, 2012).

³³ C. N. Adichie, “We Remember Differently,” in “The Reminiscence of Nigerian Civil War and Elite Perception of Nation and Nationalism in Nigeria,” *Historical Research Letter*, Vol. 12, 2014, P.13.

Chimamanda's review displayed ethnicity as the bane of state failure in Nigeria which accounted for one of the factors for the fall of the First Republic. While other reviewers like Kaderi S. and Ishola Omodunni present the danger of secession in any given nation. The issue of secession in the history of Nigerian civil war is most critical since it is considered igniting point of the outbreak of the war.

Whatever the argument, the position of this work is that Achebe may not be far from displaying ethnic jingoism as noted through the work under discussion. But most outstanding is the issue of genocide. Achebe argues that Nigerian Civil War was genocide, certainly not so. To appreciate the argument better what does the word genocide mean? Genocide means total extermination of a particular people or race from the surface of the earth. One may pause to ask, does this definition explain the reality of Nigerian Civil War? Certainly not Nigerian Civil war was fought primarily to retain and maintain one Nigeria of which Biafra is a part. The evidence of the sovereign state of Nigeria was demonstrated in series of negotiation between the Federal Government of Nigeria and the secessionist Biafra to avert the war. Even at the height of the war this continued. There was evidence of refugee camps on the Federal side. Therefore, the issue of economic blockade and starvation was not in any way a suicide mission but a war strategy to compel total and unconditional surrender of Biafra. It must be stated unmistakably that Achebe was looking at Biafra from a monolithic point of view. History has proved this wrong. Biafra is a conglomeration of people of diverse culture which included Efik, Ijaw, Urhobo, Ibibio among others.

Godwin Alabi Isama's book *Captioned Tragedy of Victory*³⁴ serves as his autobiography and a reflection in his war experience especially. Third Marine Commando in Atlantic Theatre under the Command of Benjamin Adekunle, alias Black Scorpion. It is indeed an exposition of the ordeals experienced by the soldiers occasioned by the terrain of the area. The author further discloses the ingenuity to surmount the challenges such as constructing temporary bridges in the mangrove of Calabar and Ogoja, swimming training and the like. The author in no small measure shows the hospitality and cooperation enjoyed by the minority groups of the Cross River State. He argues that the unconditional surrender of Biafra would have been very difficult without the effort of the people. He maintains also that, of all the expeditions, Port Harcourt was the toughest because of its strategic importance to both the Federal troops and Biafra. This is not unconnected with the availability of crude oil.

The strength of the book lies in the fact that it fills some gap in the historiography of Nigeria Civil War. Worthy of mention also is that, the book serves as an antithesis of *My Command* by General Obasanjo. The author describes him as an opportunist in the victory he so attributed to his military prowess. The author also employs pictorial and photographic approaches to put across his message before the readers. This is evident from the fact that nearly all the pages has either photographs or maps justifying the operation of Third Marine Commando. The author also appreciates the role of women in the success of the war. Also, debunks the claim that women were recruited for socials. This implies that the women were recruited for mischievous purposes such as prostitution. Alabi affirmed that the women acted as cooks, carriers, spies among others. No wonder, he lamented their dismissal from Nigerian Army after the Civil war. The

³⁴ A. G. A. Isama, *Tragedy of Victory*, Ibadan: Spectrum Publisher, 2013, Pp. 10-200.

author however, eulogised himself.

One of the interviews of General Yakubu Gowon, the leading actor of the Civil war, is worth discussing because of its significance to the issue at stake. The question goes this way, “whether he thought the war was inevitable,” Gowon had this to say to Pini Jason:

“No, it was the actions of the leaders. When it got up to the stage -whereby the leaders would not agree, then decision had to be taken. There would not have been a civil war had there not been secession if there was no decision to break away from the country, certainly there wouldn't have been any reason to start fighting. The civil war was a result of the east and the leadership of Ojukwu deciding to break away. Now I had a duty and responsibility. I swore allegiance to Nigeria, and Nigeria is composed of all the various parts. And the East was part of Nigeria. But Ojukwu’s leadership because of whatever reason it had, and, of course I know there were strong reasons why he made certain decisions, but I know it is personal ambition more than anything else. Yes, unfortunate events had occurred, and I can assure you, if anyone had any sleepless night, it is because of the sort of things that happened in Nigeria from 1966 up to that time.”³⁵

Suffice it to postulate that the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria owes a duty of not only to maintain the unity of Nigeria but also to preserve its territorial integrity. This General Gowon regarded as an allegiance sworn to Nigerians. To proclaim a part of Nigeria (Eastern Region) as a sovereign state of Biafra by Ojukwu is an affront and a negation of Nigerian sovereignty or nationhood. Therefore, it is evident that the declaration of Sovereign State of Biafra on 30th May 1967 was a last straw that broke the camel’s back. It is admissible that the war would have been averted if the Eastern Region did not secede. However, there is also a possibility that if the Aburi Accord on which Ojukwu stood was respected and implemented by the Federal Government, the inevitability of the war would have been laid to rest.

B. A. T. Balewa’s book titled, *Governing Nigeria: History, Problems and Prospect*

³⁵ General Yakubu Gowon in Conversation with Pini Jason, October 31, 2005 in Achebe’s Note: *There Was A Country*, Allen Lane, London, 2012, P. 219.

focuses on the evolution of political culture and development in Nigeria from colonial era to post independence period. The work is indeed an introduction to a deeper understanding of various trends in the socio-political development of Nigeria since independence. The author argues that, the most important and sinister factor in Nigeria's political development is ethnicity. He therefore, regards ethnicity as a decisive factor in Nigeria politics. Its relevance to the research in progress is that the catastrophes of 1966 cannot be divorced from ethnicity, regionalism and sectarianism which finally culminated into the explosion of Nigerian Civil war.³⁶

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter is anchored on the premise of the background to the study which encompasses conceptual issues such as statement of research problem, aim and objectives of the study, scope and limitations of the study, justification of the study, significance of the study, research methodology, theoretical framework and literature review.

³⁶ B. A. T. Balewa, *Governing Nigeria: History, Problems and Prospects*, Mathous, London, 1996, Pp.1-95.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF IDAH AREA ON THE EVE OF THE COLONIAL CONQUEST

2.0 Introduction

The history of Igala speaking people is a long one. That is to say that the development of institutions such as the state, kingship, kinship, clan organisation and economic occupation and religious beliefs had been a slow process which involved adapting to the environment, borrowing from and lending to neighbours, integrating various groups into a cohesive whole and exploiting the opportunity that presented themselves in the inter-group relations.³⁷ The Igala before the nineteenth century inhabited an entire triangle tract of territory on the banks of the Niger and Benue rivers.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Igala kingdom extended over parts of Yoruba speaking territory, Nupe, Ibirra, Idoma and other groups. In the eighteenth century, more areas were incorporated into the kingdom as a result of expansionism. J. S. Boston argues that although the Igala are deeply involved in the system of contract and common economic, political, and cultural interests engendered by this riverine network. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the kingdom had been considerably reduced in size and population as a result of the activities of the Jihadists, the Bassa Nge, the Bassa Kumo, internal political and economic crises as well as external forces.³⁸ Settlements of the Igala speaking peoples were also located on the right bank of the Niger and below the confluence. Igala territory is now bounded by the River Benue on the North, the Niger to the West, on the South and South-East by the Igbo speaking peoples

³⁷ M. S. Abdulkadir, *Economic History of Igala land, Central Nigeria: 1896-1939*, Ahmadu Bello University Press, Zaria, 2014, P. XI.

³⁸ T. Houdgkin, *Nigerian Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, London, 1975, P. 72.

and to the East by the Idoma.

It is interesting to note that Igala speaking people witnessed series of reorganizations in the Colonial era. At one stage, the Igala area was balkanised between Northern and Southern provinces of Nigeria. At another, between 1900 and 1906, it was as sphere of Northern provinces; Ankpa *Area* in Munshi Province and Idah and Dekina *Areas* in Bassa province. The proclamation of the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1906 further demarcated the Igala speaking territory. Idah Area was placed in Onitsha *Area* in the South whilst Ankpa and Dekina *Areas* became part of Munshi and Bassa Provinces respectively in the North. However, by 1919 there was a re-unification of Igala speaking territory, a development which made her to become part of Munshi Province. In 1926, the whole of the area was transferred to the defunct Kabba Province where it remained throughout the colonial period. Kabba Province embraced the Niger Benue confluence and extended below the confluence for about eighty miles.³⁹ Idah, the headquarters of the Igala was situated on the right bank of the Niger. It lies on the Eastern bank of the Niger linking Lokoja to the North and Onitsha to the South, Nsukka to the East, Agenebode across the River Niger to the West.⁴⁰

2.1 Location

The Igala inhabits an area of transition between the high forest condition of South and dry savannah of the North. The area is almost wooden and particularly at the time of the year when the grasses are burnt up (*ajala*). It presents a picture orchard-like

³⁹ J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom*, Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1968, P. 1. For further reading, see P. O. Okwoli, *The Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala, Alh. Ocheja Obaje, 1956-2006*, P. 1, M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland Central-Nigeria...* P. 1.

⁴⁰ J. N. Ukwedehh, *History of the Igala Kingdom, C1534-1854*, Kaduna : Arewa House, 2003, P. 2.

appearance characterised with unbroken cover of well-group trees.⁴¹ Extending from about latitude 7°43'N, to longitude 6°43'E. The present area of Igala speaking people is about 13, 150 square kilometer with an approximate population of 684880 people according to 1963 Population Census figures. The 1991 Population Census puts the population of Igala at about 900,000. The projected population as at 2006 is about 1½ million.

2.2 Relief

The physical environment of Igala speaking people include uplands, the plains, lowland, the Rivers and the soils. Other important relief features include Udi hills which enters the area from Nsukka Plateau in Igbo community and extend over much of the present Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Egume, Anyigba, Oḍoru, Alloma, Ejule Itobe stands between a range of hills and the plain of Idah.⁴² The Plateau serves as a watershed and the numerous rivers and streams contributed to agricultural productivity, transportation and fishing. There are about 164 streams in Igala speaking area. The River Niger and Benue and to some extent the Anambra river serve as natural highways for communication and commerce. Some of the rivers which follow through Idah, Ibaji Bassa Nge and Bassa Komu and which over flow annually give rise to the alluvial soil necessary for the cultivation of rice.⁴³

2.3 Drainage

The three most important rivers that influence the ecology and the pace of historical development in *Ane-Igala* and the other groups in the lower Niger are the Niger, the Benue, and the Anambra. Based on geological and hydrological studies of the

⁴¹ F. F. W. "Byng-Hall, Note on the *Akpoto* and Igala Tribes", *Journal of the African Society*, Vol. VII, No. XXVI January, 1918, P. 166.

⁴² J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom...*

⁴³ K. M. Buchanan and J. C. Pugh, *Land and People in Nigeria*, London, 1962, P. 16.

two most important Nigerian waterways, it has been suggested that the Niger and Benue troughs belong to the upper and lower cretaceous age respectively.⁴⁴ The significance of the age of the Niger and Benue to the early history of the region is that their formation clearly antedates the period of the later Stone Age when archaeological studies in the region begin to show evidence of the existence and activities of men. As one of the essential needs of man, it is quite likely, that the earliest human settlement in the area must have been influenced by the earliest existence of these rivers, where man could eke out his sustenance with relative ease by tapping the resources of the rivers and tributaries.⁴⁵

Apart from the Anambra which belongs to the same geological period, other important tributaries of the Niger and Benue which trasverse and water Ane-Igala include Ofu, Okura, Omala, Imoa, Ubele, and Inachalo.⁴⁶ Several other rivers and streams exist in different localities. In the Ibaji area of Idah plains, many bodies of water exist such as Ebocho Odoma, Akanyo, Adi-Uru, Atakpa and Itike. The significance of these rivers in the history and culture of Ane-Igala cannot be over emphasized. The rivers Niger and Benue are two most important rivers that have impacted man and his culture, Ane-Igala since the beginning of human societies in the region. They satisfied one of the basic needs of man.

Another very important historical phenomenon which is as old as the rivers themselves is that the Niger and Benue served as melting point of interaction which encompasses movement of diverse people, ideas, trade, and culture between the people of

⁴⁴ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D with Special Reference to the Rise of the Attah Kingship", (Unpublised Ph.D Thesis), Departemnt of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1987, P.22.

⁴⁵ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D...", it should be noted that thre are other streams in Ibaji. These are as follows: Ojila, Iyachu, Irukeh and Arah.

⁴⁶ Ade Obayemi, "History, Culture, and Group Identity: The Case of the North-East or 'Okun' Yoruba," Paper Presented to Department of History Seminar held at Kaduna, Arewa House, November, 1976.

Ane-Igala and other areas of the lower Niger and beyond into the Niger-Delta in the South. Others include the Edo speaking peoples of the right bank of the Niger, Ibirra, the North East Yoruba speaking groups, otherwise referred to as Okun Yoruba among others. The relevance of these rivers to the history of Ane-Igala can also be seen in the way they have affected settlement patterns, occupation and world view. The earliest settlements were located within the vicinity of rivers, lakes, and streams.⁴⁷ Probably to avail incipient societies the opportunity to tap the ready resources as therein. Fishing developed in areas dominated by rivers and other bodies of water, farming of some crops, for example, yam and rice are important in the flood plains because of the availability of silt and alluvium carried to the area by the rivers as they overflow their banks.⁴⁸

The impact of the rivers and the other bodies of water on Ane-Igala worldview is observable in the socio-political organisation of the people which shows that the role of the *Onu-Aji (waterking or king of the water)*, *Ebo-Oni (water spirit/god)* in the society stand out very conspicuously. For example, in Okura district of Ane-Igala, the Onu Aji (*king of water*) from the Adumu clan is the chief priest of the god of Adale river, the main source of water supply for Egume. It is worshipped to ward off war, small pox and death. Water deities also abound in the plain of Idah. The Oma'Odoko shrine centres on river Inachalo, the Idokoliko centres in Ocheche and Olife centres on the Niger are good examples of water deities worshipped for the purpose of peace and order in Idah and its environs. The worship of the streams of Odoma, Ihiake, Atakpa, Ikpako, Okpe, Ebocho and Abara (a branch of Anambra passing through Odeke) are some examples of similar

⁴⁷ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,P.11.

⁴⁸J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"..., P. 27.

practices in Ibaji District South of Idah.⁴⁹ The exact date is yet to be ascertained but what deriveable is that they are pieces of ancient antiquity. However, what should be stressed here is that, the worship of any natural environmental phenomenon in any society is largely due to its presence in the area and also the significance given to it overtime.⁵⁰

2.4 Climate

Basically speaking, Igalaland, *Ane-Igala* has two main seasons which Ukwedeh identifies as *Uwo* (dry season) and *Qloji* (wet season) respectively. The former spans the period of October to march, while the latter spans April to September. The rains which start from March are heaviest in July and August and with annual average of about 1270 millimeters. From the finding of this research, the heaviest rains start from September to October. This however, does not disprove the annual average rainfall.

Afu'Qwe (harmattan) which ushers in the *Uwo* (dry season) proper lasts between November and January. The very dry atmosphere during the period of *Afu'Qwe* causes the trees to shed leaves while some grasses become completely dry⁵¹. The topography of the Igala speaking area has exerted greater influence on its climate. Although harmattan *Afu'Qwe* affects most of the area, or generally during November to January, its intensity and severity is much more in the Plateau region than on the plain, humidity on the plains remits higher than on the Plateau. It is a characteristic humid plains to emits hot air to the atmosphere while the Plateau is often dry producing cooler and sometimes air.⁵² This ecological disparity points to the fact that human activities and history in a terrain can be influenced by the dictate of the two seasons. Worthy of note, farmlands are prepared

⁴⁹ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,P. 33.

⁵⁰ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,

⁵¹J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,P. 13.

⁵² J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,P. 13

during the *Uwo* (dry season). The period is characterized by large scale hunting expeditions by different communities. As a mark of its importance, hunting festival such as *Ocho* festival was celebrate towards end of the dry season. It should be noted that the festival does not bring the hunting to an end; be it important occupation, it continues throughout the year. Another important attribute of *Uwo* (dry season) are the frequent conflagrations (bush burning) resulting from the activities of the farmers and hunters. The incidence of this has affected the vegetation of the greater part of Igala enclave resulting in the development of secondary forest and grassland. The implication of this is that the original rain forest of the region has become non-existent or extincted. However, with some exceptions, some sections along Rivers Anambra Ofu and Okura partly due to bush fires.⁵³

The *Oloji* (wet or rainy season) is the period of planting most of the crops, such as rice, maize, and millet. The planting of yam however, comes earlier, between December and March, before the rains set in properly. But most of the planting of food crops does not exceed June, except in the Plateau areas, where some crops are planted twice in a year. In the flood plains, biannual cropping is impossible owing to the fact that the Niger and Benue overflow their banks between August and September. It is interesting to note that this makes people to turn to rainy season fishing and group hunting (*Okpa*) during the flood season. Given this state of affairs, fishing became dominant occupation of the period through exploitation of the three main rives and their numerous tributaries and

⁵³A drink known as *ote-abichi* is tapped from fallen palm tree while *Ote-ekpe-ale* is obtained from a standing one. Both of these were sometimes further processed and distilled into a highly concentrated type of gin called *akpakala*, *Ogogororo* served on important occasions such as burials, festivals, or the worship of certain fetishes.

streams than span the length and breath of Ane-Igala.⁵⁴

2.5 Vegetation

Florally, Igala speaking enclave is characterised by deciduous forest interspersed with Savannah woodland and tall grasses, merging into the guinea Savannah belt northwards. The available evidence has shown that some of the trees of the area are of rain forest origin. In a narrow rain forest belts, the typical trees include some of the mangroves (*rhizophora race mosa*), the raffic palm (*raphia vinifera*) and the oil palm (*elacis guinesis*). The important of mangrove to mankind cannot be overemphasized. The mangrove is important for building canoes, the chief means of transportation on the Niger and Benue and navigable tributaries. Raphia palm served the early communities as source of alcoholic stimulation known as *Qte-ofollo*, tapped from the mature-raphia trees, its branches are used as rafters of the roof of houses while the fronds served as the thatches for houses. They young and tender part of the frond is processed for Iko, an important trappings of the local masquerades. Oil palm is also an important flora of the area. Owing to its nutritional value, the early settlements in our area of study clustered in the vicinity of oil palm trees. This also indicates evidence of abandoned settlements. It is also useful in roofing houses and rope-making and source of alcohol of different grades.⁵⁵

Other trees served as indicators of former settlement. These include, silk cotton tree – *agwu/agwugwu ceiba pentandra/eriodendrron anfractuosum*), baobab, *obobo* (*adansonia digitata*), *utie/ehia* (*chruysophylum albidum*), coconut-palm unoba (*cocos nuaifera*), date palm *odo borasus acthiopum*), *Ugba* (*parkia clappertoniana*), *oro aikpele*

⁵⁴ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,Pp. 14-15.

⁵⁵ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"...,Pp. 15-16.

irvingia gabonensis), and *Ukpele/Okpiye* (torosopis Africana).⁵⁶

Some of these trees bear fruits that serve as ready food. Examples of such are *Unoba*, *Ugba*, *Oro* among others. It should be noted at this junction that some of the fruits from the major ingredients for the preparation of certain delicacies. They are as follows; Anwa (*afzelia Africana*, aigele (*dialium guineense*) *Ichikala spondias mombin*), and the ejiji (*vitex doniana*) also bear edible fruits.

Apart from its importance for nutritional value, silk cotton tree, baobab, the iroko, and the palm are reputed as abode of spirits whose activities could have good or bad effects. It is not uncommon to see a settlement interspersed with baobab trees because of the belief that they would provide protection from spirits inhabiting the place. The feet of the ogilichi tree or, the unya, are the two most popular locations of earth god shrines among the Igala speaking territory. The baobab tree is believed to have the capacity for absorbing and neutralising the effects of thunderbolt, and thus preventing everything within its locality. This cosmology made it one of the most respected and protected trees in Igala geo-political zone, leading a situation in which people either consciously site their settlement in its vicinity or plant it in their compounds to avail themselves of its protection, most of these trees also served medicinal values especially antidote for food poison, witchcraft and others.⁵⁷

2.6 Soils

Five types of soils are distinguishable in *Ane-Igala*, such soils include, *Ane-elanyi* (sandy soil), *Ane-aruwa* (alluvial soil), *ane'eyele*, (loamy soil), *ane-okuta* (granite soil),

⁵⁶ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D"..., P. 11.

⁵⁷ NAK/LOKOPROF 67 1920, "Assessment Report on Ibaji" by J. N. Brooke.

ane-ama (clay soil).⁵⁸

The *Ane-elanyi* (sandy soil) is found at the bank of the Niger and Benue covering a narrow strip of land from Agumagu to Amagede. It is so poor that it cannot support any crop. Because of its unsuitability for agriculture, it is only fishermen who occupy the area with their temporary huts which are easily disbanded depending on the dictate of the rivers. The *ane-aruruwa* is the alluvial soil brought to the farms in the flood plains particularly suitable for yam. The area covered by the *ane-aruruwa* (alluvium) is largest in Ibaji area, the Southern part of Idah plains. This factor is responsible for the fact that Ibaji District still remains the most important area of yam production in Ane-Igala, realising an estimated annual revenue of £66666 from the sale of yam alone by 1920.⁵⁹

Ane-eyele, (loamy soil) is a feature of relatively poor areas where the soil contains more sand than clay. The only crops that do well here are legumes such as; cow-pea, pigeon peas and soya beans. Sorghum, maize and millet are also grown in the area covered by this type of soil. The granitic soil supports some yams and grain crops on the Plateau and piedmont. The clay soil is common in the region of the flood plains and along the valleys of the different tributaries of the Niger and Benue; and the streams and lakes which are bound in Ibaji. It retains a lot of water and this makes it the best soil for a specie of rice locally known as *Igbale-Ibaji*, or *Igbale-Ogbala*. This is said to have been domesticated from wild variety called *Igbale-omi-swap* rice, growing wild in swampy areas all over the Ibaji area.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D...", P. 12.

⁵⁹ These categories of members could not assume the office of Onu-Anę, the earthpriest of the settlement.

⁶⁰ P. C. Dike, "Symbolism and Political Authority in the Igala Kingdom", (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis), Department of History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 1977, P. 8.

2.7 Settlement Patterns of the Igala

The earliest and the smallest unit of settlement in the Igala area was the *Unyi*-the homestead. The *Unyi* comprised the husband, his wives, children and those entrusted to him by his relatives and friends, and his unmarried brothers, sisters or other relations.⁶¹ The *efunyi*, or the *ofigbeli*, the patrilineage, was a larger unit of settlement, consisting two or several homesteads under their *onofe-unyi*, (the family heads). In the patrilineage, the oldest one of the family heads that founded the settlement would assume the leadership role. These are referred to as primary settlements. Membership was strictly based on agnatic kinship ties. *Am'om'onobule*, uterines, the *amana*, the in-laws, the *amadu*-the domestic slaves, were also assimilated on the understanding that they accepted their social and political limitations in certain crucial matters.⁶² The next stage of the evolution of settlements was when the patrilineages co-exist or live together to constitute an *olopu*, a clan. The importance of clan in Igala society cannot be overstressed. This, P. C. Dike notes but, his argument that clanship constituted the Igala's basic social identity. It raises issues or problems.⁶³ The history of settlements in Igala speaking area, both on the eve of the colonial conquest and after the development of the centralised state system under the Attah has demonstrated that what gives the Igala man his basic social identity is the homestead. Therefore, you cannot be an Igala man or citizen if you cannot be identified with any homestead. Moreso, the patrilineage and clan are elongations of the homestead, and identification at those levels is more fluid than it would at the homestead level. Given fluidity of identification, the claim of P. C. Dike cannot be substantiated. This became more explicit in J. S. Boston's definition of an Igala clan A clan is typically a

⁶¹ J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom...* P. 102.

⁶² J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D...", P. 27.

⁶³ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala to C. 1830 A.D...", P. 27-28.

federation of lineages that takes a common title in rotation and explains its unity by the hypothesis of common ancestry.⁶⁴

The importance attached to the homestead as the primary level of settlement in Igala territory is evidenced in the fact that the very important office of the *onu-ane*, the earth priest, which still remains the prerogative of the oldest member of the unit that traces his ancestry through the direct line of the original founders of the homestead. The fourth stage in the evolution of settlements in the area, before the rise of the Attah, is the *ewo*, the large settlement. It is said that the process started beyond the end of millennium A.D.⁶⁵ The pattern of settlements was characterised by dispersed settlements. These dispersed, self-sufficient, small scale, settlements that subsisted on the exploitation of the resources of the immediate environment were also known as *Od'oko*. The fusion of these *od'oko* settlements gave rise to *ewo*. This process is dependent on several factors. Most outstanding of these factors were the increasing heterogeneity in the settlements, as more and more migrants arrived, and the fact that convergence of the different groups gave rise to clashes of interests which could not be handled by the homestead heads in their dispersed settlements. Another important factor is that the simple organisational structures of the dispersed settlements were inadequate for their defence, and the strength that would result from fusion into bigger settlements was seen as a good solution. The control of the resources derived from the land also favoured the rise of large settlements. These were regarded as directly dependent on the goodwill of the *Anę*, the spirit of the land. It is interesting to note that frictions developed between the later settlers and members of the land owing homestead, who represent the symbol of the earliest settlers.

⁶⁴ NAK, SNP17, "Notes on the Igala, Idoma and *Akpoto* and their customs and History" by K. Officer.

⁶⁵ A. Obayemi, in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heinmann, Ibadan, 1980. P.145.

Thus, the land owning homestead, whose leader was the earth priest, controlled all the activities that were connected with the land. This as a matter of fact is purely economic control. This was not unconnected with the worldview of the people during the early period who regarded land as the father and mother of human existence.⁶⁶

The proliferation of the office of the earth priest during *Od'oko* stage of Igala settlements, and the fact that the land and its exploitation formed the only means of livelihood, meant that anything that tilted the uneasy balance between the land owners and the latter settlers had serious consequences. The fusions of more and more people in the dispersed settlements widen their horizon beyond their immediate environment. This resulted to emergence of large settlements which may be out of the continuous expansion of the settlement or through migration into a region of economic importance. Another important disparity between the large settlement, the *ewo*, and the three earlier stages of settlements, is that the *ewo* had an urban status, as distinct from the rural character of the *Od'oko* settlements. Unlike *Od'oko* settlements, the *ewo* had a much more elaborate socio-political system based on the *onu-ewo*, the chief of the *ewo*, and the *Onu-ane*, the earth priest. Also noted, *ewo* had a defined market place where regular commercial transactions took place.⁶⁷

2.8 A Brief History of Igala Area

On the basis of the available sources on the study of Igala, Idoma, and Ibirra history, it is possible to argue that the *Apofo* represents the proto-culture of the region. It is likely that even though the word *Akpo* has now fallen into disfavour among these three

⁶⁶ S. A. Crowther, *Journal of Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers*, Undertaken by Macgregor Laird in Connection with the British Government in 1854, London, 1970, P. 174.

⁶⁷ Miles Clifford, "A Nigerian Chiefdoms" Some notes on the Igala Tribe and their "Divine King" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 66 1936, Pp. 395-397.

language groups (Igala, Idoma, Ibira), the most probable deduction at this stage of the knowledge of the people in the region is that each of them might have had some connections with these early inhabitants called *Apoto* at some time in history. For example, refers to the confusion created by the diversity in the nomenclature and in the orthography of the names as they exist in the written records of the century and early colonial phase. Ade Obayemi has argued that the name *Akpoto* or *Okpoto* used in these earlier texts to mean Idoma and Igala has fallen into disfavour. *Akpoto* is a word meaning a combination of Idoma, Igala and Ibira.⁶⁸

The evidence for the reconstruction of this aspect of the study is gleaned from the relevant section of the nineteenth century travelers' reports, colonial linguistic and oral sources. In 1854, Samuel Corwther after his expedition through greater part of our region during which he interviewed some leading political and religious functionaries' reports:

From Idda to the confluence, all the land on the left side of the river, and from the confluence to this place (Mitshi country) is called *Apoto* land, and bears the same name at Igara. The Ibira, Bassa, Agatu (a tribe to Idoma) and the mitshis, who are found in the immediate vicinity of the South side Tshadda either as refugees or settlers; and are not original proprietors of that part of the country, as themselves confess. Even the Attah himself appears to be a settler or colonist in the *Akpoto* land.⁶⁹

A possible conclusion from the discussion on *Apoto* and its role among the

⁶⁸ W. B. Baikie *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage up the Rivers Kwara and Benue, Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda in 1854*, London 1966 P. 86. The word *Akpoto*, which apart from being the original name for the whole of the region that is now divided into Igala and Idoma Divisions, is also the name of a District of Eastern Igala and the word which the central Idoma apply to themselves and their language." Robert G. Armstrong, *Language in "Western Africa: Ethnographic Survey of Africa: Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence."* Great Britain: Lowe and Brydone (Printers) Limited, London. P.91.

⁶⁹ D. Forde (ed) *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London, 1970, Pp. 91-92.

peopling of the Igala area is that it represents evidence of the existence of early interrelationship of human centres along the Niger within the vicinity of Idah in particular and the whole of Niger-Benue confluence in general. These interrelationships could have led to some modifications of the original linguistic configuration giving rise to the present linguistic differences as represented by Igala, Idoma, Ibirra among other parts of the region.⁷⁰

Tradition collected from amongst the Igbirra of Toto in the area of the former Opanda state indicate that at the level of linguistic terminology the word Akpo got its source from *Apito* meaning that he/she is speaking in the original tongue or revealing the old secrets. This implies that the original language can only be gotten from Akpoto and since it has become outmoded any vestiges of it that might be noted suffer serious ridicule from the speakers of the currently more virile and versatile Igala favoured in Idah and its environs and are the people simply regarded as the Igala speaking *Apoṭo* version, showing lack of civilisation. A critical examination of this view would display systematic relegation of all aspects of life related to the so called ‘uncivilised’ ancient *Apoṭo* as a device to erase all traces of the pre-Attah kingship period of Igala history, living people with the perverted view that Igala history for all times is synonymous with the history of the advent of the centralised state system among the people.

The major themes in the evolution of the Igala state are preserved in legends

⁷⁰ E. O. Erim “Yala Migration and Settlement”, MA Dissertation, University of Ibadan, June 1974, P.49. For emphasis we cited the relevant sentence thus, “All this goes to suggest the fact at some point in the history of the people of the Benue plain, the areas around Idah must have been inhabited by a people called Akpoṭo. Also, W.B. Baikie made useful remarks about the states of the *Akpoto* in the people of Igala area. According to him, “what is now known as Igala was formally all *Akpoto*.” The position of R.G. Armstrong about a century later is not in any way significantly different from those of his predecessors because he is of the view that Akpoṭo, which apart from being the original name for the whole of the region that is now divided into Igala and Idoma Division is also the name of a district of Eastern Igala. Emphasizing the point further, he opines that “..... at the earliest period of which any linking this region (Igala and Idoma) was known as *Akpoto* and its people likewise.”

surrounding personalities. The legends appear to permit arrangement of the events they describe in a progressive order. First is that dealing with the transfer of sovereignty from aboriginal population – *Akpoto* of some accounts to a foreigner, usually identified as *Abutu'Eje*, at times identified as a child reared by a leopard (*Eje*), as a prince from Ado (Benin), or Apa (Wukari Jukun) or Yoruba territory, or Agenapoje from heaven.⁷¹ The next phase thus expressed in myth is the emergence of Achadu, a foreigner from the Igbo whose personal qualities led to his marriage to the female Attah, the leader of the traditional kingmakers – *Igalamela*. Idoko, Ayegba's father is the representative of the period when the Igala rejected tribute paying status, defeated Jukun expedition and established the machinery of the traditional government which has survived until recent times.⁷²

From this proto-dynastic framework extending over several centuries, we can reconstruct early history of this state, which holds key to the histories of multi-lingual polities in the Niger-Benue confluence area. Boston has discussed the sources from which the kingship of the Igala might have derived or would have been influenced.⁷³ Behind the datable and well researched 'documents' of the Benin impact or the much more obscure but perhaps more recent and better recalled Jukun overrule, there is the evidence of a still older cultural connection with the Yoruba speaking peoples.⁷⁴ One convenient platform for the discussion of the relationship of the Igala with Yoruba speaking people is provided by the statement inspired chiefly by linguistic comparison that:

⁷¹ D. Forde, (ed) *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, 1955, P. 80 .

⁷² A. Obayemi in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, p.150.

⁷³ A. Obayemi in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, P. 12.

⁷⁴ J. S. Boston, "Notes on the Origin of Igala Kingship", *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 2, No.1 1962, Pp. 373-383.

The most definite statement that can be made about the Igala is that they had common origin with the Yoruba and that the separation took place long enough ago to allow for their fairly considerable linguistic differences.⁷⁵

This is elaborated further by Lexica statistical returns of a “separation time of 2,000 years between Igala and Yoruba.”⁷⁶ The Igala and Yoruba are today territorially separated. The closest groups of Yoruba speaking peoples to Igala are Oworo, the Abinu (Bunu), Ikiri, Owe and Ijumu, all located inland on the right bank of the Niger above and below the confluence. The Yoruba speaking people especially the Ikiri, Abinu, Oworo, Ijumu, and Owe and East Yagba are in geographical proximity to Igala and also preserve living culture traits and orally transmitted traditions which vividly demonstrate closer ties or affinities which, though of imprecise antiquity, are definitely more recent than that suggested from an Oyo based linguistic comparison.⁷⁷ It has also been argued that the territories of the Igala and the Yoruba speaking people had once been contiguous.⁷⁸ Surviving features of such a period include the existence of settlement of Igala speaking peoples on the right bank of the Niger, such as Ajaokuta and Geregu. The ultimate event of the area actually inhabited by the Igala on the West bank prior to the coming of the Ibirra and Bassa Nge is open to conjecture but a community like the Igala isolated village of Ebu near Asaba presents an interesting case.⁷⁹

A few centuries ago, the settlement of Igala and Yoruba speaking population were contiguous, the similarities between the Yoruba and Igala kingdom on issues like succession as enumerated by Boston became more plausible. Although the North-East

⁷⁵ E. M. Fresco, *Two dialects of Igala and Yoruba: Some Comparisons*, Insitutte of African Studies, Ibadan, 1968, Pp. 32-36 on the isolation of Ebu dialects from the main Igala community.

⁷⁶ A. Obayemi in *Groundwork of Nigerian History...*, p.155.

⁷⁷ J. U. Egharevba, *A Short History of Benin...*, P. 28.

⁷⁸ J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdon...*, Pp. 378-388.

⁷⁹ T Boston, *The Igala Kingdon...*The titles of Agaidoko, Abokko onukwu Ata and Omogbaje were traditionally associated with the supervision of traffic on the Niger, P. 109.

Yoruba states or stateless societies differ from both the Igala and Yoruba kingdoms in the sense that they are not 'kingdoms', the political organization around which their society revolves offers us a firsthand observation of a stage in Yoruba Igala state formation. Each state, (there are more than thirty among these groups) is headed by individual who had risen to the ranks of the highest grades to titles prefixed either Oba (Obaro, Obadofin, Obajemu etc) or Olu or Ele (Olu, Eleta, Oludoyin, Alaere among others). Some of which are hereditary within lineages. The holders controlled lineages with distinct territorial definition. Even where there is an *Olu* (chief or king) holding one of these titles, the other title holders *Oroota* and *Ol'oolu* exercise together with him what is best described as "collective headship of state". The state composition of *Or'oota* vary but the more stable ones in each of these 'states' is divided. Where each category is centrally graded in order of seniority, rotational exercise of sovereignty was ensured by promotion as at *Ufe* (Iffe). One interesting aspect of the history of these societies is that the traditions of origin for the people are the same as that of the rulers, there are no royal families. The supreme qualification for political leadership is that one is an indigene, descended from autochthonous elements. Slaves and other foreigners were not allowed another category of titles of which in some places, the *Eleso* (elesho) was at the apex. Where individual titles were hereditary within lineages, as at Ife-Olukotun, each title had specific functions, however, the general similarity of these titles with those of the Uzama of Benin on the one hand and general relationship of the Uzama and Oyomesi with similar institutions in Yoruba speaking territory on the other have been pointed out.⁸⁰ It has

⁸⁰ A. Obayemi, "States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area", in Obaro Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History...*, Pp144-145.

been suggested that they refer to a pre-dynastic phase of political development.⁸¹ Such too appears to have been the status of Igalamela in history. Like the six, seven or nine *or'oota* of the Yoruba speaking groups in Kabba and Kogi *Areas* described above, they indicate group which exercises collective authority. The system in which there are kings without royal families, in which there were governments over which an Oba or Attah might be imposed or allowed to rule over, as have survived among the Abinu, Owe, Ijumu, Ikiri, Oworo and Yagba represents the pre-dynastic antecedents of which the Uzama, the Oyomesi, the Igalamela and similar institution are survivors.

For the Igala, the conclusion from the above is that a political system might have evolved or emerged in which the supreme authority rested with the Igalamela each of whom like the Uzama, the Oyomesi, Nihinron, Or'oota chiefs of the North-East Yoruba, had territories to administer. The instrumentality of the Igalamela in the evolution of Igala state is that they had formed a government with a defined territory located in this case in Idah area. Later a foreigner was received under what circumstances is still obscure, and rule over Igalamela. The personality involved could have been the one represented in legend as having descended from heaven, or the anonymous Igala chief who is said to have crossed the Niger from the West bank. With the area as a 'core', the adjacent territory of the '*Apoto*' was incorporated under the over-rule of the Attah like Ayegba and his successors to form mega state, namely the Igala kingdom as today understood. The crux of the matter is that Igala state might indeed have become a kingdom contemporaneously with the Edo and Yoruba kingdoms, but whenever it matures, it had become strong enough to have engaged the attention of Benin and to have

⁸¹ A. Obayemi in *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Pp.155-156.

threatened the very existence of the latter in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁸²

In spite of the fact that the above reconstruction offers a solution to the emergence of Igala kingdom, there are other puzzles on which the scheme is silent. The exact status of Amagedde on the Benue as a religious and or political centre in the history of Igala is not fixed. Every new Attah in the third year of his reign sends an official to Olutubatu, a grove near Amagedde to offer sacrifices on his behalf. Clifford reports further that:

It is believed by many that this shrine marks the burial place of the pre-dynastic Attas. Moreover, it is generally accepted that Ayegba's father died in the vicinity of Amagedde and that his body was brought down via the Benue and Niger to Idah, while there is the further very significant fact that during funeral ritual before the Atta is committed to his final rest – the Atebo (Head priest) spends a period of seclusion in the royal graveyard at Ajaina, taking with a staff or *Okute* known as *Otubatu*, which may reasonably be supposed to represent the spirits of the ancestors whose remains are buried in the grove of this name at Amagedde.⁸³

It can therefore be summed that the first or early 'centre' of the Igala kingdom was at Amagedde, some 150 miles above Idah on the Benue. However, the character of this capital and its dating will have to await archeological investigation. The change of capital from Amagedde to Idah, both of which are riverine settlements probably reflects a constitutional revolution marked either by change of dynasty or destruction of the earlier capital, or fusion of two systems hitherto centred on Amagedde and Idah. Perhaps the Alago kingdoms of Doma were established or began to pay tribute to Attah when the capital was at Amagedde on the Benue. Perhaps too, as a result of military confrontation with Benin, an Edo derived dynasty was indeed installed as the convergence in Igala and Benin sources suggest.⁸⁴

⁸² A. Obayemi, "States and Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence Area", in Obaro Ikime, *Groundwork of Nigerian History...*, Pp.144-145.

⁸³ J. S. Boston, *The Igala Kingdom...*, Pp. 378-383.

⁸⁴ For a discussion on the class system in Igala, see, "The Rise and Fall of the Igala State", in *Nigerian Magazine*, No. 80, March, 1964, P. 17.

It is also certain that things were not started from the scratch but there was a precedent to be derived from the memory of the Amagedde kings. The riverine orientation of the kingdom was no doubt a part of the scheme of things and the extension of Attah's authority would no doubt have been partly dependent upon mobility on the river.⁸⁵

2.9 The Social Organisation of the Igala

The Igala comprised several groups whose social organization and value systems were generally similar. Unlike the majority of Igbo society, the Igala recognized one paramount ruler or king (*Attah*) meaning father, as political and spiritual leader. This in no small measure acted as one of the unifying factors. The Igala people have a common language and political concept. Their language, Igala, has several dialects, yet few essential differences between them and communication is therefore not impaired.⁸⁶In lowlying areas annual flooding had restricted settlements to a few higher ridges thus making for a number of compact, large and paramount villages. The hamlet, referred to as *Od'oko* in Igala language was a self-contained community made up mainly by kinsmen related to one another either by birth or marriage. The dominant group that controls the socio-economic was agnatic kinsmen descended from the founder or related to him patrilineally. For economic reasons, most hamlet fused loosely into a villages *ewo*, members of which obtained land through the village head, *Onu-Ewo*. The right to apportion land was delegated to the head of senior hamlets and by the clan which held sovereign rights overland. The hamlets as a matter of Obligation accepted the village supremacy and control of village over natural and man made resources, such as water,

⁸⁵ Crowther and Taylor, in M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*, P. 224.

⁸⁶ M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*, P. 55.

paths farmlands, markets and woodlands. The dominant occupations of the hamlet setting were farming, fishing weaving, dyeing, smithing, trading, palm oil producing and iron working.⁸⁷

Another significant long standing feature of the social organisation was age group systems, *amaje'ego*. The qualification for initiation and upward mobility in this system was based on age bracket and it cut across the various images. The age group provided the farming community with cooperative labour for farm and communal services. It also acted as a credit association *Oja*, enabling members to overcome sudden large financial obligations such as marriages, naming and death ceremonies. Fishing and hunting were not left out of their activities. Consanguineous relationship was traced through both paternal and maternal lines as general determinants of village connections. The paternal line determined the family structure, the household and the settlement patterns. The male members of a lineage and the land on which they settled belong to the entire lineage with elders having jurisdiction over it. Values and norms were transferred to younger ones by the eldest members of the lineage who were the primary agent of socialisation. The clan system is very significant in Igala historiography that is to contend that "clanship gives the Igala basic social identity. An Igala clan is a genealogically defined patrilineal group of persons of both sexes claiming descent from a common ancestor. The royal clans were the largest with a membership of over 50,000 persons and most complex of all clans and general, the larger a clan the greeter its importance and power. The issue of clan, *Olopu* should not be accepted in its face value because it is contentious and fluid among scholars of Igala history. For instance, Ukwedeh argues that it is the homestead that gives Igala man his basic social identity. Therefore you cannot be an Igala citizen if you cannot

⁸⁷ M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*,P. 174.

be identified with any homestead. Moreover, the patrilineage and the clan are mere elaborations of the homestead.

2.10 Igala Economy

The pre-colonial Igala area witnessed considerable growth in agricultural and craft production and trade. These and other economic activities provided the wealth of the society, individual and state. The linkage of different system of production, agriculture, craft and trade, helped in making the entire economy flexible, adaptive and responsive to change. Production and other linkages led to considerable inter-regional interdependence leading to specialisation and a system which could deal with outsiders and benefit materially and technologically. The standards of agriculture and craftsmanship among the Igala were sufficiently high that they won praise from the Europeans who saw their works. Trotter seemed to think that the standard was better than what he saw down the river Niger, and certainly it must have been better than in some smaller societies troubled by the slave trade with little integration or interdependence.

Crowther and Taylor confirmed the statement as follow:

It must be admitted from what we saw that the Eggarah (Igala) are industrious and evidently more advanced in civilisation than their neighbours lower the river. Their grounds are much better cultivated, manufacture more encouraged and social comfort increasing.⁸⁸

In the nineteenth century, the ruling class exercised a measure of control over production and trade as well as the political system. This is known as state control. State control implied a society which was highly stratified with small elite, who with their associates controlled some of the facets of the economy and directed them so that they reap the most substantial benefits. Control was manifested by giving certain clan heads like Abboko, Agaidoko, Omogbaje and sometime individuals like Onupia Ohimeme and

⁸⁸ M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*,P.175

Akubo and families such as Abutu Eje, control over certain aspects of transport or particular kinds of produce. Local officials policed the highways and controlled specific markets. There were also religious sanctions and political control in terms of the fertility of the land, appointment of state officials and confirmation of appointment.⁸⁹

Agricultural commodities in pre-colonial Igala territory were produced from the raw state to the manufactured stage for the use of the people and for export to neighbouring distant lands in exchanging for other goods. The engagement of the Igala in agriculture and production was not only to produce surplus but also engaged partly for a 'deficit' Thus it was an attempt to get ride of something, but an attempt to acquire things the Igala did not produce or those other produced more cheaply and sufficiently. Output targets were not geared merely to satisfy local consumption. But also for trade which was regular and widespread. While agriculture was the main activity, trade distributed the products of agriculture and manufacture. The Pre-colonial Igala economy was thus not subsistence but of great antiquity.⁹⁰

Commercial activities and production in the area failed to produce a capitalist type of organisation not just because of low technology, but also because incentives and controls as well as limited urban centres and wealth and transport and constant redistribution. Part of the investment capital other than the one necessary for marketing and production went to non productive purposes and was appropriated by the state. The costs of transport were considerable and substantial. However, the Igala were able to develop and enhance their agricultural, productive and trading process within the society

⁸⁹ M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*,P. 176.

⁹⁰M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*,P.175.

and the economy of which they were apart.⁹¹

By the second half of the century changes were taking place in the Niger trade. The Jihadists, the Basaa Nge, the Bassa Kumo and even state officials and Europeans created challenges and changes. But in spite of those changes, the state clung to traditional economic prerogatives and policies, seeking to enforce the old control over the economy.⁹² As one would expect, colonial conquest witnessed mass killing, looting and the burning down of homesteads, farms, and villages. The conquest laid the foundation which later facilitated the direct integration of the rural economy into a wider and larger economy and as well into the international orientation that gave benefits to the British and the expatriates.⁹³

On the whole, the lives of the rural producers throughout the period covered had never been easy. In the precolonial period, their surpluses were appropriated by the state and ruling class and their associates. The conquest, political and economic chaos it had generated disastrous consequences on production and trade. This left the rural population more vulnerable to a series of disasters as witnessed by drought, famine, and crop failure leading to higher destitution. Yet despite these hardships, the people continued to provide for themselves as well as the surplus which was again appropriated by the colonial state and traditional rulers while the state did very little to alleviate the suffering of the people. The desperate and precarious position of the majority of the population deteriorated even more with the onset of the Worldwide Great Economic Depression of the 1930s. During these years, food and export prices fell drastically while production increased in order to

⁹¹ R. C. Armstrong, "The Idoma speaking peoples" in D. Forde (ed) *The People of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London, 1970, Pp. 117-118.

⁹² M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*, Pp. 2-3.

⁹³ M.S. Abdulkadir, *An Economic History of Igalaland: Central-Nigeria...*, P.53.

meet tax and other social obligations.⁹⁴

2.11 Conclusion

The relevance of the land and the peopling of Idah to this discourse cannot be overstressed. For instance, the Igala speaking people and their Igbo neighbours shared similar geographical and ecological zones. Moreover, there was evidence of high degree of cultural interaction among the people because of the proximity of Idah Area to Igbo speaking people of Nsukka, Anam Igbo and Onitsha. It should be noted that the harmonious relationship that existed between the people over the years changed drastically after 1966 counter coup. In the event of Nigerian Civil War, loyalty of state was divided. While, Igala was loyal to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Igbo on the contrast were on the rebellious side, championing the course of the defunct Biafran Republic. The difference in loyalty between the two parties certainly created strained relationship during the war as both sides became the theatres of war.⁹⁵

The importance of the natural environment in shaping the history of man is a matter that does not need any debate in modern historiography. It seems glaring from the foregoing that the influence of the natural environment on man and his history in *Anɛ-Igala* cannot be ignored in the study of Igala pre-colonial past. In general terms, the role of the environment in the development of certain aspects of Igala settlement patterns, economy, political culture, cosmology among others has been highlighted. But it is important to point out here that the relationship between the natural environment and human history is not viewed from the deterministic perspective in which man is always passively responding to environmental controls rather the relationship between man and

⁹⁴ J. N. Ukwedehh, (Unpublished PhD Thesis), P.1

⁹⁵ J. N. Ukwedeh, "The History of Igala: c1830AD with special referenc to the Rise of Attah Kingshp," (Unpublished PhD Thesis), P.1.

the environment is seen as dialectical while it is true that environmental conditions show in broad outlines the possibilities of human history, it is equally true that man makes a substantial part of his own history by affecting, controlling and converting the forces of his natural environment to his own advantage.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ R. C. Armstrong, "The Idoma Speaking Peoples" in D. Forde (ed) *The People of the Niger-Benue Confluence*, London, 1970, Pp. 117-118.

CHAPTER THREE

POST-COLONIAL BACKGROUND OF NIGERIA, 1960-1965

3.0 Introduction

Nigeria political problems sprang from the carefree manner in which the British took over, administered and abandoned the governments and people of Nigeria. British administrators did not make an effort to integrate the country together and unite the heterogeneous groups of people. It is clear that the present day Nigeria owes certain achievements to the spade work of British administrators. Nevertheless, there was one evil that outlived British administration, namely; political non-advancement. When the British came, they forcibly rubber-stamped the political state of the ethnic groups of Nigeria, and maintained that status quo until they left.⁹⁷

These conflicts as earlier mentioned include Tiv crises which came as result of political unrest in the Benue Province of Northern Nigeria. It is known as Tiv riots, Action Group Crises which metamorphosed into the Western Nigerian crises, endless agitation for creation of more regions, disproportionate tripartition of Nigeria and election, and census controversies. In the face of these antecedents, one may be tempted to argue that the country is built upon a cracked edifice whose collapse is a question of time.

3.1 Regionalism, 1937-1965

During the first Republic, the Nigeria state could hardly be described as truly federal, since one region was not only large and apparently more populous than the remaining regions put together. It also commanded veto over other units. Given this state of affairs, many scholars argued that the government at the centre was an appendage of

⁹⁷ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, Pp. 2-3.

the Northern region. It is therefore being argued from some quarters too that the Nigerian situation on the eve of military intervention was a good example of law of institutional instability as propounded by John Stuart Mill in his Representative Government:

There should not be any one state, so much more powerful than the rest as to be capable of vying in strength with many of them combined. If there be such and only one it will insist on being master of the joint deliberation. If there be two they will be irritable when they agree and whenever they differ everything will be decided by a struggle for ascendancy between the rivals.⁹⁸

The British governed the north as a monolithic unit, fusing the separate polity of Borno (Kingdom) with the Fulani emirates. Similar things were done in the South until 1946 when the Richards constitution split the south. By the veto power of the British, she had established three large regions. From these developments, three administrative centres or headquarters had emerged, namely; Kaduna in the North, Ibadan in the West, Enugu in the East. Each region was administered from its seat of power under British representative called Lieutenant Governors. The overall coordinating centre was Lagos where the Governor resided. It is often contested that such British political arrangement for the country was uncalled for. Evidence abounds that the British would have excised the Kanuri region from the North East, a region could also have been carved out for the Yoruba of Ilorin, and the Tiv of Benue province because these area were geographically and ethnologically distinct from the Hausa area. It was done primarily to satisfy the colonial ambition of the British even after independence.

Regionalism began with administrative restructuring of the country based on what the Governor, Arthur Richards regarded as the “natural *areas*,” of the country. The process actually started in 1939 with the *area* of the southern protectorate into Eastern

⁹⁸ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence*, John Archers Limited, Ibadan, 2014, P. 54.

and western groups of provinces. This was followed by the establishment of regional assemblies by the Richards constitution of 1946. This was done primarily to link the Native Authorities, the particularistic units of local administration, to the central administration in Lagos.⁹⁹

In effect, the regions were halfway houses and the assemblies served as colleges for elections to the Central Legislative Council. This enabled Nigerian Nationalists from the north to sit together with their counterparts from the south. The structural framework of the short lived Republic had flaws which were the source of some of the conflicts and crises which contributed to its collapse. The most serious of these was the preponderance size and population of the Northern Region which was contrary to the “Mills law of federal stability” made it Possible for the region perpetually to dominate the federation (the majoritarian principle of the west minister system, which gave the region more than half of the seats in the parliament facilitated this anormally) such a federation, Mill argues will be conflict ridden and unstable. Nigeria experience (Like) Jamaica's domination of the West Indian federation and Singapore's of Malaysian federation (among others) has clearly demonstrated this. This was a pattern that led to Nigerian independence.¹⁰⁰ It is therefore evident that between 1953 to 1959, there was no element of constitutional advancement in Nigeria. The reasons were not farfetched. The British sticks firmly to their constitutional framework of tripartite Nigeria. There was no uniformity concept of rulership among the regional political leaders. More fundamentally, the politicians strove to keep their sway over their own region. It is interesting to note that southern leaders aspired to gain political in route to the other

⁹⁹ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence* ...Pp. 36.

¹⁰⁰ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence*...P. 36.

regions. Paradoxically, reverse was the case in the North who only strove to maintain firm grip of the North. One may be tempted to ask how could a gripe of North alone ensured political aspiration? The answer is evident in tripartition act. By this act, the British deliberately placed a greater percentage of the land and people of Nigeria in the north, putting the percentage population at 54.5, (North), 20.0 (west), 23.0 (east) and 2.5 Southern Cameroon which was then part of Nigeria.¹⁰¹ As a result, the British gave the north 55% of the federal constituencies which ensured Northern People Congress (NPC) succeeded in its hold on the north, (which it actually did) it would control at the federal level. Thus the stage was set for the federal election of December 1959.

The election was significant in the political history of Nigeria because it was to usher in political independence of Nigeria. Dudley aptly described the election of 1959 as a critical election because it was to decide which parties were to control the federal government after independence. Given the background of intense regionalism and mutual fears and suspicions among the ethno-regional leaders which characterized the final phase of colonial rule every major party was anxious not to lose out in the power game. However, the NPC had start advantage as the Northern Region was allocated more than half of the seats in the house of representative. Undoubtedly, the victory of NPC was a foregone conclusion.¹⁰²

All the party needs to do to control the federal government alone was to win enough seats in its northern region to give the necessary majority in the parliament. Knowing the implication of these NCNC and AG, the dominant southern political parties devised a strategy to challenge NPC hegemony in the North by entering into alliances

¹⁰¹ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence...*

¹⁰² A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, Pp.7-8.

with the two main Northern opposition parties: NCNC with NEPU and AG with UMBC. This strategy yielded a fruitful result as the NPC failed to secure the majority required to form the government alone. Nevertheless, it had enough seats and other advantages to make it a favoured partner to any winning condition.¹⁰³ The position of the parties are presented in a Table below.

Table 1: Regional Distribution of Seats won by Major Parties in the 1959 Elections

Party	North	West	East	Lagos	Total
NPC	134	0	0	0	134
NCNC/NEPU	8	21	58	2	99
AG	25	33	14	1	73
Others	7	8	1	0	16
Total	174	62	73	3	312

Source: E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence*, John Archers Limited, Ibadan, 2014, P. 39.

As the table shows, no party won enough seats to form the government alone, which implied that coalition government had to be formed. Even at that they remained regional based parties. However, AG and NPC had more national spread through partnership than NPC which refused to be drawn out of its regional shell, in spite of the token votes, it got in the west and Lagos. If therefore nationalness was a major consideration, the NCNC and AG (together with alliance partners) were in best position to form coalition. Moreover, the assumptions of rationality, embodied in the notion of minimum winning coalitions favoured such a coalition (Dudley 1973).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence*...P. 34

¹⁰⁴ B. J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order, Politics and Crises in Nigeria*, University of Ibadan Press, Ibadan, 1973, P. 20.

This was not to be in the manner of ‘politics’ taking precedence over ‘rationality’ or what Essien Udom once described as “Politics without vision” which characterized much of Nigerian politics in later years. It was the coalition of NPC and NCNC which was formed. Dudley has tried to show that this coalition was not as non-rational as it appeared at first sight, especially given the fact that a coalition of the NCNC and AG would have automatically be a southern coalition, a phenomenon NPC would not welcome. It is on record that even before the results of the elections were announced (But presumably when they were already known) the Governor General James Robertson invited the leader of the NPC to form the government. It was feared that the Northern leaders would not agree to independence if they did not control the federal government, or were not at very least part of it. As far as the colonial authority was concerned, this consideration was paramount to any other issue. So once the favoured status of NPC was clear, the question of coalition was no larger a theoretical one. It was simply which the AG or the NCNC the NPC leaders were willing to work with. The obvious choice was NCNC. Leaders of both parties had forged close links in the course of National governments of late 1950s, also that NPC leaders rejected Awolowo led AG which they considered anti-northerners.

On the part of NCNC decision to enter coalition with the- NPC had less to do with avowed commitment to national unity than with the ‘aspectival’ calculations that it would be better assured of government patronage and other priviledges associated with Northerners than it would in partnership with rival Westerners. The payoff reaped by the NCNC shortly after the coalition came to justify this calculation. In addition to Nnamdi Azikiwe becoming the first president of the senate and later Governor General and

President of the Country, party Stewarts got plum ministerial and ambassadorial posts, and appointments to boards of federal institutions and parastatals, there was enhanced entry and promotion for easterners in the public services and armed forces into the bargain.¹⁰⁵

Paradoxically, NPC and NCNC were strange bed fellows and even serious rivals as later events manifested. Dare described much of the tension that dogged the coalition as contradiction in the horizontal and vertical levels of coalitions, that is to say that cooperation at the centre was not extended to the regions, so that supposed coalition partners at the federal level seriously opposed one another at the regional level. This was more on the part of NCNC which not only continued to ally itself with dominant opposition parties in the Northern Region to the consternation of NPC, but also played the role of opposition party in parliament, especially from 1963 when AG was then in disarray following the imprisonment of its leaders. It would be recalled that after the demise of AG government in the Western Region, the two parties were engaged in desperate struggle to enhance their chances of becoming single majorities. These rivalries no doubt weakened the fragile coalition.¹⁰⁶

As a matter of fact, the activities of NEPU during the independence struggle demonstrated more than anything else the urgent need to re-examine what has been written so far and widely accepted as the truth about the independence struggle and politics of the First Republic. There is for example, the often repeated claim that during the struggle for independence, the Northern Region was conservative and backward as compared to the Western and Eastern Regions. There is also the view that Nigerian

¹⁰⁵ E. Udom, "Politics and Vision in relation to present day Nigeria", *New Nigerian*, Vol. 1, No. 3.

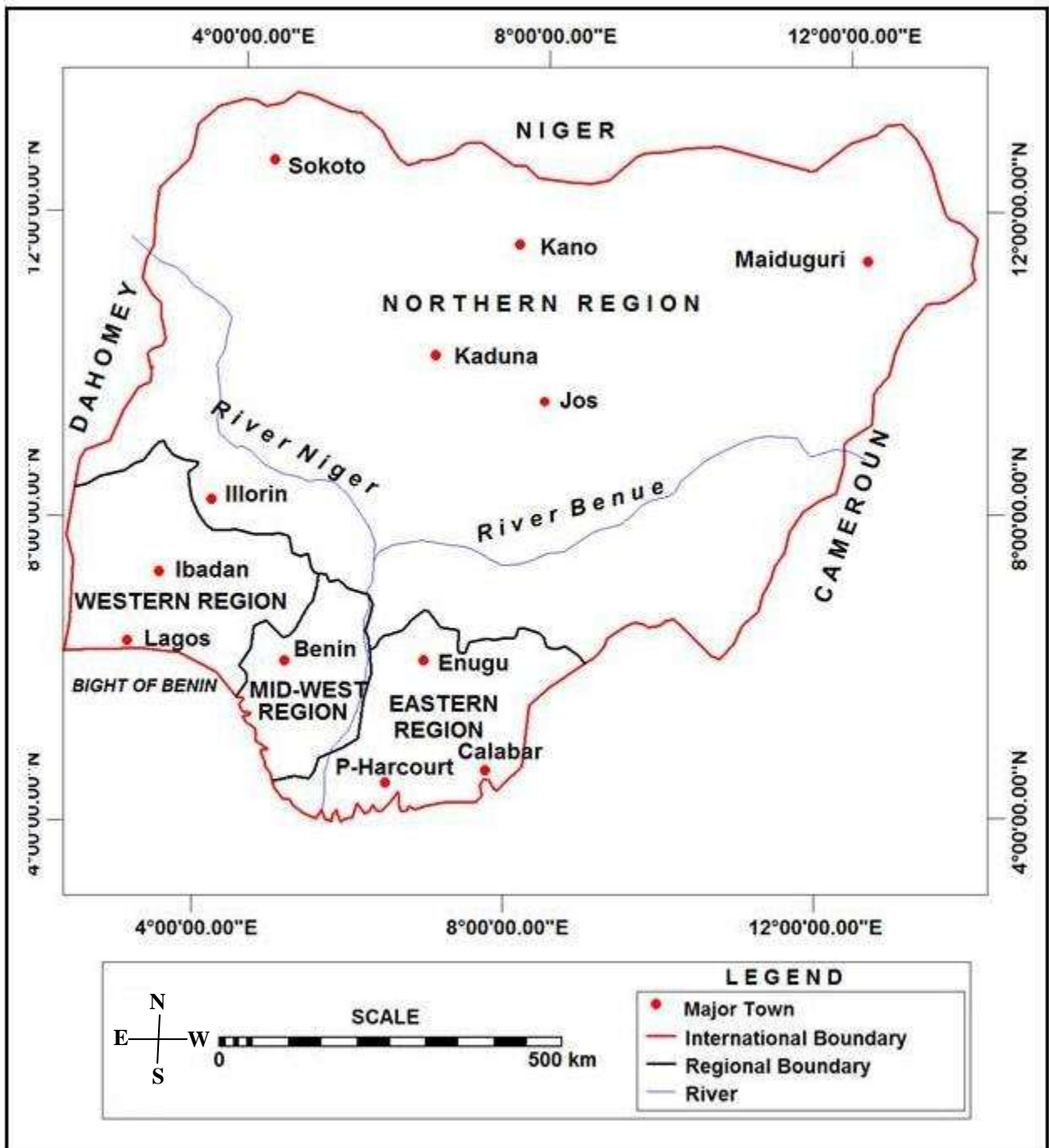
¹⁰⁶ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant, Nigeria Since Independence...*P.34.

independence was achieved through the activities of ethnic and regional political blocks led by the three so-called “founding fathers”, namely; Zik, the Sarduna and Awolowo, who with other minority leaders, are said to have sat at conferences and agree to stay together in Nigeria.

These views were in the light of the primary sources of Nigerian history of this period, clearly false, misleading and unfounded. In the first place, the politics of Northern Nigeria during the Independence struggle and the first republic was more advanced, modern and progressive than the politics in the other two regions. Secondly, Nigeria independence was achieved by Nigerian organisations like the Nigerian Trade Union Congress, the Nigerian Union of Students, the Nigerian Youth Movement, the Nigerian National Democratic party, the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons and its Youth Wing, the Zikist movement and its allies, the Northern Elements progressive union, and the United Middle Belt Congress. The NPC, as political party, and the Action Group of the Egbe Omo Oduduwa appeared on the political scene after the grounds for the attainment of independence had been laid in order to contest for regionally based elections and undermine the Pan-Nigerian and anti-colonial movements embodied in the NCNC, NEPU and their affiliates and offshoot.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ A. Abba, *The politics of Aminu Kano; Document from the independence struggle 1950-1960*, Vanguard Printers, Kaduna, 1993, Pp. 14-15.

Map 2: Nigeria Showing Three Regions, 1966



Source: Adapted from Historical Map of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 1960. P. 40

3.2 The Role of the Opposition in Parliamentary System in the First Republic, 1960-1965

On October 1, 1960 Nigeria became an independent state. The period between that date till 15 January, 1966, when the first post-independence civilian administration was violently overthrown by the military, is generally referred to as the First Republic, although the country did not become a Republic until 1 October, 1963 when its dominion status came to an end.¹⁰⁸ In 1960 Chief Obafemi Awolowo became the leader of the opposition in the Federal House of Representatives. A.G. sees itself as an alternative government or would be successor to the ruling government.

Adewale Ademoyega observes as follows:

The ultimate question that decided the political continuity of Nigeria under the NPC leadership was whether the Balewa government would continue to tolerate an opposition in the Federal Parliament or try to discredit and destroy that opposition, in order to hold disputed sway over the entire nation.¹⁰⁹

The answer to this question hinged on its attitude towards Action Groups (AG) which constituted the main opposition party in the Federal House of Assembly or whose leader, Chief Awolowo, was recognised as the leader of the opposition in the parliament. The constitutional provision was that the government in power should always allow opposition to air its view. On the other hand, the opposition was supposed to offer constructive criticism but not the destructive type. The issue now before us is whether or not all these were played out in the first republic? This would be unveiled as the discussion keeps unfolding. It is however, evident that the subsequent development demonstrated that the ruling government perceived the constitutional opposition as confrontational group. To forestall this opposition and maintain grip of power, the NPC

¹⁰⁸ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Strucck...*, P.8.

¹⁰⁹ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Strucck ...*, P.8.

needed an agent in the West and also in the East. The prime intention of NPC was not just getting an agent but the relative political capability of such an agent. In the west, the NPC found such political overtures with Chief Samuel Akintola, the Premier of Western Region and Deputy Leader of AG. It is likely that NPC may have considered ideological differences between Awolowo, the leader of the party, and Akintola, his second in command. Without doubt, Awolowo was a radical socialist and staunch advocate of creation of states in Nigeria federation. While Akintola was a core conservative and welcome conservative approach, he was more concerned with the sharing of national cakes or spoils of office with the NPC Government at the centre. As a matter of fact, if Akintola had gotten his way he would have allied with the NPC, to take over whatever share of the federal patronage, he was given and leave the masses of the North and South to their own fate. On the contrast, Awo believed in fighting for principles and rights that he held so dear. Given this state of affairs, the AG executive at Jos found Akintola guilty of Maladministration and anti-party activities and a vote of no confidence was passed on him. In the light of this he was stripped of his premiership and Deputy Leader of the party. However, in 1962, AG members of Western House of Assembly petitioned the Governor of the Region, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, the Oni of Ife to implement his removal from premiership and replace him with Adegbenro who was in the good books of the party.¹¹⁰

Apart from differences in ideological stance that existed between Awolowo and Akintola, there is a contention that the scuffles were political. In the first place, if he had suffered the latter to remain in the government until the next regional election already slated for 1965, the whole hullabalo would have perhaps been avoided. There was also a

¹¹⁰ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Strucck ...*, p. 14.

possibility that Awolowo might have feared that the apparent disloyalty of his second in command would cost his party to lose the forthcoming elections in 1964. If truly this was his conception, it did not in any way reverse the trend of events but rather worsened the matter. It is to be noted that chief Akintola maintained his stand in his impeachment from premiership and deputy leader of AG and sought legal redress in the court of law. In turn he claimed to have dismissed the governor from office. A scenario Chuba Okadigbo described as “sack-me-I-sack-you”.¹¹¹

The crises provoked by this rivalry cumulatively led to the collapse of the Republic. At the heart of the problems were tension and mistrust in the NPC-NCNC coalition generated by, among other things, the NPC's attempts to use its control of the Federal government to extend political and economic domination by the Northern Region, as well as attempts by the NCNC to wrest power from the NPC by counteracting its political advantages and extending its own power base. Strain in the coalition appeared soon after independence, especially when sixteen of the independent members of parliament joined the NPC in 1961 to give a working majority in the parliament. However, the strains did not become open till the publication of the 1962-8 development plan which showed that the bulk of federal capital expenditure was to be concentrated in the North. Suggesting that the NCNC had lost its ‘pivotal’ role and therefore its extractive capability¹¹², apart from projects connected with coastal ways, Lagos affairs, information and communication, with a total cost of approximately 68.1 million pounds, the major capital projects went to the North. The Niger dam, estimated at 68.1 million

¹¹¹ This sack-me-I-sack-you drama of 1962 was the beginning of a series of crises which haunted Nigeria until the collapse of First Republic on January 15, 1966. Chuba Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria*, Fourth Dimension, Enugu, 1987, P. 27.

¹¹² E.E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...* Pp. 42-43.

pounds (it eventually cost more than 88 million pounds) represented more than 10 percent of total federal government spending, almost all of the 29.7 million pounds scheduled for defence, the major proportion of 39.2 million pounds to be spent on health and education, and the bulk of the 35.3 million pounds to be spent on roads. This plan, as well as the accelerated appointments of less qualified Northerners in place of Southerners to top political, military and bureaucratic positions (apparently to provide the necessary support base for northern control of political Power), dashed the hopes of the NCNC that its partnership with the NPC would enhance the region. The party was then forced to seek alternative ways of securing control of the Federal Government which with the dwindling revenues of the Regional Governments, had become the most critical extractive instrument. These claims cannot be accepted on their surface value. For example, A. M. Mainasara, *Why They Struck* debunked this claims as follows:

The location of Federal projects is done on overall basis. It is unfair to single out military installations and to ignore other institutions. By January 1966, all the Federal educational institutions of higher level were located in the south that is, the University of Ibadan, and Lagos, King's College, Federal Emergency Science School at Victoria Island Lagos. At most all major infrastructural facilities such as sea ports, railway headquarters, electricity power installation and most of the tarred or metalled roads were in the south. If the argument was that some of these installations were there because they were needed in view of the situation in the south and its educational advancement, then the same argument should mutalis mutandis, apply to the location of some military installations in the North.¹¹³

3.3 Tiv Crisis, 1960-1964

The first signs of trouble in Tiv territory began at the time of the Federal Election, 1959, although the authority managed to maintain peace and order at that time. However, an NPC's candidate was beaten up and dumped into a pond. Three policemen were driven out of Nyaku's compound in Mbativ, and Vandekiya market would have been dispersed by UMBC strong armed men had the law enforcement agencies not just

¹¹³ A. M. Mainasara, *The Five Majors, Why They Struck*, Hudahuda, Zaria, Kaduna, P. 20.

arrived there in time. As if this was not enough in March 1960, in Wukari and Lafai *Areas* (The neighbouring *Areas* of Tiv) and in some parts of Tiv *Area*, the people openly defied authorities making it necessary to reinforce the Nigeria police.¹¹⁴ Although the later riots did not result in serious fights, the riots in Wukari and Lafai provided a clue for Tiv *Area*, where massive disturbances broke out five months later as characterised by the riots which were to follow.

Widespread outbursts of political disobedience of the Tiv in 1960 were indications that something was seriously wrong in the society. Though the claims and demands of the protesters should not necessarily be accepted superficially, they merit consideration. To strike at political authority is a way of reacting against conditions that are no longer felt to be tolerable and as such a change must be effected. Thus at this early stage, many people felt that further damages could have been averted if:

- a. The regional government in Kaduna had appealed to the Tiv *Area* to stop maltreating its opponents and to allow free party competition.
- b. The expressed grievances of Tiv majority had been investigated and considered by the Regional government and
- c. The Kaduna authority had agreed to the dissolution and democratization of the Tiv NA.¹¹⁵

The Northern Regional Government appeared unmindful of the potentially explosive situation in the circumstances. The situation became intolerably unbearable and a feeling that something must be done developed among the people. Thus, in the words of Tarka, the president and secretary General of UMBC/AG Alliance, there was persistent

¹¹⁴ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P. 111.

¹¹⁵ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P. 111.

refusal on the part of NPC local and regional authorities to listen to the grievances and petitions of the people individually and collectively. In the face of this powerlessness, the people rightly developed the feeling that they would never be heard or get justice anywhere. This persistent feeling of alienation and injustice bred frustration and the natural resort to retaliation against NPC members and their party.¹¹⁶

The outcome of the Tiv protest led to some socio-political redresses in Tiv *Area*. One major thesis that runs through our analysis of the Tiv disturbances is that the Tiv people deliver a protest in order to alert the appropriate authority to consider their grievances. Following the Tiv uprising, there were immediate changes in the social and political arrangement in the *Area*. These re-organisations included reforms in the administration of law and justice in the Native Court, holding of peace meetings to reconcile the previously discredited clan and kindred heads with their subjects and the setting up of an all-party advisory council to help the sole Native Authority in his task of restoring order. Additionally, in a meeting presided by the honourable premier, it was argued that immediate steps should be taken to reform the district councils and rehabilitate NA police.¹¹⁷

With the series of reforms and the rapid reconciliation which followed the 1960 riots, one might think that a lasting solution had been found to the Tiv problems. But on the contrary, the evidence after 1961, points to a sharp worsening of relations between the conflicting groups, thereby leading to the second Tiv Riots of 1964. The outbreak of fresh violence in which the participant were again mostly UM BC supporters, suggested

¹¹⁶ R. Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*, P. 112. Takar also recorded that before the outbreak of violence in 1960, he personally prepared a list of complaints against the NPC authorities in Tiv Division and took it personally to the Premier in Kaduna; but he met with rebuff.

¹¹⁷ White Paper on the defunct Regional Government, 1960, P. 9.

that the underlying causes of 1960 troubles had not been removed but only partly suppressed.

According to Tese Makar, the immediate causes of the disturbances of 1964 were difficult to explain because their perpetrators are still around. The disturbances took the government by surprise and the authorities were at a loss to know what to do to restore law and order.

The Commission Enquiry has suggested several reasons. They include, the exploitation of the existing tensions by the UMBC, the rivalry and misunderstanding among the Tor Mkovul (Pro UMBC), the general rivalry and struggle for power between the UMBC and the NPC, the poor organization and control of Tiv NA and its functions, and natural urge of the Tiv people as a whole to react violently against authority and the abuse of power.¹¹⁸ These suggestions do not really get to the bottom of the matter. What is most important is detailed analysis of the people involved and their problems. According to the elders, the architects of the troubles in 1964 (as in 1960) were mostly the 'dispossessed' groups. That is penniless adventures who had nothing to lose but everything to gain. The dispossessed people of course have no respect for the traditional good conduct of their fore fathers and as well their collective existence.

The architects of the political troubles in Tiv speaking area generally come from the UMBC and NPC leaders and the Tiv NA employees. The intelligentsia of the land was found in the group. The group is the main theatre of all the political ideologies and intrigues in the country. It creates its own mysterious. The characters of the people in this group are difficult to explain. Some specialize in the manipulation of the masses for their

¹¹⁸ T. Makar, "A History of Political Change Among the Tiv in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century", (Unpublished PhD Thesis), Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1975 P. 529.

own personal ambitions. Their ideas and ideals are not normally explicit. They are masters of trickery and extremely treacherous. But they have definite aims for their actions.¹¹⁹

All these factors appeared to be quite insignificant in comparison with the last factors that were the general disorganisation of the traditional society brought about by the several political changes introduced under the colonial rule. This situation provided means of exploitation for the UMBC and NPC leaders. The UMBC, for example, apparently encouraged the “dispossessed groups” not to pay their taxes. The NPC members who had the upper hand in their control of the Tiv NA, counteracted by instructing their officials to seize their property (farms, livestock) of those who would not pay their taxes.

From all indications, the Tiv riot resembled the earlier riot in pattern, target and purpose. It was a fight against those who represented the ‘vindictive’ power and interest of the NPC in Tiv *Area*. The objective of the rioters was to attack those in authority the clan and kindred heads, tax collectors court presidents and the police. In several areas, policemen were ambushed and then killed or wounded.¹²⁰

The government measures and outcome of the Tiv Riot was a significant epoch in the historiography of the crisis under discussion. A Daily Times editorial, entitled “stop this Bloodshed,” noted that “Tiv *Area* had become a by word for ugly rioting, disorder and bloodshed. It was hoped that this would be a means of permanently restoring peace to this riot-torn area. In 1960, a similar appeal had passed unheard. The Northern Regional government apparently believed that ‘police actions’ would silence

¹¹⁹ T. Makar, “A History of Political Change Among the Tiv in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century...”, P. 259.

¹²⁰ Anifowose argues that from the Police Report in Makurdi and Gboko shows that the 1,075 accused persons came from about sixty different clans. For detail, see Anifowose, P. 141.

the Tiv. That mood was reflected in the Governors Alhaji Kashim Ibrahim speech to the Northern House of Assembly in February, 1965. In his remarks, the Governor stated:

The situation in Tiv *Area* occasionally flaring up rioting and Wanton destruction of property had been brought under control through the Peace Keeping Operations of police and lately the army. I am very pleased to say that there is every indication that the end of the perennial disturbances which occurred well over a generation with Heakaa riots of 1929 is now in sight.¹²¹

Later, however, the government realised that it needed more than 'police action' to pacify the Tiv, the situation needed to be considered sympathetically, as a practical approach to an acceptable and lasting solutions in Tiv *Area*. Thus, the government appointed (in March 1964) a Commission of Inquiry the Commassie Commission, with the following terms of reference:

In view of the unrest in Tiv *Area* over the past four years, to examine its background and to recommend a system of local government that will be capable of providing the services required of it as well as command the support and loyalty of the Tiv people.¹²²

Between 17 May and 12 June 1964, the Commission took evidence from ninety witnesses in the Tiv *Area*, including clan heads, NA officials, elders, women and party representatives. The UMBC was legally represented at an inquiry by both the AG-Federal Organizing Secretary. At the end of its sittings, the Commission produced a report which was so critical of the Tiv administration that it was never published.¹²³ The government, however, issued a White Paper, summarising the Commission findings and recommendations.

The White Paper is instructive for an understanding of the causes of the perennial conflict in Tiv *Area*. It noted that:

- a. Those in authority did not behave with tact and that party politics was brought into

¹²¹ *Daily Times*, February 19, *West African Pilot*, 2 February, 1964.

¹²² "Northern House of Assembly Debate", 24, 1965, Col. 2

¹²³ R. Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience...*, P.134.

the sphere of administration.

- b. The Tiv resent authority and the persons holding authority.
- c. “Abuse of office in default of constant checking by senior and age grade is a vice to which the Tiv are especially prone” this is true today but the traditional checks have been greatly weakened or are non-existent.
- d. The Tiv never responded to force but can easily be persuaded by the use of reason.
- e. The District Administration was confused, they (the clan and kindred heads) realised that the power of their appointments and dismissals was in the hands of the NA and not in those of their people. This allowed them to become autocratic and oppressive to their people.¹²⁴

The Commission recommended that:

- (a) Emphasis must be placed on diffuseness of power and decentralisation and the system of local government accord as far as possible with the indigenous social structure.
- (b) The political structure must be modified since it is impossible to prohibit party politics in the Tiv political structure.
- (c) It is essential that executive functions, judicial functions and authority should not be exercised by the same men.¹²⁵

In summary, it can be seen from the evidence presented above that the outcome of 1964 riot, like the previous riot, seemed to be triumph for the Tiv. The findings and recommendation of the Commission (as summarized in the Government White Paper) to confirm most people’s belief that the Tiv people had some genuine grievances and the social and political arrangements in the *Area* needed re-adjustments.

¹²⁴ White Paper on the defunct Regional Government, 1960, P Pp. 11-12.

¹²⁵ White Paper on the defunct Regional Government, 1960, P.7.

3.4 The Tiv Riots and Its Effects on the Nigerian Political System

This discussion cannot be wrapped up without seeing the perception of Northern Region Government. The Northern region government tends to regard the trouble in Tiv *Area* as being the outcome of the frustration which arose from the NPC's refusal to support the separation of the Middle-Belt area from the Northern Region. Thus, the NPC Government saw the 1960 riot as a rebellion, a deliberate plot on the part of UMBC-AG alliance to embarrass the North at independence and force the creation of a Middle Belt State with the Tiv as its leading ethnic group. It would amount to historical injustice without looking at the meaning of the rebellion. Rebellion is a violent organized action by a larger group of people who are trying to change their country's political system. It is also an opposition to the leaders of an organisation by members of the organisation itself. Far and above all, rebellious persons do not want to behave in the way that other people think they should.

Thus, commenting on the Tiv Riot of 1964, Orodu (NPC) said:

The NPC regarded the long chain of disturbances in the *Area* as a conspiracy by some external forces aided by some selfish politicians in the area who hoped to achieve their pet ambition (i.e the creation of a Middle-Belt State) it has been the avowed desire of the disgruntled politicians that by so doing, they will make an inroad into the North and cause a setback to the present peaceful and steady march towards political solidarity and emancipation of the Northern Region Government.¹²⁶

From the above remarks, it is glaring that the NPC Government of the North saw the Tiv as a major threat to its hegemony. The Government was therefore determined to crush the Tiv riot which it regarded as a rebellious to create a Middle-Belt State.¹²⁷ To this end, an NPC leader appealed to the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in Tiv *Area*. It is a fact that the Tiv resistance to the Hausa-Fulani controlled

¹²⁶ *Daily Times*, 1964, Orodu himself is a Tiv man and a former UMBC leader. When he defected to the NPC, he was appointed the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Lagos Affairs.

¹²⁷ R. Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience...*, P. 154.

Northern Region Government emanated largely from the fact that they did not themselves come from within the Hausa-Fulani community but retained intact their separate identity and traditions. With the introduction of party politics, the Tiv massive support for UMBC had aided them to maintain their traditional ethnic distinctiveness because of their traditional resentment of alien culture and an imposed authority is somehow represented by the NPC, the Tiv warmed to talk of a new state being carved in the Lower North. The contention however, appears superfluous because there are Tiv speaking people who were loyal to NPC, why are they not apprehensive of the Northern Regional Government? The fact also remains that Tiv people consistently gave their support to UBMC-AG, which championed the Middle-Belt cause. It was not surprising that when riots broke out in *Tiv Area*, the Northern Regional Government interpreted them as a move to win self determination as a rebellion to win autonomy from the Northern Government.

Reference has already been made to the Minority Commission set up before independence to look into the fears of the smaller ethnic groups in Nigeria. While in *Tiv Area*, the Commission sat in Makurdi where the UMBC-AG case was presented by Fani Kayode, a prominent AG lawyer, The NPC defence was undertaken by L.K Anja. The NPC representative was able to convince the Commission that the fears of the UMBC were unfounded.¹²⁸ While special machinery to safeguard the interests of the minority people in the East and West was recommended, no similar recommendation was made for the Middle Belt areas. Instead of recommending the creation of new states, the

¹²⁸ The Government Representatives pointed out that the people of the Lower North (Middle Belt) occupied senior post in the Northern Civil Service. Why this claim was partly true, it must be noted out that the far North was then still short of qualified personnel. The Government therefore had no alternative preferably people of the Lower North instead of the Southerners especially Igbo.

Commission suggested two safeguards against the abuse of power and discrimination. These were the setting up a single federal controlled Nigeria Police Force and enshrining of Fundamental Human Rights in the independence constitution. The Constitution allowed local Authority Police Forces to continue alongside a national police force in the North and Western Regions, and there was no constitutional guarantee that these local forces would not be used by the Regional Authorities for personal and corrupt ends. In the case of the *Tiv Area*, the Tiv NA police became (as we have seen) servants of the Local Council and the Chiefs and were used to intimidate political opponents of the NPC. The NA police therefore became discredited in the 1960 riot and were targets of attack in the 1964 riot.¹²⁹

As to provisions on Fundamental Human Rights, the experience of the Tiv, and of other minorities was that the safeguards amounted to no more than empty declarations of intents these provisions were flagrantly violated, especially at election time. Evidence abounds, in *Tiv Area*, leaders of the opposition party were intimidated and even arrested, and thus prevented from organising in the elections. Also noted, the judiciary also lacked independence. While Magistrate and High Court Judges were somewhat isolated from political pressure, the NA courts were not. Remi Anifowose captured this vividly:

That sixty one (61) of our respondents felt that they could not expect to obtain justice at the hands of the NA courts in *Tiv Area*. Most of the people observed that the court presidents were biased towards the NPC and against supporter of the opposition party. Courts presidents did not hide their political allegiance to the NPC even in the court premises.¹³⁰

The demand for the creation of a Middle Belt state should be seen against this background. The Northern region government and the outside observers who ascribed the

¹²⁹ See Police Intelligence Report prepared by Sylvanus Akegh ASP in charge of crimes, Gboko, 17 July, 1963.

¹³⁰R. Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience...*, Pp. 128-129.

riots to the Tiv demand for a separate state could not be blamed for reaching such conclusion, though available evidence does not substantiate it. Both the attitude and malicious propaganda of the UMBC-AG leaders against the NPC only served to reinforce this of the NPC Government.¹³¹ The timing of the Tiv riots of 1960 lent weight to the charge that they were connected with the coming of independence. The fact that palm branches (the AG symbol) were fixed to those houses that were not burned was a further indication that the riots had a political purpose. However the riot could also be perceived as a political quarrels¹³² and not as a rebellion organized by militant minority committed to the perpetration of violence if their demand for a separate state was refused.

3.5 The Action Group (AG) Crisis, 1962

Meanwhile, the AG, the opposition party in the parliament and the dominant party in Western Region was meandering to its knees, a development which favoured NCNC master plans or designs. It is a fact of history that the AG opposition role extended beyond the national parliament, the party did not enjoy the blessing and support of some of its members especially principal officers like Chief Ladoke Akintola, the Premier of the Western Region and Deputy Leaders of the AG, the reason being that they had established strong affinity with NPC leaders when they served in National Government headed by Tafawa Balewa in 1957. In other words, some of the AG members allied with NPC just like their counterparts in NCNC. The question that readily comes to mind is what must have informed this sudden change? The answers are not farfetched. E.E. Osaghae rightly captured this in his book entitled. *Crippled Giant*, as follows:

These members believed that AG should seek ways of joining the coalition government because being in opposition meant that the elites of the western

¹³¹ See Senator H. F. Abaagus' Petition of 10 September, 1961 to the Ministry of Finance, Kaduna.

region were excluded from privilege and benefits in the federation. Many felt that the Yoruba were losing their prominent economic and bureaucratic position to the Igbo due to opposing the NPC led federal government. Moreover elements within the party were opposed to attempts by Chief Awolowo to transform the party into a radical nationalist democratic party for which purpose the chief had sent young party members to Winneba in Ghana for training at Nkrumah's Ideological institute.¹³³

From the above, it is clear that the premise of the friction and split in AG anchored on two grounds; namely - ideological difference and quest for material benefits. It is therefore evident that some members were hawking material spoils of the federation. The party split along these lines at its 1962 Congress in Jos. Indeed, matters degenerated rapidly. It is not contestable that the removal of Akintola from premiership and Deputy Party Leader precipitated parliamentary crisis in May 1962. For example, Akintola refused to quit the office and also sought legal redress in the court of law and also claimed that he had dismissed the Governor of Western Region, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, the Oni of Ife. However, the newly appointed premier, Chief Adegbenro, summoned the House of Assembly for a vote of confidence in his government. As soon as the matter came up for discussion in the House, the pro-Akintola started an uproar which disturbed the proceedings.

One of them broke the mace, the symbol of authority of the House. Acting on the order of the Premier Minister, Sir Abubakar, the police immediately entered the house and dispersed the members with teargas. No votes were taken. Tafawa summoned parliamentary session which declared a state of emergency in Western Nigeria and went further to suspend the legitimate government of Western Nigeria, replacing the newly appointed Premier with an Administrator, Dr. Moses Majekodunmi. Until his appointment, Dr. Mejekodunmi was a Minister in Sir Abubakar's government. He was

¹³³ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...* P. 39.

also the personal physician and friend of Prime Minister. Troops of the Nigerian Army were mobilized to maintain law and order in the region.¹³⁴

This was a pretext for the NPC led Federal Government which was bent of weakening the AG and installing a puppet government in order to further consolidate its chances of holding on to Federal power. Lateef Jankande described the scenarios as follows:

Since the results of the last federal elections in 1959 had been announced that the NPC has always shown great hostility to Action Group. The hostility is so great that nothing but the death of the Action Group and the political liquidation of Action Group leaders would satisfy the NPC. As early as January 1960 the NPC demanded the banning of the Action Group symbol, which is the palm tree, in respect of all elections in the federation. They did not succeed....¹³⁵

The Federal Government instituted further measures to incarcerate Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his political associates throughout the country in 1962 (East, North, West). These men were ordered to be restricted to places far away from their political strongholds. To make matter worse, AG party functionaries were scattered and many were detained. Above all, every effort was made to damage the image and personality of Awolowo as a leader, and of the AG as a political party. Within Akintola's few weeks in office, the new administrator had called on the Federal Government to institute an inquiry into the activities of six statutory corporations of Western Nigeria. The inquiry was quickly set-up. It was headed by Justice G.B Coker and popularly known as Coker commission. It found Chief Awolowo guilty of misuse of Western Regional funds. Specifically, he was alledged to have diverted funds from the Regional Government owned National Investment and Properties Corporation, totaling 4.4 million pounds in cash and 1.3 million in overdraft from the National Bank (also owned by the Western region) to finance the AG and publish newspapers supporting the party and indicted him

¹³⁴E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant*... P. 40.

¹³⁵ L. J. Jakande, *The Trial of Obafemi Awolowo*: Seeker and Warburg, London 1966, P.181.

for trying to build a financial empire through abuse of his official position. At the same time as the Coker Commission was indicting him, Chief Awolowo and other party leaders including Anthony Enahoro, Alhaji Lafeef-Jakande and Joseph Tarka (UMBC leader) were tried, convicted and imprisoned for treasonable felony. It was glaring that the Coker Commission Report of December 1962 was in favour of Chief Akintola. Instead of conducting free and fair election, the Balewa government simply reinstalled Chief Akintola as Premier of the West. Beside, Fadahunsi the NCNC leader was appointed the new Governor of Western House Assembly. It must also be noted that the NCNC members registered their sympathy for Akintola's newly formed The United Peoples Congress (UPC). With this state of affairs, Akintola achieved a small but shifty majority in the House, while AG became opposition party. Meanwhile, the action filed in court by Chief Akintola before the emergency challenging the validity of his dismissal from office by the former Governor, Oba Adesoji Aderemi, had gone as far as British privy Council vindicated the former Governor's action, declaring Chief Adegbenro the legitimate premier of Western region. As a matter of fact, this verdict was not respected either by Akintola nor-Balewa. This no doubt was a rape of democracy. In this questionable manner, Akintola retained his premiership of the West.¹³⁶

Most significantly the AG waterloo came with the judgement of September 1963 which convicted Awolowo and his loyalists of treasonable felony. The prosecution reads as follows:

The Prosecution had alleged that plans were made to overthrow the Balewa Government by a popular (non-military) revolution. It was also alleged that fire arms and ammunition had been illegally imported. However, it was also alleged that trial Judge Justice Sowemimo, did not declare that the prosecution had proved its case beyond reasonable doubts. Rather, he declared that he had no

¹³⁶ R. Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*, First Publishers, Lagos, P.20.

choice except to convict eighteen of the accused.

According to him, his hands were tied. This may mean that he was influenced to pass the verdict and also that he had no option. Accordingly, he sentenced them to various terms of imprisonment, ranging from two to ten years. These include Chief Awolowo and his notable aides like Alhaji L.K. Jakande, Chief Onitiri, Omisade, Olawoyin and also Ayo Akinsanya.¹³⁷

Finally, the weakening of the AG was completed when the Mid-West region was carved out from the Western region in 1963. The new region immediately fell under the control of the NCNC, and this together with the party's foothold in the Western regional government, increased its hope of posing formidable challenge to the NPC. Subsequent events, however, proved that the popularity of the NCNC in the region was short lived. Once Chief Akintola consolidated his hold on power with the backing of the NPC (which realised the dangers of the increasing strength of its coalition partner), he dissolved the UPP-NCNC coalition government and co-opted several leaders of the Western NCNC to form a new party- the Nigerian National Democratic party NNDP- which then controlled power in the region. Still all hope was not lost for the NCNC. The 1964 general elections were to provide the opportunity for challenging the NPC, especially as the party believed that Akintola's NNDP was not popular and could be easily defeated in an election.¹³⁸ The subsequent event proved this notion absolutely wrong.

¹³⁷ R. Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience*, P. 20.

¹³⁸ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, Pp. 40-41.

3.6 The Creation of Mid-West Region, 1963

The issue of sub-regional separatism often regarded as the movement for the creation of more states. These issues have often been misconstrued as an aspect of ethnic politics. It is related to ethnicity only in the sense that the demands were made by minority ethnic groups in each of the regions. It is argued that it was essentially a struggle to extend the centres of state and wealth.¹³⁹

As the movement for Nigeria's independence gathered momentum, leaders of the minority ethnic groups began to realise increasingly that their ambitions would be submerged in the will of their counterparts from the majority ethnic groups. They thus advocated the creation of more states over which they would preside. Eme Ekwewke has shown very convincingly that the demands for separate states were linked directly with the competition for access to state power by members of the governing class. Ekwewke argues thus: Since those in power of the region. (Who were invariably, from the majority ethnic groups) have no intention of losing it, those out of power were obliged to seek the creation of alternative power centres.¹⁴⁰

Elite from the majority ethnic groups in the south had advocated the reorganization of Nigeria into a large number of smaller states based on the criteria of cultural and linguistic affinities as argued by Dr. Azikiwe or ethnic homogeneity as suggested by Awolowo. In the contrast, leaders of the NPC were of a different view. They supported the retention of the tri-regional structure and the subordination of minority view to the majority will in the North and sub-regional separatism became of

¹³⁹ T. Falola, and A.G. Adebayo, "The Political Economy of Colonial Nigeria", in *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era?*, University Press, the Ile-Ife, 1988, P, 52.

¹⁴⁰ E. Ekwewke, *Class and State in Nigeria*, Longman, London, 1986, P.126.

great political significance among the minority groups in the lower North referred to in the literature as Middle Belt. Most of these ethnic groups were predominantly non-Muslim and thus favoured small scale, highly decentralised and democratic form of organization. It is further argued that the gradual devolution of power to the Muslim aristocratic Hausa-Fulani elements must have stimulated in these largely Christian elites of the Middle Belt, the political movement for separatism from the North. These were factors leading to the organisation in 1949 of the Northern Nigerian non-Muslim League which was changed in 1950 to the Middle Zone League and later to the united Middle Belt Congress. It is self evident that some issues raised above are contentious highly misleading and parochial in the face of the mission of the area referred to as the Middle Belt. It remains undeniable that this area is a conglomeration of non-Muslim groups, but some of these states were highly centralized states. These include the Igala, Jukun, and Nupe kingdom just to name a few.

In the Western Region, sub regional separation found expression in the Benin and Delta provinces. The overwhelming desire of this movement was the creation of a separate state out of Western Nigeria. In the Eastern Region, the earliest and most powerful separatist agitation was from the leaders of Southern Cameroons, a United Nation Trust Territory. Their demands were granted in 1954. This probably awakened in other non-Igbo leaders of the region the movement for the creation of new states in their areas. Thus the Calabar, Ogoja River State Movement emerged.¹⁴¹

It must be stated categorically that the strands of sub regional separatism is that the movement were not ethnic perse that they were elitist and only couched their

¹⁴¹T. Falola, and A.G. Adebayo, "The Political Economy of Colonial Nigeria", in *Obafemi Awolowo: The End of an Era? ...*, P. 53.

propaganda in ethnic terms. Even the leaders of the majority ethnic groups recognized this, and they exploited the movement for political ends. One variable is unique in this issue. Those in power in each region supported the state creation demand in other regions while suppressing protests within their region. For instance, the Action Group (AG) supported the COR and Middle-Belt Movements while Northern People Congress (NPC) from 1960 supported the Mid-West movement. The Action Group actually acquiesced in the creation of Mid-Western region. The party sponsored a debate in 1959. However, the measures were cautious and half-hearted, and the party would want states to be created in other regions as well. Thus sub regional agitation for state creation did not succeed until 1963 when the Mid-West was created.

Towards the end of 1963, the Mid-Western Region was created. This was done by excising it out of the Western Region, by a direct act of Balewa government. It was true that the area contained all the minority groups of the Region, and it was generally accepted by progressive Nigerians that there was need to break down the giant Regions into smaller regions to make for stability in the country. However, to excise a Region out of only the Western region which incidentally was the smallest of the three Regions generated a lot of controversies. Why, for instance were Middle-Belt and the Calabar-Ogoja River Regions, which also hotly demanded for autonomy were not excised out of the Northern and Eastern Regions respectively? It was nothing short of political manipulation mostly likely to curb the overwhelming influence of AG in the west and its in road in other regions.¹⁴²

Election was held for the new Mid Western House of Assembly in February, 1964. The NCNC which had benefited so much like the NPC from the AG crisis rose

¹⁴²A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P. 21.

gallantly to the occasion. It fought against the Mid-West Democratic Front (MDF), a newly formed party which was backed by the NPC. It became a historical paradox that the two parties that formed the Federal coalition government of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa were fighting each other in the Mid West elections. The NCNC won fifty three out of the sixty four seats and thus became the ruling party in the region, while the MDF won eleven seats and became the opposition party. Given this success, the NCNC undoubtedly became a formidable party in the country for obvious reasons. As a matter of fact, it was now controlling two regions. The East and the Midwest, it was also sharing power with the Akintola government in the west and also part of the Balewa government at the centre. In the face of this political manoeuvre, NCNC was assured of winning the next federal elections, slated for that same year. The population recount of 1963 was forecast to give no less than fifty percent of the population to the south. This rekindled the confidence of NCNC than before. Far and above all, the political atmosphere was becoming more precarious for the Sardauna government of Northern Region. Immediately after independence, the Tiv of Benue Province that were the heartbeat of the UMBC, became more articulate in demanding for their political rights. Agitation and rioting became a common phenomenon. Instead of devising diplomatic medium, the NPC led government resorted to the use of force to suppress the uprising. The intensity of the Tiv political war against the government of Nigeria came to its climax when moves were made to create the Mid-West Region. It is worthy of note that the same NPC government which gladly excised the Mid-West out of the west did not deem it fit to attend to the agitation of the Tiv for their own region.¹⁴³ It became glaring that creation of Mid West

¹⁴³ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P.21.

region was purely a political move.

Finally, the NCNC had expected to profit greatly from the Northern situation (where the popularity of Sarduna was wanning) and thus have the bet of both worlds by sharing the government of the centre with the NPC and serving at the same time to be its greatest opponent and supplanter, but it was soon disillusioned. First, NCNC alleged that the Balewa government manipulated the census figures and announced a fifty-five percent population figure for the North, thus ensuring that NPC maintained its grip of power at the centre.

The NCNC became furious, dejected, and thus it rejected the figure and suggested a recount. The Balewa government insisted that any objection to the figure should be settled at the High courts of the Federation. In this way Balewa silenced much of the opposition, although the controversy remained unabated. Secondly, a majority of the Western wing of the NCNC merged themselves with United Peoples Party (UPP) in the Western House of Assembly, to form a new political party called the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). This party, like the UPP, took a conservative stance on national issues and sought to “share the national cake” with the NPC.¹⁴⁴

3.7 Census Crisis, 1963

Before discussing the census crisis of 1963, in Nigeria, it is pertinent to trace its etymology and evolution in Nigeria. A census of a population is the whole process of collecting, compiling and publishing demographic, economic and social data pertaining at the specified time to all persons in a country or delimited territory. Therefore a well conducted census must have the following four major characteristics:

¹⁴⁴A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P..23.

1. Individual enumeration,
2. Universality within a defined territory
3. Simultaneity and
4. Defined periodicity.

Makinma documented that the first census took place in 1866 and covered only Lagos area. The next was in 1871 and marked the beginning of decimal census in the country. Following the British tradition of taking census in years ending with “one” other census of the Lagos colony and its surrounding areas followed in 1881, 1891, and 1901. Census of 1911 covered the whole of what was then known as Southern Nigeria. This however may not be regarded as a true census in the sense that house to house count only took place in 11 main ports, while only estimates of population were made for the rest of Southern Provinces and the entire Northern Protectorate. As a matter of fact, it was 1921 Census that covered the whole country as Nigeria. It was conducted into two parts: one for town, called the township Census and the other for the rest of the country called provincial census. It is quite interesting to note that the township result yielded fairly accurate result while Provincial Results yielded rather inaccurate results. One of the accounts maintained that the provincial Census yielded inaccurate data owing to the difficulties arising from hearty dislike which many ethnic groups feel towards enumeration, and to shortage of European manpower` due to World War I¹⁴⁵.

Thus from 1866 to 1931, the censuses were largely inaccurate as they did not meet all the accepted characteristics of a census which we noted earlier in the course of this discussion which encompasses: individual enumeration, universality, simultaneity,

¹⁴⁵ A. Okolo, “The Nigerian Census: Problems and Prospects”, *The American Statistician*, Vol. 53, No. 4, November, 1999, Pp. 321-325.

and defined periodicity. The next was after the World War II which took place between 1950 and 1953. One of its striking features was that this was conducted at different times throughout the country. The Census of Lagos was the first to be conducted between 1950 and 1951, and used as a trial, to test the suitability of new methods. The Census of Northern Nigeria was taken between May and July 1952. Persons resident in the west and Mid West were counted in December 1952 and January 1953, while the census was conducted in the east in May, June and August 1953.

On general aggregate, the exercise was a great improvement on previous census in that it covered the whole country. Furthermore, the 1952-1953 (as it usually called) also suffered a lot of other inadequacies. Although, the country was more developed economically and socially than in the previous years, during the World War II, many Nigerians were still suspicious of the motives for the census. Many persons did not readily agree to have their wives and children counted since the number of wives and children was, at the time, a measure of man's wealth. It suspected that the census would enable the tax collectors to demand heavier taxes from persons with many wives and children. There were others who held the belief that the census brought ill-luck, famine or misfortune. In addition, some regarded the census as a means of providing the names of persons to be conscripted into the army.

Gradually, from 1952 onwards, the people became aware that political power arising from the number of elected members of parliament or local councils as well as the allocation of government amenities, such as schools, hospitals, pipe borne water and electricity among others depend largely on the size of the population since Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the population of each region or state has become an

important yard stick for deciding how much of the country's annual earnings is allocated to the regions or states. The recorded sizes of the population of each state according to census data is, therefore, a crucial factor in determining, in political and economic terms, the relative importance of each state. It is therefore not surprising that the more literate persons as well as political leaders have become very interested in and enthusiastic about the political and majority value of a census in Nigeria. Hence, at subsequent census after 1952-1953, they have tried to ensure not only all their own people are counted but also that they are counted twice or more, if possible in order to record as high a figure as possible.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps the best opportunity for the NCNC and indeed all the southern parties which resented so-called Northern domination to try to remove its basis was presented by the census of 1962. Since its preponderant population (based on the census) was the reason for its domination, the calculation was that, if it were possible to change the population balance in favour of the Southern provinces then the basis of Northern domination would be permanently removed (there was, and continues to be, a suspicion that the preponderance of the Northern population is the result of a gross inflation of the actual figures). But this was not the only reason when the census was a major political issue. The use of population figures for revenue allocation among the regions in particular and resource distribution in general, for assessing the viability of new states, for allocating quota as in recruitment into the armed forces, and so on, made the census as important if not more important than election for villages, state creation movements, political parties, and the regional governments.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ A. Okolo, "The Nigerian Census: Problems and Prospects" P. 325.

¹⁴⁷ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...* P. 20.

Table 2: Census Figures, 1962 and 1963

Region	1962	1963
North	29,758,875	29,777,986
East	12,394,462	12,388,646
West	10,265,846	10,278,500
Mid-West	2,535,839	2,523,337
Lagos	665,246	675,352
Total	55,620,268	55,653,351

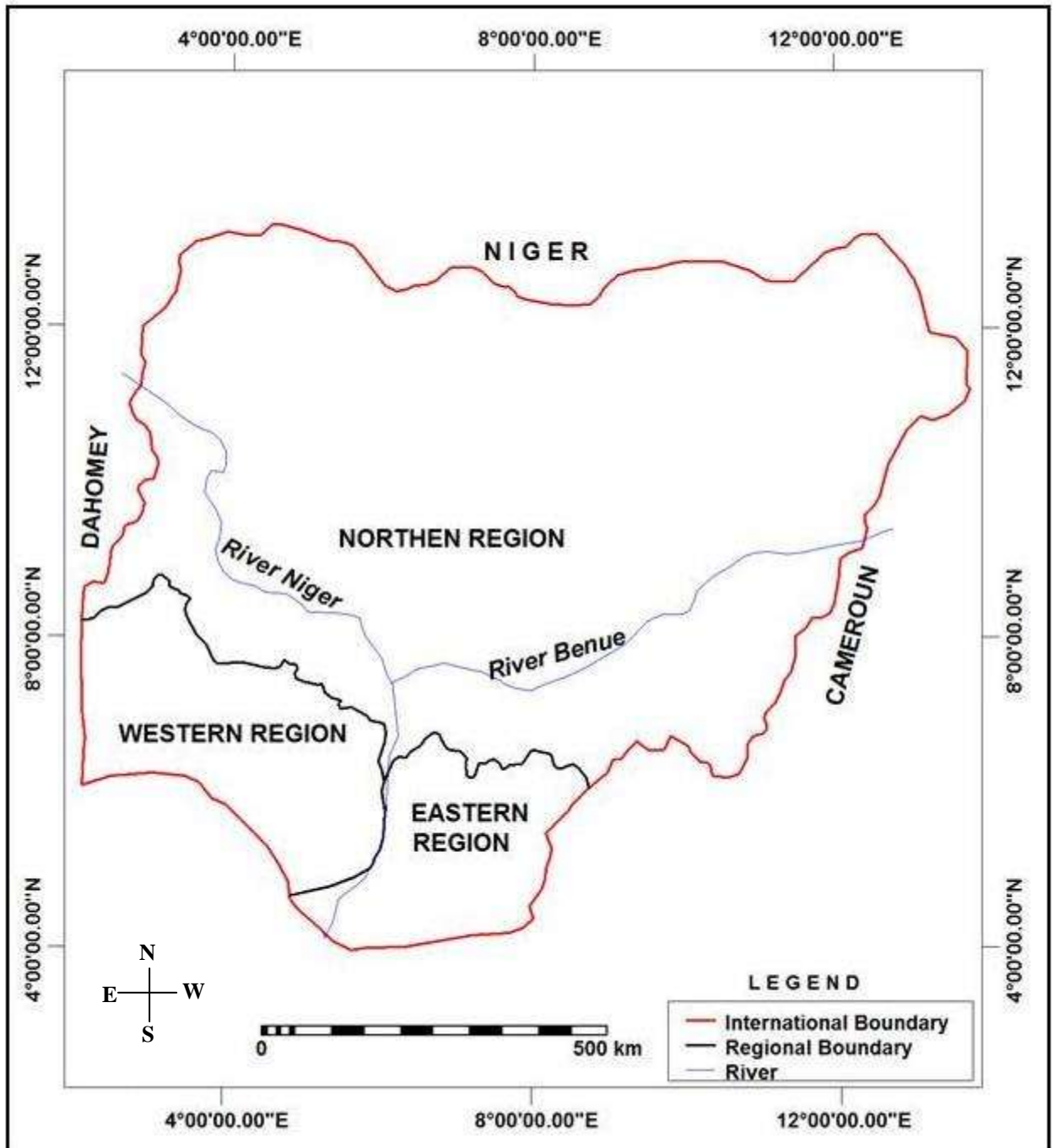
Source: E.E. Oshghae, *The Crippled Giant: Nigeria Since Independence*, John Archers Limited, Ibadan, 2014, P.36.

These considerations help to explain the fraudulent inflation of figure (livestock were reported to have been counted in some places as human population), and the controversies which followed the publication of the census results. In particular as the figures confirmed Northern preponderance (see Table 2.2), the NCNC Eastern regional government spearheaded a southern rejection of the results (unfortunately, the reaction of the west was compromised by Akintola's dependence on the NPC and he could not afford to bite the hand that fed him)! This was despite the fact that as verificatory tests carried out to check the validity of the results showed, the inflation of figures and other fraudulent acts were more prevalent in the East, the West and Lagos (the first head count suggested that while the population of the North had just increased by only 30 percent since 1952-3, those of the East and west increased by an incredible 71 and 70 percent respectively). Because of its inherent contradiction, it was nullified. A fresh census was ordered in 1963, but the results in February 1964, differed little from those of 1962 as the table above shows. The NCNC once again opposed the new figures and the premier of its Eastern regional government even went to court to seek the nullification of the census exercise, but failed partly because the party did not get the support of two other southern Premiers. While for reasons already given, Akintola readily accepted the results, Chief

Dennis Osadebey, premier of the newly created Mid West region, decided to accept the results after initially rejecting them, "for the sake of national unity."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...* P. 42

Map 3: Nigeria Showing Four Regions, 1966



Source: Adapted from Historical Map of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 1963, P.30

3.8 General Elections, 1964

This left 1964 elections as the final opportunity for the NCNC and its allies to unseat the NPC and possibly stop the threat, now virtually a fact, of Northern domination. The stakes in the elections were, therefore, very high. The NCNC hoped to turn the table at all cost; the NPC was confident of consolidating its Northern hegemonic hold and possibly extending its sphere of influence to include the west where its protégé, Akintola had to defeat the AG once and for all; and there was of course the badly battered AG which hopeful through its alliance with NCNC, to regain control of the Western Region at least. The volatile political situation and the realignment of forces produced two alliances for the election. One was the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) comprising the NPC and its client parties: Akintola's Nigerian National People's Party (NNPP), the Niger Delta Congress (NDC), the Mid-West Democratic Front (MDF). The main campaign theme of the NNA was National Unity through representation of all ethnic groups in a national government, a theme informed by the NPC's expected reassertion of federal control. The other was the United Progressive Ground Alliance (UPGA) formed by the NCNC and AG as well as their Northern allies, NEPU, UMBC, Zamfara Commoners Party, and Kano Peoples Party which had joined forces in the Northern Progressive Front formed in January 1964. The UPGA campaigned on a premise to restructure the federation and create new regions reflecting the common purpose of its members to divide the Fulani directed Northern hegemony of the federation.¹⁴⁹ The concept of Fulani direct Northern hegemony of the federation was misleading for obvious reasons. First and foremost it was NPC that was ruling the nation which comprised other ethnic groups. There are other Fulani elements in other political

¹⁴⁹ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P.47.

parties. This is purely ethnocentric and stereotype to galvanize political sympathy on regional line.

In spite of the national cross-regional outlook of the alliances, the two camps presented a North versus South constellation of forces. The mainstay of NNA was the NPC whose motive force was the consolidation of Northern hegemony- indeed concentrated its frantic efforts on winning in the North, and did not bother to campaign outside its region, since it was assured of federal control if it could win all or almost of the Northern seats. However, the NPC leaders recognised the expediency of extending their sphere of influence to the South, especially to counteract the efforts of the NCNC. The UPGA, on the other hand, was a Southern coalition whose primary objective was to halt Northern hegemony, an objective that could only be realized through alliance with formidable opposition parties in the Northern region itself.

The other point to be highlighted was the attempt by elements within the AG and Northern opposition parties to forge progressive ideological unity. The notion of progressive here related more to a counter-movement to Northern conservatism than anything else. Chief Awolowo and his supporters in the AG saw this so called progressive movement as the surest way of mobilising support among members of the opposition minority and marginalized groups in the North. It was precisely because they championed this movement that Awolowo's camp was highly resented in the North. The NCNC did not have any such 'progressive' pretension, a more conciliatory approach involving the Northern hegemonic class. Nevertheless, given the pragmatism of its leaders, the realisation of ends was a far more important criterion of success than the means used, which largely explains the pragmatic switch from detente to progressive

confrontation as the 1964 elections drew closer. Their divergent strategies, and underlying mutual suspicion and rivalry, made a strong alliance between the two southern parties unlikely. Indeed, the electoral alliance was basically one of expediency for both of them. Ironically enough, while they cooperated at the centre they were rivals in the regions and moreover less sought to fight the election alone rather than as members of an alliance.¹⁵⁰

The 1964 elections, which were scheduled for December were characterised with high stakes involving the run-up election. Attesting to this were claims and counter claims of intimidation of opponents, involving the use of thugs to disrupt and prevent campaigns and to harass candidates and electoral officials, making it impossible in many cases for nomination papers to be filed. These incidents and other acts of political violence were more in the Northern and Western Regions, which were the focus of the competition to control the centre. To avert the drift towards lawlessness and provide modicum order necessary to make the conduct of the elections possible, a peace meeting of all political parties was held in October, when they resolved unanimously to ensure free and fair election.¹⁵¹ As the events were unfolding it were more of belated efforts! But in the desperation of the parties, such interventions were insufficient to arrest the dissidents into anarchy. Employing violent tactics which sometimes involved the physically elimination of opposition candidates, the parties sought to reduce the uncertainties of the electoral process by working to ensure that whenever possible candidates were returned unopposed without vote. At the close of nominations eighty-eight (88) of the total 174 NPC candidates in the Northern Region and about 30 percent

¹⁵⁰ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, Pp. 42-43.

¹⁵¹ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, Pp. 43-44.

of the NNDP candidates in the Western Region and NCNC candidates in the Eastern Region were returned unopposed.

It became very evident before the elections that the position of the parties was clear. Feeling frustrated by the strongman tactics of the NPC to retain control of the North and of the NNDP to consolidate its hold in the West, UPGA decided to boycott the elections. However, the announcement of this decision came too late to stop its candidates and supporters taking part in the elections. In the event, it was only in the Eastern Region where the NCNC government deployed its machinery to stop the election that the boycott was effective, in the Mid-West and West elections were held. In the Northern region, the effect of the boycott was a woeful failure. The results of the elections released by the Federal Electoral Commission showed that the NPC lost only five of the 174 seats allocated to North, while the NNDP won the majority of seats in the west and NCNC in the Mid-West a clear NNA majority, Tafawa Balewa called Azikiwe to reappoint him Prime Minister. Swayed by his loyalty to the NCNC/UPGA whose leaders rejected the conducted and out come of the elections, Azikiwe refused to do so, thereby precipitating a constitutional stalement. What followed was a struggle for power between the President and prime Minister, a struggle which at one stage involved competition for control and support of the armed forces. The recourse to the military at the height of the power struggle, only succeeded in making the armed forces ultra-conscious of the blurred boundary lines separating the 'military' from the 'civil' and the 'legal' from the 'political'. The armed forces became aware that they had political role to play and also paved the way for the military coup which followed 1966.¹⁵²

¹⁵² B. J. Dudley, *An Introduction to Nigerian Government Politics*, University Press, London, Pp.69-70.

The constitutional impasse ended only after mediation by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Sir Adetokunbo Ademola) and Chief Justice of the Regional High Courts. Under the Zik-Balewa Pact, Azikiwe agreed to invite Balewa to form a new government provided that:

1. Such a government was a broad based government and included wherever possible, representative of the two competing alliances.
2. The boycotted elections in the Eastern region were to be rescheduled for March 1965 after which the NCNC members would be appointed to the government and.
3. There should be election to Western Regional Assembly in October.

On January 4, 1965, Azikiwe called Abubakar to form a new government. When the government emerged, it was an embodiment of concessions and compromise.¹⁵³ Balewa was invited to form a new government which included members of the NNDP after the rescheduled Eastern regional elections in which the NCNC lost only six out of the seventy seats (four of these were UNIP, the AG Eastern regional ally), the broad based federal cabinet was enlarged to unprecedented size of eighty ministers. But the aftermath of the event of 1964-1965 could only at best, produce a fragile peace.

The frustration felt by the NCNC (and AG) at being unable to halt the extension of Northern hegemonic rule provided deep hostility in many Eastern leaders and there were talks of confederation and secession as possible solutions to the Northern problem. But the worst was still to come when the 1965 Western regional election turned out to be a final Waterloo for the young republic. The setting for the election in the west made a matter of high risk for the republic. After the tensions and conflicts generated by 1964 elections, the struggle to control the region was of critical importance for all the parties.

¹⁵³ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P.46.

Thus, although the NNDP (desperate to hold on to power in the region by every means) and the AG (equally desperate to shame the NNDP for being usurpers that sold out to the Northern cabal) were the direct contestants, their performances were critical to the game plans of the NPC and NCNC. The campaigns and preparations for the elections were violent, as the NNDP deployed the coercive forces at its disposal against the more popular AG. The election was massively rigged and manipulated by both parties but NNDP incumbency gave it an edge.¹⁵⁴

Both parties claimed victory in the elections and each actually tried to swear in its own leader as Premier. The supposed victory of the NNDP was greeted with violent protests and demonstrations by AG supporters lives and property were destroyed in Operation Wetie (literally, wet with petrol and burn) which extended to attacks on Hausa settlers in Sagamu and other parts of the West. There was a complete breakdown of law and order which made the 1962 crisis in the region seems like child's play, but unlike on that earlier occasion, Balewa refused to declare state of emergency in the region because of the NPC support for Chief Akintola. Balewa also rejected the option of calling in the military because it was believed that many soldiers stationed in the region favoured the UPGA. It was while the west burned (which was not enough to stop Balewa from hosting the commonwealth leaders' conference in Lagos) that the Nigeria military struck in January 1966. Balewa announced that the situation in the West was normal and that everything was under control Ademoyega rightly captured these scenarios as follows:

There was no doubt that 1965 was a year of political gloom. Throughout Nigeria, the safety valves of the nation were reposed in such institutions as the Courts, the Census Commission, the Electoral Commission, the police and finally the Armed Forces. But the sanctity of those institutions was being politically assailed, assaulted and dragged in the mud, so that they were losing their credibility. It became obvious that the national leadership was nearing its collapse and that the

¹⁵⁴ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P. 46.

ship of the nation was heading for a rock.¹⁵⁵

3.9 Conclusion

Judging from the foregoing, the parliamentary system at independence was a continuity of the colonial system. The parliamentarians or ethnic politicians were groomed to take over or stepped into the shoes of the colonialists and not necessarily to restructure the colonial system. They did use the inherited colonial system to boost, strengthen and entrench their ethnic or regional domination since the colonial system was founded upon an unjust social order and imbalanced political structure. The parliamentary system which inherited this collapsed in 1966 when the military stepped in.

¹⁵⁵ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck*, Pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE 1966 COUPS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITARY ADMINISTRATION UNDER GENERAL JOHNSON THOMAS UMUNAKWE AGUIYI-IRONSI

4.0 Introduction

On 15, January, 1966, some middle ranking officers took advantage of the crisis ridden political situation in the country and decided to effect some changes by the total overthrow of the existing government. The coup is popularly known as Nzeogwu coup. Other participants included the following: Major Donatus Okafor, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major Timothy Onwuategwu, and Major Adewale Ademoyega. The focus of this chapter would be on the involvement of Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu's coup, its causes, failure and result.

4.1 The Involment of Chukwuma Kaduna Ngzeogwu in the Coup 15 January, 1966

The coup remains a scholarly discourse. The coup plotters regarded the rebellion as a revolutionary mission while some argued that it was a mere change of government while others still perceived it as a socialist move built around AG and UPGA alliance against NPC oppression. Whatever are the differences of views, let us hear from one of the participants. According to Ademoyega, one of the historical trio who planned and executed the first Nigerian coup de'tat of 15, January 1966:

Ideologically, the core of the revolutionary officers had agreed on a programme of action to be implemented. If we had successsfully taken the reins of power into our hands. This programme covered areas of politics, economy, education, social and foreign affairs.¹⁵⁶

Basically, the thesis of the coup appeared to be politically motivated, they conceived diarchy which was to be based on democratic socialism. To be explicit, Ademoyega states:

We embraced collective leadership and we planned to include both military and civilian

¹⁵⁶ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P. 45.

personalities in the government, but the army would have the principal role of laying down and maintaining the principle and momentum of the revolution.¹⁵⁷ Ademoyega aptly captured the matter in more unequivocal term as follows: this would mean that the army would see itself not as an army of occupation which indulged in political reaction, revisionism, economic robbery, corruption and sabotage as it did under the regimes of Ironsi and Gowon, but as integral part of the people ideologically linked with them economically, socially adjusted to them, with them, educationally trained with them there would neither be need for the army to be separated from the people, nor-excluded from politics. They would never have remained an instrument of force and coercion.¹⁵⁸

For objective analysis of the ideology of the coup under discussion, Y. B. Usman also posed certain questions for historical interpretation. They are as follows:

- a. Was what happened in January, 1966 a revolution or even an attempt at a revolution in Nigeria?
- b. Was what happened in January 1966 a military coup d'etat by army officers supporting the United Action Progressive Grand Alliance made up mainly by the Action Group and the NCNC?
- c. Was what happened in January 1966 a military coup d'etat by a number of Igbo army officers and civilians?
- d. Was what happened in January, 1966 a military coup d'etat against the Northern Military and political elite?

If we start with the first issue which is really about why the majors struck, we now have evidence to examine it than before, from the information cited from the books by Ademoyega and Gbulie. In January, 1966, Nigeria had a colonial capitalist economy, with the placing of Nigerians in government and business positions where they took over from the local Europeans and Labanese officials, managers and businessmen. The fight for these positions, and the strategy of British imperialism for maintaining its domination, even in respect to other Europeans and the USA, produced a political crisis, which began

¹⁵⁷ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P.47.

¹⁵⁸ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P. 45. P. 47.

with the federal election of 1965.¹⁵⁹

A revolution in the context of this has to involve bringing about the overthrow of at least the system of political relations which existed, even if the economic and social relations are not affected. From this analogy, there is absolutely nothing in the programme of the five majors as set out by Ademoyega and Gbulie to suggest that they intended to change these political relations beyond removing from power certain politicians.¹⁶⁰ Indeed the programme Ademoyega set out for the revolution seems to have been produced from the hindsight.¹⁶¹ Although, he states that the masses of Northern Region were suppressed by this oligarchy, there is no programme for giving them freedom of political expression in what he sets out.¹⁶² It is of course not to be found in the broadcasts and interviews of Major Nzeogwu – except for a remark about abolishing Alkali Courts.¹⁶³ Indeed after the appointment of a government under Alhaji Ali Akilu, the former secretary to the premier of Northern Nigeria, Major Nzeogwu's remark that, now experts rather than profiteers are running the government reveals the absence of a programme of radical change, let alone, a revolution.¹⁶⁴

In both the statement now available and action of Nzeogwu, Ademoyega and

¹⁵⁹ Y. B. Usman, *Actors and Factors in the Study of Contemporary History: The case of the Nigerian Coup D'état of 15 January, 1966*, History Departmental Seminar Series, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Volume 7, Ahmadu Bello University, Press Limited, Zaria, 2012, P. 55.

¹⁶⁰ Ademoyega tries to set out some sort of programme. Gbulie does not even do that. Ademoyega does not even seriously pretend that this was actually their 1966 programme.

¹⁶¹ Ademoyega, *Why We Struck..*, Pp. 33-48.

¹⁶² Ademoyega, *Why We Struck..*, Pp. 6,33-48 Ademoyega. *The Story of the First Nigeria Coup...* Pp.33-43.

¹⁶³ A. H. M. KirkGreene (ed), *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Sourcebook*, 1966-1969. Vol. 1 London, 1971 Pp. 125-129, 138-141, for Nzeogwu's broadcast on 15/1/66 and his interview with BBC Television transmitted on 22/1/1966 and with Dennis Ejindu of Africa and the world (May, 1967), although Robin Luckham says that he later republished this interview, particularly his opposition to secession. For the remark, Alkali Court do not give justice. I hope soon to end them." This is from *The New Nigerian* of Monday 17/1/1966, P.3.

¹⁶⁴ *New Nigerian*, Monday 17, 1966 on page 8, Nzeogwu is reported to have said so after the January appointment of these permanent secretaries under Ali Akilu to head the Ministry. After announcing these appointments he is reported to have told the Press. "We have now got experts to do the job rather than profiteers."

Gbulie – there is no indication of an attempt to bring about a revolution. Infact, the statements made by Ademoyega and Gbulie and earlier by Nzeogwu himself would indicate that the political programme of the army officers was just to establish a government around Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who was in prison in Calabar, and had been persecuted by N.P.C, closely supported by the N.C.N.C.¹⁶⁵ Whether this indicates that it was an UPGA coup is not yet clear until we obtain more information on the civilian connection of the army officers. But even if these connections were established in the absence of any political control by the Action Group or UPGA over the army officers, it would amount to exaggeration to see it as an UPGA coup. However, all indications point to what some writers have shown that the key element in the political outlook of these army officers was their intense hostilities towards the N.P.C and the Northern oligarchy. This outlook would give them close affinity with the Action Group Section of UPGA and with the tendency probably represented by Dr. Michael Okpara. So even if they were not organizationally linked to UPGA the evidence now available indicates that they were closest politically to it and did nothing contrary to the interests the hardcore of UPGA represented.

The preponderance of Igbo among the active participants of the coup and the large proportion of the Igbo among those army officers and civilians killed has appeared to justify the view that it was an Igbo coup to grab the Federal Government for an Igbo ethnic group.¹⁶⁶ While the ethnic ties may have facilitated the emergence of the group around Nzeogwu and Ifeajuna, it would seem that it is more likely that some of the officers had plans to prevent Ironsi and the Premiers of the Mid-west and Eastern Region

¹⁶⁵ B. Gbulie, *Nigerian Five Majors...*, Pp. 18. Also, A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*Pp.12-13, 68-69.

¹⁶⁶ This was used to justify the pogrom against Igbo in the Northern region; and is even been given some credence by Ademoyega in his explanation of what he calls Ironsi's misadventure. See Ademoyega, P. 116.

from getting killed for their own purposes, separate and distinct from what they agreed.¹⁶⁷

St. Jorre captures the issue of ethnic colourations very succinctly:

But it is also conceivable that when actually confronted with killing their own kinsmen, they found they could not do it, though this did not deter the Igbo Major who shot the unfortunate Igbo Quarter Master-General dead in Apapa suburb.¹⁶⁸

In the light of the available evidence, it does not seem that the Igbo civilian and military elite had in January 1966 sufficient social basis for political cohesion to conspire so systematically. Whatever the subsequent Federal Government's publication says, a systematic conspiracy by Southerners to eliminate all the Northern political and military elite is one explanation of the January 1966 coup. The fundamental weakness in this argument is that this was not even attempted in Kaduna where in fact the pillars of the Northern elite in the civil service were handed over the government within forty eight hours of the coup. Indeed one element of the social and political condition of Nigerian society in January 1966 which all these accounts leave out, or only hinted at, is that there was deep dissatisfaction with the N.P.C. government even among the Northern elite, civilian and military. It is also a well-known fact that widespread suppression of peasants had to take place in 1964 and 1965 elections. The number of NEPU and UMBE politicians in jails of the NPC was large and getting largest. Far and above all, Mainasara submits aptly in the following statement:

This development was unacceptable and must be changed by the use of military force so that a government of progressive Southerners could be formed at the Federal level. Hence, one of the plans of the coup plotters was to dispatch a Nigerian Air Force Plane to Calabar to bring Chief Aowlowo to Lagos to form an interim administration of 'progressives' under the guidance of the military.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Further information on Major Okafor and Ifeajuna is essential as they were key actors in this regard. Luckham reports that on 15/1/66 Ifeajuna had an interview with Dr. Okpara on reaching Enugu after abandoning Ademoyega and others. This also reveals the interplay of what happened.

¹⁶⁸ St. Jorre, *The Story of Nigerian Civic War*, P.50.

¹⁶⁹ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, Pp. 101, 104, 118.

4.2 Causes of the First Coup D'etat

On 15 January, 1966, the Five Majors struck the frontline politicians and army officers and those who were assassinated were mostly of Northern extraction and included the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of Northern Region, Sir Ahamdu Bello, Federal Minister of Finance, Festus Okoti-ebo, Premier of Western Region, Chief Samuel Akintola, Lieutenant Colonel Kut Mohammadu, Lieutenant Colonel Pam, Colonel Shodeinde, Brigadier Maimalari and Brigadier Ademulegun.¹⁷⁰ One may ask what actually motivated this ugly incident A. M. Mainasara attempts an answer and he states clearly that:

The ostensible reasons usually given for staging military coups d'etat, especially in Third World Countries are to eradicate bribery and corruption, and also put an end to tribalism, regionalism or sectionalism, free the masses from misery, poverty and squalor, and drift in the country and provide purposeful leadership, enhance the image of the country in the eyes of the international community among others. The January Nigerian coup makers were no exception in shouting altruistic slogans as this.¹⁷¹

Commenting on the same issue, Ben Gbulie, an insider of the January 1966 coup, says interlia:

For far too long, the country had been at cross roads, tottering dangerously on the brink of disaster. The political situation was gradually but surely getting out of hand.¹⁷² But if the prevailing political situation had constituted an unpleasant jar to Nigerian nerves, the stench of corruption in high places had given her a racking stomach – ache.¹⁷³ But by far the most dreadful of our country's insuperable monster was tribalism – it was my opinion, Nigeria's number one, killer disease, a cancer worm as old as the hills – a fundamental factor of the problems of Nigerian unity and right from the country's attainment of independence in October, 1960, many a tribalist parading as a politician had been fanning cinder of tribalism into frantic life.¹⁷⁴

Similarly, Ademoyega captures the developments more vividly as follows:

There was no doubt that 1965 was a year of political gloom throughout Nigeria. Generally, people had been disillusioned and disaffected with Balewa's Government and the rulership of Balewa/Akintola/Sarduna clique of NNA. Economic, social and educational problems were not solved, corruption was rife and nepotism was the

¹⁷⁰ A. M. Mainasara, *Why They Struck...*, P.7.

¹⁷¹ B. Gbulie, *Nigerian Five Majors...*, P. 6.

¹⁷² A. M. Mainasara in Ben Gbulie, P. 8.

¹⁷³ ¹⁷³ A. M. Mainasara in Ben Gbulie, P. 8.

¹⁷⁴ Mainasara in Ademoyega... *Why We Struck...*, p.8.

order of the day. The safety valves of the nation were reposed in such institutions as the courts, the Census Commission, the Electoral Commission, the police and finally the armed forces. But the sanctity of those institutions was being politically assailed, assaulted and dragged in the mud, so that they were fast losing their credibility. It became obvious that the national leadership was heading its collapse and that the ship of the nation was heading for the rocks.¹⁷⁵

The arch rebel, Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu was quoted by Ben Gbulie in *Nigeria Five Majors* as having told Sir Kashim Ibrahim, the captive Governor of the Northern Region:

You are a good man, it is not against people like you that we are staging this coup. It is because of all those corrupt politicians who for the past five years, have been holding this country to ransom - - without rhyme or reason.¹⁷⁶

It has been suggested that because of the Sandhurst tradition, a deep respect for duly constituted government, and an honour of coups d'états, the Nigerian Army was expected to have a distinctly anti-interventionist orientation. This view was based on the example set by the British political establishment which has ensured the absolute stability which the British political system has enjoyed for over 300 years. There may, therefore, be some justification in assuming that the Nigerian military, like their counterparts in former British colonies could have been strongly influenced by the Sandhurst tradition. However, the 'wind of change' which influenced the influx of young university graduates with different backgrounds and revolutionary ideas into the African Armed Forces, as well as the services of coups in other parts of the continent were bound to influence public opinion, which was bound in turn to modify hitherto strong foreign notions, ideals and influences. When the first Nigerian military take over occurred in January, 1966, B. A. T. Balewa argues that it was the Sandhurst tradition that had prevented it from taking place earlier.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ademoyega, *Why They Struck...*, P. 8.

¹⁷⁶ B. Gbulie, *Nigeria Five Majors...*P.18.

¹⁷⁷ B. A. T. Balewa, *Governing Nigeria: History, Problems and Prospects...*, P.90.

The apolitical nature of the army was over a long period gradually destroyed by the politicians with the result that by 1966, the military nursed its own political ambitions. Since independence, the Nigerian government had used the army on duties clearly brought about political considerations. For instance, during the Federal Elections of 1959 and 1964 the army was ordered to organise parades and demonstrations in order to assure the citizens that government had the power to quell political disturbances and to protect lives and property. Similarly, the use of the military in internal security duties in Tiv Area and other parts of the country brought it face to face with internal disorder and so created the urge to set things right. Moreover, in order to win the support of some officers, politicians from various parts of the country tried to indoctrinate their kit and kin in the army. With this type of relationship, the army saw itself as an arbiter in political matters. The situation was not improved by the fact that the government of the day sought to ingratiate itself with the officers through judicious “bribes” and gifts in the form of increase in pay, presents at festivals and selection for courses overseas, by canvassing the support of the army, therefore, the politicians undermined their own positions through making soldiers susceptible to political pressure and to material reward for their own loyalty.¹⁷⁸ The question of the military becoming political deserves more detailed comments not only because it led to military intervention in politics but also because the Armed Forces will in the foreseeable future remains a major factor in Nigerian politics. The politicians began destabilising the country and the Nigerian military saw its duty to the nation also extending into political field. It rejected the apolitical mould into which it was cast. The officers were then among the most nationalistic citizens in the country and the army was seen as a truly national institution in which, with a few provisos, there were

¹⁷⁸ S. C. Ukpabi. *Strands in Nigerian Military History*, Zaria, Geskiya Corporaiton Limited, 1986, P. 119.

equal opportunities for all. It had the reputation of being less corrupt and also manifested an austere outlook.

The motive of the coupists was further unveiled by one of the conspirators, Colonel Madiebo:

At independence therefore, Nigeria became a Federation and thus remain one country. Soon afterwards the battle to consolidate this legacy of political and military dominance of a section of Nigeria over the rest of the federation began with increased intensity. It is this struggle that eventually degenerated into coups d'etat and a bloody civil war.¹⁷⁹

It should be noted that allegations about the military dominance of the North and the alleged concentration of military installations in that region were made in order to deceive the unwary. The real reason which prompted the coupists to strike was that a section of the army officers resented the application of the quota system to the recruitment of the army officer corps. The opponents of the quota system wanted to dominate the armed forces perpetually, and by implication, the control of the country.

Another grievance of this class of military officer was what they considered to be partially in favour of the North in the location of military installations. Several questions were asked in parliament by spokesmen of these military officers why such and such a project was located in the North, but curiously, nobody questioned the location of any military projects in the South. For example, of the five battle lines of the Nigerian army, two were located at Enugu and three were at Ibadan and when the Sixth Battalion was being formed, it was located at Ikeja, Lagos, where the main Ordnance Depot including the ammunition depot was also sited.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ A. Madiebo, *Nigerian Revolution and Biafran War..*, P.4.

¹⁸⁰ A. M. Mainasara, *Why They Struck..*, P. 12.

4.3 The Failure of the Coup

The contradiction in the military itself contributed to the failure of the first coup to achieve anything worthwhile. If anything, it aggravated the existing political and social tension. For instance, Ironsi who inherited the coup as events showed, did not share the political ideals of the coup makers and so was not in position to carry out their objectives. In addition, the military apparatus itself was not sophisticated enough to deal with the ensuing political problems which vitiated what the officers aimed to achieve.¹⁸¹

In January, 1966, the military toppled the civilian government in order to restore law and order. What emerged instead was a period of uneasy calm which within six months later exploded into unprecedented violence which led in stages to a Civil war. The military also set to strengthen national unity and to end ethnicity, nepotism and regional conflicts, but it was a wrong material for achieving these objectives since it was already enmeshed in these problems from which it could not extricate itself. As they seized political power, the *areas* in the army resurfaced. Since the officers were enlisted on quota basis, their views on how to reorder the political future of Nigeria tended to reflect the opinion of those politicians and pressure groups from their regions whom they sought to eliminate. As the days passed, the officers found themselves under constant pressure, from without, to pursue certain political and social policies. Very soon the cohesion in the army was destroyed and the tension was so high that the men were asked to return to their regions of origin as a way of diffusing the situation. Worthy of mention was the damage done to the hierarchical and command structure in the army as other ranks and junior officers refused to take orders from senior officers who were not from their own region. This made the military unreliable as the instrument for restoring order

¹⁸¹ S. C. Ukpabi. *Strands in Nigerian Military History..*, Pp. 12-123.

in parts of the country in which violence erupted later in the year. It also prepared the ground for the coup of July 1966. Within a short period, of its seizing political power, the military was in danger of disintegration.¹⁸²

Ademoyega captures the scenario in the following remark: “Had we now lost Lagos? Had our men deserted us? Okafor had lost the Federal Guards. Has Ifeajuna also lost the 2 Brigade Headquarters? Has Obienu lost the 2 Reconnaissance Squadron? Where were we heading to? We were now on the horns of a dilemma?”¹⁸³

Ademoyega one of the coupists of January 15, 1966 gave four important reasons for the failure of the revolution. The first was the fickleness of some of the planners and executors of the coup. He cited Don Okafor as an example from the rank who enlisted into the Army since 1951 and was not commissioned until 1960. Given his background, he had developed a conservative attitude instead of revolutionary principles which marred the success of the coup. His appointment, as a commander of the Federal Guards was invaluable to the revolution hence his failure to perform cost the coup plotters dearly. Secondly, the role of Ifeajuna, having failed in the task of arresting Ironsi, he connived with Okafor and both of them disappeared from their midst. This no doubt raised the serious question of whether or not there was collusion between the two, and whether Okafor’s failure to arrest the GOC was not a case of deliberate or willful omission.¹⁸⁴ However, it sounds more of a deliberate act which may not be far from ethnicity.

The third reason for the failure of the revolution was the preponderance of forces of reaction. Why was it that there were very few senior officers in the planning and execution of the revolution? Simply the upper echelon of the officer corps was crowded

¹⁸² S. C. Ukpabi. *Strands in Nigerian Military History...*, Pp. 123-124.

¹⁸³ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P.107.

¹⁸⁴ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P.107.

with reactionaries and revisionists. There were no less than seventy Nigerian officers in the ranks of majors and above by October 1965, but less than ten were ready and willing to participate in the revolution. The remainders were either nonchalant or totally apathetic of the term that they were revolutionary and willing to work for the building of a new social order.¹⁸⁵

The other reasons advanced for the failure of the revolution was that Nigeria was not yet ready for it. For example, the preponderance of reaction in the army simply reflected the preponderance of reaction in the country. Those Army officers who worked gallantly to destroy the revolution were typical Nigerians who were not different from their civilian counterparts.¹⁸⁶

It must be added that the deceptive role of Nwawo and Maidebo ruined the whole process of the revolution. To some extent, it was not total failure because it was partly successful in Lagos because some persons panned to be destroyed were done with and also a huge success in Kaduna. It must be stated clearly that Lt. Col. Arthur Unegbe's refusal to surrender the key of the armory as demanded by the young officers played a very important role in bringing about the collapse of the coup in Lagos itself. Unable to secure the key to the armory, the leaders of the coup were automatically denied the control of the most important means of carrying out their plan in Lagos areas – arms and ammunition. It was indeed, exactly this situation that gave General Ironsi his chance that fateful night of January 15. Although the role of Unegbe is still an account of historical puzzles, because it was stated in some accounts that he was shut in the bedroom with his wife. Also, that the key to armory are not kept at home, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu

¹⁸⁵ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, Pp. 144-146.

¹⁸⁶ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, Pp. 147-148.

Ojukwu who was then in charge of 5th Battalion of the Nigerian army station in kano played a decisive role in foiling the coup. He refused to cooperate with Nzeogwu who was then in Kaduna and instead gave his support to General Ironsi in the latter's opposition to the January 'Boys'. This action may attract certain historiographical questions. Was it because he was unaware of the coup? Or was it because he did not belong to the clique of the coup plotters? Or was he seniority conscious or power thirsty? Whatever was the diverse observation of Ojukwu's role, a grateful Ironsi soon afterwards appointed him Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria.¹⁸⁷

4.4 The Result of the Coup

It would appear in the actual execution of the coup that many things went wrong. Many liberal minded Nigerians who saw the coup from the national angle did manifest clearly their position to welcome changes, although they were at the same time gravely dismayed by the fact that blood had to be shed in accomplishing the change. That is to say that, while agreeing with the objective, they nevertheless bitterly regretted the bloody aspect of the method chosen for its execution. In many non-Igbo hearts, the one-sided pattern of the killings raised suspicion that perhaps the coup was an attempt by the Igbo to seize power in the country.¹⁸⁸

The immediate effect of the first military coup on the Nigerian political system was that it caused a temporary split within the army, which in turn, affected the performance of the political system. General Ironsi persuaded the rump of the cabinet of the civilian administration to hand over political power to him. This he did by issuing the stern warning

¹⁸⁷ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P.148.

¹⁸⁸ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P. 148.

(or veiled threat) that if they failed to do so, a civil war could hardly be avoided.¹⁸⁹

The disputed events of Nigerian's first coup d'état of 15 January, 1966, still constituted a vexed question among those seriously affected by it. In 1986, for example, Major General Hassan Katsina a former military Governor of one of the Northern States, North-Central State, was believed to have been summarily dismissed from the Nigerian Army partly as a result of the reference he made to the coup in a leading Nigerian newspaper. References to heroes and villains of the coup still tend to divide Nigerians into such camps as pro-revolution and anti-revolution, pro-reform and anti-reform e.t.c. Whatever the notions their users attached to such terms, it can be emphasized here that no "revolution" in the sense of drastic changes in social systems and values resulted directly from Nigeria's first coup d'état. In the trends, came several changes in the governments, some radical, moderate or resistant to reforms of substantive character.¹⁹⁰ The fact remains that it led to the termination of the First Republic.

Whatever is the submission for the failure of the coup, D.J.M. Muffet came up with an explicit account of its failure in Eastern Region and Mid-West. Neither in the Eastern Region nor in Benin in the Mid-West was any attack made on the heads of government or any politician killed. This fact is undeniable and can indicate only either:

- (a) A failure on the part of plotters to execute the plan due to ineptitude or cowardice.
 - (b) A lack of firm intention from the first or a change of plan at the last moment
- or
- (c) That there had never been any intention to executive a plot in the east or the

¹⁸⁹ B. A. T. Balewa, *Governing Nigeria: History, Problems and Prospects...*, P. 95.

¹⁹⁰ R. Uwechue, *The Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 37.

Mid-West at all, and that those who thought of these had been deceived.¹⁹¹

4.5 Conclusion

The coup d'état of 15 January, 1966 produced shock range in Idah Area just like any other part of Nigeria. It should be recalled that the political and military leaders of the North were assassinated in one fell swoop. While their counterparts from other regions “miraculously” survived the coup, except in the West where Chief Samuel Akintola, the Premier of the Western Region was assassinated. It is against this backdrop that the *New Nigerian Newspaper* notes that “there was mad rush of application letter for jobs pouring into the North from other parts of the country.”¹⁹² It is likely that the study area may have been affected by this influx of letters. From the analysis, it is self-evident that the January coup de'tat 15 January, 1966 was borne out of sectarian feelings and ethnic loyalties rather than the nationalist claim of the coupists to establish socialist diarchy. The coup however, ended in failure as a result of the palace coup masterminded by the General Officer Commanding Nigerian Army Aguiyi-Ironsi. The coup therefore marked the beginning of military administration in Nigeria.

¹⁹¹ D. J. M. Muffet, *Let the Truth Be Told...*, P. 24.

¹⁹² T. Muhammadu, *Courage and Conviction: The First 20 Years*, in *The New Nigerian Newspaper*, Budahuda Publishing Company, 2000, P.36.

CHAPTER FIVE

AGUIYI-IRONSI'S GOVERNMENT AND THE AFTERMATH, 1966

5.0 Introduction

The major concern of this chapter is to provide the developments that led to the emergence of Aguiyi-Ironsi as Head of State of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. The chapter also highlights the objectives and policies of his regime, some of which paved way for the termination of his government on 29 July, 1966 as a result of the counter-coup. The chapter further outlines the aftermath of the coup.

5.1 The Emergence of Aguiyi-Ironsi as Head of State, 1966

The coup of 15 January was foiled by a palace coup organised by General Ironsi who regarded the latter as a mutiny and uprising organised by the dissident army officers. On 16 January's Broadcast, Orizu Nwafor states that "I have tonight been advised by the Council of Ministers that they had come to the unanimous decision voluntarily to hand over the administration of the country to the Armed Forces of the Republic with immediate effect."¹⁹³ It should be stated categorically that there was no unanimity as claimed by Orizu. The decision to hand over the administration of the country to the military may not have been unanimous. While some members of the rump cabinet favoured handing over the administration of the country to the military, the majority of Northern members favoured the appointment of the most senior N.P.C minister Zara Dipherarima, as Acting Prime Minister, but the acting president probably preferred the military. This may have been the outcome of the 40 minutes discussion Ironsi held with Orizu in which the former insisted that the only solution to the large scale political crisis

¹⁹³ Nationwide Broadcast by Dr. Orizu at 11:50 pm on January 16, 1966 at midnight January, 17, Aguiyi - Ironsi spoke thereafter suspending parts of the 1963 Republican Constitution.

was ceding of power to the military. Ironsi probably succeeded in making Orizu to realise that the political class had no answer to the crisis.

Whatever is the situation, there is no constitutionality in military regime. A great deal of controversy later arose over the constitutionality of Ironsi's assumption of power, especially in comparison with Gowon's takeover of power seven months later. Since there was no provision for their action in the Republican Constitution of 1963, both were illegal and unconstitutional. And none of the careful wording that accompanied Ironsi's accession to power could disguise this central immutable fact. The "unanimous" and "voluntary" nature of Federal Cabinet's "invitation" to Ironsi and his reply that he had been formally invested with authority as Head of State, the Federal Military Government, (he significantly omitted to say by whom) merely kept the officer on gentle manly plane and gave the impression – admittedly much needed at that critical time – that everything was under control. But it could not disguise the fact that he (and later Gowon) governments were both defacto and not dejure administration.¹⁹⁴

5.2 Aguiyi-Ironsi Reforms and Policies

Upon assumption of office, Ironsi referred to the political disturbances and crisis of confidence which rocked party politics and posed a threat to the nation which by implication necessitated the coup and stated that the purpose of the government was to "maintain law and order – and essential services – until such a time when a constitution is brought out (sic) according to the wishes of the people. The regime also committed itself to a corrective agenda which included preservation of the unity of Nigeria eradicating regionalism, tribalism, corruption and dishonesty in public life and accerlerating development. In pursuit of some these objectives, it issued Decree 33 which banned 'the

¹⁹⁴ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P. 57.

eighty-one political parties (most of these were actually interest groups) and twenty-six tribal unions and cultural organisations, and instituted a commission of inquiry into major parastatals like the electric Corporation of Nigeria, Nigeria Railway corporation, Nigeria ports Authority, and the ‘Corrupt’ Lagos city council.¹⁹⁵

The regime also set up traditional study groups to examine and make recommendations on problematic areas of restructuring of the public services and on constitutional review. The last study group which indicated the likelihood of a return of power to civilian was asked among other things, to examine the factors which militated against national unity and emergence of a strong Centre. Although, the committee never really got started on its tasks before Ironsi took dangerous steps to abrogate the federal system, its terms of reference, especially those which required the examination of how the centre could be made stronger than the regions.

After indication of Ironsi’s preference which crystalised in the unitary system, Gboyega established the parameters of military regime which were followed by subsequent regimes. The most important of these was Decree 1 (Constitution, Suspension, and Modification Decree) which rested executive and legislative powers in the federation in the hands of the Head of State, and in the hands of the military Governors in the regions. The Decree also established the supremacy of the military decrees which could not be challenged in court of law - the so-called ouster clauses.¹⁹⁶

Moreover, the ethnic interpretation and colorations of the coup was reinforced by several factors. As far as many Northerners were concerned, the composition of the coup planners on the one hand and the victims of the coup on the other gave credence to the

¹⁹⁵ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant..*, P. 58.

¹⁹⁶ E. E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant..*, P. 58.

fact that the coup was planned and executed by the Igbo to enable the latter obtain what they could not obtain through the constitutional/democratic process. It should be recalled that in addition to the loss of its leading politicians and religious leaders of the senior officers of the ranks of lieutenant colonel above, the Northern region lost four out of its five officers.¹⁹⁷ The western region lost none of its seven officers. First was the pattern of the killing of the political leaders and military officers, with exception of Lt. Col Arthur Chinyelu Unegbe, Quarter Master General of the Army who was of Igbo stock while the Northern and Western regional Premiers were assassinated, the two Igbo Premiers of the Eastern and Mid-West regions were spared, were they saint? It is glaring that North suffered the greatest losses with the killing of its two most powerful politicians, Premier Sir Ahmadu Bello and Federal Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa and its leading officers. Accounts by some of the surviving major actors in the coup denied any element of ethnic considerations in execution - Ademoyega and Gbulie¹⁹⁸. Be that as it may the facts on ground spoke for itself.

The Northern accounts insisted on Anti-North motives. Mainasara, Muffett, Mohammed and Haruna: it was probably for this very reason that *West Africa* of 22 January, 1966 described the coup as Igbo versus Hausa while St. Joree captured it as Igbo plot against the Hausa. In some sense, the coup could be taken more accurately as 'Southern' movement rather than a purely Igbo one. Finally, there are strong indications in the weaving of the fabric of the plot that loyalty of classroom and rank mattered more than tribe; it was not accident that six of the seven ring leaders were majors.¹⁹⁹

Towards the end of May, Ironsi announced two decrees for Nigeria, it amounted to

¹⁹⁷ *West Africa*, 22, Janaury.

¹⁹⁸ Mainasara, *Why They Struck*, P. 12.

¹⁹⁹ *Daily Times*, 25 May, 1966.

another coup – executed by a stroke of pen. The country was no longer to be called a federation, simply the Republic of Nigeria, ruled by ‘national’ instead of a ‘federal’ military government. The regions were abolished and replaced by groups of provinces, the Federal and Regional civil service were unified and to be administered from Lagos, political activities and tribal organisation were dissolved and political parties banned for two and half years. Many of these changes, however were apparent than reality. The new title of government and abolition of the regions alerted nothing except nomenclature since the new group of provinces concided with the former regional boundaries and remained under the rule of the existing military governors.

Moreover, the lopsided nature of Ironsi appointments aggravated ethnic suspicious. A well thought and fairly balanced appointment would have most probably doused ethnic tension and widened the support base of the Ironsi regime. But adversely or otherwise, Ironsi’s appointment tilted too much in favour of the Igbo cabal. For example, apart from surrounding himself with scores of advisers who were almost exclusively of Igbo extraction, Ironsi appointed his friend Gabriel Onyiuke as Attorney General of the federation. While another Igbo, Dr. Pius Okigbo was appointed permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, he was also serving as Economic Adviser to the Federal Military Government. Indeed Ironsi attempted to appoint Professor J. C. Edozien of the University of Lagos as the Vice Chancellor of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria which was fiercely opposed by the Lt. Col. Hassan Katsina who preferred Professor Ishaya Audu. As if that was not enough, out of twenty one officers promoted from majors to Colonels in April, 1966, eighteen were Igbo against Supreme

Military Council (SMC) advice.²⁰⁰ Still on this line of Ironsi blunders, Mohammed and Haruna demonstrated that he had effected posting that placed Igbo officers in charge of strategic command positions.

Although, it is not out of place for a leader to swap by a number of unsolicited advisers from their ethnic groups, Ironsi should have been more considerate in some of his appointments considering the issue on ground.²⁰¹ To make matters worse, the arrow head of the January coup de'tat, Major Nzeogwu and his colleagues, who were probably seen as villians by many especially Northerners were not dealt with in the way and manner that would assuage the anger of the Northerners. That the coup planners who decimated the ranks of the civil and military leadership of the North still drew their salaries and were seen as heroes in some quarters as well as the 'royal' treatment Nzeogwu was accorded in prison exacerbated Northern anger.

This was purely misjudgement of mood in the army. Not punishing the January 'boys' (even their dismissal from the service would have gone along way to placate the Northern soldiers) was a fatal mistake. It went against the fundamental military maxim that one unpunished mutiny invariably leads to another and there was simple arithmetic consideration that three quarters of the rank and file were Northerners who in the aftermath of January coup, had shown clearly and brutally that they bore no love for their Southern officers.²⁰²

It was in this unfavourable situation discussed above that Ironsi regime promulgated Decree 34 on 24 May, 1966. The Decree abolished federalism and replaced it with

²⁰⁰ General Ironsi went against Supreme Military Council advice which cause him dearly and amounted to his blunders and eventually his death

²⁰¹ Nowa Omoigui..., P. 18.

²⁰² S. C. Ukpabi. *Strands in Nigerian Military History...*, P. 124.

unitarism. Ironsi's position was that since the federal system encouraged ethnic chauvinism, Decree 34 was intended to 'remove' the last vestiges of intense regionalism of the recent past, and to produce that cohesions in the governmental structure which is necessary in achieving and maintaining national unity. On the contrast, many Northerners perceived the decree as an attempt by the Igbo to 'rob' Hausa and Fulani of whatever benefits they still derived from the Nigerian Federation, it would be recalled that among other things, Decree 34 provided national (unified) Civil Service and the abolition of Regional Civil Service. Thus one important implication of the decree was that the educationally backward North would have to compete with the better-educated South for appointment into civil service. More significantly, the North had most to fear, since it lagged far behind the other regions in education – in 1960, it had 41 secondary schools against South's 842. Clearly if educational qualification alone was to be criterion for government jobs, - there was no mention of any other – the North was bound to be losers. Northern posts would be snapped up by Southerners and the long feared 'domination' of the South would at least become a reality.²⁰³

Yet the North was very conscious of this educational shortcomings viz-avis the South. Indeed, this formed the basis of Northern fear of the Southern domination. In one of such expression of fear, Alhaji Balewa says:

Man at times – is by nature suspicious and it is therefore natural for people of the North – to fear domination. There are 4600 men and women in the Federal Civil Service (1958), I have not been able to obtain the figures of the number of Northerners in the Federal Civil Service; but I very much doubt if they even amount to one percent. This will continue to be a cause of disaffection and friction.²⁰⁴

It must be acknowledged that as the time of expression of the fear quoted above, the Northern civil service was the exclusive preserve of the Northerners even though

²⁰³ *House of Representatives Debates*, Vol. II, 1957-1958.

²⁰⁴ *House of Representatives Debates*, Vol. II, 1957-1958.

professionals were recruited from other regions as necessary. To worsen the situation on 25 May, 1966 (a day after the promulgation of Decree 34). As one could then imagine the reaction of the North was likely to be to any arrangement or policy that could further hamper the appointment into the civil service. More inflamatorily, Lt. Col. Ojukwu announced that on the basis of seniority, Igbo civil servants would be transferred to other regions.²⁰⁵ This coupled with announcement in May 1966, that Ironsi was going to be in power for three years²⁰⁶ may have led some Northern leaders to the conclusion that the continued existence and survival of Northern Nigeria would depend on immediate termination of the Ironsi regime.

As would be expected, Ironsi's regime being the first military government had to be contended with several political and social problems some of which were its non-making. The military had to define its role. It had found it necessary to intervene in politics but it did not want to be deeply involved in politics itself. It was torn between its desire to administer the country and the crying necessity to find solution to the political problems facing the nation. How to play the role of administrator rather than that of a politician remained unsolved until the regime was toppled in July. Even before that happened, Ironsi found that the longer the military remained in power the more blurred the line become between the soldiers as an administrator and as a politician. The military itself was in dilemma, because it blamed the politicians for the ills of the nation and so did not want to have anything to do with them or even to play their role even though some of the national problems required a political solution. Its administrative arrangement which excluded politicians deprived the regime of the services of a group

²⁰⁵ *West Africa* May 28, 1966.

²⁰⁶ *Daily Times* 11 and 13 June, 1966 among others.

which would have relayed to the government the feelings of the people on certain actions taken by the regime. Similarly, association with good politicians would have enabled the soldiers to acquire quickly the necessary sophistication needed to deal with the mounting and crucial issues of the period.²⁰⁷ A number of factors may have influenced Ironsi's preference for unitarism. Obviously ethnicity was the hallmark of Nigerian politics up to the time Ironsi assumed office as Head of State. Ironsi may have abolished federalism because of its centripetal pulls. However, Ironsi and his advisers probably failed to appreciate the fact that the problem was not with federalism as a concept but the fact that unity an important prerequisite for the survival and sustenance of federalism was lacking. Unitarism cannot produce centripetal pulls in a nation where the civil populace only promote their regions above the nation. One is therefore not taken aback that rather than producing centripetal pulls, Decree 34 produced unprecedented East North centrifugal pulls.

Economic considerations may have also influenced Ironsi's preference for unitarism. Obviously, unification would have been economically cheaper than multiple layers of administration in the country. Indeed, in several newspaper articles, Sam Aluko, a notable economist, emphasised the cost effectiveness of unification. Also that it would have been to 'open up' every inch of Nigeria for Nigerians irrespective of their religion or region. Apart from the fact this would enable more Southerners to get employment opportunities in the 'Northern frontier' and vice versa. It would also promote and boost the economic interests of the ubiquitous Igbo traders. To worsen the situation, complaints about Igbo provocations were widespread in the Northern Region. Northerners filed reports about parties being called by the Igbo to celebrate what they called the 'January

²⁰⁷ *Daily Times 11 and 13 June, 1966...*

victory'. Photographs showing Major Nzeogwu standing on the late Sarduana of Sokoto were said to be distributed in the open including market places. It was even said that stickers were distributed showing Nzeogwu and saying '*shine maganin ku*' meaning he (Nzeogwo) is the one who can knock sense into you Northerners.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, the Northerners were constantly reminded of the bullets that felled their leaders in January while derogatory remarks about Northerners were reportedly in common place, even in Army barracks.

The crisis that trailed the unification Decree of Igbo, Hausa and Fulani hostilities came to its climax on Saturday May 28 with the arrival of copies of the June edition of *Drum Magazine* in the North. The magazine contained two provocative articles. The first, written by Nelson Ottah and entitled, *Why Nigeria Exploded* thoroughly derided Northern leaders. Ottah blamed the Balewa's, Bello's, Akintola's 'alliance' for the intervention of the military in the country's democratic process. The article poured invectives on the NNA in general and Ahmadu Bello in particular. The second article titled, *Sir Ahmadu Bello rose in his shrouds and spoke from the dead* was written by Coz Idapo. The article featured a cartoon in which the late premier accepted responsibility for the collapse of the Nigerian democratic process and consequently asked for forgiveness from Idapo.²⁰⁹

Ironsi made some feeble attempts at arresting the above situation. For example, on 1 June, his regime promulgated Decree 40 which banned the display of provocative pictures or singing of offensive songs. The Decree prescribed three months

²⁰⁸ *Drum Magazine*, June, 1966.

²⁰⁹ *West African Pilot*, 2, June, 1966, see also *West Africa* 15 June, 1966.

imprisonment or 50 pounds fine or both for offenders.²¹⁰ These belated measures could however not salvage the situation as unprecedented anti-Igbo pogrom broke out in the North and on 29 July, 1966, the Ironsi regime was overthrown in a coup executed by soldiers of Northern extractions.

Nonetheless, the allegation that General Aguiyi-Ironsi was an Igbo chauvinist is controverted by the following empirical evidence. Forsyth has argued convincingly that Ironsi more than anybody else tried to foil the major coup of January 15, 1966.²¹¹ His advent to power put to an end the warring in Western Nigeria, the violence in Tiv speaking territory, and the insurrection of Isaac Boro in the Niger Delta. In Eastern, Western and Mid-Western Regions, (Southern Nigeria), he ordered for the detention of former politicians likely to foment unrest but politicians from Northern Nigeria were all permitted their liberty. In his 9-man Supreme Military Council (SMC) only himself and Lt. Col. Ojukwu (actually an ex officio being a Military Governor) were Igbo and his Federal Executive Council comprising the SMC members and 6 others consisted of only one other Igbo, the Attorney – General, and one other Easterner, the Inspector General of Police, Edet. Of the 23 Federal Permanent Secretaries, three were Easterners, eight were Northerners, seven were Mid-Westerners, and five were Westerners, of the 23 General Managers, Chairmen and Secretaries of parastatals appointed by Aguiyi-Ironsi, there were 12 Westerners, 6 Northerners, 3 Easterners, one Mid Westerner, and 3 foreigners.

His private secretary Hamzat Ahmadu was a relative of the late Northern premier; his Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon from the Anga ethnic group in Northern Nigeria; and his personal escorts were mostly composed of Northerners who

²¹⁰ *West African Pilot*, 2, June, 1966, see also *West Africa* 15 June, 1966.

²¹¹ F. Fredrick, *Biafran Story*, Ibadan: Spectrum Publishers, 1983, P. 40.

were led by another young Anga, Lt. W. G. Walbe a “fact which may have cost the General his life” as seen by Forsyth.²¹²

5.3 Counter-Coup of July, 1966

The counter-coup of 29 July, 1966 was captioned under various divergent nomenclatures. To some it was “a return match” of the January 15 1966, as well as a Lieutenant coup masterminded by the Northern soldiers, also a tragic interlude in nation building, a horrendous tit for tat, to others it was pogrom and as well as Northern plot theory against the Igbo and the entire Easterners. Whatever are the varied nomenclatures, the fact of the episode was that the counter coup took place on 29 July, 1966. Chinua Achebe captures the prelude of the counter-coup as follows:

By June several meetings had taken place among the Northern Nigerian ruling elite. They sent representatives to meet now General Ironsi, handing a list of their demands that included the revocation of the unpopular Decree 34: the court martial and punishment of the leaders January 15, 1966, coup; and the discontinuation of any plans to investigate the underpinning of the May, 1966 killings in the North.²¹³

In a similar remark, Adewale Ademoyega shed some light on the episode as follows: Although, General Ironsi had been swept away by the morning of July 29, 1966, the counter coup of the Northern officers and men did not end there. It continues to sweep away more and more officers and men from the East and Igbo speaking parts of the Mid-west. In Kaduna, Zaria and Kano, it started late on that 29 and continued unabated for two days. By July 31, the victims had either fallen or had run away from their stations and were finding their ways back to their stations and some were finding their ways back to home towns and villages. Chinua Achebe cites Luckham in *The Nigerian Military* by giving us some chilling statistics of the casualties of the 206 individuals murdered during counter coup (almost ten times as many as during the

²¹² F. Fredrick, *Biafran Story*., P. 46.

²¹³ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country*, P. 81.

January 15 coup) 185 were from the East, 19 were from the Westerner, and 6 from the Mid-Western Region. Not a single person from the North loss their life during this fest.²¹⁴ While Ademoyega estimated the casualties of the coup at about fifty officers and one hundred and thirty other ranks had been shot in the counter-coup.

Raph Uweche argues that the Federal Military Government has been considerably and consistently reticent about details of what happened during the counter coup of July, 1966. In its important publication – *Nigeria 1966* – which appeared in January 1967 (that is six months after the coup), and which gave a review of the events of 1966, it had only the following to record:

There were widely circulating rumours that the “uncompleted” job of January 15 was to be finished by eliminating the remaining officers of non-Eastern origin. Although many top Army officers of non-Eastern origin had been killed in January, there were others who luckily escaped being murdered. Some of these were out of Nigeria in January 1966, and have since returned to the country. They were now holding some key positions in the Army and still prevented a complete all-Igbo affair at the top of the Military Administration.

In another publication, *Background Notes on the Nigerian Crisis*, issued in October 1967, anchored on three major imperatives. Firstly, for over six months the coupists of January 15 were not court martialled.

Secondly, there were persistent rumours of an Igbo Master Plan "to complete the job" of January 15 by killing the surviving Northern officers. Thirdly, the promotion of 23 Army officers of whom 19 were Igbo appeared to be part of the plan. To cap it all,

²¹⁴ R. Luckham, *The Nigerian Army: A Sociological Analysis of Authority and Revolt, 1960-1967*, London: Cambridge Press, 1971, P. 49.

General Ironsi promulgated the Decree abolishing the Federal System of Government.²¹⁵

The Eastern Nigerian account is understandably much fuller. It was able to give chronology of the episodes of the counter coup by tracing what had transpired in 2 Brigade in the South: Abeokuta, Ibadan and Ikeja, and First Brigade in the North: Kaduna. It is logical to argue that Eastern account appeared to be most accurate in detail but not necessary in detail conclusion. For instance, it points at Northern conspiracy plot to kill Ironsi and Ojukwu and install Gowon as Supreme Commander and Head of State.²¹⁶

The Federal Military Government account recorded only a total of 15 people killed throughout the country:

The mutinous activities of January 15 resulted in the death of seven people in Lagos, including the Prime Minister, Alhaji Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, his Minister of Finance, Chief F. S. Okotie – Ebo and Five Senior Military Officers, the Premier of Western Region, Chief S.L. Akintola (killed in Ibadan); seven people in Kaduna including the Premier Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, Brigadier S.A. Ademulegun and his wife.²¹⁷

This figure hardly compares with the total of 214 people killed in July of 1966.²¹⁸ In spite of the exaggerated tone of the “Northern revenge” things did not get out of control in July. It was principally the subsequent political mistakes of the new administration that turned the vast majority of Igbo against the Federal Military Government. These mistakes were in turn to shift the ground for suspicion from the Northern camp to the Eastern camp. What had happened notwithstanding, many Southerners and indeed many Igbo, while they were gravely distressed by the slaughter of Southerners but mainly Igbo officers, were still disposed to regard it as an act of fate.

²¹⁵ Background Notes on the Nigerian Crisis, No. DPDL/1067/10,000, *Federal Ministry of Information*, Lagos, October 1967, P. 4.

²¹⁶ Background Notes on the Nigerian Crisis, No. DPDL/1067/10,000.

²¹⁷ Background Notes on the Nigerian Crisis, No. DPDL/1067/10,000.

²¹⁸ R. Uweche, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, Pp. 43-44

5.4 The Aftermath of the Counter-Coup

On August 1, 1966 Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, Army Chief of Staff emerged as the new leader of the country. In other words, Gowon assumed office at the climax of deep national crisis. In addition to unsettled terrain of Lagos and continuing furore over abrogation of the federal system, the counter-coup resonated in the Northern region in the form of renewed genocidal killings of Igbo and Easterners. The military Governor of Eastern Region, Col. Odumegwu refused to accept Gowon's accession to power. He insisted on knowing what had happened to General Ironsi (whose assassination was not officially announced till January (1967). Consequently, the post of the Head of State and Supreme Commander had not yet become vacant. But after killing General Ironsi and Lt. Col. Fajuyi, the rebel officers were determined to have nothing on their own way to the extent that in their view, no Southern officer was worthy enough to be entrusted with government of the nation. Brigadier Ogundipe and other senior Southern Army Officers who came next in rank to General Ironsi were left in doubt as to their suitability for the leadership of either the army or the country. Only a Northerner was acceptable. It was thus that the mantle of government fell on the shoulders of the most senior Northern officers in the Nigerian Army, then Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon who at that time had at least six surviving Southern officers including Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu above him in military seniority.²¹⁹

It is a fact of history that other senior Army officers survived the counter-coup –

²¹⁹ Although Gowon was the senior Northern officer in the military, he was outranked by Ogundipe, Commodore Wey of the Navy, and Colonel Adebayo. Three lieutenant colonels, Basse, Imo, and Njoku, had greater seniority. A major reason why Ironsi was declared "missing" and not officially pronounced dead until six months after the coup was the new government's unwillingness to admit that the regular chain of command, legitimised by rights of seniority, had been arbitrarily broken. When Ironsi assumed power he had been the country's highest ranking officer.

Ogundipe, Adebayo, there were still other Lieutenant – Colonels before Gowon. These were Imo Effiong and Njoku, all from the Eastern Region. The crux of the matter was that these officers did not partake in the coup and by that virtue were not eligible to reap the spoils of the coup. Moreover, the coup had an agenda codenamed “Operation *Araba*” meaning secession. According to Ademoyega:

They had shouted for it in May and had it in their minds ever since. Now was the time to make it reality. Was there anybody in their way? Certainly, none was there anything to stop them? Yes – self-interest. Who could use this to stop them? Their friends, especially the international ones – British and American and of course, some faithful Nigerians who still believed in the continuity of the nation. How did it happen?²²⁰

As a matter of fact, the British argued it out that the North would suffer if they seceded because the wealth of the nation emanated mainly from the South, and because the North is landlocked. General Gowon’s maiden speech, he stated that the country had been “plunged into national disaster by the grave and unfortunate action taken by a section of the Army against the public” and this involved the elimination of political leaders and high ranking Army Officers, a majority of whom came from a particular section of the country.²²¹ This was of course referring to the January, 1966 coup. Gowon stated as follows:

Suffice to say that putting all considerations to test, political, economic as well as social, the base for unity is not there, or is badly rocked not only once but several times. Therefore, felt that we should review the issue of our national standing and see if we can help stop the country from drifting away into utter destruction.²²²

Analysing this statement, Ruth stated that “there had been a secession announcement in the original draft; it had been cut out at the last minute, and whoever had tried to rejoin the remaining pieces had left the remaining stiches showing”. She also claimed that last minute arguments from the British High Commission in Lagos

²²⁰ Ojukwu, *Biafra*, Pp. 1-31.

²²¹ Broadcast on Radio Nigeria, August 1, 1966; See also *New Nigerian* Kaduna, 2, August 1966

²²² Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 1967, P.33.

engendered the deletion of the critical and negative paragraphs, howbeit, hastily and haphazardly. This Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu rejected out rightly on the command of military hierarchy. From the historical investigation, this claim is spurious but the reality points at Ojukwu's inordinate political ambition, this is to say he wanted to carve out his sphere of influence for himself. By this reaction, no one was left in doubt that the defacto withdrawal of Eastern Region from the centre had begun, culminating in the declaration of Eastern Nigeria as an Independent Republic of Biafra on 30 May, 1967.²²³

It must be stressed in no unmistakable terms that the coups of January and July, 1966 revealed considerable appreciation of the calculus of violence and a corresponding misperception of its consequences for both the military and the political systems. It is a very serious matter when problems of authority, hierarchy and legitimacy arise among men who maintain a monopoly of force in any polity. From this background, the quarrel between Ojukwu and Gowon as persons, between them as rulers, and between Eastern Nigeria and the rest of Nigeria under both men respectively, come graphically into purview. Gowon's first problem then was how to establish his authority and to keep Nigeria one.²²⁴

Gowon reverts the country to a federal arrangement, with promulgation of the Suspension and Modification Decree 9 of September, 1966. Promising a three phase

²²³ R. First, *Powers in Africa*, Random House: New York, 1979, P. 321. It has been suggested that Gowon was dragged into the new position by the "unanimous forces of the non-commissioned officers from his ethnic region and the British High Commissioner, Sir Cumming Bruce." See Nicholas D. Ofiaja, *Stability and Instability in Politics: The Case of Nigeria and the Cameroun*, Vantage Press, New York: 1979, p. 145. According to Luckham: "The January coup left a legacy of shock and mistrust among the soldiers especially among the Northern Other Ranks. . . . It appeared that a majority of the officers' favoured a defacto secession of the North from Nigeria. . . . A number of important civilian figures urged Gowon very strongly against secession....The British-High Commissioner and the American Ambassador also gave similar advice. Gowon responded to these urgings...." See Robin Luckham, *The Nigerian Military*, Pp. 51, 67.

²²⁴ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria*, Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Enugu, P. 35

return, this action no doubt appeared to placate the Northerners who were not happy over Ironsi's creeping unitarism. Gowon as a diplomatic leader was aware of the fact that other Nigerians had a role to play in the scheme of things and also allowed them to have a say. This attitude was exemplified by the immediate release of Chief Awolowo on August 3, 1966 and his notable followers from prison, and other political detainees – Dr. Okpara and his colleagues of the East. St. Jorre captures the event as follows:

Most important of all, releasing the popular politicians Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Awo) the Yoruba leader, Chief Anthony, a Mid-westerner. It must be placed on record that it was one of the many tragedies of Ironsi government that the decision to release these men had been taken before he was killed, but implemented by Gowon. Thus, received the credit and finessed it with the gesture of going out to the airport to meet Awolowo and greeting humbly with the words, 'we need you for the wealth of your experience'.²²⁵

This no doubt was a watershed in Gowon regime. The release of Chief Awolowo from ten year imprisonment for treasonable felony earned Gowon widespread acceptance especially in the West which was Awolowo's base.

Soon afterwards, in September, he convened an "Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference" in Lagos at which the regions including the aggrieved East, were represented by delegations that comprised politicians, academics, lawyers, bureaucrats and traditional rulers. Gowon asked the delegations to rule out either the break up of the country or a unitary state, and reduced their choices to four; a federal system with a strong centre; a federal system with a weak centre; a confederal system; and entirely new system peculiar to Nigeria.²²⁶

²²⁵ On August 3, 1966, Colonel Gowon granted amnesty to Chief Awolowo and ordered his release from prison. Gowon personally greeted Chief Awolowo when he was flown into Lagos. The release of Awolowo after three years of detention prompted thousands of Yoruba to line the streets of the Federal Capital upon his return shouting "Awo! Omo luwabi", a *dupe l'owo 'loru. Adupe lowo Gowon!!*. Gentleman, Thanks be to God.

J.J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil war, 1967-1970*, New Jersey, USA, 1970, P. 36; Uwechue, *Africa Today (eds)*, 1996, P. 1171; *Morning Post*, August 8, 1966.

²²⁶ *Nigeria, Nigeria*, 1966, Pp. 37-40, See also Osaghae, P. 26

The proposals presented by the regional delegations show the extent to which the country had drifted apart, and was on the brink of disintegration. The Northern and Eastern regional delegations, representing the major protagonists in the crisis, demanded a confederal system in which among other things, the central government would function as determined by the regions (the Northern region proposed that chairmanship of the central executive council should rotate from year to year among the regions); each region would retain its revenue and contribute equally as others to finance central government; would issue its own currency notes and coins; and would be free to secede from the union.²²⁷

The Western and Lagos delegations proposed a ‘true’ federation on the basis of a restructuring of the four regions into eighteen states, and control of the armed forces by the states. If agreement could not be reached on this, they proposed, as an alternative, a “commonwealth” of Nigeria based on the existing regions each of which would then be completely sovereign in all matters except the few delegated to the central authority.²²⁸ The other details of the proposed commonwealth demonstrated that it was no different from the confederal system favoured by the North and East. By contrast to the foregoing proposal, the Mid-West delegation demanded a federation based on the creation of more states, with a strong centre committed to correcting the injustices of the past and resolving basic conflicts, and in which no state would be allowed to secede. As the only minority region and representative at the conference, the Mid-West was influenced in this position by the historical experience which continually led minorities in Nigeria to favour a strong centre as a guarantee against majority oppression in the regions. Such

²²⁷ “Form of Political Association for Nigeria,” Paper by Northern Delegation.

²²⁸ Verbatim Report: *Ad-Hoc Committee on Constitutional Proposals for Nigeria*, 14 September 1966, P. 14.

preferences provided the middle ground which saved the country from breaking as the majority groups demanded. By the time they adjourned on 3 October, 1966, the Northern delegation, after persuasions²²⁹ by the British High commissioner and US Ambassador to Nigeria and federal Government officials, to retract its confederal proposals, and favoured not only a federation but also the creation of new states based on consultations with the group concerned on these, it reached a consensus with the Lagos, Western and Mid-Western delegations. The Eastern delegations rejected them, arguing that the time was not opportuned for the creation of new states, but it was a matter for individual regions to decide. However, Gowon did secure a major political victory: the five regional delegations including (Lagos) unanimously agreed that the country should remain one political entity. This was the ‘mandate’ that guided him throughout the period of national crisis, especially the civil war that eventually ensued.²³⁰

It is significant to note that the meeting of the Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference was to resume on October 23, 1966. But the Eastern delegations did not turn up, mainly because of the pogroms but also because the Northern troops stationed in the West had not been removed and Gowon showed no inclination of removing them. Chief Awolowo has resigned his place as leader of the Western delegation. Seeing that the conference was collapsing, Gowon adjourned it indefinitely. As a matter of fact, the Ad Hoc Conference could not reconvene because of the deteriorating relations between the Federal Government and the resumption of the killings of Easterners in the North.²³¹

There was no doubt that the conference had failed for three main reasons. The first

²²⁹ Verbatim Report: *Ad-Hoc Committee on Constitutional Proposals for Nigeria*, 14 September 1966, P.19.

²³⁰ B. J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Order*, Ibadan: University Press, Ibadan, P.155.

²³¹ Verbatim Report: *Ad-Hoc Committee on Constitutional Proposals for Nigeria*, 14 September 1966, 19.

was the sudden swing around of the Northern delegation that made a proposal that conflicted with their own original memorandum, especially at a time when such a new proposal could not be entertained, much less accepted. The second was the renewal of the atrocities, even in its fiercest form. Thirdly was their refusal even to honour the few agreements already made since August 10 with respect to the removal of Northern troops from the West.²³²

5.5 Conclusion

The impact of this chapter on the study area was that the counter-coup was perceived as reprisal. Moreover, it should be recalled that Aguiyi-Ironsi proscribed twenty (26) ethnic unions in Nigeria. The two Igala political unions (that is, Igala Divisional Union and Igala Union). This change relationship between the people of Idah Area and their Igbo counterparts. For instance, the May riot in the cosmopolitan towns and cities of the North produced tension and suspicion in Idah. Similarly, the Fourth Edition of *New Nigerian* on 7 January, 1966 reported that seven (7) Igala speaking people were killed by 1966 from the neighbouring *Onitsha*.²³³

With the military intervention, Major General Johnson Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi, the commander of the Nigeria Army, eventually emerged as the first military ruler of Nigeria. He was the short term beneficiary of his misbegotten coup and ultimately a victim of his failure, either did not understand the delicate of the problems facing him and the country he hoped to rule or else he shared the misguided ideas of Major Nzeogwu and his colleagues as to how Nigeria's ills could be cured in outlining the policies and programmes of his government in a radio broadcast in January, 1966. Nigeria

²³²E.E. Osaghae, *The Crippled Giant...*, P. 63.

²³³T. Muhammadu, *Courage and Conviction...*

immediately began to ponder over the implications of the proposed government policies and programmes for the future of the country. Within the short period of four and half months, Aguiyi Ironsi promulgated 33 Decrees of exterminating the political maladies of Nigeria in that swoop. The decrees included the suspension of legislative and executive provisions in the 1963 constitution, the proscription of 81 political parties and associations and 26 tribal association. Without waiting for Williams Commission to conclude its sitting, submits its report and inspite of the clear signs that the idea of unitary system of government would certainly create apprehension in other parts of the country, the Head of State promulgated Decree No 34 on 24 May, 1966 abolishing four regions and unifying the civil service. The hasty declaration of changes made, supposedly without prejudice to the work of the study group which he himself appointed to deliberate upon the matter. It was seen as concession to the opposing pressure on him by his close advisers who felt it was government's opponents that were agitating by trying to mobilise public opinion against unitary system. The swift and sudden promulgation of the decree was therefore seen to pre-empt any opposition. As foreseen, the reaction to the decree No. 34 was nationwide and it spreads violence. There were unpleasant incidents in most cosmopolitan areas of the North. Eastern residents of these areas, mostly Igbo suffered considerably.²³⁴

²³⁴ B. A. T. Balewa, *Governing Nigeria: History, Problems and Prospects*, London: Malthus House, 1996, P.90.

CHAPTER SIX

THE OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR, 1967

6.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to highlight the immediate causes of Nigerian Civil War. The outbreak of the Civil War (1967) became inevitable as a result of interplay of certain imperatives which if avoided would have laid the crisis to rest. One of such imperatives was the killings of the Easterners in Northern Nigeria, (May, September and October), 1966. They were probably regarded as point of no return in the Match towards the Civil War.

More significantly, the inability of the new Federal Military Government under General Gowon to stop the killing of the Igbo by the Northerners and to guarantee the safety of lives and property of those living in the Northern Region and Lagos. The inability of the Federal Military Government to implement Aburi Accord of 4–5 January, 1967, coupled with Gowon's urge to keep the integrity of Nigerian State. To curtail secessionist ambition of Ojukwu and his clique, the Federal Military Government declared federal blockade on Eastern Nigeria between June and July, 1967. On the 27 May, 1967, General Gowon created 12 states. Above all, on 30 May, 1967 Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, the Governor of East Central State declared former Eastern Region as Sovereign State of Biafra. The determination of the Federal Government to crush the rebellion eventually degenerated to the declaration of "police action" on 6 July, 1967.

6.1 The Killings of the Easterners in Northern Nigeria, 1966

Igbo killings of May and September 1966 in the north which were probably the point of no return in the march towards the civil war were in fact merely a culmination of series of events starting from the coup of 15 January 1966. Even if the coup had been planned with the best of intentions, its outcome looked frankly to the other Nigerian people particularly in the north and west it was like an Igbo conspiracy. For example, out of the seven ringleaders, six were Igbo, more importantly, the victims were non-Igbo. However, matters grew even more when the dust of the January coup settled and General Aguiyi-Ironsi eventually took over. Initially, Ironsi enjoyed the good will of generality of the public even in North where there was scepticism, the attitude was that of wait-and-see rather than of outright hostility. Unfortunately, Ironsi wasted this goodwill and this he was not helped by the post-coup actions and words of his fellow Igbo who in public in northern towns jeered and taunted the northerners for their losses.²³⁵

It is therefore, evident that Ironsi wasted this goodwill within a period of six months. His refusal to bring the January coup leaders to trial has been decided by the Supreme Military Council (S.M.C.). More fundamentally, Ironsi surrounded himself with Igbo who advised him irresponsibly on various ill-considered decisions. These included promotion against SMC decision, of the twenty-one officers to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (eighteen of them were Igbo). The aftermath of this was enormous on Ironsi's regime as noted below:

The effect of all those measures was to heighten fears, especially in the North, of a Machiavellian plot by the Igbo to dominate the country. Protests against the measures which started peacefully degenerated into riots soon after the announcement of unitary system of government. These led to attacks on Igbos

²³⁵ T. Mohammed, "The Civil War in O. Oyediran: *Nigerian Government and Politics under Military Rule, 1966-1979*, London: Macmillan Press, 1979, P.37.

first in Zaria and later in other towns in the North. As Dudley observes, the Igbo were attacked not because they were Igbo but because the name Igbo had become more or less synonymous with exploitations and humiliation. It was essentially an attack on a mental stereotype. The situation was not helped by immediate tales of plans by Igbo to kill off every “Northerner” of promise right down to primary school age to ensure the success plot! Such tales of course were merely rumours; but like all rumours, they were dangerous.²³⁶

The May attacks led to the migration of a large number of Igbo from North to the East; some of the Igbo fleeing the North went to the West but the majority remained behind. It was the killings that accompanied the July, 29 Counter-Coup that began the massive migration of Igbo and non-Igbo back to the East. The Counter-Coup which eliminated Ironsi and Fajuyi along with many other Igbo officers brought Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power. The coup which was quietly aimed at vengeance as well to forestall Igbo domination went too far and degenerated into the mass killings of Igbo in September, 1966. According to Osaghae, “between May and September 1966, an estimated 80-100,000 Easterners were killed and hundreds of thousands were wounded in different parts of the North. By the end of September, Ojukwu concluded that the safety of Easterners living outside the region could no longer be guaranteed, and asked them to return home. He also asked the non-easterners to leave the region. This order, combined with the revenge killings of Northerners in Port Harcourt, Enugu and other Eastern cities, led to a counter exodus of non-Easterners from the region. It is necessary at this juncture to stress that although secession was proposed in the name of the Eastern region, it was primarily an Igbo affair. Minorities from the East had also tended to suffer the same fate as the Igbo in the Northern killings and some of their leaders supported secession, but the fear of Igbo domination and the desire to be free from Igbo control influenced their half-hearted reluctant involvement in the war that later ensued. The decision by Gowon to

²³⁶ For an exhaustive analysis of some the action taken by General Ironsi. See B. J. Dudley, *Instability and Political Orde...* Chapter Six.

carve out separate states for them in May 1967 strengthened their resolute to be free. The story of secession and Civil War was also the story of the persecution of the minorities by Biafrans who accused them of supporting the federal side.

From October, 1966, relations between Eastern government and the Federal Government/Northern Region deteriorated rapidly, and all attempts to find a solution failed as Ojukwu insisted that neither he nor any representative of the Eastern Region no longer felt safe attending meetings outside his region. This was the background to the 'Peace Summit' of the Supreme Military Council held in Aburi Ghana, 4-5 January 1967 under the auspices of the military government in Ghana. Ademoyega argues that the report of a fresh outbreak of violence and atrocities against southerners in the North, especially against the Igbo that brought an abrupt end to the constitutional conference. He maintains *inter alia*:

“This the time the violence was so intense and was such a catalysm that the terms “pogrom” seemed to be an understatement. If any single event could be so termed, it was that September – October pogrom staged throughout the Northern Region and directed in the main against the Igbo, that made the civil war inevitable. If anything, it made housing hospital and resettlement problems absolutely intractable in the Eastern Region. Also, it completely put a seal on the grim determination of Ojukwu to pull Easterners out of the Nigerian fold. All that remained was for him to hold on for as long as possible in order to be military ready to face Nigeria, later he would have declared secession in the meanwhile, he was to use his request for a confederal status as a staking horse”...²³⁷

²³⁷ A. Ademoyega, *Why We Struck...*, P.185.

6.2 Aburi Accord 4-5 January, 1967 and Its Consequences

Gowon repeatedly and publicly rejected a supreme military council meeting outside the country, and branded such suggestions unpatriotic. The young head of state was anxious to avoid doing anything that would give further credibility to Ojukwu's claim that the federal government lacked sufficient authority to guarantee the personal security of an Igbo leader. Meanwhile, the British were urging concession to allay Ojukwu fears and they were supported in this by the Americans who maintained a consulate in Enugu with direct access to the Eastern Governor.²³⁸ Most of the suggestions for talks outside of the country were immediately dismissed by Gowon.²³⁹ The one option that he could not easily dismiss was the persistent offer of good offices from Nkrumah's successor in Ghana, General Joseph Ankrah.

The Ghanaian Head of State was uniquely well placed to serve as intermediary between the young Nigerian lieutenant colonels. A brother officer who had been promoted through the ranks during the days of the British Colonial West Africa Frontier Force, Ankrah enjoyed a personal almost paternal rapport with Gowon.²⁴⁰ For nearly five months, Ankrah made repeated informal overtures to bring the adversaries together. These initiatives which had the strong backing of the British and the Americans were direct and personal. Ghana's High Commissioner in Lagos at the time recalled that

²³⁸ The United States of America maintained consulates in the North, West and East, but not in the Mid-West. By the early 1967, there were only three diplomatic missions in the Eastern capital of Enugu, the British, American and Cameroonian representatives.

²³⁹ American Ambassador Elbert Mathews, for example, reportedly returned from one trip to Enugu with a query of whether the Federal Government would welcome the provision of an American aircraft carrier as a neutral site for talks, Gowon is said to have rejected the suggestions as nonsense.

²⁴⁰ For a sketch of the "old boy network" that existed among the members of the Ghanaian and Nigerian military establishments, many of whom had trained together at the British-run West African training school at Teshie, Ghana, see Cameron Duodu, "Old Boy Network Brings News Service of Nigerian Peace Talks," *Observer Foreign News Service*, No. 23417, January 9, 1967.

the contacts between Ankrah and his Nigerian comrades were restricted that he did not learn of the outcome until it appeared in the Lagos *Daily Times*.²⁴¹ As 1966 drew to a close, Gowon was finding it increasingly difficult to resist the Ghanaian overtures. The Supreme Military Council had been unable to meet in full session since he had assumed power on July 29. Frustrated in his attempt to re-establish a unified high command over the Nigerian army and facing a rising tide of militant secessionism in the East, Gowon finally decided that a meeting outside the country offered the only immediate alternative to an untenable situation. Ojukwu maintained that when he telephoned Gowon to wish him well on Christmas Eve, the federal leader suggested they meet in Accra, and the bargain was struck.²⁴²

Having said this, when Nigeria's military leaders assembled on January 4, 1967, Ghana's Head of State, General Ankrah, sought to remain on the background indifference both to Gowon's sensitivity to the international implications of meeting outside Nigeria on an essentially domestic matter,²⁴³ and because Ghana was in reality powerless to affect the situation. At the outset of the discussion, Ankrah carefully rejected any interference that he might try to sit in judgment or even to presume to mediate.²⁴⁴ He also sought to avoid any conflict over protocol by describing his presence at conference as that of a "brother officer."

General Ankrah opening speech was as follows:

"The Chairman of the Ghana National Liberation Council, Lt. General J.

²⁴¹ Alhaji Yakubu Tali, Ghanaian High Commissioner in Lagos, 1966.

²⁴² Ojukwu's chief secretary has since published that the arrangement was actually sealed by Britain's roving ambassador, Malcolm Mac-Donald. Akpan, *The Struggle for Secession*, p. 51.

²⁴³ The significance of Gowon's concession to meet Ojukwu at a foreign venue was not overlooked by the international press whose comment seemed to justify earlier fears among Federal Officials that the gathering would be interpreted abroad as a convocation of equals rather than as subordinates with their Commander-in-Chief. For example, *The Times*, (London) January 5, 1967.

²⁴⁴ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 45.

A. Ankrah, declaring the meeting open, welcomed the visitors to Ghana and expressed delight that Ghana had been agreed upon by the Nigerian Military Leaders as the venue for this crucial meeting. He considered the whole matter to be the domestic affair of Nigeria, and as such, he refrained from dwelling on any specific points. The General, however, expressed the belief that the Nigerian problems were not such that cannot be easily resolved through patience, understanding and mutual respect. Throughout history, he said, there has been no failure of military statesmen and the eyes of the whole world were on the Nigerian army. He advised that soldiers are purely statesmen and, not politicians and the Nigerian Military Leaders owe it as a responsibility to the fifty-six million people of Nigeria to successfully carry through their task of nation-building. Concluding, the General urged the Nigerian Leaders to bury their differences, forget the past and discuss their matter frankly but patiently.²⁴⁵

The Aburi meeting in particular proved to be thin and of the wedge which split the country into two and threatened to split it into even more bit. At Aburi, it looked as though an accord of sort was reached. But no sooner were Gowon and Ojukwu back in Lagos and Enugu than they proceed to give entirely contradictory interpretation of the accord. For Gowon, Aburi in essence still meant a federation albeit a weaker one. For Ojukwu, however Aburi meant a confederation similar to East African community in which the Igbo speaking people would be virtually free to run their own lives and thus feel secure.

Evidently, the two were heading for a collision. With time Ojukwu became increasingly defiant, seizing federal property in the East and generally behaving as sovereign. Topic for discussion included: a committee to work out a constitutional future for Nigeria, the backlog payment of salaries to Igbo Government employees who were forced to leave their posts as a ‘result of the disturbance; and the need of Eastern Region to recognize lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as supreme commander, the need for a resolution renouncing the use of force. The predicament of displaced persons following

²⁴⁵ “The meeting of the Supreme Military Council held at Aburi, Accra, Ghana 4-5 January, 1967”, *Nigerian Crisis*, Vol. 6. No. WT811/267/10,000, Eastern Regional Government Publication, Pp. 19-27.

the pogroms in the North, the fate of the soldiers involved in disturbances on January 15 1966 and the planned distribution of power between the federal military government and regional governments also required urgent attention.

Anyone who has read the highly controversial Aburi transcripts cannot deny that Gowon was immediately put on defensive by his adversary from the East who, through careful preparation and quickly wit, extracted a series of apparent concessions that could be construed as leaving Nigeria without a central Government. It is difficult to fault Frederick Forsyth's assertion that "intellectually, Ojukwu towered over the rest."²⁴⁶ "But the Aburi showdown was no academic exercise; Ojukwu was on the attack politically." He correctly assumed that in the wake of the shameful killings, the growing concern in London, and the rising disaffection in the Western Region, the other members of supreme military might be in a mood to be conciliatory. He arrived at Aburi with a cadre of advisers, briefs to distribute to his colleagues, and a well-turned sense of the opportunities.

Gowon however, approached the conference with an entirely different perspective. "We did not get to Aburi", he later declared, "to write a new constitution for Nigeria."²⁴⁷ Throughout the Aburi discussions he remained preoccupied with what he apparently believed were purely military issues; normally, would Ojukwu agree to respect the new military command structure and would he assist with reintegration of the Nigerian Armed Forces? Gowon does not appear to have fully understood Ojukwu's point that "the Army problem is mixed up very closely with the political problem it depends on what form of Government you have to decide, what sort of Army should

²⁴⁶ F. Fredrick, *The Biafran Story...*, P. 86.

²⁴⁷ *Mornign Post*, January 27, 1967. Report of Lieutenant Colonel Gowon's Press Conference on the meeting at Aburi.

serve that Government.²⁴⁸ From the forgoing, Gowon implicit assumption was that if army could find a basis for internal consensus and respect for central authority, then the “legal boys” and to civilian representatives of the four regions should and could work out the constitutional arrangements. Restoration of the army as a national institution was at least for him, the whole point of Aburi.

Complicating his task were the differing views exhibited by the other military Governors, aside from Ojukwu. At best, Gowon could only be a broker for the conflicting local interests. Ojukwu’s side was united, a pattern that would be repeated throughout the subsequent civil war, while Gowon had forged a coalition government by steering middle course. He was even unsure at this stage how to reorganize the federal army so as to minimize further tension and possible bloodshed. This left Ojukwu plenty of room to maneuver to exploit differences among the other governors and he played his hand skillfully. As an international public relations exercise, the Aburi meeting must be considered an important victory for Ojukwu. “On Aburi we stand” became the diplomatic and propaganda battle cry of Biafra spokesmen throughout the ensuing civil war, and it seemed to strike a responsive chord in the world press. The political argument behind the slogan, briefly stated, that at Aburi there had been unanimous renunciation of force to settle Nigeria’s internal differences, and that there had also been unanimous approval of a decentralization programme which should have given each region full control over its internal affairs and a veto over any political decisions taken by the Central Government in Lagos. Gowon, Ojukwu later claimed, had flagrantly reneged on both counts. The Federal Government, not surprisingly, interpreted the Aburi records differently. Substantively, Ojukwu’s victory proved to be hollow because the final communiqué did

²⁴⁸ Aburi Meeting, P. 17.

pledge a renunciation of force, but it also included the following: “on the powers and functions of the Federal Military Government the (Supreme Military Council) retained its belief in the workability of the existing institutions subject to necessary safeguards.”²⁴⁹ The “necessary safeguards” were enumerated in a separate document that was never released. Jorre attempted an explanation of this document as follows: “They immediately wrote divesting memorandum, punching holes through virtually every clause of the agreement, spelling out its unworkability, how it would lead to the breakup of the federation, and adding a few gratuitous political ideas of their own. (Although marked Top secret, this document was smuggled by an Eastern agent and later published in full in Enugu).²⁵⁰” The crux of Ojukwu’s “argument turned on a paragraph of the final communiqué which stated that “any decision affecting the whole country must be determined by the Supreme Military Council. Where a meeting is not possible, such a matter be referred to the Military Governors for comment and concurrence. Given its significance, the civilian officials in Lagos had digested the Aburi communiqué, the cadre of permanent secretaries closest to Gowon, together with Attorney General, Dr. T.O. Elias, drafted a lengthy memorandum warning of the full implication of “concurrence.” Their case boiled down to the following: “the introduction of the element of Regional Military Governors’ consent in the Federal Legislations will leave the Federal Executive Council with virtually no functions and the powers of the Federal Military Government vis-a-vis the Regional military Governments no longer exist.”²⁵¹ Over the next two weeks a series of meetings were held among the principal legal officers, civil servants, and military

²⁴⁹ Aburi Meeting Final Communique, Signed at Aburi on January 5, 1967.

²⁵⁰ De St. Jorre, *The Story of Nigerian Civil War*, P. 97.

²⁵¹ The highly controversial memorandum was reprinted by Ojukwu’s government as an appendix to the Eastern Region’s version of the Aburi talks. The document’s authenticity has never been denied. It was dated January 20, 1967, and was circulated under the signature of S. I. A. Akenzua, Acting Secretary to the Federal Military Government. The Meeting of the Supreme Military Council, Appendix IV, Pp. 56-63.

secretaries of the regional governments, all with a view to reaching a more realistic compromise regarding the operational meaning of Aburi accord. It must be emphasized that the various exchanges were an exercise in futility. Toward the end of January 1967, Gowon issued a clarification of Aburi discussions, stressing that the bottom line had been a unanimous pledge of allegiance to the Nigerian army under a unified command, with himself as the Supreme Commander, adding that: We definitely decided against regional armies. Several weeks later, he further clarified his position to a close door meeting of Lagos corps of African Ambassadors when he flatly declared: I emphasise that it was never the intention that any military Governor should have the power to veto decisions taken by the Supreme Military Council”²⁵²

Ojukwu reacting to the Lagos interpretation came in a personal note to Gowon denouncing the Federal Commander for not keeping his word and vaguely threatening secession by the Eastern Region. Once it became apparent to the East that Ojukwu tactical victory at Aburi would not be upheld, secession was almost inevitable, From January 1967, the Ojukwu government was preoccupied with preparation for secession and the possibility that other regions might be persuaded to follow this course thereby precipitating the complete dissolution of the Nigerian Federation.

Ojukwu and his collaborators claimed that when the troops were withdrawn from the East in August, 1966, the weapons that remained in the region amounted to only 120 rifles of bolt-action type.²⁵³ The East felt powerless to defend itself against physical intimidation from Lagos and, because of this, a secret arms procurement programme

²⁵² *Morning Post*, January, 1967, Gowon Press Conference on the Aburi meeting. Reprinted in full in Kirk-Green, *Crisis and Conflict*, Pp. 352-354.

²⁵³ F. Fredrick refers to 303 police rifles (The Biafran Story, P. 115) and whatever the true figure was, it is a fair assumption that the Eastern Region Arsenal in 1966 was negligible.

began immediately. The first clear evidence that Ojukwu's agent were buying military equipment appeared in October 1966, when an aging DC-4 commanded by an American gunrunner, Captain Henry Wharton, crashed in Northern Cameroon en route to Eastern Nigeria with a load of small arms and ammunition.

On 25 February, 1967, Ojukwu promised his people that he would not allow them to be slaughtered in their beds that East was militarily ready to resist any threat, and that unless the Aburi accord was implemented by the end of the fiscal year, 31 March, 1967, the East would unilaterally withdraw from the prevailing federal arrangement.²⁵⁴ This stand brought a quick response from General Ankrah, who, less than a week later, invited Gowon to Accra to determine what if anything was being done to meet Ojukwu's demand and to urge him to take whatever steps were necessary to placate Eastern fears.²⁵⁵ In response, Gowon assured him that new concession would be forthcoming at planned meeting of the Supreme Military Council in Benin on March 16 and Ankrah relayed these assurances to London and Washington. It is also a fact that Ankrah secured Gowon permission to send a high-level fact-finding delegation directly to Ojukwu's headquarters in Enugu. The diplomatic maneuvers gave added prominence and legitimacy to Ojukwu's grievances, but failed to lure the Igbo leader to attend the Supreme Military Council meeting on 16 March, 1967.

The outcome of the rump session of the Supreme Military Council was viewed by the East as further evidence of weak and indecisive Federal Government. The next day a decree was published in Lagos proscribing a major decentralisation of the country's administration. Apparently, Ojukwu's demand for the concurrence of Military Governors

²⁵⁴ *Ojukwu, Biafra, "Breach of Aburi Accord"* Broadcast February 25, 1967, 1, 107-113.

²⁵⁵ *Daily Graphic* (Accra), 5 March, 1967.

on such matters as trade, commerce, industry, transport, the armed forces, and higher education, was finally acceptable.²⁵⁶ There was, however, a key reservation. The provision in Section 70 of the Constitution that gives powers to the Supreme Military Council “to take over the legislative function of a Regional Government during any period of emergency which might be declared in respect of that Region by the Supreme Military Council” was upheld. So, too, was the provision of Section 71 granting the Supreme Military Council “the power to take appropriate measure against a Region which attempts to secede from the rest of the federation”.²⁵⁷

The Northern Governor, Hassan Katsina, applauded the March 17, 1967, decentralization Decree as evidence of a common front that would contain the East²⁵⁸, but a week later Ojukwu published an edict giving himself emergency power to declare the region a disturbed areas. With the approach of March 31, 1967, the day on which Ojukwu would declare secession unless his demand regarding the Aburi agreements were met, there were strong indications that the rest of the federation lacked the strength to resist. On March 30, the Governor of the Mid West Region, David Ejoor, told reporters in Benin that the Federal Military Government did not intend to use force on any region that would secede, a position that was supported by the Western Governor, Robert Adebayo.²⁵⁹

With the cohesiveness of the rest of Nigeria apparently weakening, Ojukwu decided not to force the issue with announcement of formal secession on March 31. His

²⁵⁶ Federal Republic of Nigeria, Constitution (Suspension and Modification), Supplement to the Official Gazette of the Federation of Nigeria, Vol. 54, A91-92. Decree No. 8 promulgated on March 17, 1967. Explanatory Note attached to the Note attached to the decree reprinted in Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict*, I, 401-402. The decree was later rescinded.

²⁵⁷ Federal Republic of Nigeria, Constitution (Suspension and Modification), Supplement to the Official Gazette of the Federation of Nigeria, Vol. 54, A91-92. Decree No. 8 promulgated on March 17, 1967. Explanatory Note attached to the Note attached to the decree reprinted in Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict*, I, Pp. 401-402.

²⁵⁸ *New Nigerian*, March 21, 1967.

²⁵⁹ *Daily Times*, March 31, 1967.

immediate objective became the removal of Northern troops from the Ibadan and Abeokuta Garrisons in the Western Region. Perhaps if he could generate sufficient domestic and even international pressures to have all in the Aburi communiqué – then the prospect for new, independent Southern alliances or merely the fragmentation of the federation would be enhanced. Thus, Ojukwu instead of seceding, signed a Revenue Edict of 1967 otherwise known as Survival Edicts directing that all revenues derived from the Eastern Region be diverted from the federal authorities in Lagos and paid into East regional treasury.²⁶⁰ This latest demonstration of the East's autonomy was followed by Ojukwu's call for a summit meeting of Nigeria's military leaders in the presence of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, General Ankrah, president Nassar of Egypt, and President Tubman of Liberia.²⁶¹ Ojukwu's envoys had quietly been touring African capitals for several weeks to win foreign support for their interpretation of the Aburi agreement. The envoys had discovered that the reports of October 1966 killings in the North had generated much sympathy among African leaders. Ojukwu hoped to convert this sympathy to political pressures that would restrain the federal government from taking any reprisals, while enhancing his own status internationally as independent action.

Lagos retaliated against Ojukwu's seizure of federal revenues by suspending all Nigerian Airways flight to the East, halting postal and money order transaction, and canceling the diplomatic passports of thirty prominent Igbo who were known to be lobbying against the federal government overseas.²⁶² Reacting to the call for mediation by African Heads of State, Gowon invited the Lagos Diplomatic Corps to a briefing session

²⁶⁰ Eastern Nigeria Government, *Revenue Collection*, also reprinted in Kirk Greene, Pp. 88-89.

²⁶¹ *West Africa*, No. 2603, April 22, 1967, P. 539.

²⁶² An extraordinary issue of the *Federal Gazette* published in Lagos showed that the passports were canceled on various dates between April 20 and May 3, and included such prominent Igbo as K. O. Mbadiwe, Pius Okigbo, Francis Nwokedi, Flora Azikiwe, and a number of diplomats suspected of engaging in arms purchases abroad. *West Africa*, No. 2607, May 20, 1967, p. 673.

during which he outlined his reasons for rejecting the suggestion:

- a. the current situation in Nigeria is an internal affair;
- b. the invitation, emanating from Lt. Col. Ojukwu as it does, has the undertone of seeking de facto recognition by these African Head of States. It also implies that there is a dispute between two sovereign and equal states;
- c. to avoid possible *area* in the ranks of the OAU, and especially among those who would be genuinely interested in assisting Nigeria;
- d. the fact that Lt. Col. Ojukwu refuses to recognise the existence of the Federal Government and myself as the Head of State; and
- e. the invitation to any Head of State must as a matter of protocol emanate from me as Head of State of the Federal Military Government. In reaching such a decision I would, of course, consult my colleagues on the Supreme Military Council.²⁶³

Gowon sought to assure the ambassadors that the situation in Nigeria, which he compared to the threat of Kantaga's secession in Congo was "well within the capacity of my government to resolve."²⁶⁴ The government's representatives had shown little enthusiasm for becoming openly involved unless specifically invited by the Federal Government, and those Africans named in Ojukwu's proposal either ignored his call or deferred to the Federal Government.²⁶⁵

The greatest shock was a direct challenge to the Gowon regime issued by the Western Region most prominent Yoruba politician, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. In May 1, 1967, Awolowo told a major gathering of Yoruba elite that "if the Eastern Region is

²⁶³ "Gowon's Addresss Heads of Diplomatic Mission in Lagos", reprint of the speech media in Lagos on April 24, 1967, Kirk Greene, *Crisis and Conflict 1*, Pp. 410-414.

²⁶⁴ "Gowon's Addresss Heads of Diplomatic Mission in Lagos"..., p. 414.

²⁶⁵ "Gowon's addresss Heads of Diplomatic Mission in Lagos"..., P. 414.

allowed by acts of omission or commission to secede from or opt out of Nigeria then the Western Region and Lagos must also stay out the federation”.²⁶⁶ Responding to Awolowo’s remarks, the Western Leaders of thought,” the most representative body of Yoruba opinion then in existence, passed a resolution declaring that if any region seceded, the federation as we know it shall cease to exist” and western Nigeria shall automatically become independent and sovereign”²⁶⁷ When Gowon tried to convene the Supreme Military Council three days later, both Ojukwu and the Western Regional Governor colonel Adebayo, failed to attend. The Western Governor made it plain that he would not participate as long as Northern troops remained in the West.²⁶⁸ It appeared as though an East-West alliance was developing that might force Gowon’s abdication and result in the dissolution of the Nigerian federation into two possibly three sovereign states, one dominated by the Igbo, another by the Yoruba, and the third under the control of Hausa and Fulani.

Respect for Ojukwu’s position was apparently waxing stronger not only within Nigeria, but Britain as well. Ojukwu expect the British government to support the breakup of the federation, but he did hope for British neutrality, which obviously would make secession a lessy risky venture. It should however be noted that neutrality would not only deprive Gowon’s regime of any access to British military assistance but, it would be tantamount to a vote of no confidence in the Federal Government. An embarrassed Federal Government later released the text of the cable with the caveat that “no official request has been made to the British Government in this context. Only

²⁶⁶ *Daily Sketch*, May 3, 1967

²⁶⁷ *Daily Times*, May 2, 1967. Also printed in Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict*, Vol. 1, Pp. 414-418.

²⁶⁸ *Nigeria Federal Ministry of Informaiton*, Press Release, No. 1108, May 18, 1967.

tentative feelers were made²⁶⁹. The British were evidently displeased with the implication that they were prepared to backstop Gowon's efforts to revive the federation, and took steps to disassociate themselves from his faltering regime. According to a statement issued by the British High Commission in Lagos: No such request (for security force) has infact been made to the British Government. It would receive careful consideration if it was the unanimous wish of all Nigerians from all parts of the country.³⁵¹

The above quotation implies that there had to be unanimity among the regional governors before Britain would be involved. Such recognition also demonstrated that federal government only possessed nominal authority which is tantamount to de facto as a confederation of separate entities. In other words, the Britain's unwillingness to interfere with this arrangement was view in the East as a very encouraging omen.

Faced with an untenable situation, Gowon tried to forestall Eastern secession by granting a series of dramatic concessions during the third week of May as a sign of weakness and to claim that sanction had failed and the federation was on the verge of collapse. Secession was at hand, and Lagos appeared to lack the power and the will to resist. The allegiance of the Western Region was in serious doubt and the British seemed to resign to a "wait and see" policy. On May 26 Ojukwu addressed a joint meeting of chiefs and elders and the Consultative Assembly and offered the members three choices. "Accepting the terms of the North and Gowon and thereby submit to domination by the North, or (b) continuing the present stalement and drift, or (c) ensuring the survival of our people by asserting our autonomy."²⁷⁰ The Assembly to no one's surprise, endorsed independence the following day.

²⁶⁹ *Morning Post*, May 19, 1967, Press Reslease of the UK High Commission, Lagos.

²⁷⁰ Ojukwu, *Biafra*, 1, 173 .

6.3 The Creation of Twelve States Political Structure 27 May, 1967

Perhaps what hastened the creation of more states in the 1967 was the crisis of the period. The relationship between the Eastern Region and the rest of the country deteriorated, and Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu seceded and announced the Republic of Biafra. Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon created 12 states on 27 May, out of the former four regions and named Governors for all of them. Six states were created out of the former vast Northern Region. In the South, he created Lagos state out of the former Western Region. Along with already existing Mid-West, Rivers, East Central, and South-Eastern States were excised out of the former Eastern Region as soon as Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu declared that the former Eastern Region had seceded from the federation, and declared the new Republic of Biafra.²⁷¹

It should be noted that instead of announcing the birth of Biafra on May 27, 1967, Ojukwu paused once again to see if this latest threat would prompt the Federal Government to withdraw all Northern troops from the West. For the first time in the ten-month war of nerves, Ojukwu overplayed his hand. Rather than offering new formulae or gestures to mollify the East, Gowon counter attacked four hours later after the news of the consultative Assembly mandate for secession reached Lagos. He issued a constitutional decree that transformed the Nigerian Political system. The decree superseded the six-week old decentralisation decree (No. 8) and replaced the four regional governments with twelve federated states.²⁷² While the far reaching decision would take thirty-two months to implement fully, in retrospect the creation of twelve states was a major turning point in the country's history.

²⁷¹ Federal Republic of Nigeria, *The Constitution*, (Repeal and Restoration), Decree 1967, No. 13, Supplement to Official Gazette Extra ordinary, No. 37 Vo. 54, May 27, 1967.

²⁷² J. J. Stremlau, *International Politics and the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 55.

Undoubtedly, the creation of twelve states eventually facilitated three major paradigms in the political power. At the regional level, it occasioned limited Hausa and Fulani hegemony over the Northern half of the country and by the end of the war, prevented any further Igbo domination in the non-Igbo areas of the East. Nationally, the new arrangement marked the ascendancy of representatives from the minority ethnic groups, which consisted of nearly forty percent (40%) of the country's population. Nigeria had changed domestic alliances with possibility of building a more politically viable nation.

The public statement issued, by the government of Mid-Western State of Nigeria in July 1968, under the title *understanding the Nigerian crisis* contain the following formula:

With the creation of twelve states in Nigeria, the fundamental problem which threatened to dissolve a political association of our fifty years has been solved. It is clear that the states represent a successful attempt to reconcile conflicting interests of the ethnic communities with their desire to participate in the federal process as one people. The new structure of states will provide the basis for welding together the heterogeneous communities of Nigeria into a nation forging the chain of common values, common culture and sharing a common citizenship and common experience. The internal structure of the new state will curb the excess of any ethnic group and ensure peace and stability and provide a wide margin of security for the re-occurrence of the present crisis on such an unprecedented scale in the future. Igbo leaders must give up the plan of leading Nigeria as an ethnic group and contrive new ones of participating in the federal process as individuals. It is on this basis that they can make constructive contribution to Nigerian history²⁷³

So far as it goes, the above statement very clearly demonstrates the desire of its authors and other like-minded Nigerians to seek and secure lasting settlement to the current crisis, settlement based on fair play and on an equitable adjustment of our constitutional arrangement to accommodate the conflicting interests of those who are more likely to be dominated by the other. But recognising a necessary objective is one thing and taking the

²⁷³ *Understanding the Nigerian Crisis*, No GPB 429 (68)/369/20,000, Benin City, Nigeria, August 1968. A Mid-western Nigerian Government Publication. First Published in *West Africa*, 20 July 1968 and in the U. K. Press Gazette, 29 July, 1968.

most effective and realistic means to attain it is another. The attitude reflected in this statement, although, well-meaning, is over optimistic. Uwechue noted as follows:

It describes the twelve-state arrangement as already a successful attempt to reconcile conflicting interests when infact it is right now evident that numerous important interest are actually kicking against it. The current war itself, and the secession of Eastern Nigeria which preceded it, were directly precipitated by the imposition of this very same twelve state constitution.²⁷⁴

Because of the manner of its announcement, there was the impression that Gowon created 12 states in the country without consulting anybody. Some antagonists of the creation of twelve states have tendered different arguments to justify their claims. Chuba Okadigbo (of the blessed memory) one of the antagonists argues that General Gowon unilaterally fragmented Nigeria into twelve states with the view to isolate Igbo of the East and neutralise Ojukwu. This is, of course, not true, as the then commander in chief himself had stated time and again. As far as prevailing circumstances permitted, and making full use of the available means of consulting the people, Gowon did ascertain the thinking and wishes of the people of the country over the creation of states. As a matter of fact, the whole question was, of course, not an entirely new issue on the Nigerian scene. One of the major criticisms of the old regional groupings in Nigeria was that the regions were too unequal, both in size and population. It was postulated that the Nigerian federation neglected the accepted fact that in a true federation, no single part should be as large as or larger than the other component parts put together. In light of this Northern Nigeria came under repeated attacks for comprising over two thirds of the area and more than half of the population of the federation. Although much of the argument at a time was intended to score purely political points, designed by political opponents to splint

²⁷⁴ R Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War...*, P.75.

and weaken the North, to the advantage of other parts of the country.²⁷⁵

The individual most identified with the campaign for more states was Chief Obafemi Awolowo. In 1953 he had called for a *area* of the country into nine states. Four in the North (to free the Middle-Belt Yoruba from Hausa domination), two in the West and three in the East. The arrangement was strikingly similar to the one created in 1967. It must be noted too that throughout the intervening fourteen years Awolowo's efforts were resisted. Worthy of note president Azikiwe declined the move particularly to COR state movement because he felt the claim was based principally on anti-Igbo sentiment.²⁷⁶ More significantly when chief Awolowo was released from prison in 1966, he immediately drew the attention of the public to the plight of the minorities should any of the four region try to secede and suggested the need for a more broadly based federation.

The crux of the matter was that Gowon was not apathetic to the need for more states. Scholars have attempted explanation. As a member of a tiny ethnic group and a Christian from the predominantly Moslem North, he was also personally aware of the inequities of the old system.

It is a truism that the question of more states in the country was not a new phenomenon and responsible opinion in the North was aware of this and had come to the conclusion that given the right conditions, more states could go a long way to resolve the problems and difficulties caused by the fears and suspicions engendered in the old structure of the country. The main thing therefore, was not to see the creation of states as a completely new idea, but to ensure that conditions were right for the introduction of the

²⁷⁵ J. A. M. Samci, "My Experience of the Civil Service and of the Creation of States: 1960-1970" in Y. B. Usman, G. A. Kwanashie (eds) *Inside Nigerian History 1950-1960: Events, Issues and Sources*, University of Ibadan Press, Ibadan, 1996, P. 294.

²⁷⁶ J. S. Coleman, *Nigerian: Background to Nationalism...*, P. 388.

new measure. One of the most important considerations in this respect was, of course, to ensure that the creation of states was a national exercise, and not just a revival of the old political game of playing one part of the country against another. The idea in some quarters that the new states came as a complete surprise was clearly without any basis. In fact, the commander in chief did in actual fact makes full use of the then available means of consultation, making allowances for the prevailing conditions in the country. He was convinced as a result of these consultations that it was the wish of the people that more states be created. The manner in which the creation of new states was announced was perhaps partly responsible for the wrong impression that it was the sudden decision of one man. Under normal circumstances, an elaborate programme of public announcements and administrative preparation would have followed the favourable outcome of the consultations before the actual creation of states.

In view of the anomalous conditions in the country then, the commander in Chief could hardly have been expected to rely solely on normal protocol. The recalcitrant attitude of Ojukwu gave Gowon no alternative but to decree the creation of states at the time, and in the manner, in which he did it. In addition, the twelve states arrangement is clearly as overweighed in favour of minority considerations as the old arrangement of four regions was overweighed in favour of the majority groups. Raph Uwechue writing on the elastic Federal Union cited three extracts culled from the maiden issue of Fume1. Namely, the Question of States re-examining; on the Origin of the Twelve States by Dr. Emiko Afimomo and On Revenue Allocation by Taiwo Idemudia. Uwechue argues:

Between them they summarise our problems as of today, by bringing out vividly the fact that fear of domination: political and economic not only prompted the creation of the twelve states but persists after their creation.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ R Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War...*,

Whatever the validity of the argument, the official position from the Federal Government was that the creation of new states was an important move to fasten unity and stability in Nigeria. However, many suspect Machiavellian scheme at work here. Gowon understanding inter-ethnic rivalry, suspected that dividing the East into four states, land locking the Igbo into the East Central State and isolating the oil producing areas of Nigeria outside Igbo territory, would weaken secessionist sentiments in the region and empower minority groups that lived in oil-producing regions to stand up to what they had already declared for years the prospects of Igbo domination.²⁷⁸

Whatever is the shade of opinion, Gowon's appointment of civilian to be commissioners of (effective ministries), in the government from each of the newly created states was no doubt a masterly move. Jorre captured it as a completion and consolidation of his coup for obvious reasons. The men concerned were popular politicians in their areas and several of them also possessed a national and even international charisma. They included Anthony Enahoro from the mid-west, Joseph Tarka, the Tiv leader and Okoi Arikpo, a strong federalist from the Eastern minorities who was to become highly effective foreign minister for the federation. It would be

²⁷⁸ A definite step [toward secession] was taken in March when the Government of the Eastern Region announced that all revenues collected on behalf of the Federal Government would be paid to the Treasury of the Eastern Region. The Federal Government, it was alleged, had refused to pay the salaries of refugee civil servants forced to flee their areas of employment, and the East now had some 2 million refugees whose displacement from other parts of Nigeria was "irreversible." Moreover, the Federal Government, it was alleged, had refused to pay the East its statutory share of revenues for months.

Faced with virtual secession, Colonel Gowon finally attempted to deal with grievances about Northern domination and also to appeal to minorities throughout Nigeria. He proposed that the Northern Region be broken up into six states, the East into three, and the West into two. The new states would coincide, to a extent, with natural ethnic divisions. Notably, the East would be divided in such a way that the oil reserves would be located in states without an Igbo majority.

Source: Phil Baum, director, Commission on International Affairs, American Jewish Congress, "Memorandum to Chapter and Division Presidents, Chapter and Division CIA Chairmen, ORC's, Field Staff," 27 December, 1968.

recalled that toward the end of May 1967, Lt. Col. Ojukwu summoned the Eastern Nigeria Consultative Assembly, which met and having no other choice, gave Lt. Col Ojukwu the green light to carry out his secession, carry out his rebellious intention. Shortly after midnight on 30, May, 1967, Odumegwu Ojukwu and crowd of his closest advisers' family, and friend, gathered at sprawling governor's mansion in Enugu to hear the following declaration.

Fellow countrymen and women, you know, the people of Eastern Nigeria.... Aware that

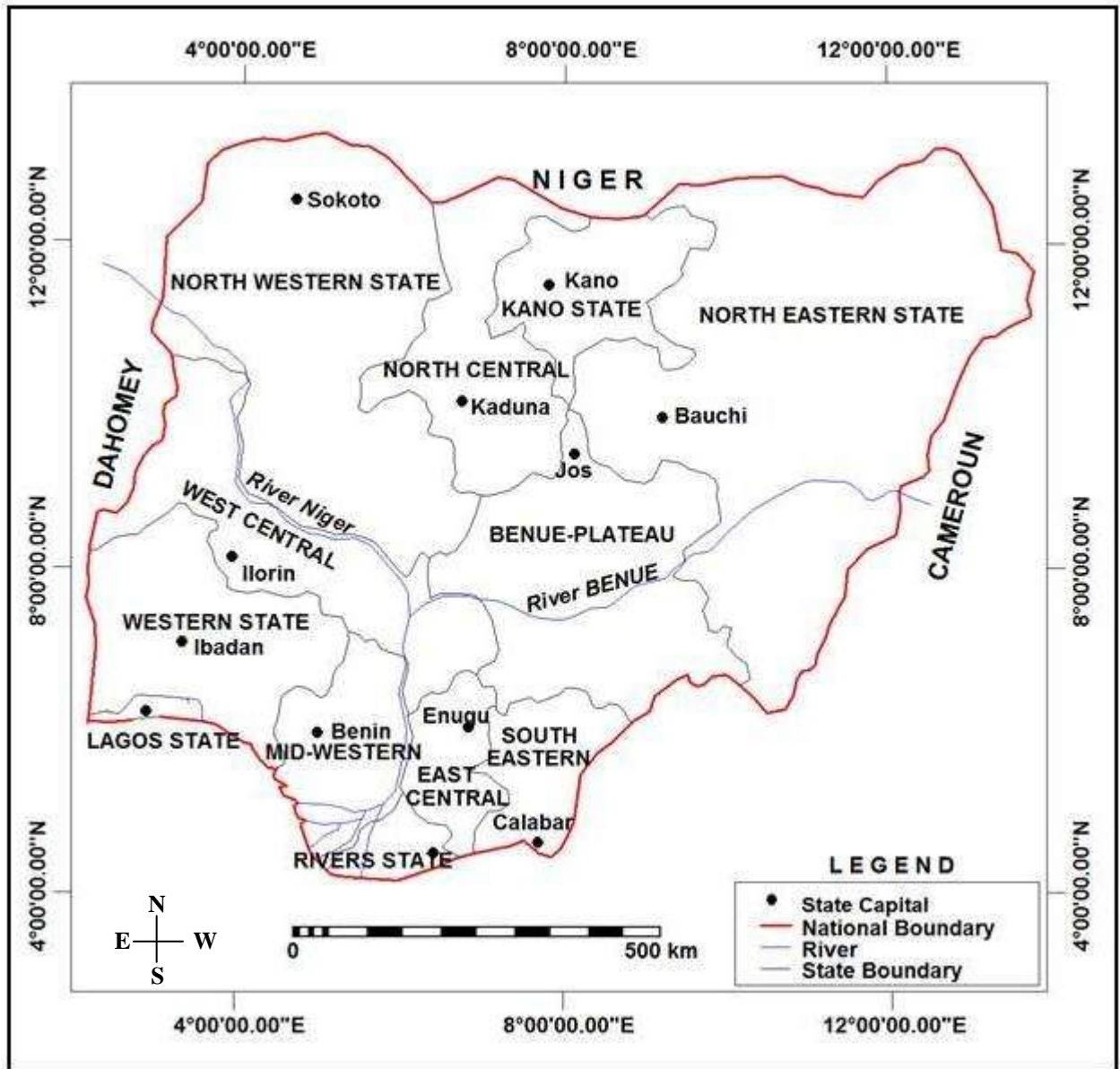
You can no longer be protected in your lives and property by any government based outside Eastern Nigeria.... THEREFORE I DO HEREBY SOLEMNLY PROCLAIM THAT THE TERRITORY AND REGION KNOWN AS AND CALLED EASTERN NIGERIAN TOGETHER WITH HER CONTINENTAL SHELF AND TERRITORIAL WATERS SHALL HENCEFORTH BE AN INDEPENDENT SOVEREIGN STATE OF THE NAME AND TITLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BIAFARA (sic).²⁷⁹

In other words, a mere few days after the new states were decreed, Ojukwu announced the secession of the East, complete with a national anthem, a national flag and similar paraphernalia which certainly could not have been prepared and finalized within two days. That these preparations had been going on for a long time was quite clear. It was also clear why Ojukwu spurned all the conciliation moves directed toward achieving a peaceful settlement, under the spurious excuse that he was being “pushed” sent out of the federation. He had infact set his mind irrevocably upon breaking up the federation in order to carve out a separate empire for himself.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Ojukwu argues that the delegation of the sovereign state of Biafra was not one main affairs as claimed by the federalist. The validity of this claim was flimsy. Ojukwu, Biafra “The Declaration”, May 30 1967, 1, 193-196. For an hour-hour account of the events surrounding Ojukwu declaration, see West Africa, No. 2810, June 10, Pp. 773-774.

²⁸⁰ Ojukwu argues that the delegation of the Sovereign State of Biafra was not one main affairs as claimed by the federalist...

Map 4: Map of Nigeria Showing Twelve States, 1967



Source: Adapted from Historical Map of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Information, Lagos, 1967, P.20

Table 3: States Created by the Gowon Military Administration, 1967

S/N	EXISTING STATES	REGION	AREA (SQ ML)	STATE CAPITAL	POPULATION	ETHNIC/LINGUISTICS COMPOSITION
1.	North-West	North	65,004	Sokoto	5,733,296	Nupe, Gbagyi, Hausa and Fulbe
2.	North-Central	North	26,949	Kaduna	4,098,305	Hausa, Fulbe and Gbagyi
3.	Kano	North	16,630	Kano	5,774,842	Hausa and Fulbe
4.	North-East	North	120,834	Maiduguri	7,815,443	Kanuri, Hausa and Fulbe
5	Benue-Plateau	North	41,844	Jos	4,009,408	Tiv, Anga. Birom, Idoma and Jukun
6	Kwara	North	28,672	Ilorin	2,406,265	Yoruba, Igala, Ibara, Nupe, Hausa and Fulani
7	Lagos	West	5,747	Lagos	1,433,567	Yoruba
8	Western	West	29,100	Ibadan	9,487,526	Yoruba
9	Mid-West	Mid-West	15,344	Benin City	2,535,839	Edo, Igbo, Urhobo, Ijaw, Itsekiri and Isoko
10	East-Central	East	8,746	Enugu	7,469,000	Igbo
11	South-East	East	13,730	Calabar	4,626,317	Ibibio, Anang, Efik, Ekoi, Bekwarra, Yala and Oron
12	Rivers	East	7,018	Port-Harcourt	1,544,314	Ijaw, Ikwerre and Igbo

Source: "Nigeria Yearbook Lagos,"1972.

6.4 Declaration of the State of Biafra, 30 May, 1967

The Republic of Biafra took its name from the Bight of Biafra, the vast expanse of water covering the continental shelf into which the Niger River empties before flowing into the Gulf of Biafra. The origin of the word “Biafra” is difficult to trace, although historical records point to Portuguese writings from the sixteenth century.

May the twenty-sixth saw an emergency meeting of Ojukwu’s special Advisory Committee of Chiefs and Elders in Enugu. The consensus was building across his cabinet that secession was the only viable path. "On May 26, the Consultative Assembly mandated Colonel Ojukwu to declare, at the earliest practicable date, Eastern Nigeria a free sovereign and independent state by the name and title of the Republic of Biafra."²⁸¹

It is crucial to note that the decision of an entire people, the Igbo people, to leave Nigeria, did not come from Ojukwu alone but was informed by the desires of the people and mandated by a body that contained some of the most distinguished Nigerians in history: Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Nigeria's, former Governor-General and first ceremonial president; Dr. Michael I. Okpara and Sir Francis Ibiem, Former Premier and Governor of Eastern Nigeria, respectively; and Supreme Court justice, Sir Louis Mbanefo. Others included: the educator Dr. Alvan Ikoku; first republic minister Mr. K. O. Mbadiwe; as well as Mr. N. U. Akpan; Mr. Joseph Echeruo; Ekukinam-Basse, Chief Samuel Mbakwe; Chief Jerome Udoji; and Chief Margaret Ekpo.²⁸²

For the Federal Government of Nigeria, the secession of the Eastern Region – Biafra – was the natural and inevitable culmination of a carefully laid out plan nurtured

²⁸¹ A. Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolutionary and the Biafran War*, P. 93

²⁸² C. Achebe, *There Was A Country...*, P. 91.

secretly to maturity. For Biafra she was rejected and “pushed out” of Nigeria. The truth was somewhere in between these two distinct and conflicting positions. Biafra had a plan for secession but it had not matured by May, 1967, and secession could have been averted had the Federal Government shown greater appreciation of the feelings in the East following the “adulteration” of Aburi Accord. Instead it lost its nerve, panicked and in an attempt to forestall it precipitated secession. But the ease and rapidity with the East was “pushed over” and out of the federation also demonstrates how close she had brought herself to the edge of secession.

It would be recalled that the important decision to secede was not arrived at overnight. It was preceded by some preparations. Dr. Graham – Douglas, Former Attorney General in the East made this assertion in his Pamphlet, *Ojukwu’s Rebellion and World Opinion*.²⁸³ As early as March 1967 an official of the Eastern Regional Government, intercepted at London airport, was found with designs and specimen of currency notes and stamps for the Republic of Biafra. The British custom officials here borrowed the documents for some five hours” routine scrutiny” before returning them to the frightened traveller.

Interestingly, one of the things the new government did was to establish the Bank of Biafra. The Bank was located in Enugu until the city fell in October, 1967. The Bank Pioneer Governor was Sylvester Ugo. The legal tender produced by the institution in January, 1968 was designed by Simon Okeke and other talented local artists.²⁸⁴ The currency was widely accepted in Biafra. It must be placed on record that it was not a

²⁸³ N. B. Graham-Douglas, *Ojukwu’s Rebellion ad Wrold Opinion*, London, Russell Partnesss Limited, 1968.

²⁸⁴ Europa Publcatons, *Regional Survey of the World, 2004: Set Africa South of the Sahara*, Routledge: London, 2004.

recognised legal tender beyond Biafra's borders and could not be used for foreign exchange.

The flag of the Republic of Biafra was modeled after Pan-Africanist teaching of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL). It was Garvey's organisation that came up with tricolored morphology of the pan-Africa flag, with three horizontal bands, red, black and green to symbolise the common ancestry and political aspirations of all black people around the world. The red in Garvey's conception highlighted the blood that links all people of African ancestry, as well as blood shed during slavery and liberation struggles around the globe. In the Biafran context, it was used to represent blood shed during the pogroms and the quest for independence. The black was seen as the affirmation of "an African nation state" by the UNIA-ACL. In Biafra, it was a symbolic ancestral connection to souls of years past. The green in both Garvey and Biafra's concept stood for Africa's abundant natural wealth and resources, and its radiant future. The Biafra flag also highlighted these aspirations with a rising golden sun and rays representing the eleven original provinces in the republic.²⁸⁵

The Biafra National Anthem, *Land of the Rising Sun*²⁸⁶ was based on a powerful poem by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. The Nigeria Biafra war led to an explosion of musical, lyrical, and poetic creativity and artistry. Biafra founders tapped into this energy and commissioned a number of regimental drills, daily songs, cadences, that they hoped

²⁸⁵ R. A. Hill *et al.* (eds.). "The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Vol. X: Africa for the Africans, 1923-1945." University of California Press, Berkeley 2006; T. Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organisation Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, Greenwood Press: Westport CT, 1987, p. 43; Vincent Bakpetu Thompson, *Africa and The Evolution of Pan- Africanism*, Longman Publishing Group: New York, 1977.

²⁸⁶ Nnamdi Azikiwe reports, *The Music of Sibelius, Be Still My Soul*, was appropriated, and *My Ode to 'Onitsha Ado N'Idu: Land of the Rising Sun* was plagiarised and adapted to suit the secessionists." Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Origins of the Nigerian Civil War*, Nigerian National Press, Apapa, 1969.

would spur armies to victory and excite the populace to political and economic vitality.²⁸⁷

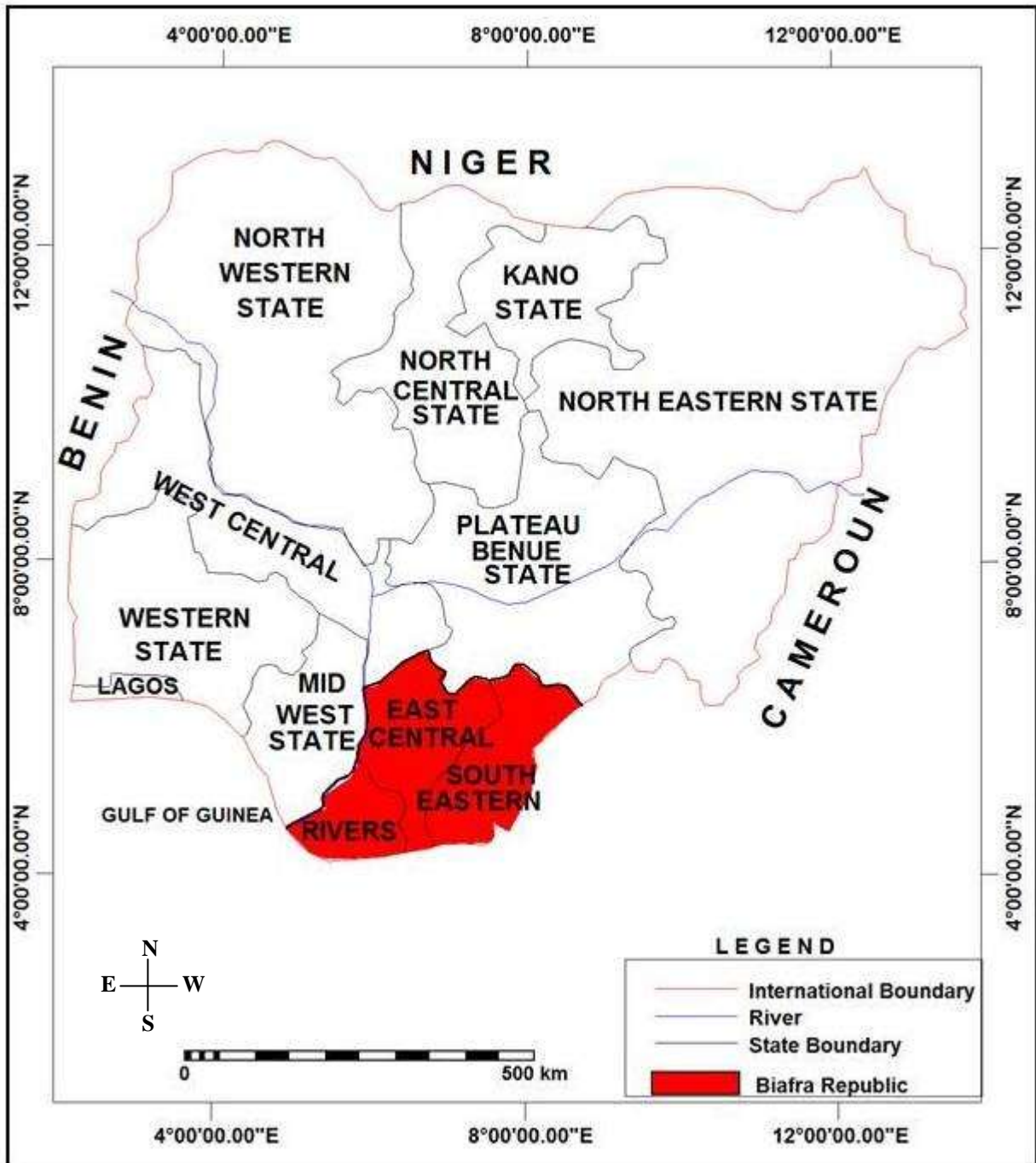
More significantly, the Republic of Biafra was built upon the ideological principle of Ahiara declaration. The brain child of National Guidance Committee. It was called *Ahiara*²⁸⁸ because Ojukwu's headquarters was at the village of *Ahiara*. The concept of the Ahiara Declaration was taken from a similar one issued by President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania in the early 1960s called *Arusha* Declaration. On June 1, 1969, Ojukwu delivered this major speech, the *Ahiara* Declaration. It was an attempt to capture the meaning of the struggle for Biafran sovereignty. The speech was as notable for its concentration on a number of issues that stood for such things as the rights to liberty, safety, excellence, and self-determination – as it was for the things the republic was against: genocide, racism, imperialism, ethnic hatred, which were squarely condemned.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Origins of Nigerian Civil War...*

²⁸⁸ The retreats Ojukwu had before, in Umuahia and Owerri was popularly known as Ojukwu Bunkers were longer available to him, having been bombed by the Nigerian Army.

²⁸⁹ Nwankwo and Ifejika, *Biafra*; Achuzia. *Requiem Biafra*; Madiebo. *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*; Schabowska and Himmelstrand, *African Reports on the Nigerian Crisis*; *Biafra @ a glance*, www.kvcnu.com/biafra/biafra.htm; Biafra-Foundation. <http://biafra.cwis.org/pdf/BiafraNewsAgency23.pdf>, p. 6; Metz, Nigeria.

Map 5: Map of Nigeria Showing Defunct Biafra Republic, 1967



Source: Adapted from Historical Map of Nigeria, Lagos, 1967, p. 19

6.5 The Federal Blockade June/July, 1967

The Federal Government's first response to Biafran secession was to re-impose severe economic sanctions, including a blockade of the Eastern Regions air and sea ports, a ban on foreign currency transactions, and a halt to all incoming post and telecommunications. The only international business excluded from the sanctions was the continued exporting of crude petroleum from Port Harcourt, the reason for this was that the semi-annual payment of royalties was not due until July 10, and both sides hoped to collect the full revenue. It should be noted that apart from the economic blockade, there were no direct reprisals, during the first five weeks of secession, the initial confrontation appeared to be, in the words of one experienced journalist, St. De Jorre, a "phoney war"²⁹⁰. This implies a period of time when two groups are officially at war but not actually fighting.

It must be admitted that economic sanctions had a particularly damaging reputation in Africa because of Britain's failure to bring down the Ian Smith regime in Rhodesia. The prospect that they would ever work against Biafra was even more dubious, given the thousands of Igbo who lived in West Cameroon and across the Niger River in the Mid-West state. More often than not, these people had never paid much attention to domestic and international frontiers except in the rare instances that these conformed to ethnic law and custom. There is also a probability that illicit international shipping could be offloaded by small craft in the hundreds of estuaries that sliced through the vast riverine regions of Nigeria's newly proclaimed South Eastern and Rivers State.

Nigerian authorities defended the plausibility of the economic threat by stressing the Eastern traditional economic dependence on the rest of the federation and by

²⁹⁰ De St. Jorre, *The Story of the Nigeria Civil War.*, Pp. 123-144.

suggesting that Ojukwu really did not have the strength or tenacity to resist.²⁹¹ As a matter of fact, the application of economic sanction was the federal government's only immediately available option. Nigeria's army was so poorly deployed and ill-equipped that the government had to limit its initial response to the economic sphere while the mobilisation of forces got under way. International respect for the federal blockade was generally a good omen, because all major foreign shipping lines agreed not to enter the prohibited area and several ships bound for Eastern Nigeria had then re-routed to federal Ports. Significantly, the strength of this paper blockade was much greater than Biafra's leaders had anticipated.²⁹² The effective closure of the Eastern ports was a major defeat for the secessionists. The handful of stray cargo vessels willing to smuggle goods into Biafra died with the shelling and capturing of two ships by the Nigerian navy in early July.²⁹³ Another important indicator of foreign willingness to support the federal quarantine of Biafra was an early agreement between the governments of Nigeria and Cameroon to restrict movement of persons and goods across their respective borders. Initially it posed difficulties to enforce the new regulations until the federal army had occupied the south Eastern state. President Ahidjo deployed Cameroonian troops along the frontier and sent his secret police into border villages to monitor and interdict unusually large purchases of local and imported goods.²⁹⁴ The actual display of the blockade viability focused on the behaviour of Nigeria's largest oil concessionaire, shell-British petroleum. When the July 10 deadline for royalty payments passed without any

²⁹¹ De St. Jorre, *The Story of the Nigeria Civil War...*, Pp. 123-124.

²⁹² De St. Jorre, *The Story of the Nigeria Civil War...*, Pp. 138-139.

²⁹³ J. J. Stremmlau, *The International Politics and the Nigerian Civil War...*, P.75.

²⁹⁴ Ojukwu. The most theatrical confrontation is said to have taken place when McFadzean, Gray's superior, flew in from London. The Biafran leadership was split over what would amount to "reasonable" demands, and Ojukwu asserts that his tough talk was undermined by one of his senior advisers, who privately phoned McFadzean to assure him that compromise was possible.

action from shell-BP, the Federal Government announced a petroleum control Decree” that extended the blockade to oil tankers.²⁹⁵

This was a bombshell following 2 July, the Federal Government implementation of its threat and cracked the blockade down on the tankers and thus completed the process begun a month before of sealing off Biafra coastline. More significantly, the fur was also flying at the British Commissioner in Lagos David Hunt, the High Commission had apparently not been consulted by Shell BP about its decision and was in a towering rage. He was bitterly opposed to the idea of any oil revenue payment to the Biafrans and had his best to halt every move in the direction. The game was not yet over.²⁹⁶ Bifara’s main concern was foreign exchange. The issue of royalties and taxes were critical to both parties. One of the accepted attributes of sovereignty is the ability to collect revenue and taxes. The federal government’s aim was therefore to deny the Biafrans both the cash and implied recognition.

The amount involved was close to twenty million dollars and Biafra tried to assert its claim through a combination of legal arguments and unabashed extortion. In Washington, Ojukwu’s lawyers drafted a lengthy memorandum for all major oil companies operating in Nigeria to show why the Biafran government, with de facto

²⁹⁵J. J. Stremmlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P.75, Interviews: Kolade and Hadj Hammadou Alim, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in Lagos. The Igbos control much of the economy of West Cameroon, and, according to Kolade, there were rumors that Ojukwu had sent representatives to west Cameroon offering support for any secession there. President Ahidjo took a strict position of neutrality along the frontier; his security forces would not allow Biafrans or Nigerians to transverse Cameroonian territory, although it was several months before this was fully operational. He even denied a Nigerian request to use the small portion of the Ikom-Calabar road that cuts into Cameroon for a few miles. There is considerable anti-Igbo feeling in west Cameroon, which in 1961 voted to side with Yaounde so that the majority of West Cameroonians would not have to remain under Igbo domination. To reduce tensions in these border areas during the war, Ahidjo passed restrictions that forbade listening to Radio Nigeria or Radio Biafra at high volume. The wearing of native cloth with pictures of Ojukwu or Gowon was also banned. Internationally, Ahidjo remained one of Nigeria’s strongest supporters as will be noted in later discussions of the role of the Organisation of African Unity in the Nigerian crisis.

²⁹⁶ See *Daily Times*, June 15, 1967.

control over the East, should not, according to British and American practices, receive all taxes and other revenue payments from any company interested in operating there.²⁹⁷ The oil representative listened politely to the legal briefs but did not respond, preferring instead to continue dealing with the federal government.

Shell BP was dealt with separately and more aggressively.

The most dramatic if overpublicised episode in Biafra's brief exposure to oil politics was the arrest of Shell BP's local managing director, Stanley Gray, and his incarceration in the Plush Presidential Hotel in Enugu. Nigerian officials, believe the incident was a more ruse to allow the company a way to make at least a token payment to Ojukwu without burning all its bridges with the federal government Ojukwu, however, relishes his recollection of the browbeating late night secessions with BP officials during which he claims to have come close to extracting major concessions.²⁹⁸

In the end, he was promised a "token" payment of approximately two million dollars, which would have been equivalent to the amount of revenue earned during the seven weeks of Biafran secession, with the rest of the obligation to be held in escrow. Apparently, the payment was never actually made.²⁹⁹

The Biafra were also running into trouble as a result of the federal blockade which, though far from total in the early days, was beginning to throttle the Biafran economy. A federal spokesman admitted that the blockade itself would not bring Biafra down but said it was designed as softening up process to lower Eastern morale. Feeling was running so high in the East that although process rose, it was doubtful whether it achieved this. However, in the major terms it was one of the major causes of Biafran's defeat.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷De St. Jorre, *The Story of the Nigeria Civil War...*, Pp.141-142.

²⁹⁸J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*,P. 187.

²⁹⁹J. J. Stremlau..., Ojukwu, The most theatrical confrontation is said to have taken place when McFadzean, Gray's superior, flew in from London. The Biafran leadership was split over what would amount to "reasonable" demands, and Ojukwu asserts that his tough talk was undermined by one of his senior advisers, who privately phoned MeFadzean to assure him that compromise was possible.

³⁰⁰There has been endless speculation about whether or not Shell BP made payment and if so, how much and to whom. The most plausible explanation - namely, that Gray made the pledge but the British government refused to release the foreign exchange for transfer to Switzerland - appears in De St. Jorre, *The Nigerian Civil War*, P. 141, and in Cronje, *The World and Nigeria*, Pp. 166-171.

6.6 Police Action 6 July, 1967

The imposition of the Federal blockade against oil tankers left the question of future payment unresolved, although not for long. On 6 July, 1967, the Federal Government launched what was described as a “police action” intended to discipline Lt. Col Ojukwu and his clique”. The campaign was expected to last a few months at the most.³⁰¹ Who opened first is interesting because both sides claimed the other did. However, who fired the first shot is a matter of dispute. From Jorre account, it appears as if the Federal Government opened fire first. To quote him internally: By night fall, Federal Columns were advancing on two fronts, and the agencies were carrying the news to the four corners of the world.³⁰²

The federal army which was previously numbered less than nine thousand men had multiplied in the interval to an estimated forty thousand troops, hurriedly reconstructed from the disorganized remnants of the Nigerian army after the withdrawal of Eastern Nigerian elements. It had acquired a few dozen British armoured vehicles of the ferret and Salad in type as well as a number of French panhards. The absence of Igbo officers who formed the bulk of the officer class in the old Nigerian army meant that the new federal army had to rely mainly on inexperienced young officers or on more seasoned but uneducated non-commissioned officers. This lacuna prompted widespread speculation in the early days of the war that foreign mercenaries were leading the federal troops. It is not clear how much truth there was in this allegation but there is little doubt that the engineering corps made excessive use of foreign “instructors”.

The Biafran army at the beginning of the war estimated at some twenty five thousand troops hurriedly organised around the nucleus of the two thousand surviving

³⁰¹ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of Nigeria Civil War...*, P. 7 .

³⁰² De St. Jorre, *The Story of the Nigeria Civil War...*, P. 165.

Eastern Nigerian officers and men with little training in make shift camps. The bulk of recruitment came initially from the abundant supply of angry refugee youth itching for the opportunity to fight. The Biafran was relatively lightly armed, relying essentially on clandestine shipments of weapon many of which came initially from Czechoslovakia. It had no artillery and very few anti tank weapons. There was no real airforce on either side. The federal air force only just created consisted of a bare dozen trainer aircrafts of Dornier type, Biafra had two American-built B. 26 bombers purchased clandestinely in France. She also had a number of French built helicopter originally bought as civilian machines by companies operating in the Eastern Region.

The Federal Army opened its campaign by advancing from the North with a reported strength of eight battalions. Really, the Biafrans had anticipated the advance from that direction and had taken positions weeks before that event. Biafra resistance was much stiffer than expected. Although increased federal pressure led to the loss in the first weeks of fighting of important portions of Ogoja province, the Biafrans took a heavy toll of the Federal Army.³⁰³

6.7 Conclusion

It has been revealed that the penetration of the Biafran soldiers in Ibaji started with the attack of Echeno village. The rebel soldiers came through Enugu-Otu, a neighbouring Igbo community. According to the informant, the attack began at night in early November, 1967. In this encounter, Echeno recorded one casualty while Biafra recorded fourteen (14). This however, did not call for celebration because two weeks later, the euphoria disappeared because the village was set ablaze by the rebel soldiers. This led wantom destruction of buildings, property, livestock among others. The villagers

³⁰³ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of Nigeria Civil War...*, P. 8.

vacated their home temporarily to seek refuge in a far Ibaji neighbourhood such as Akwuro, Onyedega, Atiko ecetera. Some crossed River Niger to Illushi, Ifekwu, Odogumę and Okpatawo. It was indeed face to face battle between the Biafran soldiers and unarmed Echeno civilians under the command of Egwuda Akpoli. The incident at Echeno acted as a gateway to other attacks on Ibaji District in January 1968.³⁰⁴

Moreover, it should be noted that within the period of six weeks the whole of mid-west state had been cleared off of the rebels and plan had started to cross to *Onitsha*. Sadly enough, the two attempts ended in futile with the last almost degenerating in muting. The *division* eventually crossed the River Niger at Idah and linked up with one *Area* before Onitsha was captured on 21 March, 1968.³⁰⁵ Also, topographically, it should be recalled that Idah bordered with Onitsha to the south and Nsukka to the East, and because of its proximity, it became one of the theatres of war. Available evidence suggests that the rebel B26 bombers and helicopter became a nuisance in Nsukka axis. Usman Ojotu corroborates the above assertion that the Biafran B26 bombers and helicopter bombed Idah three times in 1968. He also explains that the first air raid was in the evening at about 5:30 p.m. which one Abu was murdered, the second was in the morning 9:00 a.m. and there was no casualty recorded while the third bombing was at the Ega Market Square. However, the informant was unable to provide the actual time and date due to lack of record keeping but he maintained that it was at the heart of the market. During that day, about fourteen (14) persons were feared.³⁰⁶ It is not a subject of any debate that this incident had catastrophic impact on the people of Idah. For instance, the

³⁰⁴ Onu'egwune Ude, Place: Echeno Ibaji, Age: 85, Occupation: Farmer, Date: 13/07/2016.

³⁰⁵ Major General Abdullahi Shelleng, "The Nigerian Army in the Civil War", in T. N. Tamuno, *The Civil War Years*, Being the Proceedings of the National Conference on Nigeria Since Independence. Zaria, March, 1983, Vol. III, P.69.

³⁰⁶ Usman Ojotu, Occupation: Ex-Serviceman, Place: Angwa Idah, Rank: Sergeant, Date: 14/06/2016.

town became panic-stricken; people went to into hiding in villages and camps. The people covered their houses with leaves to prevent focal view of the rebels. Ojotu's account corroborates Abdullahi's account especially the role of B26 rebel bombers and helicopter.

The chapter had clearly established that the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war in 1967 was a product of many factors. This encompasses the massacre of the Easterners in May, September and October in 1966 by the Northerners which made it abundantly clear that the Federal Military Governor was unable to guarantee the safety of Ndi Igbo and other elements of Eastern Nigeria. The non-implementation of Aburi accord by the Nigerian Government became a staking point for Ojukwu to justify the secession against him, hence the slogan, "on Aburi we stand" dominated the Eastern Secession propaganda.

Equally significant, the doggedness of the Federal Military Government to preserve the integrity of Nigeria as a sovereign state made the matter worst. During the incessant agitations for the creation of state in Nigeria right from colonial era to post-independent made General Gowon to create 12 states on 27 may, 1967. It was mainly a political move to forestall the actualisation of Biafran Republic. It should be noted as well that between June and July, 1967 the Federal Government declared the federal blockage on the Eastern Region. On 30 May, 1967 Ojukwu declared the former Eastern Region as sovereign state of Biafra. This was rejected by the Federal Military Government under General Gowon who described the act of secession as rebellious and launched what was then described as "Police Action" intended to discipline Lieutenant Ojukwu. The campaign was expected to last for a few weeks or a few months at the most.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ESCALATION OF THE CIVIL WAR, 1967-1970

7.0 Introduction

Many factors were advanced for the escalation of Nigerian Civil war. The premise of this discussion is on the causative factors and analysis of each factor for the development of the war. One of these factors was the Biafran invasion of the Mid-West on 9 August, 1967. The importance of this factor cannot be overstressed. To start with, it produced shock which fundamentally altered the character of the war; the unexpected push of the Biafran soldiers displayed their military capabilities.

On the part of the Federal Government, Lagos itself, the administrative nerve centre of Nigeria, came under very real threat and it induced a rapid re-thinking on the Federal side hence, General Gowon's reiterated that from now on, "we shall wage total war."³⁰⁷ This development led to the involvement of the foreign elements in the war such as Britain and Russia. Note that by late September, Biafran forces were swept back from the Mid-West to Eastern Region. The "total war" and the enormity of Biafran civilian suffering which it produced gained world attention and sympathy, for Biafrans, this development no doubt led to the direct recognition of Biafra by four African states: Tanzania, Gabon, Ivory Coast and Zambia. This development catapulted other developments in the course of the war such as alleged genocide, Biafra resistance, the invention of indigenous technology, federal war policies, war economies, and propaganda machinery employed.

7.1 Invasion of the Mid-West State 9 August, 1967

The Biafran invasion of Mid-West was a major turning point in the war. It had

³⁰⁷ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*P.8.

immense political, military, economic and psychological repercussions. And, in retrospect, it can be seen to have played a significant part in sealing Biafra's fate.³⁰⁸ On 9 August, 1967 Biafran forces in a lightning operation overran the Mid-West State and within the span of few days advanced some thirty miles into the heart of Nigeria's Western Region. This event and the shock it produced perhaps more than any other factor, fundamentally, altered the character of the war. That unexpected push revealed in dramatic fashion Biafran military capabilities. Lagos itself came under very real threat.³⁰⁹ This fact induced a rapid rethinking on the federal side.

Ojukwu states that:

We went into the Mid-West purely in an effort to seize the serpent by the head..... our motives was not territorial ambition or the desire of conquest. We were going to Lagos to seize the Villian Gowon, and we took the necessary military precautions.

The words 'serpent and villain' used by Ojukwu to describe General Yakubu Gowon was derogatory and therefore portrayed Ojukwu as a propagandist. As far this discourse is concerned, Gowon was not a villain but Ojukwu a rebel.

This is Ojukwu's version and as a statement of the overall objective of the campaign. There is no reason to doubt what it was all about, (one should perhaps, add that Ibadan, closer than Lagos, was an alternative objective which if achieved, would probably have also toppled the Federal Government). Militarily, the operations offered the bonus of easing pressure on the occupied parts of Biafra, especially the ominous advance on Enugu, and prevent the Nigerians from using Mid-West as a launching pad for a new front. Politically, it offered the chance of unpinning the loosely constructed Federal alliance notably the weavering west and throwing the whole Nigeria into spectacular disarray. The concept of a 'Southern Front' it had a long political history

³⁰⁸ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 166.

³⁰⁹ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 166.

against the North was again close to the surface in Biafran thinking. And then, even if Lagos or Ibadan were not taken, the threat alone might bring the Federal Government closer to Biafra's peace terms. (In fact, at the height of the Biafran occupation of the Mid-West, Ojukwu launched a peace initiative its essence being a proposal for a sort of common market link between an association of states in Nigeria).³¹⁰ Despite the euphoric verbal heroic espoused by John De St. Jorre, the well regarded reporter for the observer provided a far more subdued picture of Biafran army readiness and organisation:

The Biafrans 'stormed' through the Mid-West not in the usual massive implements of modern warfare but in a bizarre collection of private cars, "mammy" wagons cattle and vegetable trucks. The command vehicle was a Peugeot estate car. The whole operation was not carried out by an "army" or even "brigade...but by at most 1,000 men, they majority poorly trained and armed, and many wearing civilian clothes because they had not been issued with uniforms.³¹¹

The invasion was motivated among other things by the speculations of an impending federal takeover to provide it with strategic and logistic access to Eastern Nigeria if war broke out. This speculation is tantamount to conjectures because Mid-West was still remaining part of Nigeria and did not secede either. This is mere propaganda machinery. What is however most evident was that the political and traditional elite of Mid-West had made it abundantly clear to Gowon that they were not part of a civil war and that the region would be neutral in the event of any hostilities. Several reasons were advanced for this position. Apart from a desire for peace during a precarious period, the leaders of that part of Nigeria recognised that their citizens were of multi-ethnic background, including a sizeable Igbo population. The Biafra utilised this knowledge to their own advantage by mapping out their strategy. The leaders of the offensive related their reasons for occupying the Mid-West as one "organised to prevent the federal

³¹⁰ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 166.

³¹¹ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 166.

government from forcing mid Westerners` to enlist to fight against their own people; thus undermining the mediatory role which the Mid-West had been playing”³¹² indeed, some scholars speculate that Governor David Ejoor, the Military Governor of the Mid West, was informed of Ojukwu’s intention to invade and that both men could have very well met to discuss the implication of such an action.

The role of Brigadier Victor Banjo was critical in the historiography of the invasion of the Mid-West. It would be recalled that he was alleged of taking part in January coup de’tat of 1966 and found guilty of treasonable felony by the Nigerian Federal Military Government despite his insistence for innocence. To be precise he was detained at Ikot Ekpene prisons. It is self-evident that geographically Ikot-Ekpene was in the Biafra enclave Banjo decided to stay on Biafra soil rather than return and face court martial. Ojukwu had got tactical strategic and political mileage for having Banjo in Biafra, and he enjoyed the prospect of having a Nigerian soldier fight for him. Despite protests in certain military quarters made him one of his close military confidants and advisers. From the available evidence, it appears as if Banjo was not in support of Ojukwu secessionist aspiration but favoured a solution to Nigeria’s problems that would result in the “deamalgation” of the country back into Southern and Northern Nigeria.³¹³ Chinua Achebe captures the event as follows:

In the late evening of 14 August, 1967, soon after the Biafra invaded the Mid-Western Region, Brigadier Banjo Spoke to Mid-Westerners and Nigerian over the airewaves from

³¹² It was generally believed that both Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu of Eastern region (Biafra) and David Ejoor of the Mid-Western Region met secretly on several occasions to discuss the crisis before and even after the declaration of Biafra. Ejoor admitted all of these actions were taken to prevent battle on Benin soil and protect everybody’s interest, including the Igbo citizens (of the region) even though (he) primarily supported the Federal Government.

Source: S. E. Orabator “The Biafran crisis and the Mid-West”, African Affairs 86, No. 34, July, 1987, Pp. 367-383.

³¹³ Stremmlau, argues that Ojukwu had given a Yoruba Lieutenant Colonel Victor Banjo, Commander of the invading Biafra army in the hope that this would placate non-Igbo in the Mid-West and facilitate link-up with dissident in Western Nigeria. See also Nwankwo and Ifejika, *Biafra*, Madiebo.

Benin. Hundreds of thousands of listeners across the nation tuned in, expecting a detailed explanation for the invasion and description of the long term plans of the Biafran army. Some of the questions running through my mind and the minds of many Nigerians across the nation included the following: who exactly was behind this invasion, was this a temporary occupation? What was the long term plan? What would be the reaction of Gowon and the Nigerian federal forces? Banjo's address was a disappointment. It sounded to me far more like a lament of the breakup of Nigeria than a speech coming from "a Biafra military" or an explanation for the invasions of Nigeria territory or Biafra secession.³¹⁴

This became explicit in the context of the Broadcast. For instance, Banjo dedicated the first half of his message to what sounded like an overview of Nigeria's political and military history and his own travails within that establishment. In the second half of the speech he finally got around to explaining to his listeners that the Biafran invasion of Mid-West was not a "conquest or an invasion" but an exercise designed to "enable the people of the Mid-West to see the Nigerian problem in its proper perspective".³¹⁵ Closely following Banjo's speech was the promulgation by the Biafrans of a new decree that established what would be known as the Republic of Benin (The area occupied by Biafran Forces) in the Mid-Western Region and the appointment of Major Albert Nwazu Okonkwo as its military administrator, we were told, would supersede the previous government of the Military Governor David Ejoor, who had been appointed by the Nigerian Head of State.³¹⁶

It became very obvious that from the moment Banjo reached Benin, little went right for the Biafrans in the Mid-West. Instead of pushing on to Ibadan and Lagos he dawdled, making speeches, setting up his own administration and confusing Enugu as much as the enemy. Many observers have concluded that if he had concentrated all his forces on continuous westward thrust he would have got to Ibadan within a few days.

³¹⁴ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country...*, P. 130.

³¹⁵ See C. Achebe, Appendix of the above for the detail of the speech. P.294.

³¹⁶ Achebe Foundation Interviews: Nigerian Soldiers from the defunct Mid-Western Region, 2008.

There was virtually nothing to stop him with incalculable results. But the delay of almost two weeks, lost Biafra the campaign and ultimately, much more besides. More explicitly, in 1982, Ojukwu provided a glimpse of his disappointment about the role that Banjo played in the Mid-West offensive. The stop in Benin was the beginning of the error. My plan for that operation was that by half past five in the morning, the Biafran troops would be in the peripheries of Lagos. General Olusegun Obasanjo debunked this claim in his memoir titled, *My Command*, Obasanjo avers that some doubts as to whether or not Victor Banjo intentionally refused to proceed further to Ibadan and Lagos as directed.³¹⁷ “A renowned social critic and I discussed Banjo’s request for me to grant him unhindered access to Ibadan and Lagos at any price. Both the request and the price were turned down.”³¹⁸

The other aspect of the belief that Awo did not show full commitment to the Federal side is the belief in some quarters, that he was involved in the “Banjo plot.” According to this theory, Colonel Victor Banjo, the leader of the invading Biafran force was to be given an unhindered access to the West by the grace of Chief Awolowo. The detail of the plot was that having occupied the Mid-West, the “January Revolutionaries” would then attack Biafra and possibly kill Ojukwu, ally with the West and bring the war to an end. Thereafter, the plotters would, with the support of Awolowo, turnover to Gowon, depose him and install the latter as President of the country.

The most articulate exponent of this view is Fredrick Forsyth.³¹⁹ According to him, the plot was foiled by the Biafran intelligence and Banjo (Alale, Agbam and Ifeajuna)

³¹⁷ O. Obasanjo, *My Command: An Account of Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, Heineman Educational Books, 1980, P. 30.

³¹⁸ F. Fredrick, *Biafran Story*, Pp. 118-122.

³¹⁹ B. Odogwu, *No Place to Hide: Crisis and Conflict inside Biafra*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1985, P. 267; Nelson Ottah, *Rebels against Rebels: Trial of the Biafran leaders*. Manson and Co, Ikeja, 1979.

allegedly confessed the above. Forsyth further added that the British Deputy High Commissioner in Benin connived with the plotters by relaying the messages in German to another official of the High Commission in Lagos. Forsyth concludes by stating that Banjo treacherously withdrew from Ore and deliberately yielded Benin and other territories already conquered by the Biafrans in order to achieve the plot earlier stated.

The bulk of the Banjo plot, in the view of this writer, was largely mythical. Since the conclusion of the war, there has been no corroborative evidence to substantiate Forsyth's claim that Banjo or any official of the British mission got in touch with Chief Awolowo. In fact, the alleged confession by Banjo (involving Awolowo) is also a ruse as Nelson Ottah and Bernard Odogwu, two high ranking Biafran officials, have revealed in their works. These officials gave prominence to the trial of Banjo et al in their works and there was no place, in the exhibits tendered before Justice Nkemena Tribunal, where Chief Awolowo was mentioned. Neither did the plaintiff nor the defendants connect Chief Awolowo with the "plot." The hostile reaction of the Yoruba of Ore, as available evidence shows, is also not supportive of Forsyth's claim. Nor is there any evidence for the alleged Banjo's treacherous withdrawal from Ore and the rest of the Mid-West. In fact, existing evidence shows that the battle for the control of Ore was fierce but the Federal side won by sheer military might and because they were fighting on friendly territory. Nonetheless, the "Banjo plot" was not all myth as there was definitely plan to overthrow Ojukwu by the forces that favoured a negotiated solution with Nigeria.

So did Banjo without Ojukwu's consent, make a tactical decision not to proceed beyond after the military intelligence available to him demonstrated that it could be a

suicide mission.³²⁰ Historically, what is most tenable is that Banjo already saw himself as an independent military commander, a dynamic political force, and showed every sign of trying to continue the grand revolution design, sketched out by the young majors in January 1966. ‘I still do not think, he said that we (the military leaders) have the right to destroy a nation that was handed over to us to save at a moment of crisis.’ And the secession of Biafra, claimed, began the dismemberment of our nation.³²¹ Slipping out of control, disobeying orders, calling himself a ‘Nigerian’ and announcing his intention to fight one Nigeria, naturally infuriated Ojukwu who abruptly recalled him to Enugu. Despite his immense popularity with troops in the Mid-West, Brigadier Ejoor Later said that Banjo had approached him in Benin and suggested a wild scheme for liberating the rest of Southern Nigeria. But there is no evidence to suggest that he was in touch with Awolowo, either personally or through intermediary. Nor is there any for a deliberate and treacherous withdrawal from ore and the rest of the Mid-West. More simply, the Federal troops were stronger, more determined, fighting on friendly territory and continuously forcing them to pull back for their own good. (‘Sabotage’ and ‘treachery’ were great scapegoats in Biafra and later speech, Ojukwu blamed the losses of Nsukka, parts of Ogoja and Enugu as well as the entire Mid-West on treasonous activities by Biafra’s hidden enemies). From this analysis was victor Banjo a traitor or understood hero? I think posterity will debate this question for a long time...³²²

In any case, what is most historical was that Philip Alale, the Moscow political agitator who had once worked for Nkrumah and who had some notoriety as the political commissar of the Biafran Armed Forces in July shared the one Nigeria and radical beliefs

³²⁰ O. Obasanjo, *My Command: An Account of Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, P. 21.

³²¹ W. Soyinka, *The Man Died: Prison Note of Wole Soyinka*, African Book Centre, London, 1972.

³²² St. De Jorre, *The Story of Nigerian Civil War...*, P.171.

of Ifeajuna and Agbam. The four were court-martialed, sentenced to death and shot on 24 September, four days after the fall of Benin. The fact of the matter was that the Mid-West failed for obvious reasons. The political assessment of the invasion which invariably meant that the Mid-Westerner and westerner sympathy for Biafran did not in fact meant a desire to become involved in the war on its behalf. Far and above all, lack of proper planning and preparation made the matter worse than they needed to have been.³²³

There were nevertheless some initial gains for Biafrans. It was a dramatic bold, exciting, stroke which gave a much needed boost to Biafran morale. It showed Nigeria and the world that the war was not going to be a push over for the Federal Government, it shoked Lagos and the west for a short and solitary period and a considerable amount of valuable booty-arms, transport, food and at leats £2 Million from the valults of Benin's Central Bank found its way into the Biafra war chest. These Ojukwu admitted as consolation prizes. The invasion greatly extended the war; henceforth no holds were barred, no territory was sacrosanct and slowed it down, turning the struggle into a war of attrition which in the long run was to greater disadvantage of smaller, weaker, blockaded Biafra. By invading the Mid-West, Biafra opened up a new front and brought the Nigerians onto their western doorstep. The immediate military effects were bad too Biafra's small army could hardly cope with the existing threats, let alone talk on commitment outside the country. The long gallop through the Mid-West weakened the defence of the North and as a result, Enugu fell in early October to the Federal Forces as the threat was taking place. It coverted the non-Igbo parts of Mid-West from worried but reasonably sympathetic workers into implacable and deeply committed enemy. The attack also effectively pushed the West into the war where all Gowon's blandishments

³²³ St De Jorre, *The Story of Nigerian Civil War...* P. 172.

and diplomacy had failed.³²⁴ All Yoruba people' Awolowo said "just three days after the Biafra army had crossed the Niger, must lose no time and spare no effort in giving every conceivable support to the federal troops in defence of their homeland, of their fatherland." Finally and perhaps most significantly of all, the invasion seriously undermined the integrity of Ojukwu's claim that he merely wanted to defend the original boundaries of Biafra and protect the lives and property of Igbo. The Mid-West presented no threat to Biafra's security at that time and its poor Igbo were in no need of his protection.³²⁵

It led to international involvement in the war. From Britain, federal land forces received ample supplies of light and heavy weapons. The federal air was entirely reorganized and equipped with Russian Mig fighters and Llyushin bombers. "Total war" became a reality. In later September 1967, the Biafra forces were swept back from the Mid-West into the Eastern Region. A fortnight later, the Biafra's capital of Enugu fell into federal hands. By the end of the year, Biafra's second largest port of Calabar also went. The important river point and commercial centre, Onitsha, Port Harcourt was to follow in May, 1968, thus making the blockade of Biafra total. The subsequent fall of the remaining big towns of Aba, Umuahia and Owerri in quick succession spoke more of superior Federal Might than of higher Federal morale or better fighting methods.³²⁶

7.2 Biafran Resistance, 1967-1970

It could be argued that the Biafrans main duty was that of resistance owing to the fact that the war was mostly conducted in their territory. The resistance took different forms and dimensions and different levels which are worthy of note. To start with, the

³²⁴ See also *West Africa*, August 26, 1967

³²⁵ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 9.

³²⁶ R. Uwechue, *Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 9.

resistance mounted by the Biafrans ranged from the Defence and Command Headquarters (HQ) to the Community war councils and militia groups. The community level involved men and women, young boys and girls and children.³²⁷ All these played important roles towards sustaining federal onslaught. It should be noted that resistance does not only mean to bear arms, as the person bearing arms needs to eat and other necessary things that the absence of which will lead to immediate collapse.

At the national military and defence level, there was restructuring following the assault of the Federal Forces under the following newly promoted field commanding officers: Colonel Muhammad Shuwa in charge of 1 Division, charged with the responsibility of invading from Northern Biafra to take Nsukka and Ogoja. Colonel Murtala Mohammed in charge of 2 Division to advance from Benin, Mid-West and to Onitsha and Third Division known as the '3 Marine Commando' under the command of Colonel Benjamin Adekunle (Alias Black Scorpion) which was detailed to take the Southern offensive Port-Harcourt, Bonny and Calabar.³²⁸

This federal strategy was arranged to encircle the Biafran enclave which they succeeded in doing within the first year of the war as the fringe towns and cities fell to the federal side. But the invasion was met with stiff draconic resistance in the Biafra Central Area, the Igbo core area, which has led to the speculation that the minorities played a role in the fall of their areas to the federal side.³²⁹

Due to the resistance mounted by the Biafran side, the federal side made a radical change and adjustment. It should be noted that some incidents which took place in the

³²⁷ N. N. Oguzie, "A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and Its Impact on the Mbaise Area, 1967-1977, (Unpublished B.A. Project), Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2013, P. 48 .

³²⁸ N. Omoigui, *The Civil War File*, Pp. 2-6.

³²⁹ N. N. Oguzie, "A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and Its Impact on the Mbaise Area, 1967-1977...", P. 49.

war fronts were never reported to the army headquarters in Lagos and it is now that some reversals trend suffered by the federal side are being known through the effort of some researchers like Nowu Omoigui. Evidence abound, the Owerri siege and encirclement of the 16 Brigade of the Third Marine under Major E.A. Etuk in a Kill Bear Hug Formation to kill it by General Madiebo and others was not known to Lagos until Adekunle and Shuwa fell out. Owerri was recaptured. Major J.A. Makanjuola had to abandon his position at Oguta with heavy casualties in the face of fierce counter attacks led by Colonel Ben Nwajei, Navy Captain Anuku and Colonel Achuzia. Major H. A. Asoya dislodged the federal units of the 15 Brigade at Egbema oil fields with a swift movement. Major George Innih's push against the Biafran 63rd Brigade to Enyiogugu Mbasie met with stiff resistance first with Steiner and later under Major Lambert Iheanacho along with a battalion from the "S" Brigade led by Onwuateguegwu. The result was that the federal 14 Brigade fled. In Agulu and Adaze junction, the Umuahia Brigade under 500 man battalion led by Major Njoku completely destroyed the 81 battlion of the 1 Division.

Earlier in the conflict, (December, 1967 and January, 1968) then Colonel Kalu nearly wiped out the 15 Brigade under J. A. Akinrinade and only those who could swim escaped. At Uzuakoli, Majors Nwosu, Ananaba, Ginger and Okafor mounted a counter against the battalions led by Majors Ibrahim Bako and Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB) to retake the town. This is just to mention a few of resistance and counter offensive by the Biafrans. At a time the war became a stalement and even the commanders became weary. These reversals were as a result of the over confidence and undermining of the Biafran forces following the relatively easy capturing of the border

towns. This morale led Adekunle to declare as quoted in Nowa Omoigui's work that-----
----- "we shoot at everything that moves and when troops march into the centre of Igbo territory, we shoot at everything even things that do not move"³³⁰ and he went on to declare that he would capture Owerri, Aba and Umuahia (OAU).³³¹

It should be placed on record that there was serious foul play and irregularities among the field commanders. There was arrogance which in some cases led to the non-commitment to the command and order from the army headquarters in regards to war plans and strategies. This had serious implication on the effort, especially that of the Third Marine Commando. This trend was represented by Colonel Adekunle Benjamin, who infact was operating on his own and undermined the efforts of other commanders like Colonel Shuwa. One of the consequences of Adekunle's unconventional methods was the disaster of Umuahia,³³² Colonel Achuzia represented this element on the Biafra side.

The General officer commanding the Biafran army newly promoted Brigadier Hillary Njoku was replaced by Major General Alexander Madibo in September 1967.³³³ Other changes and redeployment of soldiers took place. Colonel Joe Achuzie was drafted in to halt the advancement of Federal 2 Division under Colonel Murtala Mohammed and he put up gallant resistance leading to the Abagana incident which cost the federal side heavy casualties and materials despite the fact that they eventually

³³⁰ N. Omoigui, *The Civil War File*, P. 46.

³³¹ N. Omoigui, *The Civil War File*, Pp. 46-47.

³³² N. Omogui, Nigerian Civil War File, Microsoft word, P. 4-7. According to Omoigui in April, 1967, Biafran forces regrouped and overran federal units at Onne, Arochukwu and Aletu in May, 1967, they continued and got Afan station, Ikot Ekpene, Oguta and Enugu-Aku were seized from the federal side in September, 1969. Adekunle operation OAU Owerri, (Aba, Umuhahia), ended in catastrophe near Umuhia in October, 1969. In fact, unknown to the public the scale of the loss was such that the 3rd Marine Comdmando Division was reduced to one third of its original 3500 man size before the Operation OAU.

³³³ N. Omoigui, *The Civil War File*, P 49.

captured Onitsha.³³⁴ The Federal Third Marine Commando met the Biafran resistance in Southern axis under Colonel Kalu Ogbujo, formerly of NMTC Zaria.³³⁵

The Biafrans invented weapons and arms that enhanced their resistance. One of such inventions was the shore battery which was used on the shore of river Niger and it devastated the 2 Division. Another invention was the bomb called 'Ogbunigwe' which was used extensively in addition to the locally made rockets, light weapons and ferret called 'Ajuala-viper' which was particularly effective in the Ogbuta/Egbema and Ohaji sectors.³³⁶ To appreciate the dynamics of resistance mounted by the Biafrans, it would be pertinent at this junction to discuss the issue of the air-lift and air-transport which became the only means they could reach the outside having been encircled by the federal forces. T. N. Tamuno argues that due to the importance of the air transport for bringing in arms and military hardwares and relief materials by the aid and humanitarian groups, Biafrans constructed at least 4 airstrips... Uli, Uga, Awgu, and Obligu.³³⁷ There was the determination to defend the airstrips and also repair and maintain them in the face of attacks from the Federal Air Force. The one at Uli is the most important as the most used. In spite of the Federal Air Force firing power with MIG-17S, Illyushin-28 bombers which experts have considered "the heaviest concentration of fire South of the Suez, the Biafrans continued to make their movements. For instance the Joint Church Aid (JCA) alone made 5,314 landings with 60,267 tons of supplies between June 1968 and the end

³³⁴ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria crisis*, in T. N. Tamuno and S. C. Ukpabi (eds) P. 11.

³³⁵ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria crisis...*, Pp. 49-51.

³³⁶ N. N. Oguzie, "A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and Its Impact on the Mbaize Area, 1967-1977...", P.52; See also Felix Oragwu, "Scientific and Techlogical Asepect of the war, Machine in Biafra", in T. N. Tamuno and S.C. Ukpabi (eds), Pp. 225-229.

³³⁷ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria Crisis...*, P. 17.

of the war in Mid-January 1970.³³⁸

Although they lost II aircrafts and over 26 crews (the JCA alone lost 8 aircrafts and 13 crew members) they were determined in what was considered the biggest airlift since the Berlin airlift of 1949³³⁹ and the busiest in Black Africa, second to Johannesburg, yet only operated from dusk to dawn. They devised means to beat the reconnaissance and radar of the Air Force. The Uli airstrip was handling any type of cargo aircrafts like Hercules, DC-7s, Boeing C-7 G Strato-Freighters, each night 30-40 aircrafts.³⁴⁰ Uli therefore remain centre of gravity throughout the war.

S. C. Ukpabi has demonstrated that the stiff resistance mounted by Biafrans was due to ingenuity and initiative on the part of the Biafrans. Mention is due to certain groups and organisations in Biafra that played an important role to sustain the war. One such group is the Research and Production (RAP) unit. Composed of scientists, physicists, students and teachers from the universities and technologists, especially from the technical departments of the oil companies in Port Harcourt, mechanics among others. This group was responsible for the production of military wares, chemicals, and also consumable goods like drinks and paints and the like.³⁴¹

Another group was the Biafran Organisation of Freedom Fighters (BOFF), which served as the agent of mobilisation for the war effort and also as a militia group from which young men and women were introduced into the army. The role of the international humanitarian groups such as Red Cross Society and World Councils of Churches, the German Capital and Holy Ghost Fathers of Ireland among others that sent

³³⁸ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria Crisis...*, P. 17.

³³⁹ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria Crisis...*, P. 17.

³⁴⁰ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria Crisis...*, P. 17; P. N.C. Okigbo, "The Economics of the Civil War: the Biafran Experience" in Tamuno *et'al*, (eds), Pp. 100-101.

³⁴¹ T. N. Tamuno, *Introduction: Men and Measures in the Nigeria Crisis...*, Pp. 21-25.

in relief materials into Biafra boosted the Biafran resistance.

According to N.N. Oguzie in his project titled, *A study of the Civil war and its Impact on Mbasise Area, 1967-1977* quoted a central female mobilizer during the war as follows:

“At the community and town level, the various communities establish their war councils and monitoring groups charged with the responsibility of gathering food and other materials for the soldiers, identification of able-bodied men for conscription, defence and combing the community for infiltrators and gathering information for the soldiers and their communities.”³⁴²

7.3 Biafran Social and Economic Challenges

The young Republic of Biafran undoubtedly was a nation in arms or war. As such the war effort occupied the central role in the organisation and execution of activities. Apart from the war, which was sustained to a large extent through the contributions of the individuals and communities, in terms of food and other materials which had a huge economic implication on the people, the socio-cultural activities of the people also witnessed a huge disruption.

Economically, all resources were channeled towards the war and this was made more agonizing following economic blockade placed on the territory by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the changing of the colour of the Nigerian pounds and its denominations. The implication was that the people had to scratch from their limited resources not only to feed themselves, but to contribute to the war effort.³⁴³ Meanwhile, a telling blow was struck at Biafran economy by the Federal Government cancelling all Nigerian currency notes and issuing differently coloured ones. Within the month Ojukwu had impressively introduced Biafran postage stamps and currency.³⁴⁴ But Nigeria’s move

N. N. Oguzie, “A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and Its Impact on the Mbaise Area, 1967-1977...”, P. 56

³⁴³ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 85.

³⁴⁴ J. J. Stremlau, *International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 85.

had nevertheless shrewdly negated much of the prize of the two million pounds in old Nigerian notes seized in August 1967 from the Federal Treasury in Benin by offering sets of these currency notes and coins to collectors. Their eventual redemption by General Gowon after January 1970 proved major economic headache for the central bank because the Biafran notes are all intents and purposes so much worthless papers.³⁴⁵

Unlike in other places where the war had reached, the Mbaïse area, for example, was able to still farm on small scale and engage in trade with other neighbouring towns. However with the number of refugees and relatives pouring into the area, the situation became very difficult for the inhabitants of Mbaïse. The market operation and trading were done in such a way as to avoid the federal air raids and bombardments as the markets and public places were the prime targets of the federal pilots. Thus, the markets were so conducted on shifting basis and during some specific periods of the day.³⁴⁶

7.4 The Issue of Alleged Genocide

One of the hottest debates in the historiography of Nigerian civil war is whether the war was a genocidal mission or purely for the unity of Nigeria. Chinua Achebe, although, a literary genius but not a historian, raised certain historiographic issues which should be considered in this discourse. He poses them as follows:

Did the Federal Government of Nigerian engage in the genocide of its Igbo citizens through their punitive policies, the most notorious being "starvation as a legitimate weapon of war"? Is the formation of blockade around the war, a case of calculated historical suppression? Why has the war not been discussed or taught to the young ones, over forty years after its end? Are we perpetually doomed to repeat the mistake of the past because we are too stubborn to learn from them?³⁴⁷

It may be of interest to start the discussion by tracing the etymology of genocide and what it connotes and denotes, Robert provides this description.

³⁴⁵ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country...*, P. 229.

³⁴⁶ N. N. Oguzie, "A Study of the Nigerian Civil War and Its Impact on the Mbaïse Area, 1967-1977"...,P. 55

³⁴⁷ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country...*, P.228.

The term genocide is derived from the latin (genos = race, tribe, cide = killing) and meaning literarily, the killing or murder of an entire tribe or people. The Oxford English Dictionary defines genocide as deliberate and systematic extermination of an ethnic or national group by genocide we mean the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group. The UN General Assembly adopted this term and defined it in 1946 as” ... a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups.³⁴⁸

Lemkin the proponent of this concept argues that genocide can be:

...a coordinated plan of different aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institution, culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.³⁴⁹

Ordinarily, this involves creating conditions calculated to cause the death of a group which may include destroying the means of life as much as actually executing the victims. Again, a criminal intent to destroy or to cripple permanently a human group is portrayed in the description above. The acts are directed against groups as such and individuals selected for destruction only because they belong to these groups. According to the Article ii of the United Nations Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of Genocide, it means or refers to any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a nation, ethnic, racial or religious group, such as:

1. killing members of the groups;
2. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the groups;
3. deliberately inflicting on the group condition of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part.
4. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and

³⁴⁸ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country...*, P.7.

³⁴⁹ N. G. Oziomah, cited Lemkin, “Religion and Genocide: The Nigerian Experience, 1950-2011”, (Unpublished M. A. Dissertation), Department of Religion and Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, 2011, P. 25.

5. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.³⁵⁰

It is significant to note at this juncture that the UN Convention's definition has not been accepted as the last word on the definition of genocide. It has often been criticized for excluding some groups, for example, political and social groups from the list of possible victims of genocide. Many scholars find the clause 'the intent to destroy in whole or part problematic. Two of the most common objections are such that intent can be difficult to establish and that attempt to assign such intent to individuals makes little sense in modern societies, where violence can result as much from anonymous social and economic forces as from individual choices. In attempt to clarify the term genocide, Charny observes that genocide can be seen as "the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy which under conditions of the essential defencelessness and helplessness of the victims."³⁵¹ Charny's observation demonstrates the insistence that all events of mass or collective murder be subsumed as genocide.

In genocide studies, three central themes are predominant, the first is the intent to destroy group, the second is the perpetrator of the genocide and the third is a victim group. Scholars like Dike, Azikiwe, Nwankwo, Uwechue, Ikejiana and Nnoli used the word pogrom in describing the genocidal massacre of the Igbo in this decade. Pogrom is a planned killing of large numbers of people usually done for reasons of race or religion. A pogrom is a form of violent riot, a mob attack, approved or condoned by government or military authorities directed against a particular group, whether ethnic, religion or any

³⁵⁰ H. Ekwe-Ekwe, *The Biafran War; Nigeria and the Aftermath* (Lampeter, Ceredigion, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991). As quoted in *There Was A Country*, P.219-220.

³⁵¹ N. G. Oziomah, cited Lemkin, "Religion and Genocide: The Nigerian Experience, 1950-2011"..., P. 42.

other groups and characterised by killings and destruction of homes and property, businesses and religious centres of such group. Pogrom usually carries connotation of spontaneous within the majority population against certain (usually ethnic) minorities, which are seen dangerous and harming the interests of majority. The term was originally used to denote extensive violence against Jews in the Russian empire and a series of anti-German pogroms in Russia in 1915. In extreme case, pogrom results to genocide. Within the period above scholars researched, the use of the term pogrom could adequately describe the events of mass killing in Nigeria.

Having said so much about the term genocide, for a real historical appreciation let's pause to examine the views of the two sides: Nigeria and Biafra. Throughout the conflict, the Biafra consistently charged that the Nigerians had a design to exterminate the Igbo people from the face of the earth. This calculation the Biafrans insisted, was predicated on a Holy Jihad proclaimed by mainly Islamic extremists in the Nigerian army and supported by the policies of economic blockade that prevented shipment of humanitarian aid, food and supplies to the needy in Biafra. The counter argument extended by Harold Wilson in favour of the federal side is important to highlight as follows:

The charges of Jihad have also been denied by British officials who assert that more than half the members of the Federal Government are Christians, while only 1,000 of the 60-70,000 federal soldiers are Muslim Hausa from the North (House of Common Debate).³⁵²

³⁵² The American Jewish Congress suggests that compounding this overwhelming evidence, according to the Biafrans, is:

The Federal government has refused to discuss peace . . . unless and until Biafran leaders renounce their proclamation of secession. Biafrans have refused this demand because they believe they can gain their aims through conventional, or guerrilla warfare, and also because they are convinced that Nigerian Military Commanders intend to perpetuate genocide against the Igbo speaking people (sic).

Source: Baum, American Jewish Congress, "Memorandum," December 27, 1968.

From the event of the counter coup, there were no elements of religious war but purely reprisal attack which Ojukwu admitted as fate accomplished. Using a Jihad for a counter coup and subsequent developments was a malapropism and tantamount to propaganda machinery systematically designed to enlist favour, sympathy, and support from international communities. Even though the submission of Harold Wilson may not be statistically accurate but the central argument is that Muslim did not dominate Nigerian army. The Igbo used religious dominance as camouflage to achieve their secession ambition. Achebe's writing on genocide argues that two million people lost their lives including mothers, children, babies and civilians. To buttress his case, he cites Asaba massacre to justify the genocide allegation of the Nigeria Civil war. Achebe placed death toll at five hundred or others as high as one thousand. The Asaba massacre under the command of Major Murtala Mohammed (later General Murtala Mohammed) appeared to be purely military exercise to recapture Asaba from Biafran siege. According to Major General Ibrahim Haruna, it was purely to maintain peace and unity of Nigeria. To quote him *interalia*, he argues in Oputa panel as follows:

As the commanding officers and leader of troops that massacred 500 men in Asaba, I have no apology for those massared in Asaba, owerri, and Ameke Item. I acted as a soldier maintaining the peace and unity of Nigeria..... If General Yakubu Gowon apologised, he did it in his own capacity. As for me I have no apology.³⁵³

Ekwe-Ekwe, an authority in history and politics and also on genocide reminds us that supporters of the Biafran position point not only to the historic pronouncements of leaders of Nigerian army often dismissed as typical outrageous war time rhetoric but to

³⁵³ General Haruna, who was under cross examination by the Ohanaeze Ndigbo (a pan Igbo group) counsel, Chief Anthony Mogbo, Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), said whatever action he or his troops took during the war was motivated by a sense of duty to protect the unity of the country.

Source: Ogwuda, "Gowon faults setting up of Oputa Panel.

an actual series of atrocities, real crimes, against humanity that occurred on the battlefield and as a result of the policies of the federal government of Nigeria.

There are many documented testimonies of victims and observers about the gross cruelty and barbarism of the Nigerian soldiers meted on Igbo civilians even after the surrender of Biafran rebel soldiers' acts that raise the question of genocidal motivation. At least that was the debatable conclusion of the investigations of the International Commission of Jurist led by Dr. Mensah of Ghana. According to Dr. Mensha, he received evidence from two witnesses about mass graves where dead, sick and wounded Biafran were buried alive with some suckling and "the cries of and wailing of the sick, the wounded and the sick babies could be heard from a long distance away. In these testimonies, it was also mentioned that when these mass graves had been covered, the Federal soldiers danced native dances over them.

The international committee in the investigation of crimes of Genocide carried out exhaustive investigation of the evidence, interviewing 1082 people representing all the actors in the dispute (two sides of the civil war and international collaborators. After a thorough and painstaking research, the commission concludes, through its investigator (Dr. Mensha of Ghana)."Finally, I am of the opinion that in many of the cases cited to me hatred of the Biafrans (Mainly Igbo) and a wish to exterminate them was a motivational factor.³⁵⁴

Without doubt, given the evidence of international observers of the pogroms of 1966, and the civil war that Biafrans, especially Igbo were victims of gross cruelty reminiscent of Jewish genocide. The available evidence has proved beyond reasonable doubt that the ringleaders of these attacks were motivated as J. Mensha argues in ICJ report, by a wish to exterminate the Igbo. But how does this motivation square up with the policy and politics of the war? Is it really the fact that other ethnic groups.

³⁵⁴S. Amadi cited J. Mensah's Report of the International Commission of Jurists, 1969, in "Colonial Legacy, Elite Dissesion and the Making of Genocide: the Story of Biafra", *Arewa House Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, P. 143.

Especially, the Hausa and Fulbe in Northern Nigeria wanted Igbo completely wiped out or driven out of Nigeria? The difficulty in understanding the genocidal behaviour derives mainly from the contradictory nature of the civil war:

How to reconcile the genocidal intent with the determination to keep Biafrans in Nigeria. It will appear that rather than other Nigerian ethnic groups wanting the Igbo outside the federation, they wanted those inside. Given that, genocide usually involves determination to drive the victimised ethnic or religious of the territorial space, how do we understand the sort of genocide that wants the victims inside rather outside.

In what is likely to be the most compelling statement of the era from an American president, Schlesinger provide his powerful extract from Richard Nixon's campaign speech on September 10, 1968:

Until now, efforts to relieve the Biafran people have been thwarted by the desire of the central government of Nigeria to pursue total and unconditional victory and by the fear of the Igbo people that surrender means wholesale atrocities and genocide. But genocide is what is taking place right now and starvation is the grim reaper. This is not the time to stand ceremony, or to go through channels or to observe the diplomatic niceties. The destruction of an entire people is an immoral objective even in the most moral of wars. It can be justified it can never be condoned.³⁵⁵

New York Times Journalist Lloyd Garrison, who covered the conflict, submitted harrowing accounts of genocidal activity on the part of the Nigerian troops: "The record shows that in federal advances - thousands of Igbo male civilian were sought out and slaughtered."³⁵⁶ Supporters of the Nigerian federal government position maintained that a war was being wage and the premise of all wars is for one side to emerge as the victor.

Overtly ambitious actors may have taken actions unbecoming of international convention

³⁵⁵ S. Amadi, "Colonial Legacy, Elite Dissesion and the Making of Genocide: The Story of Biafra", *Arewa House Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2012, P. 143.

³⁵⁶ This school of thought is exemplified by the well-regarded scholar Martin Meredith, who believes: "the aftermath of the war was notable for its compassion and mercy, and the way in which the memories of Biafra soon faded."

Source: Meredith, *The Fate of Africa*, p. 205.

of human rights but these things happen everywhere.”³⁵⁷ There was no clear intent on behalf of the Nigerian troops to wipe out the Igbo people, pointing out over 30,000 Igbo still lived in Lagos, and half a million in the Mid-West.³⁵⁸ It must be noted that the government of Harod proffered what it called a “legitimate strategy excuse in which it postulates that the indisputable excess seen during the war were due to the Nigerian military’s excellence.”³⁵⁹ Far and above all, the point of genocide remained a subject of debate among scholars. The organisation of African Unity (OAU) presently AU, and United Nations (UN) and Nigerian government did not recognise any element of genocide in Nigerian Civil War. Nigerian government argues that its principal objective was to bring back the Eastern state to the federation not the destruction of the Igbo. In other words, they sought to address the threat of secession.

However, the charge of Nigerian government committing genocide continued unabated by the Igbo. Worthy of note, a statement credited to Chief Obafemi Awolowo and echoed by his cohorts is the most callous and unfortunate. Achebe cites as follows: *All is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons of war. I do not see why we should feed our enemies fat in order for them to fight harder.*³⁶⁰

Chinua Achebe attributed this to overriding power ambition of Awolowo on the one hand and the other, the advancement of the Yoruba speaking people who also saw the

³⁵⁷ “Death Tolls for the Major Wars and Atrocities of the Twentieth Century”, www.users.erols.com/mwhitC28/warstat2.htm. *The following sources provide death tolls for the Biafran war: Champion's Encyclopedia: 1,500,000 starved; Charles Lewis The World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators (WhPSI). 1,993,900 death by political violence, 1966-70; George Childs Kohn, Dictionary of Wars: nearly 2,000,000; William Eckhardt in World Military and Social Expenditure 1987-1988 by Ruth Leger Sivard 1,000,000 civilians + 1,000,000 military + 2,000,000; Dan Smith. The State of War and Peace Atlas: 2,000,000; Jacobs, The Brutality of Nations: 3,000,000.*

³⁵⁸ Baum, American Jewish Congress, “Memorandum”, December 27, 1968.

³⁵⁹ Biafra, BBC Documentary, 1995

³⁶⁰ Jacobs, *The brutality of the Nations...*

dominance of the Igbo as a threat to that goal. Nigerian Biafran War provided an ample opportunity to achieve this end. In the Biafran case, it meant hatching up a diabolical policy to reduce the numbers of his enemies significantly through starvation eliminating over two million people, mainly members of future generation.³⁶¹ Whatever the validity of this claim, it cannot be divorced from ethno-centric propaganda.

What is however tenable was that Awolowo and technocrats and soldiers who were alarmed by the increasing internationalisation of the war advocated the “quick-kill” action. For them, starvation was a legitimate weapon of war, Awolowo publicly canvassed the view that the only way to put the war to rest is for the Federal Government to effectively blockade Biafra by land, air, and sea.³⁶²

Awolowo’s logic was that a strict enforcement of the economic blockade and vigorous pursuit of the war would force Biafra on its knees in time and consequently, save more lives. Since the available records proved beyond reasonable doubt that the food reliefs meant for the civilian population were always appropriated by the soldiers, Awolowo argued that the war was being unnecessarily prolonged. “you don’t feed your enemies,” he opines. This statement was chased on by Ojukwu and the Biafran propagandists and it was interpreted to mean that he wanted to starve Igbo to death. There is no doubt that the concept of starvation made some military sense in the context of the time. Besides, the concept was not new as it had always been employed in warfare since the period of the Greek City-States.³⁶³ It is equally significant to note that economic blockade was not even whole heartedly enforced by the Gowon administration. As a matter of fact, Gowon preferred a sort of “slow squeeze” action since, according to him,

³⁶¹ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country* P. 233.

³⁶² F. Forsyth, *The Story of Biafra...*, P. 231.

³⁶³ A. Slessengar Jnr. *Why Nations Go To War...*, P. 35.

the war was not against Igbo but designed to win them back to the federal side. Moreover, the Federal Government did not possess the military capability and resources to implement the shift, well-coordinated action advocated by Awolowo. In other words, Gowon had a relief policy of his own and this included permitting international charitable organisations to fly.

The Federal Government's actions soon after the war could be seen not as conciliatory but out right hostility after the conflict ended:

The same hard-liners in the federal government of Nigeria cast Igbo in the role of treasonable felons and weakness of the nation and got the regime to adopt a banking policy which nullified any bank account which had been operated during the war by the Biafrans. A flat sum of twenty pounds was approved for each Igbo depositor of the Nigerian currency, regardless of the amount deposited.³⁶⁴

General Yakubu Gowon interviewed by Pin Jason countered most of the charges of genocide aspect of Nigerian civil war. Gowon's response was as follows:

But there it is! No I think the policy of twenty pounds was never an attempt to impoverish the Igbo people. The government was very generous in giving funds to Ukpabi Asika so that the government of East could circulate money and get businesses off the ground, as well as (to) embark on various rehabilitations and reconstruction that were just taking place, probably the exchange rate in Nigerian Currency for the Biafran pound seemed not to be on equitable terms. If we said they could exchange at par.³⁶⁵

Judging from the above analysis, it is evident that the action of the Federal

³⁶⁴ "The Violations of Human and Civil Rights of Ndi Igbo in the Federation of Nigeria 1966-1969," October 1999; Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Pp. 45-46; Jane Gryer and LaRay Denzer, *Vision and Policy in Nigerian Economics: The Legacy of Pius Okigbo*, West African Studies, Ibadan University Press: Ibadan, 2005.

³⁶⁵ Gowon's "Interview" on Achebe's Foundation with Pini Jason, 2005. Gowon expectedly gives himself high marks for the role of his government following the conflict: "What you should remember about the time - and, at least, give us some credit for it - is that we did not take what would be considered normal action under such circumstances. In such an instance, all the senior officials involved - politicians as well as in the military - would have been strung up for their part in the war. This is what happened at the end of the Second World War in Germany; it happened in Japan at the end of the campaign in that part of the world. This is the civilized world's way of doing things. But we did not do even that. We did set up committees to look into cases such as where rebel officers had been members of the Nigerian armed forces, and their loyalty was supposed to be to the federal government. When the war ended - we re-absorbed practically everyone who was in the army. But there were officers at a certain senior level that we insisted had to accept responsibility for their role in the secession. It was the only thing to do. Probably, I could have given pardon; however, I was not the one who gave pardon to Ojukwu.

Military Government was a legitimate strategy to guarantee unconditional surrender of rebel Biafra. In other words, it was a rebuff mission. As earlier noted, three themes are predominant in genocide studies namely; the first is the intent to destroy a group, the second is a perpetrator of the genocide and the third is a victim group. The onus is now left to ask, are all these themes present in Nigerian civil war? The way and manner in which the massacre was carried out seemed to have justified the resentment of the Igbo ethnic group, beginning with the pogroms in the North from May to October 1966 and Federal Troops Actions during civil war. It should be noted as well that the pogroms was not resentment perse, it was motivated essentially by vengeance. It may irk our minds to ask who is the perpetrator? Certainly the perpetrator of the genocide is the federal side and the victim group is the Igbo ethnic group and loyal minorities group.

As a matter of fact genocide usually ends by either of two ways:

The victims are completely exterminated or their attackers are restrained or overcome. In the Biafra conflict none of this happened. Biafran soldiers did not restrain Nigerian soldiers. No external forces aided the victims. When the aggressors overran the victims, they drew back the sword – meaning, we did not intend genocide. For me this is the best evidence that what happened, at least 1967 and 1970, was misconceived war.

It was promoted in order to weaken the political and administrative advantages then enjoyed by Igbo, it was conducted on the diabolical mobilization of Northerners to believe that the Igbo wanted to enslave the rest of Nigeria³⁶⁶.

7.5 The Role of Biafran Propaganda in the War

Haunted by these apparent congenital features and by its declaration of the “Republic of Biafra,” the new Biafra establishment knew that its substance as sovereign and independent state depended on the ability to delicately manage the ethnic and economic contradictions. This triggered what was to become a bitter and sustained propaganda war between the belligerents for thirty months and twelve days. For Biafra it

³⁶⁶ S. Amadi, *Colonial Legacy, Elite Dissension and Making of Genocide: The Story of Biafra....*Pp.154-155.

only seemed probable that the early success in pictorial publicity of the pogroms in Northern Nigeria and ancillary enlightenment schemes by the Eastern Nigeria Ministry of Information culminating to the declaration of secession which was to become useful starting points which needed to be harnessed for a more comprehensive propaganda project of the new state. On the other hand, the defined position of the federalist on the inviolability of one indivisible Nigeria meant that reasonable propaganda was needed to shore up public opinion on the illegality of secession and the need to suppress rebellion from the Eastern Region. The ultimate objective of all propaganda campaigns is to facilitate success of a predetermined agenda and in case of a war, it is perhaps officially correct to earn it through guilt, fear or blackmail and even death to defend a perceived national pride. Even though propaganda encapsulates all actions taken through the mass media and direct media channels that, tend to emphasize a deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist".³⁶⁷

It is probably impossible to compare the success of the rebel propaganda and that of the Nigerians on the domestic front because they faced essentially different challenges at home. However, whereas for the beleaguered Igbo, the war was a real threat, for much of the Nigerian public. It was little more than a bad dream. This meant that whereas the first task of Biafran propaganda was to imbue the Igbo with the belief that they were invincible, Nigerian propaganda was concerned with no such a thing. As St. Jorre has captured it, "the problem was rather to keep the public sufficiently interested so that the apparently inevitable victory did not elude the country by default."³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ G. Jowett and V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Sage Publications, 1986, P.7.

³⁶⁸ St De Jorre, *The Story of Nigerian Civil War...* P. 247.

It would be reiterated at this juncture that for a considerable period of time during the early part of the war, the federalist seemed to believe that their position was so obviously just that it needed no selling. Alternatively, it appeared that the federalists seemed assured that it could rely on the British foreign office, the State Department and the Kremlin to do what selling was necessary for the war. According to Ukpabi, S.C

The illegality of the act of secession provided the federal government with justification and the propaganda materials to back up its war effort. Its argument would be that it was compelled to go war to restore the unity of the country, an argument which many countries in Africa and other parts of the world would support, for Biafra, on the other hand, the act of of secession place it at a moral disadvantage since any foreign country which tried to assist it would immediately be accused of supporting rebellion against a legal government.³⁶⁹

Following the arguments at this stage, it seems that favourable propaganda for the federalists was wrought itself out of either the perceived general perception of the typical Igbo idiosyncrasy or the several government controlled and sympathetic media operating with its control irrespective of differing editorial strategies and themes.³⁷⁰

In addition, the Federal Government was also thinking ahead to post war Nigeria? The ordinary Igbo would have to be reintegrated into federal Nigeria after the war. Federal propaganda could therefore not afford the emotive and insulting words which the Biafran radio was broadcasting night after night. Because the dice were loaded against them on the battle ground, the Biafrans set greater store by propaganda. They knew that their salvation lay in going to the peace table to negotiate a settlement which in the circumstances was likely to guarantee Biafra sovereignty. The only way to compel Nigeria to negotiations table was to convince the world that the war was genocidal and

³⁶⁹ See S.C. Ukpabi, The Lessons of the Civil War in T. N. Tamuno and S.C. Ukpabi, (eds) *Nigerian Since Independence: The First Twenty-Five Years*, Vol. VI, Heinemann, Ibadan, 1989, P. 278.

³⁷⁰ Deductions to this effect are drawn from Stanley Meisler's article on Biafran war images. In the article Meisler was shocked that A. K. Disu, the Federal Director of Information could suggest reading of local papers as the preferred mode of harvesting clear policy positions of the federal government on the war. See, Stanley Meisler. Biafran War Images, *The Nation*, March 10, 1969. 301-304.

thus get world opinion to force Nigeria to stop fighting. Biafra's propaganda unit was called the Directorate of propaganda and was headed by Uche Chukwumerije, Publisher of the Lagos based *Afriscope Magazine*. The directorate had several committees, including the psychological warfare committees, responsible for the content all propaganda, the political orientation committee responsible for organising university students to explain and justify government policies at the village level which was considered the most crucial and the overseas press service responsible for the external distribution of the directorate's release. The approach the directorate adopted was to portray the war as genocidal rather than war of unity. In the genocidal campaign itself, the war was portrayed as a religious conflict in which the backward Muslims were determined to impose Islam all the way to the sea.³⁷¹

The credibility of genocidal campaign cannot be disputed because the 1966 pogroms in the North were real as the brutalities of the war proceeded. Evidence abounds however that genocide was a myth. After the initial bloodletting during September, 1966, the Igbo were allowed to leave for home completely unmolested. As the war progressed, more Igbo lived safely outside Biafra than inside. Moreover as for the war being a religious conflict with the Muslims on the offensive, Gowon's government was more Christian in membership than Muslim as also was the fighting army. However, in wars anything can appear credible and so it was that the Biafran directorate of propaganda was able to generate such extreme phobia for Nigerians among the Igbo that the world was left no doubt that the only way the Igbo would ever be safe was outside Nigeria. This was

³⁷¹ De Gaulle argues in one of the interviews that, in Paris, "Why should the Igbo speaking people who are generally Christians who lived in the South in a certain way, who have their own ethnic fraction of the federation." See Turi Muhammadu and Muhammed Haruna, "Nigeria Civil War," in Oyeleye Oyediran (ed), *Nigerian Government under Military Rule, 1966-79*, Macmillan Press Limited, London, 1979, P. 36.

principally the source of the success of Biafran propaganda abroad and not Geneva-based Mark press, hired by the Biafrans to sell their case, important though its role was the Markpress headquarters, according to Uche Chukwumerije served merely as a “a mail drop’ for material that had been written by the Biafran themselves. According to stremlau there was hardly any difference in the Biafra transcripts of propaganda materials and subsequent Mark press releases.

For example, Luke Uche in “Radio Biafra and the Nigerian civil war study of war propaganda on a target audience” maintains that during the Nigerian civil war of 6 July, 1967, 12, January, 1970, Radio Biafra was literally seen as the Biafran Government, perse.³⁷² He argues that even when the Biafran leadership fled the enclave before the end of war, people still believe in the concept of Biafra because the Biafran Radio station identification was still in operation, this is “Radio Biafra Enugu” when eventually Radio Biafra went silent, that action formally concluded that thirty-month war.

It can be argued that propaganda success abroad was not a result of the literature produced by the directorate, it went too virulent to be credible to an audience far removed from the theatre of war. What probably helped the effort most were the first hand accounts given by foreigners who lived or visited Biafra. The directorate orchestrated the visits by such foreigners to make sure they left with the unmistakable impression that the Biafrans were prepared to suffer death to be sovereign.³⁷³

Above all, the “one Nigeria mantra of the federalist seemed a particularly effective campaign. Since according to them, the Biafran sovereignty was seized and therefore illegal under the laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the attendant moral position

³⁷² J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P.116.

³⁷³ See also T. Muhammadu and M. Haruna, P. 36.

served as a legitimate campaign platforms. The poster that captures this narrative is the “keep Nigerian one” poster.

To embody this inseparable imagery of “one Nigerianess” Gowon became an acronym for the phrase. [G] o [O] n[With] [O] ne [N] igeria”. Yakubu, Gowon’s first name was also positioned as an acronym to stand for “you all know Biafra belongs to us” even when the second did not quite fit into the fad of acronym redefinition mold, it was a sufficiently ingenious attempt by the federalist’s propaganda to drive the war spirit. The school children were indoctrinated to identify with the war effort by being taught to memorise “matching song” thus;

- i. Ojukwu wanted to separate Nigeria
- ii. Gowon says Nigeria must be one
- iii. We are fighting together with Gowon
- iv. To keep Nigeria one.

What is to be noted here is that even though slogans carry with them inherent propaganda to favour, they are essentially easy tools in the learning, assimilation and orientation of key policy positions of government. In contrast Nigeria’s efforts to put across its point of view met with hardly any spectacular successes. Partly, the Nigerian authorities were to blame. Firstly, they were slow off the mark, for the Igbo started making their case from 1966 when secession look inevitable, the federal government did nothing. Secondly, for a longtime (and perhaps even now) it was never clear which, between the Ministry of Information and that of External Affairs was responsible for external publicity The feuding of course, had an adverse effect on Nigeria propaganda

efforts. Thirdly, there was Gowon's well-intentioned but naive distaste for propaganda. He believed that the Nigeria case was so evident it needed no restating.³⁷⁴

Like in other key sectors of governance in Nigeria, the new entrants manning the Information Ministry after the Easterners left may have underestimated the profound overall effect of the exodus to the vital areas of the fledging Nigerian polity. For instance, it is yet difficult to ascertain whether the personnel in Lagos either lacked the cognate experience to handle sensitive issues of propaganda or were scared of venturing in the terrain that may pitch them against the military government. This situation becomes further compounded by the fact that even though there were substantial military officers outside Biafra, their relationship with the press was below average.³⁷⁵ According to Meisher "They were largely unaccustomed to Journalistic glare and annoyed by it" Perhaps, in their thinking, the sensitive information and activities that the civil war occasioned would inevitably be transformed into an array of incisive interpretations in both the verbal and visual media to the detriment of the war effort. It is also possible that the military hierarchy may have been more concerned in safeguarding information which may invariably expose the inadequacies of Government and its preparedness for the war. In the period from December, 1967 to February, 1968, for instance, no correspondents were allowed at the front.³⁷⁶ This lacuna in the planning and flow of information became

³⁷⁴Recitation of poetry was particularly rife during the period of the Nigerian Civil War and the creative combination of popular act dwelt largely on the dual picture of the victor and villain.

³⁷⁵The attitude of the federalist towards western media was that of suspicious caution. Perhaps convinced that the Western press had purposely set out to inflame world public opinion against Nigeria, it was irritable with respect to any media report that questioned its integrity. From the viewpoint of Lagos, the Western media played a satanic role, subverting, distorting and manipulating 'the truth' to serve its own devious ends. See Meisler, Stanley. *The Breakup of Nigeria*, *The Nation*. October 9, 1967.

³⁷⁶Zdenek Cervenka, *The Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970*, Frankfurt Main: Bernard & Graefe fur Wehrwesen, 1971.49-50. Quoted in Laurie Sheila Wiseberg, *The International Politics of Relief: A Case Study of the Relief Operations Mounted During the Nigerian Civil War (1967 -1970)*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in Political Science University of California, Los Angeles. 1973.

evident in the statements of military personnel and their civilian officers statements without weighing on the inherent publications import which was quickly exploited by the secessionist Biafra and used as instant points to buttress their visual propaganda on the annihilation of the Biafra population through starvation. For instance, statement credited to Anthony Enahoro, and Obafemi Awolowo on the war only served to aggravate than alleviate an already bad situation thus:

There are several ways of fighting a war, you might starve your enemy into submission or you might kill on the battle field.³⁷⁷
All is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons. I do not see why I should feed my enemies fat only to fight us harder.³⁷⁸

The two excerpts above made astonishing news items in both national and international media when juxtaposed against the psychological appeals of the Biafra propaganda of Kwashiorkor. It presents an idea of the several reckless managements of the crisis which could not easily be reconciled with the positions canvassed by the pro-federalist media on genuine concerns about reintegration of the dissident Biafra.

However, the Nigerians were also severally handicapped from the beginning. The May-September 1966 killing of Igbo made the Nigerian case difficult to understand not only for the western press but also their readers. Moreover there was a generalized sympathy for the Igbo arising from the belief that they were the Jews of Africa and certainly most westernised Africans. These and other prejudice probably weighed more against the federal authorities than their own short comings. In other words, it is possible that even without the short comings, Biafra still have won the war of words. As John stemlau points out, it was simply impossible to match the imagery of genocide with a

³⁷⁷ Press statement to *Daily Mirror*, by Anthony Enahoro, Federal Nigeria Commissioner for Labour and Information. June 13, 1968.

³⁷⁸ Press statement to London, *Daily Telegraph*, by Obafemi Awolowo, June 27, 1969.

discourse on the twelve State Federation.³⁷⁹

7.6 War Economies

Undoubtedly, one important aspect of the war was the management of the economy during the war, the exact cost of the war is still in dispute. It is estimated on the Federal side by Chief Obafemi Awolowo who was the Federal Commissioner for Finance during the war that the federal Government spent £230.8 Million (₦460.15) in local currency and £70.8 Million (or ₦140.16 Million) in foreign exchange to finance the war. On the secessionists' side there are some uncertainties. To get a true account, one has to add all the foreign exchange reserves initially by Ojukwu to purchase arms at the beginning of hostilities, all the expenditures by the relief agencies who kept the secession afloat during most of the war. One estimate suggests that 250 Million America Dollars were expended by these agencies in the last fifteen months of the war to keep Biafra alive.³⁸⁰

According to P.N.C. Okigbo, no estimate exists of the foreign exchange cost of the war, no account of the disbursement was kept in any Government office in Biafra. Inside Biafra, only the military Governor knew how much had been spent. Overseas, there were probably no more than two Government agents or functionaries with requisite authority to disburse money for weapons. Indeed, there were accusations that some unscrupulous self-appointed agents raised monies abroad and then diverted them to their own use. As these suggestions cannot be entirely disproved, they cast a pall of suspicion over some otherwise respectable Biafrans which persisted even after the end of the war.³⁸¹

A more relevant aspect of this is how both sides re-orientated their economics

³⁷⁹ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 294.

³⁸⁰ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, *Crisis and Conflict in Nigeria: A Documentary Source...*, P. 16.

³⁸¹ See P. N. C. Okigbo, "Economy of Nigerian Civil War: Biafran Experience" in Tamuno P. 205.

after the hostilities. Chief Obafemi Awolowo's account of this issue, in a lecture at the University of Ibadan five months after the war, was one of the most exhaustive in detail and perceptive in judgment. On the one hand, Nigeria lost the income accruable from the war affected areas. On the other hand, the army had to be expanded twenty times and more arms and ammunition purchased than envisaged in 1962/8 Development Plan in order to prosecute the war. To finance the purchase of military hardwares and to feed the troops, the Federal Military Government adopted some monetary and fiscal measures. For example, there were cuts in the approved estimates of all the ministries throughout the country except Defence and internal Affairs in the budget of 1967/8 and for the duration of the war additional expenditures were not readily allowed except in respect of the following, in the order arranged below:

- i. The conduct of the war including war publicity;
- ii. Assistance to states;
- iii. Agriculture;
- iv. Roads.

In addition, a 5 percent surcharge on duties was imposed on a number of consumer goods, a 5 percent compulsory saving by all salary and wage earners in the pay as you earn system, and a one naira flat rate on all community and poll taxpayers. In 1968, the import duty surcharge was raised from 5 to $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent, excise duties were imposed on a number of domestic manufactures and a once-for-all levy made on all pioneer companies with an annual profit of at least £5000 (or ₦10 000).³⁸²

A number of other measures were introduced. In 1968, the Central Bank was directed to finance the State marketing boards in place of the commercial banks. The

³⁸² T. Muhammadu *etal*, "The Nigerian Civil War"... in O. Oyediran (ed.), Pp. 44-45.

commercial bank for unknown reasons refused the demand that year contrary to the practice, to finance the purchase of produce. Yet in the absence of oil the agricultural products, especially cocoa and groundnuts became the principal foreign exchange earners 'for the Federal Government. In the annual abstract of statistics, 1970 (a publication of federal office of statistics, Lagos), it is shown that between 1966 and 1968 revenues from petroleum dropped from \$257 Million to \$104 Million, and 1968 accounted for only 7 percent of Nigeria's export earnings. Earnings from palm oil products fell even more sharply, from \$93 Million to \$29 million. Income from cocoa, on the other hand, jumped from \$79 Million to \$145 Million, while the scale of groundnut products remained relatively steady, fetching \$155 Million in 1966 and \$146 Million in 1968. With the liberation of oil producing areas in 1968 petroleum did provide a large amount of foreign exchange for the Federal Government in the concluding months of the war.³⁸³ On the secessionist side, the war started with more than \$20 Million in Foreign Exchange belonging to the former Eastern Nigeria. This was used to purchase arms for the new recruits taken on after the declaration of secession in May, 1967. In addition, sum of £30 million in Nigerian currency in circulation in the secessionist enclave at the beginning of hostilities was unloaded in the black market abroad. But the Federal Government blockade of the enclave effectively prevented the secessionist regime from exporting oil abroad. And in January, 1968, the Federal Government introduced a new currency which rendered valueless the Nigerian currency the agents of the secessionist regime were illegally exchanging abroad in the black market to earn foreign exchange.³⁸⁴

P.C.N Okigbo argues that it was clear that this situation would not last too long. It

³⁸³ T. Muhammadu *etal*, "The Nigerian Civil War"..., in O. Oyediran (ed.), P.45.

³⁸⁴ T. Muhammadu *etal*, "The Nigerian Civil War"..., in O. Oyediran (ed.), P.45.

was anticipated sooner or later that Nigeria would change her currency. The Biafran authorities had established the Central Bank of Biafra; the Governor-designate had been enjoined quite early to set in motion all the apparatus required to organize, design and produce a currency for issue on short notice. The Governor of the Bank set about this task with dispatch in 1967; by the end of the year he was in position to submit several designs for acceptance. By the time the Federal Government decided to change the Nigerian currency in 1968, the Biafran notes printed in Portugal to design made by distinguished artists, were already in place ready to be used.³⁸⁵

Nevertheless, there were myriads of problem associated with the change from Nigerian to Biafran currency. The first was what to do with large holdings of Nigerian currency still in Biafra but deteriorated by the Federal Government. The notes were shipped out from various European capitals – Lisbon, London, Paris – in plane to be sold in a currency market for ultimate redemption by the Central Bank of Nigeria. Its plan boomeranged due to delay in transportation, shipment and dishonesty such huge quantities of currency, especially after it had been come public knowledge in foreign currency markets that Nigeria had demonetized the former currency. Another problem was how to design and print the new Biafran currency on paper that could withstand very rough usage. It was necessary, therefore that the paper should be as water resistant as possible and stand extraordinary degrees of handling. A third problem was the difficulty of replenishing the supply not because of the cost of reprinting but because of the difficulty of transportation in Biafra. Notes were printed in denomination corresponding to the Nigerian units: five shillings, ten shilling, one pound and five pounds. It was an important decision to define the units identically with Nigerian currency units so that the

³⁸⁵ P. N. C. Okigbo, “Economy of Nigerian Civil War: Biafran Experience” in Tamuno P. 45.

public would not have to learn new units. The decision made it easier for the traders in the market place. A basic question that raised a problem for a central banker would have been to decide what volume to print in the first instance and how much to introduce from time to time. It was however, surmountable, because it was easy to determine from the data available at the time the volume of Nigerian notes in circulation in the former Eastern Region. This was used as the target for initial printing, the aim being to replace the Nigerian notes with Biafran notes.

However the calculation overlooked an important phenomenon. Prior to 1967, the banks were used fully not only Eastern Nigeria but in Nigeria as a whole as depositories of monetary wealth. There was sort of some currency hoarding by the population and generally most people had learnt to use banks for depositing their money. In a war situation, it became a practice to hold one's own care, using the banks only to secure additional supplies. The implication of this is that the volume of hand to hand currency held in hoards would be much other than the level suggested by the prewar experience. The quantity of notes printed is therefore inadequate from the start it could not be regularly replenished because the cost of reprinting and difficulty of transportation, Moreover, it had been decided quite from the onset that coins would be too expensive to mint and too bulky to transport from Lisbon to Biafra. In attempt to solve this problem, Nigerian coins within Biafra enclave were also made legal tender. No wonder its disappearance created a vacuum which resulted to inflation. Soon, there were hardly any commodities that could be bought for less than five shillings for which notes were available. In addition, the new Nigerian notes began to trickle in to be used by Biafran traders and sponsored users to utilise in the trade across the borders for essential

commodities. Equally significant, this phenomenon, depreciated in importance as its risk grew many who used the lines were unable to return to Biafra. The control of the supply was in part exogenous, the limit of the capacity to print in Portugal and transport to Biafra. There was no international trade, importation to be paid directly. Besides, hoarding reduced from each issue a substantial proportion held as personal deposits.³⁸⁶

Mostly, as a result, of circumstances, currency from hand to hand transactions was constantly in short supply. This factor helped to dampen the ensuing inflation induced by shortage of commodities. In some places, the traders used commodity money, exchanging goods for another, the values being nationally fixed within the currency units. The only way to pay for imported materials of war to sustain the fighting was to accumulate foreign exchange. In the absence of any export trade, it followed that the only source open would be gifts of weapons, and proxy were made by a few friendly government, the weapons and essential supplies were ferried by air through Gabon and Satome to the Biafran airport at Uli. The Oscar source was the large number of Biafran residents overseas who went for campaign for support and help. Some of the help came in cash, some in kind, part of which was converted to cash and part if it deemed necessary despatched as commodities.³⁸⁷

From the forgoing, it can be deduced that the net effect of these measures led many observers to speculate that the secession would come to an end in August 1968; the regime was short of foreign exchange and not sufficient arms were coming in. But at this time the secessionists were winning the war of propaganda in Europe and America, voluntary organisations, in addition to putting pressure on their governments to deny

³⁸⁶ P. N. C. Okigbo, "Economy of Nigerian Civil War: Biafran Experience" in Tamuno P.45.

³⁸⁷ P. N. C. Okigbo, "Economy of Nigerian Civil War: Biafran Experience" in Tamuno P. 203.

arms to the federal government and thus force it to negotiate with Ojukwu, were also giving donations in money and kind to the so called starving population of Biafra!. This became the major source of both the relief materials for the civilian population and the arms for Ojukwu's army. According to John Stremlau,

Any person or organisation wishing to transfer money to Biafra in order to pay for local goods and services would make a deposit into the London branch of the Igbo owned African continental Bank, and equivalent sum would be released in local currency that was valueless outside Biafra. The sum paid to the Bank immediately became available to the Biafra government as external revenue, and could be invested in military equipment, and used to pay mark press for its propaganda services, or allocated for other foreign purchases.³⁸⁸

As noted earlier, the relief organisations kept the secession alive most probably in advertently. When the war ended in January 1970 the Federal Military Government proved wrong all the predictions that the end of the war would be marked by the deaths of many people. Not even mass trials of war criminals took place, much less the genocide by the western press. There was no recrimination among the general public. With adequate preparation, post war rehabilitation and reconstruction in the war-affected areas and the reintegration of the Igbo into Nigerian society were a comparatively easy exercise.³⁸⁹

In the management of the war economy, Chief Awolowo adopted the fiscalist approach. Like Lord John Keynes, the guru of the fiscalist, Awolowo sought to achieve economic stability and growth through the use of fiscal measures (notably tax) in controlling aggregate demand. The fiscalist approach also entails an active participation of the state in allocating resources through bureaucratic controls and regulations. It is opposed to the monetarist approach which lays much premium on money and believes

³⁸⁸ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 24.

³⁸⁹ B. J. Dudley, *Politics and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria...*, Pp. 118-119.

that so long as interest rates are adjusted, market forces would interplay to bring about a desirable situation in the economy. In particular, Awolowo adopted a three-pronged method in financing the war:

- (a) economising the resources of the Federal Government:
- (b) conserving the badly depleted and scarce foreign exchange; and
- (c) generating additional revenues to compensate the loss accruing from drops in oil and agricultural export.³⁹⁰

The first test of Awolowo's strength of nerve came early in the war, the international currency crisis of 1967. In November, 1967 the British government unilaterally devalued the pound sterling and since Nigeria was a member of the sterling bloc, a decision (to devalue or not to devalue) had to be taken. Awolowo sought the opinion of the country's leading financial experts and eventually decided against devaluation for two reasons. First, he opined that it was not in the best interest of Nigeria during this war time as it would reduce the capacity of the country to buy arms from the international market. Second, he considered the British action as an infringement on the country's independence and sovereignty.

Before taking the decision, Awolowo was under strong pressure from the monetarists like Clement Isong, the Governor of the Central Bank (who preferred devaluation) but he had to put his feet down.³⁹¹ With the rejection of devaluation of the Nigerian pound, its earning power remained stable during the war period.

One of the measures adopted by Chief Awolowo to conserve the country's scarce

³⁹⁰ O. Awolowo, *Financing the Nigerian Civil War*, Nigeria: Apapa National Press, 1970, P.3.

³⁹¹ Interview with C. Isong, former Governor of Central Bank by a team of *Newswatch Reporters*, Awo, *A Special Newswatch Publication*, June 1987, P. 23; Effiong Essien "Managing a War Economy", *The Guidian*, 13 May, 1987, P. 7.

foreign exchange was the purchase of arms and ammunition through raw cash or by barter. Most of the arms obtained from the Soviet Union, for example, were bartered for agricultural produce. Although, the Soviets could have insisted on foreign exchange or no deal, they accepted the bargain because they saw the war as an opportunity to score political and diplomatic advantage over Britain, more so, when Britain had vacillated a lot at the beginning of the war.³⁹² Besides, the resort to barter, Awolowo also exercised a tighter control over the disbursement of foreign exchange earnings. This measure became necessary in view of the fact that before his tenure as finance commissioner, commercial banks in the country disposed of their foreign exchange according to their whims and caprices, In fact, the World then was divided into two bloc; the scheduled and non-scheduled area and the Exchange control Officer had no authority over the transfer of exchange to the scheduled area. This practice was discontinued henceforth. Awolowo not only abolished the arbitrary distinction between scheduled and non-scheduled areas, he also instructed all commercial banks to deposit all their foreign exchange earnings with the Central Bank of Nigeria. In the event, all transactions in foreign exchange were subject to the recommendation and approval of the Exchange Control Officer.³⁹³

Another measure adopted by Awolowo to conserve foreign exchange was that he regulated the country's imports. Prior to May 1967, little control was exercised over the importation of European manufactured goods and all sort of articles found their way to the Nigerian shores. On noting this dangerous trend, Awolowo put a good number of items on the prohibitive list. It was also to conserve foreign exchange that Awolowo

³⁹² This provided a unique opportunity for the Soviet Union to establish some influence in Nigeria. She attempted to replace British paternalism when the latter refused to sell aircrafts to Nigeria at the initial stage of the war.

³⁹³ O. Awolowo, *Financing the Nigerian Civil War...*, P.10.

inaugurated a high powered Import Quota Allocation Committee charged with the responsibility of issuing import licenses to deserving firms.³⁹⁴

Finally, Awolowo was quick to discover that Biafrans were hawking Nigeria's pounds at give away rates for foreign exchange. This practice could have a telling blow on Nigeria's economy; moreso when the Biafrans now had in their possession unissued currency notes burgled from the Central Bank vaults in Enugu, Benin and Port-Harcourt. This abuse of the Nigerian pound coupled with the dire need to ensure the effectiveness of the trade embargo imposed on the secessionist territory compelled the Ministry of Finance to embark on currency conversion exercise in late 1967. This exercise was given legal and military backing by Decree No. 51 of 1967. The three musketeers: Awolowo, Clement Isong and Abdul-Aziz Atta, kept sealed lips on the exercise until its actual execution.³⁹⁵ This exercise caused a great discomfort and economic loss in the East as it caught them unawares. The exercise also lowered the morale of the fighting troops as it reduced their earning power to nothingness and, had the war been vigorously prosecuted at this time, the civil war could possibly have ended earlier than it lasted. In fact, Awolowo incurred the wrath of the Igbo for this measure and several still hold this point against him today. (That the exercise had a- terrible impact on the Biafrans is confirmed by C.O. Dureke:

The first serious blow against them (Biafrans) was the promulgation of the Moratorium Decree which nullified the Biafran currency and rendered nearly all Igbo on the Eastern side of the River Niger impecunious in one fell swoop.³⁹⁶

In particular, the exercise crippled them financially and severely curtailed their

³⁹⁴ E. Effiong, "Managing the War Economy"...in *The Guardian News*... 13 May, 1987, P. 7.

³⁹⁵ Alhaji Abdul Aziz Attah was the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance throughout the war years while Clement Isong was the Governor of the Central Bank during the same period.

³⁹⁶ Cited in Umunnaegbulam Moses' "Bitter Lesson of First Coup" in *MONTHLY LIFE*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1986, P. 9.

ability to purchase arms from the international market. An equally significant economic measure that Awolowo adopted in the prosecution of the war was the Central Bank Act of 1968. Prior to the outbreak of the war, only the commercial banks were authorized by law to finance the Commodity boards. With the outbreak of the war, however, the Standard Bank (now First Bank) refused to finance the export of the country's export produce because it was not sure of when the war would end and whether it would be possible for her to recover the amount expended. It was against this background that the Central Bank Act of 1968 was promulgated. This act made the Central Bank the sole authority to extend credits to the marketing boards for financing the purchase of export produce.³⁹⁷

It was through all these fiscal control measures initiated by Awolowo and adopted by the Federal Executive Council that the Federal Government was able to raise “230.8 million pounds in local currency and 70.8 million pounds in foreign exchange” to prosecute the war³⁹⁸. Dr. Clement Isong, the Governor of Central Bank throughout the war years gave Awo a deserved and befitting remark: He was the most careful commissioner I worked with. Every Monday, he would meet with me and his permanent secretary to review the foreign exchange position of the country. He was never partisan on issues.³⁹⁹

As a true fiscalist, Chief Awolowo used fiscal instruments to generate revenue internally. Among the most important were (a) the capital gains tax of about 20% imposed on companies, (b) terminal dues payable by all ships evacuating mineral oil

³⁹⁷ Interview with C. Isong, *Special Newswatch Magazine*, June, 1987, P. 23.

³⁹⁸ O. Awolowo, *Financing the Nigerian Civil War...* P. 12.

³⁹⁹ Interview with C. Isong, *Special Newswatch Magazine*, June, 1987, P. 23.

from Nigerian ports; (c) turn over tax imposed on companies regardless of whether they had recorded profit for the year in question or not; (d) a flat levy tax on the categories of pioneer companies. This measure alone yielded the sum of £1.2 million for the Federal Government in the 1968/69 fiscal year. This policy was directed against the Pioneer Industry Ordinance which had, before then, granted a tax holiday of five years to "infant industries;" (e) a super tax imposed on all companies whose taxable income exceeded either £5,000 during the year of assessment or 15% of the company's issued and paid up capital. This tax was initially fixed at two shillings on a pound in 1968 but it was raised to five shillings on a pound in 1969. From this tax alone, statistics show that the sum of £1.6 million and £2.4 million were collected respectively in the 1968/69 and 1969/70 fiscal years.⁴⁰⁰

Having refused to borrow money from the international money market, Chief Awolowo also modified the status of Treasury Bills and the Way and Means advances. This was to increase the Federal Government capacity to borrow from the Central Bank. Prior to the war, the Federal Government was only allowed to borrow from the Central Bank of Nigeria in proportion to 50% of its budget. This legal limit was amended by Awolowo and the Federal Government could raise loan up to 85% of its estimated revenue in 1968, 100% in 1969 and 150% in 1970. In the same spirit, Awolowo had in May 1968 reduced the rediscount rate from 5% to 4½% and thus allowing for general reduction in interest rates to stimulate domestic production. He also created new borrowing instruments for the government. An example was the Treasury Certificate which initially matured in 90 days but which was now raised to one year.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Awolowo, *This Week*, "Weep Not For Me" June 30, P. 25.

⁴⁰¹ Interview with C. Isong, *Special Newswatch Magazine*, June, 1987, P. 23.

From our discussion so far, we have been able to establish that too much fuss has been made of Awolowo's advocacy of starvation as a weapon of war. And if the economic policies he pursued as the Finance Minister had a telling effect on the secessionist enclave, the policies were implemented for the sake of larger Nigerian nation. There should, in fact, be no doubt in any quarter that Awolowo contributed a great deal to the preservation of Nigeria as a single socio-political and economic entity. Indeed the modest epitaph for Awolowo's civil war role is that supplied by Gowon himself:

In the war years, Chief Awolowo worked hand in hand with his most able Permanent Secretary, the late Alhaji Abdul Attah. They were both strong and able men, each with his firmly held opinions and they respected each other. Together, ably assisted by other committed public servants they ensured that we managed our finances so well that we never lacked the sinews of war. Without their work we could hardly have prevailed?⁴⁰²

7.7 The Role of Indigenous Technology in Nigeria in Civil War, 1967-1970

Technology, throughout the ages, has provided mankind in many spheres of activities with the means of influencing and controlling its future development. The history of scientific and technological breakthroughs shows specific period of significant progress that can be distinctly related to the introduction of new important ideas, concepts and products. Such periods of leap forward have been most marked during the times of war extreme deprivation and needs. For instance, the period before and immediately after the First and Second World War, the Nigerian Civil War helped to ginger the Nigerian public to realize the vulnerable position of the country in depending on foreign technology and expertise for the country's security and survival. A clear conception of the War Machine, in the context of Nigerian Civil War, the awareness of the states of

⁴⁰² Yakubu Gowon, "Awo Served in Hour of Need", *Awo in the eyes of People*, Lagos, *A DAILY TIMES Publication*, August 1987, P. 82.

Nigerian scientists and technologists prior the outbreak of the war, will clearly bring the achievements in technology of Nigerian scientists and technologists into focus.

In a war situation, the totality of machinery and effort required to meet the challenges posed by such a crisis constitute a war machine. This invariably means that the primary needs for the morale, mobilization and commitment of both the population and fighting forces must be such a machine. It should be noted that the dearth of this machine to undertake the commanding tasks posed by the crisis situation, the system will collapse. What then are the basic tasks of a War Machine? They include the following: -

- i. production and supply of adequate food (i.e. primary tool production, processed food, packaged food items, and the like) for the population and the defending forces;
- ii. ensuring mobility and transportation of men and material both civilian and armed forces;
- iii. provision of modern communication and transport equipment;
- iv. fuel and power;
- v. clothing (including footwear) for various climatic environments and conditions both for the fighting forces and the supporting civilian population;
- vi. production and supply of simple and complicated weaponry i.e. arms and ammunition, armoured vehicles, rockets, gun boating teargas, smoker screen, various bombs (both demotion and anti-personnel), mortals and various propellants, explosives, grenades, and others.
- vii. provision of adequate Medicare;
- viii. training in the use of new equipment, arms and ammunition; and
- ix. maintenance of equipment and other facilities.

Under normal circumstance, most of the needs and enormous problems demonstrated by the Nigerian civil war would have been taken care of by massive importation. However, reverse was the case in that part of the country (Nigeria) called Biafra which

was barricaded by land, sea and air. It became relatively impossible to depend on external supply of these basic necessities. If the latter had to be met, then, of necessity, a self-sustaining machinery must be in place to meet the challenge. The Biafra war machine, for this purpose, was made up:

- i. the machinery for food production, processing, preservation, packaging and distribution;
- ii. military – industrial complex that was put in place to provide essential materials, equipment and services;
- iii. mobilisation of scientific and technical personnel for the solution of technical and allied problems on a self-sustaining basis;
- iv. mobilisation of the population for development and provision of infrastructures and services;
- v. research and development complex directed primarily at the design and development of new processes and new products from existing local materials, for fabrication and manufacture of new technical means of production through copy technological capability in adaptation, for modification and for redesign of existing technologies and equipment to serve different specific purposes.
- vi. new production machinery and industrial plants for the direct manufacture of newly designed processes, products, equipment and machinery; and
- vii. simple factories or make shift industries for fabrication of machinery, equipment and tools, for extraction and processing of local minerals and raw materials; e.g. brine for salt, crude petroleum for petrol; diesel, kerosene, and others.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰³ F. N. C. Oragwu, “Scientific and Technological Aspect o the War-Machine in Biafra”, in T.T. Tamuno *et al*, (eds), *Nigeria Since Independence: the First Twenty-Five Years...*, Pp. 213-215.

The war machine also included the technical facilities available in Electric Cooperation of Nigeria (ECN), Railways, Nigerian Port Authority (NPA), Industrial Development Centre at Owerri, Airways, Ministry of Works, Youth, Trade Centres and Technical Colleges, and Research Laboratories. These facilities were utilized for (a) Production and technology adaptation work (b) furnace and foundry development and metal casting technology and (c) the special purpose equipment. It is the above complex machinery which aided the military industrial establishment that constituted the War Machine on Biafra. The most important difference between the war in Biafra and that of greater Nigeria was the ability or otherwise to bring in things from outside.

With the sudden disappearance of access to foreign technology, technical know-how, technology products in terms of equipment, machinery and materials for meaningful sustenance of life, it was done on the scientific and technological community that a lot was required of them if the population was to survive. The civil war was in its entirety threw defence forces into comatose whose activities and life span dependent on foreign technology and imports: As a matter of fact, the defence forces suddenly found themselves virtually lacking in basic necessities such as equipment, materials and other technical support needed for civil war. It was the helplessness caused by lack of alternative options which gave rise to spontaneous movement in Biafra, then initially referred to as “Science Group.” The latter was a voluntary coming together of many scientists, technologies, technicians and craftsmen who felt they had something to offer in the solution of the technical and allied problems posed to the population by Civil War crisis. The “Group” comprised a broad spectrum of people with scientific and

technological background, formal and informal, from various walks of life. These included:

- i. Teachers from the Universities, Colleges of Technology and Secondary Schools;
- ii. Research scientists from research and technical establishments.
- iii. Scientists, technologists and craftsmen from various public services, organization, such as Railway, Port Authority, Electricity Corporation, Petroleum Refinery, Mines and geological surveys;
- iv. Engineers and Technicians from the private sector such as Shell – BP, UAC, BEWAC, among others; and
- v. Ordinary artisans and craftsmen and the so-called wayside mechanics.

However, it should be noted that not all the available scientists joined the science Group. ‘Some of the people found themselves working in other equally important non-scientific and non technological programmes and were, therefore not directly involved in the work of the “Group.” What is most outstanding of the “Science Group” was their total commitment to technological innovation, copy technological creativity, a higher degree of improvisation and ready acceptance of high risks and extreme privation.⁴⁰⁴ After the loss of Enugu, the two sub-groups of the science Group came together and set up their first headquarters in December, 1967 in Umuahia. The Group was known as Research and Production Organisation (RAP). It must be recalled that before formalisation of RAP organization, a number of Research and Production Workshops were already established and functioning. These included:

- i. Weapon and Equipment, Research and Production with particular reference to Ogbunigwe and land mines;

⁴⁰⁴ F. N. C. Oragwu, “Scientific and Technological Aspect o the War-Machine in Biafra”... P. 215.

- ii. Weapons and Equipment, Research and Production with particular in mortals and rockets;
- iii. Chemical Materials Group. Research and Production with particular reference to explosives and propellants;
- iv. Chemical Materials Group and Production (Miscellaneous chemicals) including edible and manufacture, coke production from local coal;
- v. Airport and Road Development Group;
- vi. Alcohols and Assorted Drinks Group;
- vii. Metallurgy Workshop, furnaces, crucibles and casting including granades bomb castings;
- viii. Mechanical Engineering Design and Production of devices, including bullets;
- ix. Petroleum Extraction and Refinery Group; and
- x. Electronics/Electrical Design and production Group.

This discussion will however be restricted to Weapon Production Group because of its crucial roles in the historiography of Nigerian civil war. This Group was assigned the tasks of final assembly of various elements into various bombs, and devices. In some cases, the Group used its workshop for actual testing of the triggering devices. Their tasks included loading and production.

- i. Ogbunigwe which was a unique bomb produced by scientists and given the name “Ogbonigwe” (killer of the crowd). The bomb was built using basic physics of “Monroe” effect which could desperse shrapnel as directed using the wave phenomena for such dispensing and which could destroy by a combination of the shrapnel and well-devised wave altitude. This was achieved by the shape of the

Ogbunigwe, the position of explosives, and the detonating devices. The Ogbunigwe could be deployed as a:

- (a) Mine weapon
- (b) Ground to air weapon.

The device could be produced in conical and cylindrical shapes depending on the objectives to be achieved.

- ii. Anti-personnel and Demolition bombs which served as normal conventional bombs; and
- iii. Mortar shells and the printing mechanisms of mortar and shelling equipment.⁴⁰⁵

Perhaps no more important instrument of war lay at the disposal of the Biafrans than the bomb called “*Ogbunigwe*.”⁴⁰⁶ The originators of this notorious weapon included Gordian Ezekwe, Benjamin Chukwuka Nwosu and Willy Achukwe. This ingenuity was later adopted and manufactured by RAP Engineers. It comprises complex three – chamber apparatus that often included delayed action devices containing a propellant, an explosive substances – often gun powder in an igniting base – and scraps of metal for

⁴⁰⁵ F. N. C. Oragwu, “Scientific and Technological Aspect o the War-Machine in Biafra”..., Pp. 215-225

⁴⁰⁶ During his last wartime speech Biafran head of state Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu summarised many of the technological feats of the Biafran state:

In three years of war, necessity gave birth to invention. During those three years,... [w]e built bombs, rockets, and we designed and built our own refinery and our own delivery systems and guided them far. For three years, blockaded without hope of import, we maintained all our vehicles. The state extracted and refined petrol, individuals’ refined petrol in their back gardens. We built and maintained our airports, maintained them under heavy bombardment.... We spoke to the world through a telecommunications system engineered by local ingenuity.

In three years, we had broken the technological barrier, became the most advanced Black people on earth.

Source: Excerpt from last wartime speech of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, Head of Biafran State; Emma Okocha, “Odumegwu Ojukwu—The Last Campaign of the Biafran General,” *Vanguard*, February 15, 2010.

maximal effect. Ogbunigwe struck terror in the hearts of many Nigerian soldiers.⁴⁰⁷ The novelist Chukwumeke Ike captures the hysteria and dread evoked by it in a passage in his important book, *Sunset at Dawn*:

When the history of this war comes to be written, the Ogbunigwe (sic) and the shore batteries will receive special mention as Biafra's greatest saviours. We have been able to wipe out more Nigerian with those devices than with any imported weapons.⁴⁰⁸

You must have heard that the Nigerians are now so morally afraid of Ogunigwe (sic) that each advancing battalion is now proceeded by a herd of cattle.

It would be difficult to try to summarise the major achievements of technologists and scientists in Biafra. But in terms of technical achievements, the major ones could be summarised as follows:-

- i. Mortar and mortar shells were developed and produced using locally available materials and a distance of over 2 miles was achieved by December, 1967;
- ii. Ground to air rockets were tested and mass produced, achieving an average altitude of 2 miles within the first six months of the crisis;
- iii. High quality rocket solid fuels were perfected and mass produced;
- iv. Grenades; including smoke green and riot type varieties; were cast and produced in large quantities and used to effect;
- v. Armoured vehicles were adopted, modified, produced, and utilized to good effect;

Unique Biafran weapon Ogbunigwe was produced as a land mine, a ground to ground weapon and ground to air weapon, with destructive effects based on "Monroe" wave effect phenomena and wall directed dispersion of embedded shrapnel;

⁴⁰⁷ E. O. Arene, *The "Biafran" Scientists: The Development of an African Indigenous Technology* (Lagos, Nigeria: Arnet Ventures, 1997); Bayo Onanuga, *People in the News, 1900-1999: A Survey of Nigerians of the Twentieth Century* (Lagos, Nigeria: Independent Communications Limited., 2000); pay special attention to entry on Ezekwe; Michael Robson, "Douglas A/B-26 Invader/Biafran Invaders"; www/vectaris.net/idjO7.html.

⁴⁰⁸ V. C. Ike, *Sunset at Dawn: A Novel about Biafra*. London: Collins and Harvill Press, 2006.

- vi. Petroleum refinery, equivalent to the old Port Harcourt refinery for the first fractions of petroleum, diesel and kerosene, was replicated twice and mini refineries were successfully set up for on-the-spot refinery needs, with production of “tel” was almost perfected before the end of the civil war;
- vii. Salt factory based on local brine established to provide the edible salt needs in Biafra;
- viii. Production of toilet soap and mosquito repellent coils using dried orange peel in the case of the latter;
- ix. Acetone produced;
- x. Human vaccine production through copy technological creativity achieved; e.g cholera vaccine;
- xi. Bullet produced based on local lead materials and production of relevant percussion caps through safe handling of mercury fulminate;
- xii. The distribution and production of various grades of alcohol;
- xiii. The semi-commercial production of soap;
- xiv. Major electronics and electrical devices and products achieved.⁴⁰⁹

The above represented but a sample of the major technological achievement of scientists and technologists in Biafra during the civil war. In many countries, such achievements should normally form the basis for new industries and for a military industrial machine soon after such a war. The Biafra experience provided a firm basis for the use of local materials in industrialisation and effective modality for introducing technological process into economic and social development programmes of a developing

⁴⁰⁹ T. N. Tamuno, “Introduction, Men Measures in the Nigerian Crisis 1967-1970” in Tamuno and S. C. Ukpabi (eds) *Nigeria since independence: The First Twenty Five Years, Vol. VI; The Civil War Year*, Heinemann, Ibadan, 1989, P. 25.

country. Factories were set up based on local raw materials, many existing technologies were upgraded and modified through well directed research and development work and within a very short time. Scientists and technologists in Nigeria outside Biafra were understandably limited in their technological achievements and should have done equally well if there were no alternative options available outside. It was quite easy in that case to import technological products and the foreign personnel to put them to use since there were no compelling reasons to do otherwise. To this end, it was impossible to expect such technological breakthrough similar to the Biafra cases which were made possible by sheer necessity and survival instincts. The Biafran experience clearly indicated that self-reliance as a model for national development for a developing country like Nigerian wanting to escape from its colonial fate is feasible. It is also practicable in an emergency, either self-induced or imposed by circumstances.

7.8 Conclusion

The escalatory factor of the Nigerian Civil War enlongated the plight of the people of the study area especially the freedom of movement, to the east, is Nsukka and to the south, is Onitsha. This axis became a no go area during this period of study. In other words, it became a death trap during the Civil War. This chapter had highlighted and examined critically the factors that escalated Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. From the analysis, it is proved beyond reasonable doubt that the causations were interrelated and in chain relations. Worthy of mention was the Biafran invasion of the Mid-West and the federal counter invasion of the Mid-West late September which changed the character motive of the war from mere “police action,” to “total war” which subsequently led to total blockade of the Biafra enclave. This factor more than any other factor enlist

international involvement in the course of the war. For example, on the Federal side were Britain, USSR while on the rebel were France, Portuguese. Other developments that followed were the charge of genocide, the use of propaganda etcetera.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ROLE OF FOREIGN ELEMENTS IN THE CIVIL WAR, 1967-1970

8.0 Introduction

The interest shown by the European nations and certain countries outside Africa has been subjected to conflicting interpretations. This interest falls into a sharply different category from that shown by African states.⁴¹⁰ It is against this background that the role of foreign elements in Nigerian Civil War must be studied. It should however, be noted that the collaboration of intensive international lobbying activities with the massive publicity given to the Biafran plight, the international press in Europe and US affected Nigeria's Diplomatic Relations with the international community and US in particular. For a better discussion and understanding of the impact of the process of internationalisation of the Nigerian Civil War, it is important to provide an exposition of the role of foreign powers in the crisis. The action of African states individually and organisation of African Unity must be examined.

8.1 The Role of Europeans

There were majorly two areas of international involvement, the first was in the supply of arms to warring groups. The second and equally significant area was in the supply of relief materials to the starving population. Unlike the rebels, the federal government purchased its arms directly through various government institutions in Britain, France, USSR, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and Holland. Shortly after, the start of the war and for no reason not too difficult to see, (France with its interest in oil exploitation in the war affected areas)⁴¹¹ Holland, and Belgium imposed an embargo on

⁴¹⁰ R. Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War*, P. 9.

⁴¹¹ Turi Muhammadu and Muhammed Haruna, P.34.

the sale of arms to Nigeria. The rebels bought arms mainly from private suppliers. In August, 1968, France became the chief supplier, according to G. Theyar⁴¹², France also provided the rebels with foreign currency for the purchase of arms and other supplies. Between September and October, 1968, the rebels were supplied by France with up to 300 tons of arms weekly. There is a consensus that the arms that French supplied to the rebels helped to lengthen the period of the war by more than one year, a year within which the agony of malnutrition and starvation reached its peaks among the civilian population in the rebel areas.⁴¹³ Other countries which for selfish reasons supplied arms to the rebels include South Africa, Israel, and Portugal.

It ought to be pointed out that the support of Britain and USSR of the federal cause were for different reasons. The USSR was interested in having a solid political and economic foothold in Nigeria. Britain on the other hand, was more interested in influencing federal war policies. The continued British Pressure on the war policies of the federal government made dependence on the USSR for arms greater. This proposition is historically contestable. It has been commonly said, with justification, that British intervention in the Nigerian Civil War has been dictated by essentially economic interests. Few people will deny that this is so. Economic interests dictated her intervention in principle, they do not explain the manner and measure in which it has come. Britain “split” colonial India before quitting her but continued to maintain practically unabated economic ties with both India and Pakistan after that event. Much the same situation applies to her relations with Malaya and Singapore, after the

⁴¹² G. Thayer, *The War Business*, Palladin, Lagos, For Analysis of Soviet Policy in this regard, See Legvold, *Soviet Policy in West Africa*, Pp. 311-30, “The USSR and War in Nigeria”, *Mizan*, No. 70/71, Winter/Spring 1969, Pp. 31-38; Klinghoffer, “Why the Soviets Chose Sides”, Pp. 47-50; and Cronje, *The World and Nigeria*, Ch. 12.

⁴¹³ B. J. Dudley, *Politics and Political Order...* P. 207.

dissolution of Malayan federation. But for racial disagreement, Britain would in all probability have continued to maintain harmonious economic ties with three members of her former Central Africa federation Zambia, Malawi and Rhodesia. The point being made here is that economic interests by themselves need not to have forced the hand of normally cautious Britain to take sides with Lagos and for the destruction of lives and property. Indeed, with the considerable investment of British firms in oil-rich Eastern Nigeria (Biafra), Britain had every interest in seeking to avoid prolonged Civil War, commotion or destruction in any form. Uwechue argues that British economic interests are not themselves incompatible with the existence of more than one independent state were Nigeria to break up, it has been clearly demonstrated by the precedent mentioned above in the case of India and Pakistan, Malaya and Singapore, and the former Central Africa Federation.⁴¹⁴

The problem in the Nigerian context is that the present situation presents a dilemma comparable in certain respects to that of the two China. You have to choose one or the other. If Britain cannot keep both Nigeria and Biafra, it is her interest to strengthen her hold on the bigger of the two and hope through this to secure a “reconquest” of the smaller portion in order to regain the original whole neither hatred for the Igbo nor a sacred attachment to the principle of preserving one Nigeria dictated Britain present position and commitment expediency did.⁴¹⁵

Apart from international nation’s involvement in the war, there was also evidence of voluntary non-governmental organisation from western countries. Their involvement produced two major effects. First on the list, it provided the rebels (Biafrans) with free

⁴¹⁴ R. Uwechue, *Reflections on Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 92.

⁴¹⁵ R. Uwechue, *Reflections on Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 93.

and effective publicity. According to Kirk-Greene,⁴¹⁶ Oxfam mounted a heavily advertised appeal for £200,000 to stop the starvation, in particular of children. Secondly, the involvement of relief organization provided the rebels with foreign currency. This was possible according to Lindsay,⁴¹⁷ through the buying of locally produced food stuffs and payment of landing fees for relief aircraft. The relief organisations involved included the international committee of the Red Cross (which in the words of Kirk Greene prepared an airlift that promised to be on a scale second only to that which saved Berlin in 1948), Africa concern, the French Red Cross, and of course Caritas International.⁴¹⁸

Another power which supported the federal government in a very substantial way was of course, the Soviet Union. As a super power her interests in the cold war conflict were primarily political and only remotely economic.⁴¹⁹ Achebe captures USSR involvement in Nigeria civil war more vividly:

There were other reasons for the ever growing soviet presence in Nigeria in 1969. The soviets had announced their intention to expand their bilateral trade agreements with Nigeria to include Military and economic assistance. They had their eyes on a truly large. Prize contract to build one of the largest steel mills in all of Africa, at a cost of a then astonishing \$ 120 million.⁴²⁰

On the Biafra side, two countries stand out prominently for the support and sympathy which they have shown for the Biafran course. These were France and Portugal. Portugal's reason remains an uphill task to explain. It cannot be humanitarian posture or gesture since her attitude to the fight for freedom by her African colonies puts in doubt any drop respect on her part for the principle of self-determination by African

⁴¹⁶ Kirk-Greene..., Vol. II, P. 56.

⁴¹⁷ Kennedy Lindsay, "Political Factors in Biafran Relief Ventures", Vol. 22, No. 2, February, 1970.

⁴¹⁸ For an exhaustive analysis of the role of British Pressure groups on the Nigerian Civil War, See William A. Ajibola, *Foreign Policy and Public Opinion*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1978; Other writing by Nigerian on the International Involvement include Jide Aluko, "The Civil War and Nigerian Foreign Policy", *Political Quarterly*, April, 1971; Oye Ogunbadejo, "Civil War Strife International Relations: A Case of the Nigeria Civil War, 1967-1970", PhD Thesis, University of London, 1974.

⁴¹⁹ R.Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 93.

⁴²⁰ C. Achebe, *There Was A Country..*, p. 104.

people. Perhaps most exciting and more complicated was the attitude of France. The first official statement from the French government indicating sympathy for the Biafran people came on 31 July, 1968, when the Minister of Information M. Joel Theule made the following statement after a cabinet meeting.

The French government notes that the bloodshed and suffering endured for over a year by the population of Biafra have demonstrated their will to affirm themselves as a people.. Faithful to its principles, the French government considers that as a result, the conflict should be resolved on the basis of the right of a people to self-determination involving setting in motion the appropriate international procedure to this end.⁴²¹

On the 19 of September, President De Gaulle himself spoke in the following terms:

.....in this matter France has aided and aids Biafra within possible limits. She has not taken steps to accomplish the final decisive act the recognition of the Biafran Republic because she considers that the matter is above all the affair of Africans. Already there are both from East and West Africa which have recognized Biafra. Others may perhaps follow. This is to say that for France the decision which has not yet been taken is not excluded for the future and one can indeed imagine that the federation itself, realizing the impossibility of remaining as constituted at its inception, may become transformed into a form of union or confederation which could reconcile the right of Biafra to self-determination with her connections with the whole of Nigeria.⁴²²

Naturally, this obvious inclination towards Biafra has raised an enormous amount of speculation as to French intentions and interests in Nigeria. Uwechue wrote in his capacity as Nigerian diplomat in France 1966 and noted certain developments regarding the evolution of French thinking vis-avis the Nigerian crisis. Below are quotations from the *Sunday Times* of London and *Le monde of Paris*, offering explanations for the French attitude to the conflict:

French supplies of arms and ammunition have sharply boosted the collapsing Igbo rebellion against the Nigerian Federal Government. This last minute infusion for col. Ojukwu is a tragedy for Nigeria. It merely prolongs the agony and ensures yet more bloodletting in a cause which is indubitably lost. It is not hard to discern French motives for wanting the war to linger on. The war devitalises a vast and potentially very rich commonwealth country which happens to be surrounded by far weaker and smaller francophone states. The intervention is at least in part transference of France's European complexes on to the helpless back of dying Africa.⁴²³
France which nevertheless recognised only the government of Lagos is progressively increasing her aid to Biafra. The Biafrans have acquired the right to self-determination

⁴²¹ "Biafra", *A.F.P. Bulletin Conseil des Ministres*, 31 July, 1969, (Author's Translated).

⁴²² "Afrigue Occidentale-Nigéria, No. 6687, to September 1968, (Author's translated).

⁴²³ *Sunday Times*, London, 6 October, 1968.

through their sacrifices on the battlefield and the killings to which Igbo have been subjected. Furthermore, it is felt in Paris that the process of separation has become practically irreversible owing to hatred born of this conflict and that the Nigerian federation has in any case come to an end. The French government emphasising the humanitarian aspect of its involvement. But it is clear that political considerations have equally dictated its attitude. The Nigerian federation as it stood in 1966, by the very fact of its size and economic power constitute a pole of attraction in the gulf of Benin. In the long run to the political equilibrium of the whole of West Africa. It is to be noted that the only French speaking countries which have recognised Biafra are Gabon and Ivory Coast, states whose leaders have opposed the maintenance respectively of the former federation of French West Africa and the former Federation of French Equatorial Africa.⁴²⁴

From the foregoing what was most convincing is that France has ulterior motives despite the claim of respect for self-determination and humanitarianism which may not be unconnected with economic goal. There is this claim that “Paris wanted the French oil company Elf Aquitaine (which had a smaller market share in Nigeria’s oil industry) to have a greater footprint in the West African sub region consistent with Jacques Foccart’s vision of French domination. However, the key to French “intervention” on the Biafran side is to be found firstly in French public opinion and intense pro-Biafran sentiment, and secondly in the involvement of respected African leaders on the Biafran side.

There is also this assertion that French instigated African countries, namely Ivory Coast and Gabon to act in the way in which they did. This is a statement that is not in accordance with fact. The contrary, in fact, happens to be the case. Ivory Coast, Gabon were not the only African countries where French has influence. As a matter of fact these two being among the richest can afford as much independence from French official line on foreign matters as the rest of O.C.A.M. (Afro-Malagasy Commun Organization) members, the crux of the matter was that both President Houphoet Boigny and president Bongo have little faith in the cohesive force of federations. Their past political records

⁴²⁴ *Le Monde*, (Paris) November 1968, [Author’s translated]

help to illuminate the fact. It was President Houphouet Boigny who actually successfully led the opposition to France's programmes for a French West African Federation and insisted on independence for each individual state. Gabon was also the first to pull out of the Federation of French Equatorial Africa.⁴²⁵ With this basic attitude, it was easy for both leaders to see the inevitability of failure in the Nigerian federal experiment. When war erupted and bloodshed and destruction mounted as the war progressed, they felt their instincts had been vindicated. The breakthrough which Biafra achieved with both president Houphouet Boigny of Ivory Coast and president Nyerere of Tanzania was the one factor that altered the situation coupled with literary prowess of the Boigny. The involvement of France came therefore as a result of pressure exerted on her by respected African leaders and by French public opinion.

However, it will amount to waste of time and energy to concentrate on blaming the outsiders for taking advantage of the opportunity we ourselves offered them. Such negative attitude will solve nothing. These powers know what they were doing. They know their own interests. The important question that should occupy our minds right now is whether we can say that we know what we are doing; whether we know our own true interests.

Raph Uwechue notes the scenario as follows:

Furthermore, before the conflict developed, important national projects such as the Kainji Dam, the iron and steel industry planned for the country and indeed, similar other projects of vital importance to a developing country were able to attract only the most sluggish support from outside. Despite their known advantages to the country. But within only a few months of fighting, foreign aid began to pour in foreign destructive and with which to destroy our own people. Is this not enough to make any serious Nigerian stop and think? It is amazing how swiftly we have become credit worthy when we are up in arms against one another for the destruction of our own lives our own property and common economy. What is this aid really worth? What does it mean to those who are giving it? Where it comes as a gift our generous donors are actually spending only a tiny percentage of their immense stock. Where, as is mostly the case, we purchase, their arms

⁴²⁵ R. Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 97.

production is, to the extent of the supply given to us being encouraged.

Now at war we have begun once again to drift just as we did in pre-war politics. We are fighting a war which is being fed by outsiders, who have strings attached to the arms they supply. Sooner or later, their permeation amongst us will begin to have effect. These powers will want to direct our politics. Let us brace ourselves while we still have the time to do so to put an end to the internationalization of our quarrel. The moment is fast approaching when we shall find ourselves unable to halt the ominous international momentum, the buildup of which our folly is steadily encouraging. Drifting is bad enough in ordinary peace time politics. In war it is catastrophic.⁴²⁶

8.2 The Role of Organisation of African Unity (OAU, now AU) and Nigeria's Neighbours

The emergences of the country intact out of the ravages of the war marked an important turning point in its historical development by several internal and external variables. The single most important external factor which contributed to the maintenance of Nigeria's territorial integrity were the roles played by the country's neighbours. The staunch support given to Nigerian by most of its neighbours was informed by dependence of some of them on Nigeria for their meaningful survival.⁴²⁷

In order to understand the reaction of the neighbouring and other African countries to the conflict in Nigeria, it is necessary to review the federal government's role in international affairs in the period between 1960 and 1966. Diplomacy is nothing but a cumulative process and Nigeria's behaviour in the period that preceded the Civil War greatly influenced Africa's reactions to it. Nigeria internal politics and its consciousness about its potential economic wealth and political influence in Africa and the rest of the world made its leadership to fashion out a functional and self serving foreign policy. Given the fragility of the country's federal structure in the early 1960s, and the ideological outlook of the leadership. The leadership of Nigeria were anxious that the

⁴²⁶ R. Uwechue, *Reflections on the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 99.

⁴²⁷ The staunch support given to Nigeria by most of its neighbours was not in any way a historical accident but traceable to multiplicity of factors which range from historical and cultural relations to acute dependence of some of them on Nigeria for their meaningful survival. Abdullahi Mahadi, "The Roles of the Neighbouring Countries in the Nigerian Civil War" in Tamuno *et al.*, P. 252.

surrounding international environment in West Africa in particular should be conducive to domestic tranquility. It was in the light of this that conference of Nigeria's Ambassadors in 1966 stressed the need for "the maintenance of good neighbourly relations with all the states in general and with our immediate neighbour in particular"⁴²⁸ But this was not made easy by French imperialism. As a British Newspaper the "*Sunday Express*" correctly pointed out, from the perspective of the French, a united prosperous Nigeria would inevitably become a "United State of West Africa" and would tend to pull the former French colonies away from French influence.⁴²⁹ Nigeria has never entertained any delusions about the French designs and the extent of their influence over their former colonies, she was also aware, especially before the eve of oil wealth, of its limited financial capability to offer these countries sufficient incentives to lessen their dependence, on France. Nevertheless, a fundamental assumption of Nigeria's foreign policy had been that over the long term, France's interest in West Africa would gradually recede and the former colonial territories would look to Nigeria for leadership in the area of international security and economic development.⁴³⁰ In the interim, Nigeria had to attempt to prove to the neighbouring countries its preparedness to uphold their territorial integrity, provide them with economic assistance and even more significantly, promote bilateral and sub-regional economic cooperation to ensure joint development of resources. Fortunately, soon after the attainment of independence, Nigeria was provided

⁴²⁸ J. J. Strelau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...* P. 12.

⁴²⁹ *The Sunday Express* gave four economic and political reasons for France's interference in the Nigerian crisis: The first one was economic dependence of the neighbouring African countries on Nigeria; the second was that if the rebellion had succeeded in breaking up the country, France hoped to join in the exploitation of oil in the former Eastern Region in which Britain had a big interest; the third was that if under the stress of the rebellion, the Federation was to split into ethnic parts, the French community around Nigeria would be well placed to profit from the collapse; and finally, General De Gaulle is said to have wanted to show once again that he could make things uncomfortable for Britain if he wanted to.

⁴³⁰ J. J. Strelau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War*, P. 11.

with several opportunities to prove its worth and sincerity. Nigeria's role in the Congo and its prompt decision to send a military expedition to aid president Julius Nyerere in suppressing the mutiny by his soldiers may have impressed these communities.

Nigeria also sought to avoid exciting any fears among her weaker neighbours that might have encouraged them to seek closer ties with the former colonialists. On the problems of boundaries which were sources of worry to the independent African states, the Nigerian Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa allayed the fears of the neighbouring countries:

Our view is that although in the past some of these were created artificially by European powers, which even went so far as to split some community into three parts, each administered by different colonial powers, nevertheless, those boundaries should be respected by different colonial powers in the interest of peace, must remain the recognised boundaries until such times, as the peoples concerned decide of their freewill to merge into one unit. We shall discourage any attempt to influence such communities by force or through under pressure to change, since interference could only result in unrest and harm to the overall plan for the future of this great continent.⁴³¹

This statement no doubt was a welcome development to those countries: for it contributed to a lessening of uneasiness among the "small" neighbours of the African giant and at the same time assured them of security against emphases by their neighbours who has any design of territorial expansion. In order to emphasise this point and create a climate of good neighbourliness, the Federal Government so dispatched a goodwill parliamentary delegation to Cameroon⁴³² and other countries. Also to assure all African countries security and cooperation, the Federal Government gave a prepared brief to its delegation to the first pan African Summit in May 1963. The objectives were outlined as follows: prior to any discussion of a common charter, all the participants at the conference should be asked to affirm the following principles:

⁴³¹ Tamuno, *et al*, P. 257.

⁴³² *West Africa*, 22, October 1960, P. 1190.

- a. Sovereign equality of African and Malagasy states, whatever may be the size of their territories and the density of their populations or the value of their possessions.
- b. Non-interference in the internal affairs of member states
- c. Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of each state and for its inalienable right to independence existence.
- d. Peaceful and harmonious settlement of all disputes arising from any of the African and Malagasy states.
- e. Unqualified condemnation of any subversive activity in the part of the neighbouring states.
- f. The constant promotion and fostering of all many cooperation in the field of economics, health, nutrition, education, culture, and
- g. Dedication to the total emancipation of the dependent territories of Africa.⁴³³

It is to be noted that with the exception of (f), the seven points in the Nigerian brief reappeared almost verbatim in Article III of the OAU Charter.⁴³⁴ The subsequent formation of a regional alliance based on the principles set forth in Article III of the OAU Charter was to offer the federal government a line of defence that proved to be very useful in its civil war diplomacy. In order to actualise its foreign policy, the federal government quietly initiated its own bilateral foreign economic assistance programmes in Africa.

Among the recipients of federal government assistance between 1960 and 1965 were the Republic of Cameroon which benefited from the services of their agricultural officers, seven police officers, four veterinary officers, five P and T officers, four cooperative inspectors and one labour officer, Chad which obtain £5,000 for citrus plantation, Dahomey (Benin) £3,000 flood relief and Basuto which obtained £25000 for

⁴³³ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P.11.

⁴³⁴ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 11.

development projects, Guinea, Kenya and Malawi also received substantial amounts of assistance both in cash and in skilled manpower.⁴³⁵

Relatively, more enduring and more significant were attempts made by the federal government to strengthen its ties with the neighbouring countries through the initiation of various economic cooperation, with the view to the development of resources which cut across the borders of the various countries. In the early mid-1960s, there were series of conference aimed at multi-national, regional and continental economic cooperation. In November, 1966,⁴³⁶ for example, representative of ten West African states gathered at Niamey, Niger Republic under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.⁴³⁷ The conference recommended the creation of West African Economic Community and a permanent regional secretariat to be established at Niamey. Technical committees on regional transport, industrial development, communications and trade were proposed to work under the direction of the proposed secretariat. President Hammani Diori urged delegates to organise cooperatives marketing for products of the “complimentary” economics of coastal and interior states. Methods, he said should be established for easier exchange, for example fruit and timber from coastal countries and cattle from the nations of interior. He mentioned transportation, telecommunications, solar energy, personnel training and agricultural research as important areas in which the West African states should pool their efforts. Regional coordination of economic development is important President Diori said, in order to avoid duplication of individual efforts and thereby stretch fund.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁵ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 399.

⁴³⁶ Some Meetings had taken place in period earlier than this.

⁴³⁷ *New Nigerian*, No. 260, November 2 1966, P. 5

⁴³⁸ *New Nigerian...*, P. 4.

Another significant development was the agreement regulating the use of water ways of Niger River which was endorsed in October, 1963. The member states comprised Niger Chad, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Upper Volta (now Bokina Faso) and Cameroon.⁴³⁹ The organisation is known as River Niger Commission.⁴⁴⁰ The primary aim of the commission was to develop close cooperation for the judicious exploitation of the resources of the River Niger Basin as well as to guarantee the freedom of navigation on the river, its tributaries and sub-tributaries and to ensure equality of treatment to those who use it.⁴⁴¹ And also to ensure that nothing was done to prejudice the supply of water to national projects such as dams, hydroelectric power, and irrigation schemes, also established for the economic development of member states. The commission, it was also agreed, should be familiar with the development plans of each of the state principally meant to integrate the economies of these states. The quest for closer relationship was to be further enhanced and strengthened by the establishment of the Chad Basin Commission which was established in May 1964 by Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon⁴⁴² and Chad with its headquarters at Fort Lamy (N'djamena). According to the former executive secretary of the commission, Mr. Omotayo, Ogunsunlire, the “scheme was also of political expediency”. Because he said, “it was a unifying force for participating countries”. It should be emphasised at this juncture that in order to give the French speaking countries a stake in the commission, the staff for the headquarters and most of

⁴³⁹ *New Nigerian*, February 17, 1967, P. 6.

⁴⁴⁰ The passing of the Act establishing, meant the abrogation of earlier colonial agreement in connection with the use of River Niger as contained in such agreements, as earlier reached at the Berlin conference of February, 26 1885; the General Act and Declaration of Brassels of July 2, 1890 and the convention of St. German on Laye of September 10, 1919, which regionalized the use of the River Niger and its tributaries to various West African states occupying the different sections of the Niger Basin. The headquarters of the commission were located at Niamey.

⁴⁴¹ *New Nigerian*, P. 6.

⁴⁴² *New Nigerian*, 18 March, 1960, P. 2.

the attendant. Infrastructure and administrative personnel were recruited from their countries. As we can see, Nigeria maintained low profile and other aspects of the operations of these commissions with the view to encourage neighbouring countries that political and economic destiny lies with Nigeria.⁴⁴³

There were also other factors which helped in winning very strong support for Nigeria during its crisis. Because Nigeria's vulnerability was shared by many other newly independent states in Africa, the Federal Government's role in organising diplomatic opposition to Nkrumah, who was regarded by his neighbours, notably, Togo, as a subversive element, earned it the respect and confidence of many African countries, the ethnic, sectional, regional, religious and other related problems which faced Nigeria were also shared by virtually all African countries. It was particularly pronounced in West Africa. Nigeria immediate neighbours were confronted by these problems immediately after independence. Apart from North and South Muslim Christian dichotomy in Cameroon faced the Anglo-phone Franco-phone question which "sometimes assumed an unpleasant aspect, akin almost to ethnicity".⁴⁴⁴

These were accompanied by other problems arising from differences caused by inequality in levels of development in the economy and education. In Chad Republic, the North-South Christian, Muslim problems fanned by divisive forces had led to shooting war by late 1960s. Chief Enahoro was therefore quite right to warn that if "Nigeria

⁴⁴³ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 9.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with S. N. A. Mensah. On the Eve of Ghana's Independence, the problem of Moti Mhu (I have separated myself) arose. This was a problem post to Ghana by Ashanti which felt that its cocoa and mineral wealth were enriching the rest of the country at its own expense. Ghana was then dominated by the coastal region of Ghana which had many more Western educated elite. Equally serious was the threat of secession posed to Ghana by former inhabitant of British Togo who wanted to join with the French Togo. Any success in the attempt would have resulted in depriving Ghana of its Volta Dam.

breaks, no one knows how many Africans will survive.”⁴⁴⁵ It was the fear of secession, more than anything else that United African countries rallied behind Nigeria. It was this phobia that made the Kinshasa meeting to resolve to send a Consultative Mission of six Heads of State (Mobutu, Tubman, Ankrah, Ahidjo, Diro and Haile Selassie) to the Head of the Federal Government of Nigeria to assure him of the Assembly’s desire for territorial integrity, unity and peace in Nigeria.⁴⁴⁶ The choice of these six men was significant for the fate of the crisis in Nigeria; most of them were Nigeria’s neighbours.

For obvious reasons, most of the members of the mission from the time of debate on the resolution in Kinshasa to the end of civil war went out of their way of virtually canvass for the support of the Federal Government. In kinshasa, Emperor Haile Selessie set tone for the discussion that followed for nine hours. He sought to reassure the Federal Government and says:

The situation in Nigeria is of concern to all of us. It concerns us because secessionist tendencies are to be found in almost African states. This is the legacy we have inherited from the colonialists who tried to rule Africans by dividing them. We know that secession if it were to be tolerated on our continent would lead to destruction of what Africans hold in high esteem – their independence and their progress.⁴⁴⁷

Then president Ahidjo observes: basically that it is this territorial integrity of Nigeria which is of concern to us”, President Diro expressed the same optimism. Emperor Haile Selassie the chairman of the committee declared in summing up, “is to end secession” which he denounced – no doubt with a view to his domestic troubles in

⁴⁴⁵ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 225.

⁴⁴⁶ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 82.

⁴⁴⁷ All of the members of consultative Mission had ethnic and or sectional/regional problems in their respective countries. They were actual suppose to maintain neutral position. General Ankrah, however for the reason to be given in the text shifted his position later. See J. J. Stremlau, P. 10.

Eritrea – as a “dangerous precedent” for Africa.⁴⁴⁸ The committee reaffirmed the decision of the OAU summit embodied in its resolution condemning all secessionist attempts in Africa. Nigeria argued that any solution of the Nigeria crisis must be in the context of preserving the unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria.⁴⁴⁹

The resolution of the committee was no doubt significant for Nigeria. Worthy of note throughout the period of Nigerian civil war, the OAU stood by the recommendations of the committee. The committee always drafted all its resolutions on the war for ratification by OAU summits.

The non-African countries also stood by the decision of the OAU when pressures were brought to bear on U Thant, the UN Secretary General, for the Nigerian crisis at the United Nations, for example, he declares his position to the press as follows:

If the heads of African states have asked all members of the United Nations and all members of OAU to refrain from any action likely to endanger the peace, unity and territorial integrity of Nigeria, I do not see how member states or for that matter the Secretary General can be actively involved.⁴⁵⁰

The West German Government declared their loyalty to OAU resolution on Nigerian crises. To be precise until OAU changed its attitudes toward Nigeria Bonn would not alter its position on the matter. In like manner, when popular pressures reached its climax in Scandinavia in August 1968, the prime minister of the five governments issues a joint communiqué⁴⁵¹ declaring their unalloyed support for OAU, as the proper forum to dealing with the political issues at stake in the Nigerian crisis. Far and above all,

⁴⁴⁸ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 103.

⁴⁴⁹ Diplomatically, the status and position of many of the members of the committee were significant. Emperor Haile Selassie was respected by African Head of State. He was also respected by the Americans, and this was significant to the Americans in the Civil War. Simialry, President Tubman was held in high esteem, President Diiori and Ahidjo were also respected by French leaders. President of OCAM (Organisation Commune Africaine at Malagache), a strategic position which enabled him to influence many members of French speaking African countries.

⁴⁵⁰ J. J. Stremlau, *International Politics of Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 279.

⁴⁵¹ A. Mahadi, “The Roles of the Neighbouring Countries in Nigerian Civil War”, in Tamuno, P. 261.

the Dutch prime minister discredited the jubilation of the rebel Biafra following the ban on total arm shipment to Nigerian Government as a result of intense protest from his people issued a statement condemning the secession and pledged Dutch support for the position adopted by OAU.

From all indications, it is quite clear that the threat of secession to African countries was a significant imperative which informed the support which the Federal Government enjoyed from the neighbouring as well as all African countries. This support was in turn instrumental in discouraging non-African countries from recognising the rebels despite their powerful and persuasive propaganda.

Two other factors which influenced the position of Nigeria's neighbours in the civil war deserve noting:

These were the dependence of land locked neighbouring countries in Nigeria as an outlet for their export and import commodities, and the problems of their inability to balance budget. During the Civil war, both Chad and Niger had considerable problems over their exports because the war disrupted vital⁴⁵² produce⁴⁵³ export routes to the sea. Niger suffered the greatest hardship because its modern economy was largely dependent on the sale of groundnut crop in Europe. Both countries were, therefore, anxious that the Nigerian situation should soon return to normal to enable them have uninterrupted access to the ports.⁴⁵⁴

The gravity of the problems of these countries can be better understood when it is realized that both of them and several other French speaking countries in West Africa notably Dahomey (Benin) found it difficult to balance their budgets. Dahomey (Benin) is one of the poorest countries in West Africa, and by 1966, she reached the limit of the annual overdraft to her by the French as early February. This led to political instability

⁴⁵² *New Nigerian*, 8 April, 1968.

⁴⁵³ With increased sales of groundnut and increased internal taxation, Niger started to balance its budget from 1964. *New Nigerian*, January 23, 1967, P. 4. But French aid in all forms continue to be important.

⁴⁵⁴ *New Nigerian*, April 6, 1966, P. 6; *New Nigerian*, August 18, 1966, P. 6; *New Nigerian*, March 5, 1968; P. 6.

particularly in the 1960s. This not only prevented Dahomey (Benin) to involve itself actively in the Nigerian crisis as most Nigeria's neighbours did, when eventually it did, it played a most negative role by allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to use Cotonou Airport to airlift materials to the rebel-held areas. As will be shown, Dahomey (Benin) was induced to take this because of the relative slim financial capability and other forms of assistance it received from (ICRS). In view of Dahomey's (Benin) earlier assurances of support to the federal government as well as its apologetic stance after granting ICRC permission to use contonou. There is every reason to believe that Dahomey (Benin) was persuaded to take negative decision by extreme degree of poverty. Besides, these were other factors such as the old boys.⁴⁵⁵

It should be noted that the most important roles which the neighbouring countries played were in the form of raising Federal Government morale and in providing diplomatic strategies to a lesser extent hence, material support. Evidence abounds, long before the outbreak of the Civil War, the neighbouring countries expressed their concern over the deteriorating political situation in the country. A Cameroonian envoy to Nigeria, for example expressed his ardent desire and hope for the return of normal life and peace to Nigeria. He was of the opinion that the whole world would join him in this desire.⁴⁵⁶ Other neighbouring countries showed the same concern. The first stage of the formal involvement of the neighbouring countries in the war was the declaration of their position in the conflict. This was aggravated by the rebel claims soon after the declaration of secession that a number of nations including Nigeria immediate neighbours, had

⁴⁵⁵ Unlike other immediate French speaking neighbouring countries, Dahomey (Benin) was very timid in asking General De Gaulle to keep out of the Nigeria crisis. This had to do with its dependence on France for subsidies.

⁴⁵⁶ *New Nigerian*, 31 August, 1966, P. 1.

recognized their still-born state.⁴⁵⁷ This appeared to be very a serious blunder because some of these countries were the staunchest supporters of the Federal Government. At the request of the Federal Government, all the countries said to have acknowledged the rebellion immediately and publicly repudiated it. This was a diplomatic victory for Nigeria, while this was a serious setback for the rebels. Commenting on the claims of the rebels about being recognized by four countries African countries, the Cameroun Republic consul in the Northern states, G. N. Ngo described it as meaningless and emphasized that as far his country was concerned, Nigeria was one and there was nothing like the Republic of Biafra.⁴⁵⁸ President Ahmadu Ahidjo of Cameroon confirmed the comment of the Cameroonian consul to Nigeria that there is no question of his country recognizing the rebels.⁴⁵⁹

The Chad president Mr. Francis Tombalbaye, assured the Head of the Federal Government that his country would do nothing that might impaire the corporate existence and territorial integrity of Nigeria. Thus he continued as follows:

At this time your great country comes across the most painful crisis in her life, I come to express in my name personally and in the name of the Government of the Republic of Chad, our sympathy and encouragement in your unceasing efforts to preserve the unity of the great federation of Nigeria.⁴⁶⁰

President Hammani Diori assured that his Government would continue to recognize no other Government than the constitutional Government of the Republic of Nigeria. He mentioned in the same message that his Government was following with anxiety the events in Nigeria” Dr. Emile Zinsou the president of Dahomey on his way to Paris through the Lagos airport, argued that it was not competent for any outsider to dictate to

⁴⁵⁷ The Rebel Radio announced on the day of secession that Ghana, Togo, The Gambia, Ethiopia, and Isreal had all extended diplomatic recognition to their new republic. 30 May, 1967.

⁴⁵⁸ *New Nigeria*, June 1, 1968, P. 12.

⁴⁵⁹ *New Nigeria*..., P. 12.

⁴⁶⁰ *New Nigerian*, June 8, 1967, P. 12.

Nigeria the solution to its conflicts. Dr. Zinso declared explicitly as follows: *I am against secession any day and in any part of Africa... the political life of Nigeria is not for outsiders to decide. But I wish this year (1969) would bring peace and unity.*⁴⁶¹

Togo proved herself to be the most enthusiastic supporter of Nigeria. The peculiarity of this allegiance was that it was consistent, vigorous, and lasted from the beginning to the end of the war. Apart from his verbal support at press conferences especially in Europe, President Eyadema of Togo made frequently quick visits to Lagos and sent high level delegations and several notes – all highlighting his country's support for the Federal Government. During one of his visit to Lagos during the war he told the press conference that the people of Togo were anxious for the end of the civil war in Nigeria so that the country might take her proper place in fostering the unity of Africa.⁴⁶²

The most significant role played by the neighbouring countries in the Civil War, however, was in the field of diplomacy where Nigeria had woefully failed from the onset of the war, it was the neighbouring countries that fought diplomatic war on behalf of the Federal Government. Paradoxically, the Federal Government initially tried to discourage these countries from playing this important role. Nigeria complacently and naively continued to hold to the idea that the conflict was her internal affair. Some of the countries however seeing the intense diplomatic activities of Biafra thought differently and inspite of the discouragement from Federal Government continued to use initiative which subsequently led to the Kinshasa resolution that ensured the near total and permanent support for the Federal Government throughout the war.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ *New Nigerian...*, P. 1.

⁴⁶² *New Nigerian*, April 16, 1969, P. 1.

⁴⁶³ With exception of the Ivory Coast, the recognition of the rebels by the four African Countries could have been avoided but for slackness of the Federal Government.

In this kind of situation and in the larger interests of Africa and African peoples, to lead an active hand in settling disputes that arise, especially when such disputes lead to large scale bloodshed, cannot be correctly considered as interference. A neighbor has not only a right but a duty to seek definite settlement to confusion and commotion in the home next door to his own, if the conflict in that home reaches a proportion where murder and arson become evident and the resultant conflagration threatens to spill over into his own house. In such circumstances he will be shirking his duty both to that neighbour and to himself if he just looks passively on, clinging to the theory of non-interference in his neighbour's private affair. A private business that develops into a public nuisance ceases to be private affair.⁴⁶⁴

At the critical stages of the crisis when members of Organization Commune Africane el Malagache (OCAM) of which Diori was the chairman, started to make some pronouncement in favour of the rebels, when at least, one of them had recognized the rebel regime, president Diori came out forcefully to plead his support for the Federal Government of Nigeria. He also paid special visit to Paris for discussions with General De Gaulle in April 1969. He reportedly succeeded in enlisting French support for curtailing arms sales to the rebels as a way of forcing them to negotiate with the Federal Government. Togo's president Eyadema's diplomatic activity was courageous as it was useful. Immediately after Gabon's recognition of the rebels, for example, he held a press conference in Paris to warn that Biafra question was threatening African unity and called for a special meeting of the fourteen nations OCAM to discuss the Gabonese action.⁴⁶⁵ Although Togo's proposal for a special meeting did not materialize, Eyadema succeeded in arranging a meeting of smaller conseil de L Entente. He also continued to play diplomatic role on behalf of the Federal Government. This took the form of persuading members of OCAM and other African countries on the futility of recognising the rebels. He also made attempts to influence General De Gaulle on the matter.

⁴⁶⁴ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 185.

⁴⁶⁵ *New Nigerian*, May, 1968, P. 12.

Equally important, were the strategic roles⁴⁶⁶ played by most of Nigeria's neighbours in the civil war. This was significant because, had the rebels acquired facilities from the neighbouring countries early in the war, both the outcome and the duration of the war would have been difficult to determine. One of the greatest problems of the rebels was the distance over which their planes or other planes bound for their areas covered in the course of their flights.⁴⁶⁷ Times not only made transportation costly but also by making the flights relatively far between, deprived the rebels of the ability to accumulate arms and ammunition as well as other consumables to sustain the rebellion. The effect of this on the morale of the rebels and their supporters was significant. In this regard, the roles played by Cameroon, Fernando Po, and Togo, and on a negative side, Dahomey and Gabon were significant. For historical and geographical reasons, Cameroon played the most critical role.⁴⁶⁸ In this aspect of the involvement of the neighbouring countries in the civil war, Cameroon's strategic role came into action even before the outbreak of the civil war. In October, 1966, a plane believed to carrying arms for bellicose of Eastern Nigeria was forced down at a point 50 miles West of Garwa in the Cameroon. It is a fact that throughout the crisis over the plane, the Cameroon Government kept on briefing the Federal Government.⁴⁶⁹ This and the other examples in Togo must have thought the rebels some lessons in the danger of flying their planes in air space of the countries neighbouring Nigeria and this explains the use of Portuguese Atlantic Island by them. Soon after the outbreak of the civil war, the Cameroon Government agreed to aid Nigeria

⁴⁶⁶ "Strategic roles" implies the denying landing facilities to rebel aircraft on any other aircraft board for rebel held area or departing from them, as well as restriction of movement of people between the neighbouring countries and rebel held areas.

⁴⁶⁷ Until the recognition of the rebels by Gabon, the nearest free landing facilities to the rebels were the Portuguese Islands, in the Atlantic Ocean.

⁴⁶⁸ This is from the perspective of a positive role, Gabon's role, from the negative perspective was equally important.

⁴⁶⁹ *New Nigerian*, October 26, 1966, P. 1; *New Nigerian*, October 29, 1966, P. 12.

by subjecting to quarantine the rebel enclave and by restricting movement of persons and goods across their respective border. To enforce this policy president Ahidjo deployed Cameroonian troops along the frontier and sent his secret police into border village to monitor and interdict unusually large purchase of local and imported goods.⁴⁷⁰ It must also be placed on record that Western Cameroon (former Southern Cameroon) Government sounded a note of warning to the rebel leader Ojukwu to checkmate unusually behaviour of a group of Igbo who declared that they were rebel supporters in Cameroun. To prove this clearly, the warning followed the arrest of about 400 rebel supporters in Bamenda in connection with an attempt to murder a Nigerian who the rebel supporters claimed was loyal to the Federal Government. The Western Cameroon Government stressed that it had nothing to do with rebel regime and explain that the government only recognised the Federal Government of Nigeria.⁴⁷¹

The Island of Fernando po was another ideal staging post for the rebels, lies less than 125 miles South of Eastern Nigeria. Before attainment of her independence, she was part of Equatorial Guinea, this Island with the consent of the Spaniards, became a base for International Red Cross aircraft subject to checks by the staff of Nigeria Consulate General in Fernando Po to making sure that the Cargo of the planes consisted only relief supplies and not arms. This Equatorial Guinea repudiated after her independence in 1968. The reason being that Francisco Marcias sought close relations with Nigeria and also partly for economic reasons. According to the representative of Equatorial Guinea in Lagos, this decision was taken because “we suspect these (ICRC) commitment to humanitarian action was not genuine. We wanted to respect the sovereignty of our

⁴⁷⁰ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 74.

⁴⁷¹ *New Nigerian*, November 14, 1968, P. 1.

friendly next door neighbour.⁴⁷² Togo another immediate neighbour refused to allow its space to be used by rebel aircraft or planes which were shuttling between the rebel enclave and the rest of the world. In the early part of 1968, a plane carrying seven tons of old Nigerian currency for the rebels was detained in Lome the capital of Togo. After several consultations with the Federal Government, the currency notes were returned to Nigeria. The plane was confiscated by the government of Togo.⁴⁷³ The only defaulting neighbouring countries which guaranteed the rebels landing facilities were Gabon, after it had recognized the rebel regime, and Dahomey in 1969. Gabon allowed the rebels to fly arms and other commodities into the rebel – held areas. The amount of arms and ammunition from Gabon which reached the rebel held areas is not known. But it must have been substantial.⁴⁷⁴

Based on the recommendation of the meeting of Nigeria Ambassadors in 1969, Nigeria stated its post war diplomacy by trying to win over “those inimical to her”. This was however, to be done through a comprehensive policy towards the neighbouring countries generally. The execution of the policy as during the pre-war period, was to be done at the bilateral ties in Francophone Africa through financial subventions, where flexible, sale of power from Kainji Dam, and appointment of Ambassadors among others.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷² Flight was to be resumed only after much pressure on Equatorial Guinea and when Dahomey had agreed to allow ICRC flights, to take off from Cotonou. J. J. Stremlau, P. 285.

⁴⁷³ *New Nigerian*, January 23, 1968, P. 1; *New Nigerian*, January 24, 1968, P. 1; *New Nigerian*, January 26, 1968, P. 1.

⁴⁷⁴ A. Mahadi, “The Roles of the Neighbouring Countries in the Nigerian Civil War”..., P. 268

⁴⁷⁵ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 383.

8.3 The Role of the United States of America (USA)

The opinion of American authority was that independent African states were areas where their European allies possessed expert knowledge and with the ability to serve US interest and those of the free world. In the height of this, at the outbreak of the civil war, the US officials stated they wanted to maintain neutrality in Nigerian crisis. In this pursuit, they banned official US arm export to Nigeria and retired to monitor the situation from afar. However, the intensive lobbying activities of Biafrans generated sympathetic public opinion in US. Consequently, the American role during the war became mainly humanitarian enterprise. They allowed relief materials to be frown from US. Moreover, the rebel had free access to Amercian weapon market. This annoyed the Military Government of General Yarkubu Gowon.⁴⁷⁶ The US policy of neutrality was informed by the following imperatives.

Firstly, the Vietnam crisis was still on and involvement in another civil war would have generated more difficulties at home. Also, US commitment in Congo in the early 1960s was still fresh. Secondly, the US did not feel threatened in Nigeria despite the Soviet presence. They came to this conclusion because Gowon and other Nigerian leaders were not Communist. Thirdly, the US believed that Nigeria is a British sphere of influence and that Britain was capable of protecting US interest in Nigeria in terms of trade which was growing in 1960s.⁴⁷⁷

The activities of the European press in alliance with the effort of Biafran lobbyists wiped up tremendous sentiment in American in support of Biafran cause. US

⁴⁷⁶ M. A. Orieso, "The Niegrian Civil War and Foreign Power in Herodotian", *Journal of the Department of Hisotry*, College of Education Abraka, 1981, P. 103.

⁴⁷⁷ E. E. Ibiang, "Nigerian Civil war and Foreign Powers: Motives for Involvement", (Unpublised M.Sc Dissertation), Department of Political Sceince, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2005, P. 33.

demonstrated it through financial and material contribution or through letter campaign lobbying Washington officials and politicians. The credit for pro-Biafran public opinion and relief assistance from US went to two voluntary Associations formed in New York City.

These were the American Biafran relief and the American Committee to keep Biafra alive.⁴⁷⁸ The most outstanding pro-Biafran activists which contributed massively to the Biafran humanitarian effort was the American organised Churches. The position of the American established church leaders was to look at the Nigerian conflict as either a religious conflict or as genocide against Nigerian ethnic group. In any case they felt obliged to act to relieve the suffering of Biafrans either in the name of Christian brotherhood or for the sake of humanity.⁴⁷⁹ Although, the total amount contributed by various groups is not certain, however the impact of their relief programme in US was tremendous and reverberated both in Nigeria and Biafra. Nevertheless, Levi A. Nwachukwu provides this information.

Table 1: Below revealed some drugs antibiotic and medical supplies donated by US pharmaceutical to solve health problem created by the civil war.

⁴⁷⁸ G. Obiozor, "Soviet Involvement in the Nigerian Civil war in G. Ukandi, F. Danladi *etal.*, *Social Change and Economic Development in Nigeria*, Praeger Publishing, New York, 1973, P. 230.

⁴⁷⁹ G. Obiozor, "Soviet Involvement in the Nigerian Civil war in G. Ukandi, F. Danladi *etal.*, *Social Change and Economic Development in Nigeria...*, P. 138.

Table 4: An Analysis of US involvement in Nigeria/Biafra War 1967

S/N	Name of Company	Value of Medical Supplies (in \$)
1	Abbott universal Limited	830,00
2	Ayerst Laboratories	12,000
3	Ciba Pharmaceuticals and Co.	3,058
4	Cyanamid international	39,816
5	Hoffman La Roche, Inc	5,500
6	Johnson and Johnson	3,000
7	Lakeside Laboratory Inc	1,060
8	Meed Johnson Laboratory	250,000
9	Merck, sharp and Dohme	2,408
10	Miles Laboratories Inc	42,000
11	Park Davies	13,260
12	Pfixzer International	166,127
13	A.H. Robins Company	2,300
14	Sbering Cooperation	5,000
15	Upjohn International	12,260
16	Wyeth Laboratories	104,590

Source: Levi A Nwachukwu, “An Analysis of US involvement in Nigeria/Biafra War 1967” (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis), USA: Michigan State University, 1975, p.170.

In terms of deep emotional involvement and sustained support, the Organised Churches in America have no rival. Interestingly, they were the arrow heads of the relief initiatives for both Nigeria and Biafra. They also played “leadership role towards the co-ordination of relief efforts of other churches in Europe and Canada.”⁴⁸⁰

Table 5: Church World Service Contribution to Relief Programme

No	Operation	Amount (&)
1	1,703 tons of supplies values and shipping cost	2,400
2	Cash donations for Nigeria	125,000
3	Airbridge	75,000
4	To Nord Church and for three flight from Europe to Sao Tome	230,000
5	Joint Church Aid, three flight from Amstardam to Sao Tome	
6	USA three flights from Amstardam to Sao Tome	37,000
7	Cash contribution to joint Churches Aids (May, 1969)	150,000

Source: L. A. Nwachukwu, “An Analysis of US involvement in Nigeria/Biafra War 1967”...

⁴⁸⁰ G. Obiozor, “Soviet Involvement in the Nigerian Civil war in G. Ukandi, F. Danladi *et al.*, *Social Change and Economic Development in Nigeria...*, P. 140

Another humanitarian body was the Catholic Relief Services. When the war started, it was the first to respond to the needs of the victims in Biafra by providing them with food and clothing. It also dispatched in number of its African staff to Nigeria to assist the Nigerian Red Cross Society and other Voluntary Agencies from January, 1968-1969, it organised the shipment of 30,667 tons of supplies to Nigeria and 19,504 to Biafra.⁴⁸¹

Table 6: Catholic Relief Contributions to Relief Programmes

No	Operation	Amount (&)
1	2,585 tons of high protein	3,604,842
2	Food, medicines and mech	
3	Cements and other emergency	
4	Suppliers, values	
5	Plus shipping cost	
6	Cash provided for local	44,000
7	Purchase of food	
8	Committee of the Red	5,000
9	Cross (ICRC)	

Source: Levi A Nwachukwu, P.166

8.4 The Role of China

Chinese International in the Nigerian civil war was shrouded in secrecy. She did not come out clearly in support of the rebels at any time during the war despite speculation in many quarters which were given evidence by Chief Anthony Enahoro and Colonel Benjamin Adekunle that Chinese arms were actively been used by the rebels in the crisis⁴⁸².

The Chinese from the start of the war were in a quandary over what to do about Biafra. To them, the rebel leaders were not political radicals and definitely not Communist at all. The Chinese leadership was therefore, of the opinion that an open and

⁴⁸¹ L.A. Uwachukwu, US/Nigeria, "An Analysis of US Involvement in Nigeria/Biafra War 1967", (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis), Department of Political Science, Michigan State University, P. 101.

⁴⁸² M. A. Orieso, "The Nigerian Civil War and Foreign Power in Herodotian"..., P. 109.

indiscriminate support for the rebel would portray them as opportunist before the international community since their actions would lack ideological inclination. On the part of the Federal Military Government, the Chinese factor was viewed with great concern and this affected the federal government from reaching a decision to recognise China as the true representative of the whole China in the United Nations. The fact that China was actually involved on the side of Biafra become a public knowledge on 22 September, 1968⁴⁸³ when in a dispatch from Beijing, the new China News Agency reported that “Biafrans are being massacred in large number by Nigeria all vandals but despite that, the Biafrans are far from surrendering” Also on September 26, 1968 Radio Biafra quoted a dispatch of the new China News Agency US calling on all Biafrans to persevere in the struggle against the advancing Nigeria aggressor. It should be noted interestingly that Chinese kept a discrete silence over the affairs throughout the war. The obvious reasons for this disposition were that they hoped with time they would be able to re-establish contract with Lagos in view of the considerable patronage and goodwill they enjoyed particularly in radical circles in the country. Furthermore, Nigeria had continued to be a good period for the Chinese products even during the war⁴⁸⁴

The real motives for China’s support for Biafra were as follows:

- i. China might have given aid to the rebels in line with her African traditional policy of giving assistance to third world countries in order to strengthen anti-imperial forces in the third world countries.

⁴⁸³ *Daily Times*, September, 1968.

⁴⁸⁴ *Guidance*, Lagos May 31, 1985.

- ii. The fact that two African states Tanzania and Zambia recognised Biafra and who incidentally were friends of China influenced decisions in Beijing to support Biafra.
- iii. The Chinese support for Biafra could be seen as a weapon in her dispute with soviet.

The support could have been rendered as a result of soviet support for the Nigerian government. It was an extension of sino-soviet crisis to the African continent China was handicapped for economic and logistical reasons to furnish anything more than token aid. This could help to explain Chinese limited assistance for Biafran.⁴⁸⁵

8.5 Israel in the Nigerian Civil War

The allegations that Israel was assisting Biafra before and during the war were rife. As early as 1966, the Federal Military government (FMG) alleged that the Israelis were giving military training and weapons to the Igbo. The denial of the allegations by Israelis Mission in Lagos did not dispel the suspicion in Lagos. The suspicion was logical because the conflict was portrayed as an Igbo/Hausa Fulani crisis. As a matter of fact, the Igbo had been good friends of Israel with whom they developed close technical and personal ties. By implication, a defeat of the Biafra could mean the political neutralization on the Nigeria political scene. The consequent ascendancy of the Arabs influence in attempt to galvanise support from Israel, the Igbo were drawing an analogy between their own situation and the persecution of the Jews in order to invoke Israel sympathy.⁴⁸⁶ More significnatlly, the suspicion that Isreal was committed to the Biafran cause was confirmed after the civil war by the Israeli foreign minister, Ambassador Abba

⁴⁸⁵ A. Hutchson, *China's African revolution*, London, 1975, P. 61.

⁴⁸⁶ O. Aluko, "Israel and Nigeria: Continuity and Change in their Relationship", *African Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1, 1974, P. 50.

Eban who argues that: *Israel had exerted itself to such an extent in providing aid to the former secessionist regime that if, another dozen or twenty countries had done so, the result of the war would have been different.*⁴⁸⁷

8.6 The Arab States

Unlike Israel, the Arab states especially Algeria and Egypt solidly supported the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. They did not only give diplomatic support through the instrumentality of OAU but also extended military assistance to the Federal Government.⁴⁸⁸

The motives behind the Arab support were due to the following imperative.

- i. They were defending the inviolability of the sanctity of state sovereignty and territorial integrity enshrined in the O.A.U charter.
- ii. It was also a political calculation in the Arab-Israeli conflict⁴⁸⁹

The consequence of this support was that it improved relations of Nigeria and the Arab states of North Africa. Consequently, in 1971, Nigeria became a member of the Arab dominated oil carted OPEC.

8.7 The End of the Civil War, 1970

By June 1969; there were some four million people crammed into the space of approximately three thousand square miles which was all that was left of Biafra. This was more than double the original population which even double before the war, produced less than its food requirements. For these people, starvation become an ever increasing problem, particularly when relief supplies fell very sharply after an I.C.R.C.

⁴⁸⁷ O. Aluko, "Israel and Nigeria: Continuity and Change in their Relationship"..., P. 50.

⁴⁸⁸ E. E. Ibiang, *Nigerian Civil War and Foreign Powers*..., P. 45.

⁴⁸⁹ E. E. Ibiang, *Nigerian Civil War and Foreign Powers*..., P. 46.

relief plane was shot down in June by federal planes. The decrease in relief supplies was severely demoralising and was a significant contributory factor in the collapse of the secessionist regime. Militarily however, it had become very apparent that by the end of May that the rebels did not have the military capability to win back much of what they had lost to federal forces in arms and in men. They might be able to make some marginal gains but it was highly improbable that could in any significant way alter the overall military position. By the end of October, frontline preparations involving more than one hundred thousand troops in all the Divisions had been completed.⁴⁹⁰ The month between the first week of November and the first week of December, the period of the Ramadan was spent in building up reserves of men and supplies so that by the 11 December when the Ramadan fast ended, federal troops were ready to start their offensive, waiting only for the order from Lagos.

When the end came, it arrived unexpected with amazing speed. The federal attack was launched on the 24 December, simultaneously from all fronts in a first time ever coordinated movement. In the south, the 3 Commando Division forces advanced north from Aba and Ikot Ekpene; trapping and virtually annihilating the rebel of 12 Division to link successfully with the 1 Division at Umuahia which they reached on the 27. The collapse of 12 Division was a severe blow to the morale of the rebels which was already at a very low level due to the falling off of supplies. With this defeat, it appears that even the will to resist also disappeared.

⁴⁹⁰ There was a change in Federal commands in the 1 Division, Col. Bisalla replaced Col. Shuwa while 2nd Division Front was extended to include Onitsha in the South of the rebel area, Colonel Obasanjo took over command of the 3 Marina Commando from Colonel Adekunle. This was mistakenly interpreted by foreign commentators that the final onslaught had been once again halted. B. J. Dudley, *Insecurity and Political Order: Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*, Ibadan University Press, Ibadan, 1973, P. 225.

Stremlau captured the event as follows: *The Nigerian commando seems to have caught the Biafrans by surprise and once they have entered the heartland they encounter no serious resistance, the opposing Twelfth Area of the Biafran army fled to the bush in disarray.*⁴⁹¹

This implies that the federal forces were to encounter only slight resistance as one line of defence after the other crumbled before their advance. After the 12 Division, the next Division to give way was the 15 Division which was situated north east of Owerri and whose defence was perforated by federal armoured cars on the 6 of January, to enable the men of the 3 Division to stream into Owerri on the following day. The race to Uli airstrip, the last line of the rebels or the centre of gravity was now the jingle. For in the north, 1 Division troops advancing westwards from Okigwe were close to Orlu and it had become a question of who get to Uli first. The Third Division or Third Marine Commando made it first but only after the rebel sue for peace. With the fall of Owerri, it had become apparent to the rebels that their position was hopeless. It should be noted that the last onslaught code named “Operation Tail Wind” was able to wreck the last stronghold of Biafra capital Ahiara.⁴⁹²

On the 9 January, Colonel Ojukwu summoned his executive council to review the situation. It was alleged at the meeting he insisted on the resistance to continue but found a whelming weight of opinion against what could be regarded as suicidal action. This may give credence to the fact that some elements in Biafra military hierarchy wanted to fight on till the last blood is spilled and considered the surrender as an act of betrayal and

⁴⁹¹ J. J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 224.

⁴⁹² B. J. Dudley, *Politics and Crisis in Nigeria...*, P. 244.

sabotage by the secessionist country.⁴⁹³ Whatever the line of argument, he was prevailed to leave in order to make it easier for those left behind to sue for peace. Ojukwu went on the radio and announced that he was “living the People’s Republic of Biafra to explore alternative option for peace”.

On the 11, Ojukwu flew out from Uli to Ivory Coast where he was granted political asylum, leaving his chief of staff, Major General Philip Effiong, to act as officer administering the government of Biafra with Ojukwu out of the way; it was then Effiong who broadcast on the 12:

Those elements of the old regime who have made reconciliation impossible (having) voluntarily removed themselves from our midst, he was dispatching emissaries to make contact with Nigeria field commandos in places like Onitsha, Owerri, Awka, Enugu and Calabar, with a view to arranging a general armistice.⁴⁹⁴

Two days later, as Third Division raced through Uli, Effiong arrived in Lagos as the head of a Biafra delegation to sign the formal declaration of surrender. For all the horror and tragedy that months of civil war had caused, the final act of surrender on the 15 January had all the ingredients of a comic opera. Its indicators included: handshakes, smiles, and the greeting, “Welcome back” from General Gowon.

Effiong read his prepared document as follows:

I Major Phillip Effiong, officer Administering the Government of the Republic of Biafra, now wish to make the following declaration;

- (a) That we affirm that we are loyal Nigerian citizens and accept the authority of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria.
- (b) That we accept the existing administrative and political structure of the federation of Nigeria.

⁴⁹³ There were a few people who refuse to recognise it and planned to continue to fight.

⁴⁹⁴ B. J. Dudley, *Politics and Crisis in Nigeria...*, P. 225.

(c) That any future constitutional arrangements will be worked out by representatives of the people of Nigeria.

(d) That the republic of Biafra hereby ceases to exist.

The reading ended, he sits down, signs the document which he then hands over to General Gowon.⁴⁹⁵

Gowon's congeniality helped to smooth surrender and the reintegration of the Igbo, as been seen from his speech accepting terms of surrender from the rebel second in-command, Major General Phillip Effiong. After gladly accepting the surrender he painted the psychology of the war:

On our side, we fought the war with great caution not in anger or hatred, but always in the hope common sense will prevail. Many times we sought a negotiated settlement, not of wickedness, but in order to minimise the problem of reintegration, reconciliation and reconstruction. We know that however the war ended, in the battle field or in the conference room, our brothers fighting under colours must rejoin us and that must together build a nation anew.^{496,}

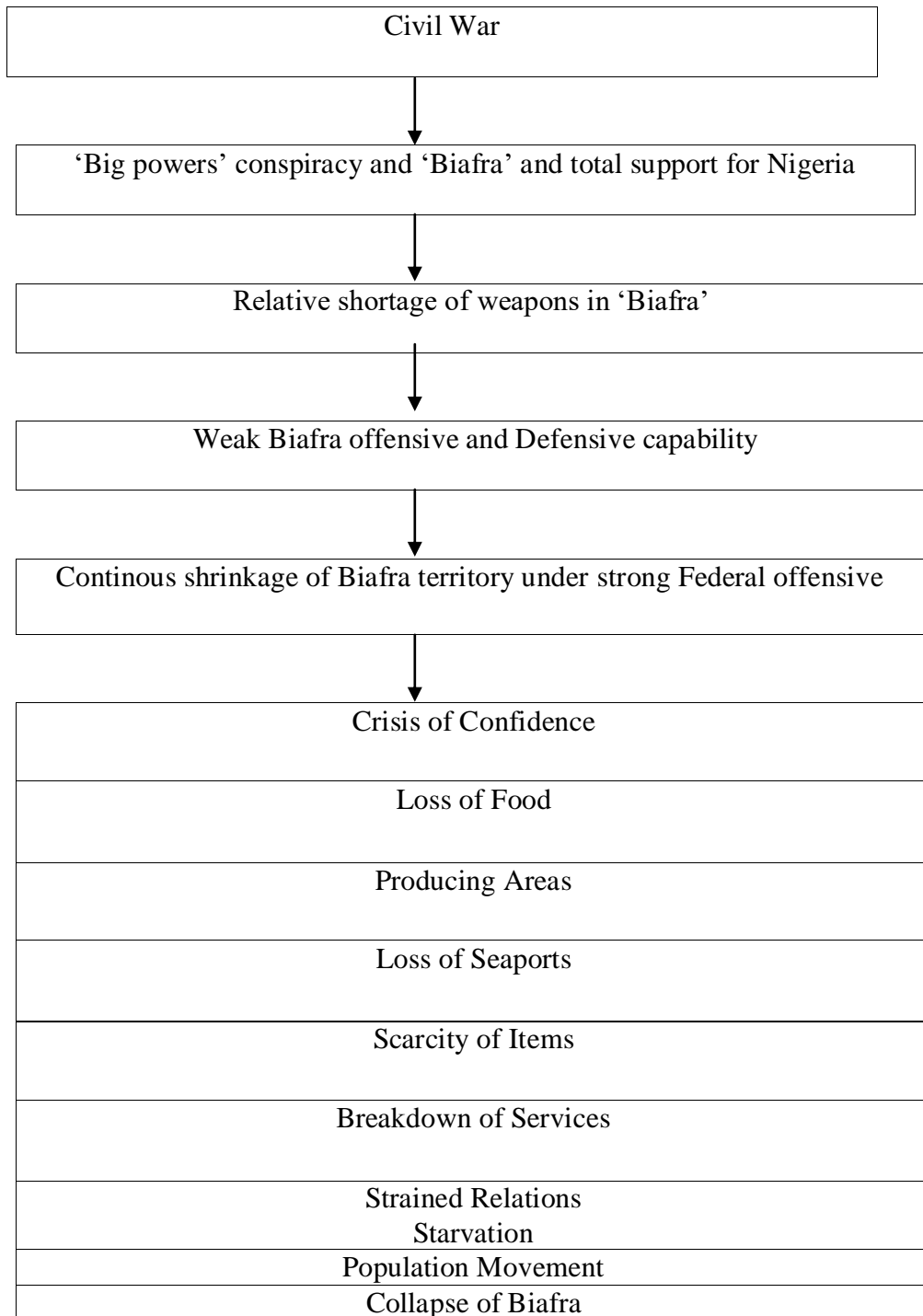
The war came to an end on the 14 day of January, 1970 and officially on the 15 January following the surrendering by the leadership of Biafra secessionist Republic at Amichi near Uli 12 January and secondly at Dodan Barrack. For the sake of history, it is important to ask "why did 'Biafra' collapse?" Many reasons have been given for the collapse of 'Biafra' after thirty months of resistance. Some of the reasons were: (a) foreign support for Nigeria (b) crisis of confidence in 'Biafra' (c) 'Biafra's financial disaster when she lost over £50,000,000 in January 1968 as Nigeria changed her currency, thus losing her vital foreign exchange (d) the destruction of the 'Biafra' 12

⁴⁹⁵ The surrender of the rebel Biafran to the Federal Military Government of Nigerian comprised of Biafran delegation and Nigerian delegation.

Biafran delegation: The Biafran delegation was led by Major General Philip Effiong; others included Sir Louis Mbanefo, M. T. Mbu, Colonel David Ogunewe and other Biafran military officers. Nigerian delegation were General Yakubu Gowon, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Military Council, Obafemi Awolowo; leaders of the various branches of the Armed Forces including Brigadier Hassan Katsina, Chief of Staff; H.E.A. Ejueitchie, the Secretary to the Federal Military Government, Attorney Enahoro, the Commissioner for information; Tasim Elias the Attorney General and the twelve Military Government of the Federation. Dodan Barracks, General Gowon's residence.

⁴⁹⁶ S. Amadi, "Colonial Legacy, Elite Dissension and the making of Genocide: The Story of Biafra," *Arewa House Journal* Vol. 1, No. 1; 2012, P. 150.

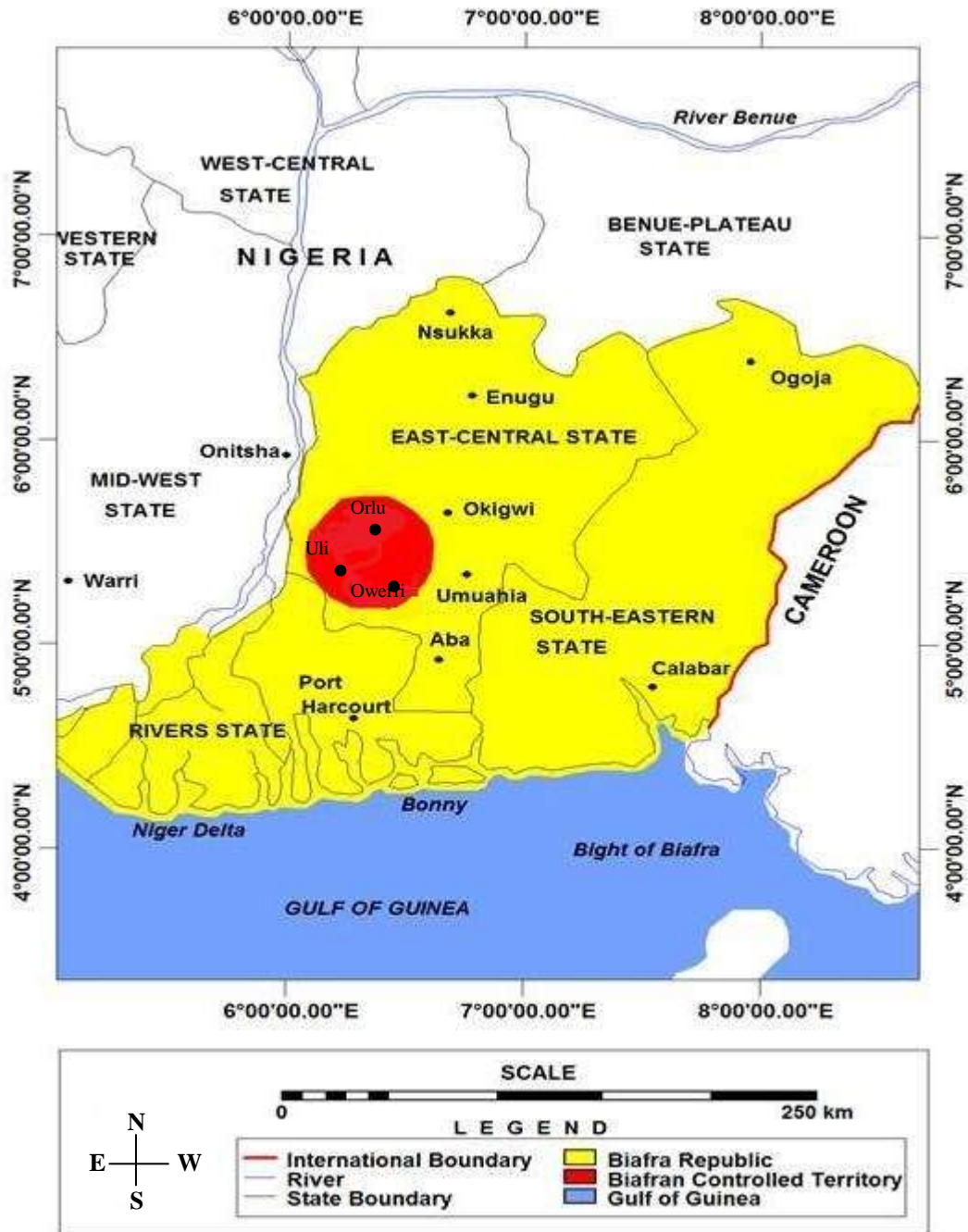
Division by the Nigerian Commados on 21/22 December, 1969, (e) the absence of a war Council in 'Biafra (f) starvation (g) the Federal blockade among others.⁴⁹⁷



Source: Causal Model for the Collapse of 'Biafra'.

⁴⁹⁷ A. A. Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War* in O.B.C. Nwose, "The Social Consequences of the Civil War in Biafra."

Map 6: Map of Nigeria showing the End of Defunct Republic of Biafra, 1970



Source: Adapted from C. Achebe, *There Was A Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, Allen Lane, London, 2012, p. X

8.5 Conclusion

It should be noted that the Civil War compelled Idah area to play supportive role just like the O.A.U. (A.U. now A.U.) and several others, for instance, the capture of Obale was aided by the people from that terrain who are familiar with the environment.⁴⁹⁸

From the discussion above, it can be deduced safely that different factors motivated foreign elements involvement in Nigerian Civil war. Some of these factors were political in nature, others were economic and humanitarian. It is however, difficult to discern clearly their motives since each of the parties involved has interior motive. For instance, it has been argued with justification that British intervention in Nigerian Civil war was dictated essentially by economic interest. However, few people will deny this so, suffice to say that economic interest dictated her intervention in principle, but they fail to explain the manner and the measure in which it has come. On the part of USSR, she was interested in having solid political and economic foothold in Nigeria, while French emphasised her reason to be on principle of self-determination and humanitarian. Nevertheless, political consolidations could not be ruled out. It must be admitted that Nigeria by 1966, given its size and economic power constitute a pole of attraction in the Gulf of Benin. The key to French “intervention” is to be found firstly in French public opinion and intense pro-Biafran sentiment. Secondly, the involvement of some respected African leaders on the rebel side. There is no doubt that as a big power France had her own political interest in mind. However, her immediate economic stakes in that area, like those of Britain were sure all through Nigeria and Biafra. No wonder, France still maintained diplomatic relations with Federal Government of Nigeria. Some countries maintained neutrality in the war. Example of such continent was USA and China.

⁴⁹⁸ Joseph Enemaku, Age: 65, Occupation: Politician, Place: Ekanyi, Date: 18/10/2018.

CHAPTER NINE

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR ON THE PEOPLE AND SOCIETY OF IDAH AREA, 1966-1986

9.0 Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War which lasted 32 months, July 6, 1967 to January 15, 1970 was bound to have far reaching consequences on the people. The impact of that war on Idah area just like on Biafra and the entire Nigerian Federation was a catastrophe/tragedy that cannot be neglected in the historiography of Nigeria military history. The proximity of Idah area to the Igbo speaking people of Biafra (Nsukka and Onitsha) made her vulnerable to share similar experiences which are regarded in this discussion as the impact of the war. Most economic activities were virtually paralysed. The agricultural sector suffered as farmlands were abandoned in the immediate border communities such as Ujeh, Ikah Uchuchu, Echeno, Odeke, Ugwalla, Oḍolu, Ogboligbo, Akpanya, Avvrugo, Eḡabada, Ollah, Ugwaka, and Oḡbale for security reasons. More significantly, the infrastructures were in jeopardy as evidenced in the willful destructions of infrastructures by the Biafran soldiers and looters. As one would expect, this phenomenon no doubt set the developmental stride of the area backward. Without doubt, the war had far reaching economic effects on the people of Idah Area that is worth highlighting in a discussion of this nature.

9.1 Decline of Trade and Commerce

The war created the exodus of Igbo community in Idah area who were mostly business men and women.⁴⁹⁹ The consensus was that Igbo dominated the commercial sector

⁴⁹⁹ Fieldwork Interview with Baba Malik, Place: Idah, Age: 72 (Retired Civil Servant) on 13 June, 2016. The informant maintains that the exodus of the Igbo in 1966 and early part of 1967 created a vacuum especially economic activities could not thrive at Idah and its environs because of Igbo dominance in the sector. Trading activities was to a reasonable extent slow.

or commercial activities. Their exit, therefore, called for concern as most commercial activities came to a stand still. For instance, most of the shops in Idah metropolis and its environs were predominantly owned by the Igbo businessmen and women. This ultimately created untold economic hardship to the people of the area. It should be stressed at this juncture that the mass exodus of the Igbo created a vacuum and a challenge to cope with. The trading activities became relatively very low.

According to Elder Nathaniel Umoche of Affah village, resident in Idah, the mass exit of the Igbo business community was a blessing in disguise.⁵⁰⁰ First and foremost, it led to the emergence of entrepreneurial class of Igala origin, it forestalled cut throat competition between the Igala and their Igbo business counterparts. The trading activities in the area became Igala dominated. In the transport sector for instance, Igala people became deeply involved as transporters. These include the following: Nwokedi Ojih, Alias Ukpashiojo, Raphael Etikwu, Moses of Iteh. It must be admitted that the proximity of the area to Onitsha, the commercial heartbeat of eastern Nigeria affected the people adversely. The declaration of Biafra on 30 May, 1967 by Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Chukwemeka Ojukwu which subsequently led to Nigerian Civil War, strained commercial contacts.⁵⁰¹ The bottle business of 1965 between the Igala speaking people of Idah and their Igbo speaking neighbours had a paradox effect on the people. The bottle which Igbo traders bought from Igala and its environs later became one of the igniting raw materials of local bomb called *Ogbumigwe* – killer of the public or crowd which ever way it was interpreted, it was nothing but a weapon of mass destruction. Besides, the war introduced smuggling business among the people along the River Niger and Mamabolo,

⁵⁰⁰ Fieldwork Interview with Elder Nathaniel Umoche, Place: Idah, Aged: 70, Date: 7 June, 2017.

⁵⁰¹ Fieldwork interview with Ogede Icheje Place: Uchuchu, Age: 65, Date: 9 June, 2017.

the terminus of River Anambra.⁵⁰² A large cross section of the informant admitted that it was of a minor aggregate. The articles of the trade were principally salt, food stuffs and later exchange of Nigerian currency. Many of the smugglers were jailed by Federal Government of Nigeria on the ground of sabotage. On interrogation, the researcher was told that the business was motivated essentially not by sabotage but because of cultural affinities that existed between the two communities. Whatever the explanation might be, it appears that the transaction was motivated principally by economic interest. The Federal Government's change colour of the currency in 1968 dealt a heavy blow on the trade was a commendable effort.

9.2 Agriculture

Farmlands and agro allied activities declined considerably and principally for security reasons. More often than not most of the war casualties were either killed or slaughtered on their ways to farms, fishing and hunting expedition among others. Just like the economic sector, the exit of Igbo farmers from Idah metropolitan town, Ibaji, Oḍolu, Akpanya affected agriculture greatly. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon created a vacuum in agriculture. Many farmlands were wallowing in total fallow, indeed begging for cultivation.⁵⁰³ The threat of Biafra soldiers encouraged continuous movement of the people of the *Area* to eke survival. Most informants argued that life first, this implied that life was much more paramount, to a lager extent, agriculture suffered setbacks. Be that as

⁵⁰² Fieldwork interview with Alami Okpanachi, Place: Idah, Age: 60 Date: 9 September, 2017. The informant disclosed that the bottle boom in the area was disasterious to the people of the area and entire Nigeria Federation because it later became one of the raw materials of Ogbunigwe – Igbo local weapon.

⁵⁰³ Fieldwork with the following: Joseph Ikedi Ubimago, Age: 65, Place: Affah-Ibaji, Date: 14 July, 2016, Anthony Okwute, Age: 89, Place: Ika Ibaji, Date: 29 December, 2016. Both parties admitted that it was motivated by greed, economic interest, proximity and the age long inter-groups relations that existed among the two communities. More significantly, the transaction was usually done at night through flashing of touchlight and throwing sticks all to indicate the presence of business associates. Language also was instrumental as both parties could speak the language of each other.

it may, there were some exceptions especially people outside the immediate borders engaged in uninterrupted farming especially the areas along the Eastern bank of the Niger and its Islands and the hinterland. This was to result to a kind of land hunger because of population explosion in the area occasioned by the influx of the refugees or the war migrants. It should be noted that within the war torn borders, fishing activities suffered paralysis to a reasonable extent as most streams, ponds were overran by Biafran soldiers and impersonated Biafra soldiers.⁵⁰⁴ The timely intervention of federal troops stationed at Illushi opposite Ibaji village of Odomomoh, Affah, Oḍolu, Egabada, Idah was able to remedy the situation. The flood disasters of 1969 and 1970 resulted to acute shortage of food. Note that riverine terrains of the area were submerged – Ibaji and riverine axis of Idah.⁵⁰⁵ This no doubt created famine, poverty ridden conditions. This was surmounted through Relief Agencies and Voluntary Organisations and P.C. Ojonyi Patrick (Old Mission Boy to Fr. Larose) captured the scenario by quoting Dennis Guertin *interlia*:

As the war dragged on, Ibaji people who left their homes were suffering too much, so we took permission from the D.O. to assist them with food, clothing and other valuable items. Odomomoh, Akuro, Eju-Ofe and Itodumah were made centres of distributing the donated items to the refugees. Rev. Sister Berthila and I took the challenge to distributing the goods to the people. This was not easy exercise especially that the people always struggle hard to get as much items as possible. Sometimes I was forced to use cane to skirr them to cue up properly for equitable distribution of the goods.⁵⁰⁶

The apathy of these all was that the area was not rehabilitated after war perse because the general opinion was that the North was not adversely affected like their eastern counterparts especially the Igbo, the brainchild of Biafra. It would be recalled that the proximity of the area to the theatres of the Civil War did not elicit the sympathy of the Federal Government to earmark the area for rehabilitation, reconstruction. It can be

⁵⁰⁴ Fieldwork interview with Emmanuel Ejimah Ojomah (JP) Alias Ijaja, Place: Idah, Age: 72 Date: 6 June, 2017.

⁵⁰⁵ Emmanuel Ejimah Ojomah (JP) Alias Ijaja...

⁵⁰⁶ P. C. Ojonyi in *Hero of Our Faith*, Pp...42-43.

argued hypothetically that geographical and political delimitations have come into play. Nevertheless, the *Area* belongs to one of the Northern states despite its proximity to East Central state.

9.3 Infrastructure Decay

The importance of infrastructure in any human society cannot be overemphasised. The term infrastructure has been used since 1927 to refer collectively to the basic physical and organisational structures needed for the operation of a society or an enterprise. In other words, infrastructures are the facilities necessary for an economy to function.⁵⁰⁷ Thus, the term typically refers to the technical structures that support a society such as roads, water supply, sewers, telecommunications, health facilities, schools, electricity etc. All these are physical components of interrelated systems that provide essential commodities which in turn enable, sustain or enhance societal living conditions.⁵⁰⁸

This implies that infrastructure facilitate the production of goods and services as well as the distribution of finished products. For example, good road networks facilitate the transportation of raw materials to industries just as good health care facilities, the life expectancy of the citizens of a given country. Indeed, infrastructure is the vehicles of modernisation and national development.

Unfortunately, what was evident in the area of our study was decay of infrastructure, fractured health care delivery system and crippled educational system. Above all, the infrastructures were in a state of disarray and deplorable conditions. For a

⁵⁰⁷ E. O. Ojo, *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria*, 2011, P. 187.

⁵⁰⁸ Sullivan Arthur and Steven Michael, *Economics: Principles in Action*, Pearson, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2003, p. 91.

detailed historical analysis, the researcher will digress a little outside over starting period. To achieve this, reviewing the developments of road network and the categories of roads in Igala speaking area (1958-1968) becomes relevant. Three categories of road were distinguishable.

- (a) Federal Government (Truck A Road)
- (b) The Northern Nigerian Regional Government Road
- (c) The Native Authority Roads. It should be noted that these categories of roads were all laterite roads.

The Federal Government Road (Truck A Road). The only Federal Government road at this period in Igala Native Authority was Otukpa – Ankpa, Anyigba-Shintaku road. The road was laterite type and maintained by the Federal Ministry of Works.

The Northern Nigeria Regional Government Road (Tunk B Roads). The only Northern Nigerian Regional Road at this period was Anyigba-Idah road. This road was very critical in the development of the area because it connected Idah town (the Igala Native Authority headquarters to the federal road at Anyigba).

The Igala Native Authority had many roads which linked the twenty Districts and large communities to the Federal and Northern Nigeria Regional Roads.⁵⁰⁹

As a result of the war, the roads were in deplorable state aside few road networks. The feeder roads and footpaths were in total abandon. Worthy of note in Ibaji District, some of the local bridges constructed through the people's efforts were destroyed. In most of the districts of Idah Area, there was virtually no evidence of reconstruction of these infrastructure after the war. James Udolor who wrote the ordeals of Ibaji terrain in his Autobiographic Note to Father Dennis Guertin, a Canadian Holy Ghost priest resident at

⁵⁰⁹ P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...* Pp. 117-118.

Odomomoh captured the scenario succinctly as follows: Travelling in Ibaji even now is an ordeal and even moreso in the 60s and 70s.⁵¹⁰ Ibaji was able to come out a bit motorable through Ibaji Development Association (IDA) efforts in the first half of 1970s.⁵¹¹

The only exception was the Auchi-Idah-Nsukka Obollo-Affor. This road was taken over by the Federal Government in 1975. The Idah Odolu section of the road was not constructed at our period but later constructed and tarred in 1992. Till now, the Odolu Nsukka section of the road is still laterite road.⁵¹² The Anyigba, Itobe, Okene road was taken over by the Federal Government as a result of the siting of Iron and Steel industry in Ajaokuta. The road and Ajokuta-Itobe bridge were commissioned in 1984 by the then Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari. The message I am trying to put across is that the construction of the road and Itobe bridge were not motivated by post war reform.

In 1963, the Government of Northern Nigeria took over all the water projects being managed and maintained in the various Native Authorities in Northern Region of Nigeria. (The Igala Native Authority Water Projects were among those taken over at this period). The Regional Government also absorbed the Igala Native Authority Staff Working in the water supply section of the Native Authority works Department. The absorbed staff was deployed to the water supply section of the Ministry of Works.⁵¹³

After the creation of twelve States on 27 May, 1967, the former Igala Native Authority became part of the Kwara State. In 1972, the Kwara State Government approved the plan to construct surface water supply to Idah, Ankpa and Dekina towns, in Idah the surface water would be pumped from Ofayi River. In Ankpa, the surface water

⁵¹⁰ James Udakor, "Fifty Years of Life Given Freely", in E. A. Ojomah, *Hero of our Faith*, P. 52.

⁵¹¹ Anthony Okwute, 29 December, 2016.

⁵¹² P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...* Pp. 117-118. P. 119.

⁵¹³ P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala....* , P. 11.

would be pumped from Imabolo River, while that of Dekina was to be taken from Itemie stream. The projects started in 1975; the site engineers were posted to their various locations, Idah, Ankpa and Dekina. The construction was done by direct labour. In 1976, there was also another creation of States in Nigeria. The former *Areas* in Igala speaking area became part of Benue State. The water projects at Idah, Ankpa and Dekina were transferred to the new Benue State Government. In 1978, the three water projects at Idah, Ankpa, Dekina were completed and commissioned.⁵¹⁴

As a matter of fact, this area under discussion was not reconstructed given the wanton damages done in the area especially Ibaji axis. Elias Ojoma captures the scenario in its appropriate context as follows:

After the Civil War the people of Ibaji were confronted with difficulties that were beyond their scope, the roads were terribly bad, there was no clean water to drink, apart from the River Niger and some lakes around the corner. No electricity, “darkness covered the whole of Ibaji.”Fr. Guetin did not find it difficult adjusting to the social demands of the people as reported by Mr. Patrick Ojonyi. He constructed a pipe borne water for them. This he started in 1972 and completed it in 1973. In 1974 he began electricity project in the same Ayah and completed it 1975. The two projects were commissioned by the then Military Governor of Benue State Col. Abdulahi Sheleng May 17, 1975. This did not stop with the Ayah people. He continued this community development projects in many villages; Uchuchu, Omabo, Odeke, Iyano, Iteh to name but few.⁵¹⁵

From the above, most of the infrastructure decay was not addressed by the Government but what were evidenceable were local efforts, voluntary intervention, and community efforts. In the health sector, there was a limited care delivery services. The first hospital built in Igala speaking enclave was General Hospital Idah established in 1933. Besides, other hospitals were founded by the missionaries – Holly Wood Memorial Hospital Ochadamu (Quaiboe Mission) and Grimand Hospital Anyigba

⁵¹⁴ P. E. Okwoli, P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...* P. 122.

⁵¹⁵ E. A. Ojomah, Pp. 23-24, Note that between 1956 to 1968 only nine Native Authority Health Clinic in Igala but later expanded to twenty in addition to four maternity clinics sited at Ankpa, Ogugu, Alloma and Unale.

(Catholic Mission).⁵¹⁶ Most of the rural dwellers could not attend these hospitals with relative ease because of insecurity created by the war, compounded by lack of motorable roads. This increased mortality rate among the people. As earlier noted, there were limited health care services as most health care centres were burnt by the Biafran rebels but the surviving ones were in shamble not until mid 1970s as it would be shown later.⁵¹⁷ It is interesting to note that later General Hospitals were established in Ankpa and Dekina by Col. David Bamigboye the military Governor of Kwara State in August, 1970. The works on the building of the hospitals were completed in 1972 and they were commissioned in the same year.

The Federal Government's interest in Primary Health Care (P.H.C.) in Nigeria was a watershed in health industry. The Federal Government made a National Health Policy in 1976 which was based primarily on Basic Health Service Scheme. The revolution of health industry was aimed at taking health care to the door steps of all Nigerians. This policy led to the establishment of School of Health Technology in each State of the Federation (Nigeria). School of Health Technology Idah was established in 1976 by Benue State Government. With the availability of trained staff, the different Local Government Councils opened more health clinics in their Local Government Areas.⁵¹⁸

9.4 Employment Opportunities

Most of the informants affirmed that the war created employment opportunities for the youth of the area, especially the young ones between the ages of 18 and 25. The

⁵¹⁶ P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...* Pp. 117-118. 121-122.

⁵¹⁷ Anthony Okwute, 29 December, 2016

⁵¹⁸ P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...*, P. 136.

enlistment into the Nigerian Army was motivated primarily by the desire to protect territorial integrity of Nigeria. From the findings, very few enlisted for material rewards; others joined as a result of molestation suffered in the hands of some Nigerian soldiers such as intimidation, beating of the civilian at slightest provocation, and romancing with “unarmed civilian wives” by the soldiers and, the ego of the army at the time.⁵¹⁹

It was gathered that the statistics of people from the area who enlisted into Nigerian Army before the war appeared quite insignificant. It must be admitted that the informants could not provide precise statistical data to buttress this claim. But what was most outstanding was that the low enlistment or recruitment was informed by its historical antecedent. Before this time, army was regarded as a profession meant for low thinking individuals, group of never-do-well, and people of lower status. These attributes no doubt hindered the earlier prospects. The Civil War however boosted the morale of Nigerian soldiers and thus making it a striving profession.⁵²⁰ The fact remains that the war offered employment opportunities to the youth of the area which in turn elevated their economic and social status in the society. As later event showed some of these soldiers became agents of civilisation and socialisation in their respective communities. Many of these soldiers were able to train their children, siblings who in one way or the other that contributed to the development of the Area.⁵²¹ Joseph Ikedi one of my informants argues that the recruitment of young ones had grown astronomically. This assertion agrees with Raph Uwechue contention that: *The Federal Army which only in the previous July*

⁵¹⁹ Fieldwork interview with the following informants. They were interviewed separately: Adama Benjamin, Place: Agwa Idah, Age: 60 years, Occupation: Retired Civil Servant, Date: 19 April, 2007, Peter Ichodokiwe, Place: Uchuchu – Ibaji, Age: 80 years, Occupation: Farming, Date: 16 August, 2016, Chief Omatta Stephen, Place: Onu Ujeh District, Odochalla, Age: 75 years, 21 September, 2017.

⁵²⁰ Chief Omatta Stephen, Place: Onu Ujeh District, Odochalla, Age: 75 years, Date: 21 September, 2017.

⁵²¹ Fieldwork interview with Sergt. Joel Ukwumaka, Place: Uchuchu-Ibaji, Age: 70 years, Date: 17 July, 2016. He mentioned late Captain Amaje from Odeke Ibaji and Major Okwute from Ayah Ibaji and Captain James Enagbo from Uchuchu as one of those children of the area who enlisted into Nigerian Army.

*numbered less than nine thousands of men had multiplied in the intervals to an estimated forty thousand troops hurriedly reconstructed from the remnants of the Nigerian Army after withdrawal of Eastern elements.*⁵²²

9.5 Conclusion

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that trading activities and commercial relations were adversely affected as evidenced in the vacuum created by the exit of the Igbo in the area. More significantly, the wanton destruction of property worth millions of Naira was also witnessed. The war no doubt aggravated decay of infrastructure as noted in the destruction of hospitals, local bridges in some parts of the area. From the positive parlance, the exit of the Igbo was a blessing in disguise because it created the emergence of young entrepreneur. Besides, the war created employment opportunities for the youth of the area as many of them were recruited into Nigerian army. These groups of person later became one of the agents of socialisation in their respective communities.

⁵²² R. Uwechue, *The Reflections of the Nigerian Civil War...*, P. 7.

CHAPTER TEN

SOCIO- POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR ON THE PEOPLE AND SOCIETY OF IDAH AREA, 1966-1986

10.0 Introduction

The war also created social problems, such as criminalities, congestions in the areas outside the immediate borders, incidence of commercial sex workers ecetera. The education industry, just like other sectors also suffered colosial setbacks as most schools in the border communities were burnt even the area outside the immediate borders, education could not continue because of fear of incessant bombing by Biafra Airforce. Besides, there were loss of lives and property. The emerging democratic experiment of the people was terminated following military intervention of 1966 which later paved way for the Nigerian civil war.

The war also boosted cultural revival identity which was hitherto growing oblivious among the people. One of such was scarification. Immediately after the end of the war, 15 January, 1970, the Igbo of the defunct Biafra were reintegrated, although ethnicity the bane of Nigeria socio-political structure could not be completely erased as it later manifested in the political activities (elections) of the area. Having said this, we shall be examining each of these factors critically.

10.1. Social Impact

10.1.i The Idea of Cultural Integration and Reintegration

Cultural integration refers to interaction between cultures for peaceful co-existence and harmonious living in the society through appreciation and understanding of the goodness of each other culture. In other words, cultural integration refers to intermingly and intermeshing of cultures which may be manifested in the lives of the

people through intermarriages, mode of worships, language, dance, eating habit and dressing among others. The question therefore is what is the reality of this definition between the Igala speaking people and their Igbo counterparts in the scheme of things?

P. E. Okwoli quotes the late Attah, Alhaji Aliyu Obaje verbatim:

Idah is a cosmopolitan town where the Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba and other ethnic groups live happily with the Igala and each is given its own Leader/Gago. We carry out interethnic marriage and attend schools, Churches, Mosques and markets together. Such is the way we live day in and day out throughout our lives. We are quite happy with their behaviour and we have nothing to complain of.⁵²³

This excerpt shows the high degree of integration and reintegration that existed after the Civil War. From the above analogy it is evident that Igala people did not displayed ethnic prejudice or discrimination. Both ethnic groups were treated equally. This is purely one Nigeria.

It should be noted that both Igala and Igbo informants admitted that the level of integration and reintegration was smooth. In the words of Chiko Igo-Onu, “we have nothing against each other.”⁵²⁴ John Nwobi an Igbo businessman in Idah (Alias Flamigo) points at charity aspect of reintegration. He contends that His Royal Highness, Alhaji Aliyu Obaje and his Council gave the Igbo a warm reception after the Civil War. This according to him was characterised by donation of food and money to the Igbo.⁵²⁵

It is interesting to note that there was also a counter opinion that the reintegration was not in total. Initially, there were elements of suspicion from both parties. This,

⁵²³ P. E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...*, 259

⁵²⁴ Fieldwork interview with Chiko Igo-Onu at Idah, exwhile Biafra soldier Age: 75, on 6 September, 2017. The man Chiko hails from Nnewi South Local Government of Anambra state. Abah interviewed on 21 September, 2017, Age: 70 an Odoḷu businessman, Idah based disclosed another element of reintegration. He argues that during the war the hosues sold at Idah were done through their consents before their departure between 1966 and 1967 and the amount sold to be remitted to Igbo after the war. He also added that Bishop Obot Ephrem, the Bishop of Idah Dioceses gave Igbo financial assistance after the war.

⁵²⁵ Fieldwork Interview with J. Nwobi, Place: Sabogari Idah, Age: 80, Date: 21-09-2017.

however, was surmounted after sometimes. On the general aggregate, the Igbo enjoyed high degree of non molestations in their daily activities either as⁵²⁶ businessmen or women, civil servants and farmers.

10.1.ii Perception of the Igbo after the War

After the war, the perception of Igbo was not entirely different from the rest of Nigerians – the indivisibility of Nigeria, the unconditional surrender of Biafra paved way for their reconciliations with the entire Nigerian state. On the whole, the Igbo perceived that Biafra was a failed republic. It is to be noted that Igbo have not given up Igbonisation. According to Simon Ataokolo (Staff Sergeant Rtd), Igbonisation refers to doggedness of the Igbo, their ability of improvisation and ingenuity. From the finding of this research, it is absolutely clear that the spirit of Biafra did not die fully as claimed and displayed by major General Phillip Effiong, officer administering the Government of the Republic of Biafra, after the exit of Ojukwu that the Republic of Biafra hereby ceases to exist.⁵²⁷ The informant further maintains that one of the indicators was incessant agitation of Biafra by Igbo in Nigeria federation. He however, concludes that it was not a consensus of the Igbo but propaganda machinery by certain group mainly to achieve personal interest.

It is obvious that the endless cry of marginalization of the Igbo after the Civil War continued to surface unabated. Its reality is therefore left for posterity to judge. After the war, the Igbo acknowledged the military might of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was also discovered that both Igala and Igbo informants admitted that war is an ‘evil wind’

⁵²⁶ Fieldwork interview with Staff Sergeant Simeon Ataokolo from Odolu Idah based, aged 64 years on 19 September, 2017

⁵²⁷ Dodan Barracks, Lagos; See B. J. Dudley, *Politics and Crisis in Nigeria*, P. 225.

that does no one nothing good, and that Nigeria will never fight such war again.⁵²⁸ The war had reduced the status of Igbo to beginners, although within the shortest time, Igbo can now compete with any part of the country economically.⁵²⁹

Much more significant, the Igbo believed that Nigeria cannot afford to continue to play the role of passive spectator in technology development planning and production, hoping that other countries will continue to provide her with the technical means of development even at a cost. There is a need for fundamental restructuring of the technology objectives and priorities and implementation strategy to effect a breakthrough and much needed departure from the colonial objectives set for science and technology. To this end, our conscious consumption of imported technology and foreign based technology derived products ought to be reversed. Without local industrialization and dynamic technology development policy, agriculture, which is the linchpin of national peace and harmony cannot be sustained except imported technology, equipment, machinery and processed materials such as fertilizers, insecticides, and herbicides. George Santayana, the philosopher, had correctly argued that, once you make people, you cannot stop them. If Nigeria is made to reverse this direction in favour of internal productivity through self-reliance where ability to do things better than anyone else, excellence and integrity are the basis of reward and recognition, nobody can stop the country in her march to self-sustaining and greatness.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁸ Fieldwork interview with Mr. Francis Obidike at Idah (shoe maker) who hails from Ekushigo Local Government Area of Anambra state aged 70 years on 18 September, 2017. Mr. Okachi Ugbojah from Uchuchu also interviewed, aged 85 years on 16 August, 2016.

⁵²⁹ Ata Okolo, 19 September, 2017.

⁵³⁰ F. C. N. Oragwu, "Scientific and Technological Aspects of the War Machine in Biafra"... P.233.

10.1.iii Ethnicity and Nigerian Politics

The term ethnic group has been defined in different ways by different scholars. One of such scholars, Thomson, defines it as a community of people who have the conviction that they have a common identity and common fate, based on issues of origin, kinship ties, tradition, cultural uniqueness, a shared history and possibly a shared language. From this definition, it is clear that ethnicity is based more or formulated more on sentiment of origin and descent rather than geographical consideration of a nation. The term ethnic consciousness or ethnicity as used in other sources represents an awareness of one's belonging to a particular ethnic group different from others, and the sort action that follows realization or awareness.

According to Ake, there are two main schools of thought that are used in explaining the concept of ethnicity. First of these is the primordial school, while the second one is the instrumentalist school. The former contends that members of the same ethnic group have a common primordial bond that determines their personal identity and turns the group into natural community of a type that is older than the modern nation or modern class. On the other hand, the instrumentalists contend that ethnicity is essentially a means for people, especially leaders, to pursue their own purpose, such as forming, mobilizing and manipulating groups of people for political ends.⁵³¹ Ethnicity as it has developed elsewhere in the world has many characteristics which are only enforced depending on a need that is constructed according to circumstances. Some of the characteristics are as follows:

(a) that although ethnic groups exist they do not have permanency with which they must perform; (b) in most cases, ethnicity or ethnic consciousness is driven by and produced

⁵³¹ C. Ake, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, Codesia, Dakar, 2000, P. 93.

by material and historical forces; (c) ethnicity is characterized by conflict; and (d) ethnicity exists only within a political society consisting of diverse ethnic groups; (e) putative we verses putative they.⁵³²

From these characteristics, and indeed some that could not be added, what one notes is that ethnicity or ethnic consciousness exists as a reaction to some forces and dynamics taking place in society.⁵³³ In other words, ethnicity does not exist or develop in a vacuum, rather it is an instrument by means of which its enactors can gain political, social or economic advantages in a competitive arena. As such ethnicity is and has over the years been used as a tool that benefits other people while at the same disadvantaging others.⁵³⁴

To this end, what then is the interplay between ethnicity and politics in Nigeria? Without doubt, ethnicity has been the bane of Nigerian politics right from the First Republic to the Second Republic and beyond. For instance, in the First Republic the three major political parties cannot be divorced from ethnic configuration. It should be noted that NCNC was slightly different in terms of its formation. NPC – Northern Peoples’ Congress originated from mutane Arewa, while Action Group was an offshoot of Egbe Omo Oduduwa. More significantly, each of the major political parties was regionally based: NPC of the North, AG of the West and NCNC for the East. Ethnicity more than any factor in Nigeria explains the phenomena incidence of one party syndrome in Nigerian politics as each political party tries to gain political in route to the other

⁵³² A. Thomson, *An Introduction in African Politics*, (2 Edition), Routledge, London, 2004, P. 60.

⁵³³ A. Thomson, *An Introduction in African Politics*, P. 95 and A. E. Ojie, “Democracy, Ethnicity and Problem of Extrajudicial Killing in’ *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 4, March, 2006 Pp. 546-569, P. 547-548.

⁵³⁴ *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, James Currenry Press, 1989, Pp. 2-6.

regions.⁵³⁵

It should be noted that the pattern of party politics in Nigeria was such that loyalty was commanded from the people according to the place of origin of its leaders. Hence, the NPC for Ahamdu Bello, NCNC for Azikwe and AG for Awolowo, each relies largely on ethnic support of Hausa, Fulani of the North, the Igbo of the East and the Yoruba of the West respectively.⁵³⁶ It would be recalled that “though most institutions of the First Republic drew their inspiration from the Westminster model, they lacked those conventions and practices which made the models what it is.”⁵³⁷ The coups of 1966 and military intervention cannot rule out ethnic factor. In 1979, in the quest to transit to democracy, Nigerian introduced presidential system of government modeled after U.S.A democratic practices. At the general elections of August, 1979, the leaders of Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigeria People Party (NPP), Great Nigeria People Party (GNPP) and People Redemption Party (PRP) featured as presidential candidates, Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was not even a party officials due to standing rule of that party against the simultaneous of holding both government and party positions by any person. Ideologically, the parties were not significantly different in content though slightly different in style and organisation.

As in 1954, 1959 and 1964, the results of 1979 elections depicted the old tendency of Nigerians to vote for the party of ‘son and the soil’. Parochialism in politics and voting, evident in the First Republic was repeated with minor or insignificant modification in 1979. Each presidential candidate secured a landslide victory in his home state and won the solid vote of his ethnic group, except for Alhaji Shehu Shagari and the

⁵³⁵ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria*, P. 19.

⁵³⁶ B. J. Dudley, *Nigerian Government and Politics*, Pp. 71-72.

⁵³⁷ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria*, Pp. 84-85.

NPN, Chief Awolowo UPN whose supporters largely from the Yoruba speaking states; Mallam Aminu Kano from the Hausa speaking states of Kano and Kaduna; Dr. Azikiwe from Igbo speaking states of Anambra and Imo (also Middle Belt State of Plateau). Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri from the Kanuri dominated State of Borno and Middle Belt states of Gongola. Alhaji Shehu Shagari won not only the Hausa Fulani speaking states of Bauchi and Kaduna but also Middle Belt State of Benue and the Eastern non Igbo states of Rivers and Cross River. It is interesting to note that, apart from the minority states in both the Eastern and Northern part of the country which voted for different parties. The solid votes of the major ethnic groups; Hausa, Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba were for the sons of their various soils and their relevant parties. Also, the results proved that despite the patriotic intentions of the framers of the 1979 constitution, the military and FEDECO regarding the emergence of truly national political parties and clear national leadership, the Nigeria public remained essentially ethnic conscious and parochial, both in temper and attitude.⁵³⁸

The politics of 1979 to 1983 can best be described as one of persistent confrontation interspersed by spasms of conciliation. Evidence abounds, when FEDECO announced on August 16, 1979 that Shagari had won the presidential elections, the UPN leader, Chief Awolowo addressed a press conference on behalf of his party, the NPP and GNPP, challenging the verdict.⁵³⁹ Arguing that no presidential candidate had met the requirements of the Electoral Decree, Chief Awolowo called upon the Supreme Military Council and Federal Military Government to arrange for an electoral college to determine who would be

⁵³⁸ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria*, Pp. 84-85.

⁵³⁹ The Press Conference was attended by Azikiwe of NPP and Alhaji Ibrahim of GNPP, Mallam Aminu Kano of PRP was conspicuously absent, as happened, the four parties met at Enugu on July 24, 1979. Eventually, N. Azikiwe dropped out of the stage and his party eventually contrived a working arrangement with the NPN, similarly. The PRP and the NPN later worked out an accord.

president of Nigeria. The main bone of contention was that although Alhaji Shagari had secured more votes than other candidates, he failed to secure one quarter of the votes cast in 13 states and therefore the FEDECO interpretation that the ordinary meaning of two-third of 19 is 12 and 2/3 was wrong. This provoked very heated exercise in legal semantics and mathematical argumentation. At the end of the day, the Federal Elections Appeal Tribunal and the Supreme Court upheld the FEDECO verdict.⁵⁴⁰

In this study, we have attempted to stress one critical point, namely; that ethnic politics breed political instability and that the man on a tribal horse back cannot become successful national leader. The politics is dangerous both to the leader and the led. A man sprung onto power at the national level from a regional base is in a fix:

He loses his crown probably his head when he tries to get out of his regional support base. Similarly, he loses the nation he wants to lead if he tries to maintain the regional base. A tribalist cannot really lead a nation; the contradiction between intention and act is startling. Nor can a nationalist be an effective tribalist for nationalism and regionalism are antithetical. The substance of tribalism is the poison of nationalism.⁵⁴¹

10.1. iv Environmental Pollution

Environmental pollution in this context refers to environmental hazards which are generally unhygienic to the well-being of the people. The war in no doubt aggravated environmental pollution in the area. Most of the casualties of the war in the area and other mortalities hurriedly buried and in some cases, the stench of the remains were unbearable, carcass of human bodies littered the ground in some places, toileting system called for a concern. Some lakes and fish ponds were poisoned by Biafran soldiers and

⁵⁴⁰For verbatim report of the Supreme Court decision, please see *New Nigerian*, Lagos, 26 October, 1979, and the Special Tribunal in *New Nigerian* 16 October, 1979. The crisis centred on whether Shagari had up to 25 percent of the votes cast in Kano state in relation to 25 percent of the votes cast in two-third of the 19 states comprising the federation. See Ibanji Bolaji, *Shagari: President by Mathematics*, Automatic Printing Press Limited, Ibadan, 1980.

⁵⁴¹C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria ...*, P. 5.

Biafran impersonated soldiers either deliberately or undeliberately. The former implies purposeful intent to destroy the people while the former implies the attempt by the Biafrans to harvest fishes in the area for their consumption. This became toxic to the people's health and lead to high mortalities. This increased spate of epidemics and endemic diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea just to mention but a few.⁵⁴²

The flood disasters of 1969 and 1970 compounded the ecological disasters of the period. That of 1969 was a watershed as the river Niger overflowed its banks and most of the riverine communities were submerged especially Ibaji axis. This brought untold hardship to the people most notable was acute shortage of food and loss of valuable property.⁵⁴³

10.1.v Educational Setbacks

The education activities almost came to a standstill, most schools in Ibaji, Oḍolu, Akpanyo and Avvrugo were burnt and some razed to ground, others abandoned. It should be emphasized here that in Idah metropolitan town educational activities were in progress as both primary schools and colleges were neither destroyed nor burnt. Some schools were converted to temporary army barracks. They included, St. Boniface Primary School and part of St Peters' College.⁵⁴⁴ After the war, the affected schools were rehabilitated by the affected communities and different Christian denominations specifically Roman Catholic, Quaiboe. The affected communities include the following: Uchuchu, Odeke,

⁵⁴² Fieldwork interview with Joseph Enemakwu, Place: Ekanyi-Ibaji, one time Secretary, Ibaji Local Government Area, also secretary Ibaji Traditional Council and presently Chairman Alu Ome Development Association, Age: 65, 18 October, 2017.

⁵⁴³ interview with Joseph Enemakwu, 18 October, 2017.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Benjamine Adama. Place: Idah, Age: 60 years, Date: 19 April, 2017. He maintained that schools were closed down in Akanya, Oḍolu and Avvrugo. To buttress his point he stated categorically that St. Mary primary school was burnt through Biafra air raid. Note also that 95 percent of the informants attested to this fact.

Ayah, Echeño, Anocha, Obale, Odolu, and Akpanya just to mention but a few.⁵⁴⁵

By 1976, there was a revolution in the education industry as a result of the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy the Local School Boards planned and executed the Federal Universal Primary Education Programme which began in September, 1976. As a result of the campaign launched by the Federal Government through Local School Board, the former Idah Area, later Idah Local Government registered thousands of pupils for the Universal Primary Education Programme. The different communities where new schools were sited responded by putting up temporary classrooms for the programme.

Table 7: The Growth of Primary Schools in Idah Local Government Area, 1977-1986

S/No	Year	Idah
1	1977	174
2	1978	177
3	1979	180
4	1980	185
5	1981	184
6	1982	184
7	1983	183
8	1984	181
9	1985	181
10	1986	156

Source: Achimugu Lawrence, *The History of Education in Igalaland*, Diolus Communication, Ikorodu, Lagos 2005, The 8.2 The Growth of Primary, Educaiotn in Igalaland, P. 71.

After the war, there was a giant stride in post primary schools established by the various tiers of government. It would be recalled that the Northern Nigerian Government established only two post primary institutions in Igala speaking area, namely, Government Secondary Dekina and Government Technical College Idah.

Note that as a result of the creation of states in 27 May, 1967, the former Igala Native Authority became part of Kwara state. The Kwara State Government established

⁵⁴⁵ Fieldwork interview with Honourable Joseph Enamakwu, Place: Ekanyi – Ibaji , one time Secretary Ibaji Local Governemnt Area, also Secretary Ibaji Traditional Council and presnetly Chairman Alu-Ome Development Associaiton, Age: 65 years Date: 18 October, 2017.

the following post primary institutions: Government Teachers College, Aloma, Government Secondary School Akpanya, Government Technical School Ankpa and Government Technical Odu Ogboyaga. As we can see from the above, two schools were established in Idah, the former Idah Area later Idah Local Government. It is significant to note that when Benue State was created in 1976 by General Murtala Mohammed, the Benue State Government established the following schools in Idah: Government Teachers College (Government Science Secondary School), Government Secondary School Onyedega, Itobe.⁵⁴⁶

Added to the above, the post primary schools established by private individuals played immeasurable roles in the educational advancement of our study area. Moreover, Federal Government College, Ugbolawo came into existence on 6 January, 1979. The college is a co-education boarding school. The aim and objectives of the college are in line with those set out in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria among which are: preparation of students for higher education and preparation of the students for useful living within the society. To foster national unity by developing, love, respect and appreciation of the good in others from different background. Similarly, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced that she was going to open seven colleges of technology in the country in June, 1976. By this period, Ahmadu Ali was the Federal Commissioner for Education. On Monday 28 November 1976, the College of Technology Idah came to existence with eleven academic staff, nineteen senior administrative staff, eighty-six supporting staff, and two hundred and twenty pioneer

⁵⁴⁶ Note that Benue State Government established Government Secondary schools in the following towns in Igala speaking areas: Onyedega, Akpanya, Itobe, Egwume Ologba, and Olowa Ogodu of all the above, three schools were sited in Idah Local Government Area – Onyedega, Okenya and Itobe. Benue State Government also established Advance Teachers' College Ankpa; Achimugu Lawrence, *The History of Education in Igaland, Dinilus Communciatons, Ikorodu Lagos 2005, P. 77.*

students.⁵⁴⁷ It was later renamed, The Federal polytechnic, Idah.

From the discussion above, one can infer that educational activities were retarded during the Civil War years in Idah Local Area but later witnessed rapid educational growth.

10.1.vi Civil-Military Relations

The civil military relations in the study area were harmonious although with some exceptions. Most people interviewed admitted that the relationship between the soldiers and civilian population was harmonious. This is their contentions

The soldiers came to protect the people from the onslaught of the Biafran soldiers. There were instances where soldiers distributed food to civilian population at Affah, Idah, Akpanya among others. They also served as arbiters in some cases some soldiers married from the hosting communities.⁵⁴⁸

Beside the above, there were some exceptions, sexual molestation was on the increase, snatching of peoples wives by the soldiers, turturing of youth at slightest provocation. There was an incident at Akwuro a man was beaten to koma for no just cause. The erring officer was however brought to book.⁵⁴⁹ One officer interviewed explained that some of the ugly behaviours related to sex abuse and molestation was due to long absence of the soldiers from their homes, wives, coupled with youthful exuberance.⁵⁵⁰ On the general note, gesture of Nigerian Soldiers towards their civilian counterparts outweighed brutalities.

10.1.vii Social Dislocation

The people who were dislocated led to loss of family ties in some cases but most disturbing was the issue of internally displaced persons who automatically become

⁵⁴⁷ P. E. Okwoli, Pp. 104-105.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Joseph Ubimago, 14 July, 2016.

⁵⁴⁹ The Researcher in conversation with Honourable Samuel Omachonu in Elder Samuel Omanibe's residence Oma-Odoko New Layout Idah, Age: 70, 29 December, 2013.

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with Simon Ataokolo, 21 September, 2017.

refugees. Refugees more often than not, wear sympathy on its victims but in some sense elements of a derogatory remark and stigmatisation. As a result of the war, many families in Idah Local Government relocated. As a matter of fact it was said that some families relocated to mid-West state later Bendel state and presently Edo and Delta State.⁵⁵¹ From the finding of this research, it appears that the people were demoralised and humiliated. To be precise, the Ibaji people who crossed River Niger to settle in mid-West state their immediate neighbours across the Niger were called all sorts of names by their kinsmen in that terrain. This includes Oloshi, Odogwumeh, Illushi, Ifekwu Island just to mention but a few. One of such names was *Akapbo* Ojukwu meaning in Ibaji dialect of Igala speaking people remnant kill of Ojukwu. If this can come from their kinsmen, one can guess what would come from other Nigerian people in that area. This however, does not rule out the magnanimity of the hosting communities.

In the words of Udalar, ‘during the civil war, the inhabitants vacated the neighboring villages. This time most parents had relocated in Edo as refugees and life was difficult.’⁵⁵² It should however be noted that as at the time of the civil war, there was no state in Nigeria called Edo, but what was on record was Edo speaking people of west of the Niger. The writer must be referring to mid-West state. Ojonyi captured the scenario in a similar term. According to him, Ibaji people who left their homes were suffering too much.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵¹ James Udalar, “Fifty Years of Life Given Freely” in E. A. Ojomah, P.43.

⁵⁵² James Udalar, “Fifty Years of Life Given Freely” ..., P. 48.

⁵⁵³ Patrick Ojonyi, Autobiography Notes on Dennis Guertin...; P. 42.

Fr. Elias also maintains that, when the Civil War began on 6 July, 1967, many villages mostly in Ibaji East were vacated. The parish centre was not an exception.⁵⁵⁴ It must be borne in mind that the vacation was not the exclusive preserve of Eastern Ibaji. The Ibaji people in the West also vacated their villages especially those in the immediate border towns.

10.1.viii Crimes and Crimininalities

Idah area just like any other African society did not condole crimes before the outbreak of the Civil War. These social vices include stealing, prostitution, corruption and bribery. There is this belief that whoever commits such offence incurs the wraths of god's of the land. Paradoxically, after the war, this belief system declined considerably. In other words, crimes witnessed unprecedented expansion. One of the major imperatives was poor armament policy of the Federal Military Government after the war. A cross section of my informants admitted that, 'many arms slipped out of Federal Military Government control, this certainly led to the profilation of arms in the area.'⁵⁵⁵ Principally, the role of arstisians and craftsmen that began to manufacture arms in commercial quantities (cartridges, riffles, local pistols popularly known as *Onwu'dinakpa*, meaning 'death' is in the pocket). For instance, Idah-Ọdọlu road became a death trap because of incessant robbery and bandits. It is interesting to note that the ditches dung by the soldiers during the Civil War became the crimminals' hideouts and strategies for perpetrating their heinous acts. It is worthy of note that stealing and robbing was no longer news in the area.

⁵⁵⁴ E. A. Ojomah, *The Hero of Our Faith: The Life and Works of Fev. Dennis Guertin in Ibaji*, Kingley Printing, New Heaven, Enugu, 2010. P. 20 .

⁵⁵⁵ Interview with Usman Ojodu, Age: 80, Place: Ngwa-Idah, Occupation: Ex-Serviceman, Date: 14-07-2016.

However, armed robbing was not the only social vices that witnessed astronomical growth. According to Christain Abangwu, *Impact of the Nigerian Civil War on the Ngwa Area, 1967-1980*, points out that “good evening sir syndrome.”⁵⁵⁶ This implies the emergence of large scale commercial sex workers in Igbo society as at that time. It is disheartening to note that young girls in a bid to keep body and soul together went into prostitution not minding the dangers inherent in it. This group includes young women who were already in marriage but could not bear the hardship occasioned by the war. This led to influx of this group of persons to Idah and its environs. However, what was of major concern was that some teenagers of this community emulated this unholy way of life as a means of satisfying their basic necessities of life.⁵⁵⁷ This corroborated T.R. Malthus’ thesis who argues 1798 as follows: “that war once started to feed those lacking in moral restraints while it kills their relatives. That is to say that every serious war produces its cheat, profiteers, racketeers, murders, robbers and thievies, hence, the situations in the territory in question.”⁵⁵⁸

10.1.ix Psycho-Physical Trauma

Given the threat of the rebel soldiers, the immediate border communities were gripped with fear and insecurity. One of the informants explained this term clearly by citing three instances. Firstly, “the people were sleeping with one eye opened and another closed”, secondly, some communities or camps began to enact laws prohibiting the cockcrows because of the threat of the Biafran soldiers. The reason behind this was that, it alerted the Biafran soldiers of their whereabouts; thirdly, cooking in the day time was

⁵⁵⁶ C. Abangwu, “Impact of the Nigerian Civil War on the Ngwa Area, 1967-1980,” (Unpublished BA Project), Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, 2008, P.59.

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with Stephen Omatta...

⁵⁵⁸ O. B. C. Nwolise, “The Social Consequences of the Civil War in Biafra” in T. N. Tamuno (ed), *The Civil War Years*, Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1984, P.37.

also problematic because Biafran Army used the smoke of the cooking to trace the people. In other words, people devised to cook early in the morning and at night. Sometimes, a cry of a baby became sort of worry because it also exposed the inhabitants.⁵⁵⁹

10.1.x Abuse of Fundamental Human Rights

The inalienable rights of man were grossly abused. In other words, civil-military relations were very poor. For instance, freedom of movement was limited by the fear of air raid constantly on patrol, bombardment and strayed bullets. The right to life and property were all under threat. Nonetheless, the rights to the dignity of human persons were also violated by the Biafran soldiers. It is to be noted that freedom of worship was limited as shrines and churches were burnt as a result of the war.⁵⁶⁰ This brought about disconcentration of holy places as people could not worship as expected.

10.1.xi Decline of Communal Bond

On the eve of the Civil War, the study area was essentially communal. In other words, this denotes collectivity and oneness in the running of the affairs of the area. Although, the area marriage with colonialism was not able to alter this bond but thereafter, the outbreak of the war drastically created a new rhetoric. For instance, before the outbreak of the war, what belongs to one belongs to all. It was a kind of *ujama* society. This communal orientation changed after the war as a result of mingling with other stocks.⁵⁶¹ The society became highly individualistic. As E.H. Carr puts it, “as the society began to develop, the cult of individual also began with a man who begins to be

⁵⁵⁹ Interview with Umoneme Ezegwulu, 16, August, 2016.

⁵⁶⁰ Interview with Joseph Enemaku, 18, October, 2017.

⁵⁶¹ Interview with Anthony Okute...

conscious of himself as a member of a race, people, party, family or cooperation.”⁵⁶² It is observed that if one takes his or herself out of the above nonmenclature, the society will be peaceful.

Also, the society became that of the survival of the fittest. One of my informants puts it “operation mind your business.” For example, in Ibaji District, the taking of socio-political titles such as *Ogbufei*, among menfolk and *Ikpenyi* among women were done in order of seniority. This took revisal trend after the war.

10.1.xii Widespread Use of Pidgin English Language

Most of the people who were enlisted into the army during the Civil War can neither speak English Language nor write because of low level of literacy (modern education). Some did not go to school at all; others were primary school dropped out. It should be noted that those with First School Leaving Certificate and Secondary School drop out communicate perfectly. The crux of the matter is that during this period of study, there was low level of literacy in the Armed Forces. In the face of all this, Pidgin English became the medium of communication. Many learnt it from them, as a result, there was hardly any part of the area pidgin was not spoken. This in no small measure quick communication especially in the commercial sector and routine discussion.⁵⁶³

10.2 Political Impact

10.2.i Socio-political Justice on National Integration

There is a school of thought which argues that there was no socio-political justice for the Igbo speaking people after the Civil War in the scheme of things in Nigeria federation. It also argues that the Igbo speaking people were treated as conquered

⁵⁶² E.H. Carr, *What is History?* London: Macmillan, 1961, P.32.

⁵⁶³ Interview with Joel Ukwumaka...

territory. Above all, that there was no victor and no vanquished. To them, this explains how the Igbo fared far less in the federation after the Civil War.

The school often points to public officer (Special Provision Decree) Decree No 46 of 1970 which states or provides that where the appropriate authority was satisfied that between 15 January, 1966 to 15 January, 1970, a public officer who was involved in any hostile or subversive act of rebellion against any of the government in the federation, such officer would be dismissed, removed or compulsorily retired from service.⁵⁶⁴ The decree also provided that where the conduct of a public officer was such that his further continued employment in the relevant service would not be in public interest, such an officer would be dismissed, removed, retired compulsory. The entire public officers affected by the provision of this decree lost their pension benefits too. No civil proceeding could be entertained by any Court of Law in the country in respect of any decision taken in line with the provision of this Decree. Decree No 46 of 1970 was enacted to prevent Igbo civil servants and cooperation officers from being re-engaged in: (a) from the public service of the federation, (b) the public service of any state of the federation, (c) the service of a body corporate or incorporate established under a federal or state, (d) a company in which any of the government in the federation has controlling interest. To this school, Gowon's "directive" that former civil servants and public corporation officers should be promptly reinstated as they came out of hiding was observed mostly in breach.⁵⁶⁵ The few who were reabsorbed not only lost their seniority in the service, they also lost a say in policy formulation and implementation in their

⁵⁶⁴ P. O. Ani, *Post War Social and Economic Reconstructon of Igboland: 1970-1983*, Mikan Press, Enugu, 1998, P. 65.

⁵⁶⁵ O. N. Iheoma, *The Post Civil War Policy of the Federal Government of Niegria and the Biafran Veterans, 1970-2000*, (Unpublished M.A. Dissertation), Department of History and Inetrnational Studies University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2013, P. 1.

respective establishment. It should be noted that the claim that the East-Central State was inhabited entirely by the Igbo speaking people may not be real. Evidence abound that there are Igala speaking people in East Central State namely; Inoma, Nzam, Allah, Onugwa among others.

Another substance was the issue of the Demonetisation Decree of 1970, (Banking Obligation) which regulated the earning of every Igbo man to twenty ponds. According to Okorie, by a stroke of pen Igbo ‘nation’ was impoverished. The Federal Government in its implementation of Banking Obligation Decree of 1970 nullified the pre-war savings that were operated between May 31, 1967 to 12 January, 1970.⁵⁶⁶ Indigenisation Decree of the period was also not the least.

There is a counterview which argues in favour of the Federal Government. According to Paul Ogbogu, President Shehu Shagari agreed to correct some of the mistakes that arose as a result of the decree. Accumulated leave allowances of the Igbo people before May, 1967 and those of 1970 – 1974 which they did not take were committed to cash. In consequence, these years came to be included as part of their pensionable service years.⁵⁶⁷ Okadigbo argues it more succinctly: *He labored to heal the wounds of the Civil War by re-examining the issue of abandon property and by facilitating the pardon of the Biafra leader, General Ojukwu and thereafter he returned to Nigeria after 13 years of exile.*⁵⁶⁸

Arguing from socio-political justice of the Igbo on national integration, the argument was based on post war creation of states in Nigeria in 1976, the former East

⁵⁶⁶ P. O. Ani, *Post War Social and Economic Reconstructon of Igboland, 1970-1983*, Milkom Press, Enugu, 1998, Pp. 20-23.

⁵⁶⁷ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria...*, P. 91.

⁵⁶⁸ C. Okadigbo, *Power and Leadership in Nigeria...*, P. 91.

Central States was divided into Anambra and Imo while the minority ethnic groups of the East maintained two states. It should be noted that the Rivers and South-Eastern States were created in 1967. However, General Murtala Muhammed changed South-Eastern to Cross River State in 1976. Igbo therefore, had only two states in the federal arrangement. With this few states, they have less representatives at the centre that is House of Representatives and Senate. It may be of interest to note that the representatives at the centre is based on number of states and that is to say that it is the state that is divided into constituent units. The underly motive was to render Igbo at the centre impotent since politics is based on a game of number. Take a look at federal establishments and parastatals, the Igbo lagged behind the other two major ethnic groups that are Hausa and Yoruba speaking states in the country. Majority of the establishments, parastatals were mostly sited in the North. How many of such exist in the East? Even in the area of elections and appointments into political offices. According to the informant, the highest Igbo man had gone in this country were to produce Vice President in the person of Dr. Alex Ekweme (1979-1983). The source did however admitted the fact that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe was the first indigenous Governor General and president of Nigeria. It was argued that his functions and roles under parliamentary system was marginal as he only performed ceremonial functions just like the Queen of England interrogating the informant why the Igbo has not produced elected president in the country, he argues that there has been this fear that once an Igbo becomes president, he would automatically declare the secession and sovereignty of Biafra. The source concludes by admitting the fact that the Federal Government is addressing the social imbalance by resorting to restructuring the state to address the ambiguity of socio-political justice of the Igbo in

Nigeria Federal state.⁵⁶⁹

From the discussion above, it may appear that the average Igbo man believed that there was no socio-political justice of the Igbo in Nigeria federation hence the incessant agitation of Biafra Republic. These claims sound illusive than reality. From the political antecedent of this country, the Igbo have faired well in terms of the issue at stake. As a matter of fact, the Igbo have featured well politically in Nigeria state. Evidence abounds, Nwafor Orizu, First Senate President, the first president, Federal Republic of Nigeria was Igbo man- Dr. Azikiwe, Edwin Umezoke senate president in Second Republic, Chuba Okadigbo, Senior political adviser in Shagari regime. The Igbo produced Governors of their respective states democratically. Thereby pointing to the fact that Igbo enjoyed franchise just like any other Nigeria citizens. In the area of federal establishments and parastatals which the Igbo often pointed as evidence of marginalisation may not sound plausible when examined critically. Nearly, all the establishments and parastatals were motivated by imperative of geography, availability of raw materials and wide sparse of land in the North and communal existence and moreso, most of the projects often referred to, were product of the First Republic.

10.2.ii The Position of the Igbo in Local and National Politics.

For the purpose of clarity, the discussion would be divided into two categories: first, how did the Igbo feature in the politics of their areas and host community- Idah area and secondly, how they featured in national politics?

Politically, the Igbo have featured creditably in their region of origin because they enjoyed all the rights of citizenship such as franchise that is, the right to vote and be voted for. Did the Igbo enjoy these rights outside their immediate community? In the area

⁵⁶⁹ Field work Interview with F. M. Ekeke, Sokoto Raod, Zaria, Age: 50 years. 6 March, 2018.

of our study, the Igbo speaking people, *Igwe* (king) enjoyed high degree of participation in the politics of the area. At traditional level, for instance, Eze Ndi Igbo (Idah chapter) meditate between the Igbo and Igala through the Attah.

Democratically, from the findings of this research, the Igbo in Idah and its environs (Ibaji, Oḍolu, Akpanya among others) enjoyed limited franchise. That is to say that they are eligible to vote but not to be voted for. On interrogation both parties' informants maintained it was as a result of indigenisation.⁵⁷⁰ For instance, one of the Igbo informants argues that even up to our period, they have not been able to produce ward chairman not to talk of a councilor. Mr. Ahmed Raphael an educationist argues that the Igbo enjoyed certain privileges such as membership of ward, party representatives at polling units, influencing the party decision and they enjoyed patronage from the government such as award of contracts.

Nevertheless, at the centre or national level, the Igbo speaking people enjoyed high degree of political participation. They enjoyed complete franchise because they can vote and be voted for. Evidence abounds, Alex Ekwueme became Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979-1983 under the platform of NPN.

It must be placed on record that there is a counterview that Igbo performed woefully at the centre, because of disunity among the Igbo political class at the centre, individualistic nature of Igbo politicians and absence of central binding force.⁵⁷¹

(iii) Demographic Consequences

One of the tragic impacts of the civil war on the area under discussion was loss of their civilian population. The informants admitted, much civil population lost their lives.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with Ahmed Raphael at Zonal TSC Office, Idah, Age: 58, Date: 29 September, 2017.

⁵⁷¹ Fieldwork Interview with Mallam Sule Adama at Angwa-Idah, Age: 69, 6 September, 2017.

The exact figure of the carnage or mortality could not be ascertained because of lack of record. What is however most central was that large cross section of the informant maintained that the loss of lives was of monumental magnitude. The third bombing of Idah town in 1968 at Ega market square killed fourteen (14)⁵⁷² persons, many wounded, and others maimed. The sound of the bomb made many hypertensive, Uchuchu recorded six deaths in a day in January 1968. Obale -3 persons, Ayeke – 5 persons, Oḍolu- 4 persons, and the other border communities suffered similar fate. The hardship of the period increased mortality rate among the rural civilian population (children, pregnant mothers, aged ones who could not stand the test of the hardship). This phenomenon was as a result of inaccessibility of medical facilities in their hideouts. Maternal mortality was high and miscarriages also assumed alarmic proportions occasioned by the fatigue of potterage.⁵⁷³ Unhygienic condition aggravated epidemics such as cholera, diarrhea among others. Hunger also played a significant role in the death toll. The mortality record of those killed by other factors is yet to be ascertained; some of the informants estimated the range of two hundred to five hundred persons. Whatever is the figure, it is indeed a colossal loss as many families went to extinction. One of the informants argues that the war increased the spate of orphans and widows in the area.⁵⁷⁴

10.2.iii Termination of Democratic Experience

The introduction of Western democracy led to the introduction of party politics in Igala speaking area just like any other parts of the country. Two political unions were

⁵⁷² Peter Ichidokwe admitted that 9 persons were killed at Uchuchu, Honourable Enemaku maintained that three people were killed at Obale, he identified one of them as Udanya Nwaibe who was asked to dig his grave. E. E. Ojomah argued that Onu (king) Uru, a clan in Odeke was captured after fierce struggle. He added that the community lost so many lives. Odiba Vitoria gave the name of the casualties in Ayeke as follows: Okoye, Oliakwu, Amaje, Achebi and Ejimah.

⁵⁷³ Interview with Joseph Enamakwu, 18 October, 2017.

⁵⁷⁴ ⁵⁷⁴ Interview with Joseph Enamakwu, 18 October, 2017.

dominant; Igala Divisional Union (IDU) and Igala Union (IU) it should be noted that the two political unions were allied to the Northern People's Congress, the party in power in the North.

The two unions contested elections during the first Igala Elections in 1954. The Igala Divisional Union won more seats in the Council than the Igala Union. As a result, the Igala Divisional Union dominated the council. In the 1960, Native Authority elections, the Igala union defeated the Igala Divisional Union and dominated the Council. Many critics of His Royal Highness, Alhaji Aliyu Obaje, the Attah of Igala argued that the victory of the Igala Union in both the 1960 and 1964 elections was as a result of the support Attah gave to them. Attah supporters have a case to argue, the bases of their argument was that Igala people rejected the Igala Divisional Union because the party allowed itself to be used by the British Colonial Administration in their plans to dethrone the Attah Ameh Oboni from office in 1956.⁵⁷⁵ With military intervention in 1966 which led to the collapse of first republic, all the political parties and political associations were banned. With these developments, the experimental democratic practice of the people was brought to an abrupt end. In other words the collapse of First Republic marked the demise of Igala democratic experience as the two unions disappeared from the political map.

10.2.iv Revival of Cultural Identity

It must be admitted that to a very reasonable extent that Nigerian civil war led to the revival of certain cultural heritage of the people. There is no gain saying the fact that the penetration of few foreign contacts in Igala speaking area (Islam, Christianity and modern education) colonialism altered so many aspects of the people's cultural legacies

⁵⁷⁵ P.E. Okwoli, *The History of the Fifty Years Reign of the Attah Igala...* Pp. 64-65.

in the name of so called modernisation and civilisation. That is to say, some aspects of the people's culture were regarded as barbaric such as tattooing, tribal marks among others. The war revived tribal marks among the people for easy identification. Many Igala young ones were given the tribal marks although this did not happen in Ibaji.⁵⁷⁶

Besides, bearing of Igbo names that were peculiar in the immediate border towns with Igbo communities were discouraged. These areas include Ibaji, Oḍolu, Avvngo and Akpanya. Most people bearing Igbo names began to translate them to Igala, singing in Igbo among the border communities especially Ibaji was discouraged, traditional dances were modified to reflect Igala, and Igbo proverbs were translated to Igala.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁶ Fieldwork Interview with Usman Ojotu at Oma-Odoko New Layout, Idah, Age: 73, Date: 14/07/ 2016.

⁵⁷⁷ Fieldwork Interview with Emmanuel Ejimah Ojomah, Age: 72, Occupation: Ex-Civil Servant and Onuegwune Ude at Echeno, Age: 85, Occupation: Farming, 17/03/ 2016.

10.3 GENERAL CONCLUSION

The major concern of the study has been the analysis of the developments that led to Nigerian Civil war, policies and measures employed to end the war in January 15, 1970 with a view to provide background information to the study area: Idah area. The study made an attempt to bring out the plights of the border communities using Idah area as a case study. It also argued that Idah area shared similar impact with Biafra because of the proximity of the area to the Igbo speaking people of defunct Biafra.

By virtue of proximity to theatres of the war, such as Nsukka, Onitsha Otuchocha to mention but a few. The study has also opened a new dimension on the discussion of the impact of the war. Besides, it avers that the plights of borderland have been a neglected theme in the historiography of the Civil War.

In order to provide a historical background to the study, the problem of nationhood in Nigeria, 1960-1965 was highlighted. For instance, Nigeria emerged from colonial rule as a disunited nation ranging from regionalism, parliamentary opposition crisis in the First Republic, the creation of Mid-West Region in 1963, 1964 General Elections, 1963 and Tiv Crisis of 1960-1964.

On 15 of January, 1966, some middle ranking officers took advantage of the crisis ridden political situation in the country and decided to effect some changes by the total overthrow of the existing government. The coup is popularly known as Nzeogwu coup. Other participants include the following: Major Donatus Okafor, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Major Timothy Onwuategwu, and Major Adewale Ademoyega. From the analysis, it is self-evident that the January coup de'tat 15 January, 1966 was bone out of sectarian feeling and ethnic loyalty rather than the nationalist claim of the coupists to establish socialist diarchy. The coup however, ended in failure as a result of the palace coup master-minded

by the General Officer Commanding Nigerian Army, Aguiyi-Ironsi. The coup therefore marked the beginning of military administration in Nigeria.

With the military intervention, Major General Johnson Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi, the Commander of the Nigeria Army, eventually emerged as the first military ruler of Nigeria. Major General Ironsi who was the short term beneficiary of his misbegotten coup and ultimately a victim of his failure, either did not understand the delicate nature of the problems facing him and the country he hopes to rule or else he shared the misguided ideas of Major Nzeogwu and his colleagues as to know Nigeria's ills could be cured in outlining the policies and programmes of his government in a radio broadcast in January, 1966.

Nigerian immediately began to ponder over the implications of the proposed government policies and programmes for the future of the country. Within the short period of four and half months, Aguiyi-Ironsi promulgated 33 Decree of exterminating the political maladies of Nigeria in that swoop. The decrees include the suspension of legislative and executive provisions in the 1963 Constitution (as amended), the proscription of 81 political parties and associations and 26 tribal associations.

Without waiting for Williams Commission to conclude its sitting, submits its report and inspite of the clear signs that the idea of unitary system of government would certainly create apprehension in other parts of the country, the Head of State promulgated Decree No 34 on 24 May, 1966 abolishing four regions and unifying the civil service. The hasty declaration changes made supposedly without prejudice to the work of the study group which he appointed to deliberate upon the matter. It was seen as concession to the opposing pressure on him by his close advisers who felt it was government's

opponents that were agitating by trying to mobilise public opinion against unitary system. The swift and sudden promulgation of the decree was therefore seen to pre-empt any opposition. As foreseen, the reaction to the decree No. 34 was nationwide spread violence. There were unpleasant incidents in most cosmopolitan areas of the North, Eastern residents of these areas, mostly Igbo suffered considerably.

Furthermore, the study had demonstrated that the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil war was a product of many imperatives. This encompasses the massacre of the Easterners in May, September and October in 1966 by the Northerners which made it abundantly clear that the Federal Military Government was unable to guarantee the safety of *Ndi* Igbo and other elements of Eastern Nigeria. The non-implementation of Aburi accord by the Nigerian Government became a staking point for Ojukwu to justify the secession against him, hence the slogan, “On Aburi We Stand” dominated the Eastern Secession propaganda.

Equally significant, the doggedness of the Federal Military Government to preserve the integrity of Nigeria as sovereignty made the matter worst. During the incessant agitations for the creation of states in Nigeria right from colonial era to post-independent made General Gowon to create 12 states on 27 May, 1967. It was mainly a political move to forestall the actualisation of Biafran Republic. It should be noted as well that between June and July, 1967 the Federal Government declared the federal blockade on the Eastern Region. On 30 May, 1967 Ojukwu declared the former Eastern Region as Sovereign State of Biafra. This was challenged by the Federal Military Government under General Gowon who described the act of secession as rebellious and launched what was then described as “Police Action” intended to discipline Lieutenant

Colonel Ojukwu. The campaign was expected to last for a few weeks or a few months at most. However, it spanned more than two and a half years.

This study had examined critically the factors that escalated Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970. From the analysis, it is proved beyond reasonable doubt that the causations were interrelated and in chain relations. Worthy of mention was the Biafran invasion of the Mid-West and the federal counter invasion of the Mid-West late September which changed the character motive of the war from mere “police action”, to “total war” which subsequently led to total blockade of the Biafra enclave. These factors more than any other factors enlist international involvement in the course of the war. For example, on the Federal side were Britain, USSR while on the rebel were France, Portuguese. Other developments that followed were the charge of genocide, the use of propaganda etcetera.

From the analysis, it can be deduced safely that different factors motivated foreign elements involvement in Nigerian Civil war. Some of these factors were political in nature, others were economic and humanitarian. It is however, difficult to discern clearly their motives since each of the parties involved has interior motive. For instance, it has been argued with justification that British intervention in Nigerian Civil war was dictated essentially by economic interests. However, few people will deny this so, suffice to say that economic interests dictated her intervention in principle, but they failed to explain the manner and the measure in which it has come. On the part of USSR, she was interested in having solid political and economic foothold in Nigeria, while French emphasised her reason to be on principle of self-determination and humanitarian. Nevertheless, political consolidations could not be ruled out. It must be admitted that Nigeria by 1966, given its size and economic power constitute a pool of attraction in the

Gulf of Guinea. The key to French “intervention” is to be found firstly in French public opinion and intense pro-Biafran sentiment. Secondly, the involvement of some respected African leaders on the rebel side. There is no doubt that as a big power, France had her own political interest in mind. However, her immediate economic stakes in that area, like those of Britain were seen all through Nigeria and Biafra. No wonder, France still maintained diplomatic relations with Federal Government of Nigeria. Some countries maintained neutrality in the war. Examples of such countries were USA and China. Despite all these, Nigerian Civil war came to an ended on 15 January, 1970.

The study further established that trading activities and commercial relations were adversely affected as evidenced in the vacuum created by the exit of the Igbo in the study area. More significantly, the wanton destruction of property worth millions of Naira was also witnessed. The war no doubt aggravated decay of infrastructure as noted in the destruction of hospitals, local bridges in some parts of the area. From the positive parlance, the exit of the Igbo was a blessing in disguise because it created the emergence of young entrepreneur. Beside the war created employment opportunities for the youth of the area as many of them were recruited into Nigerian army. These groups of person later became one of the agents of socialisation in their respective communities.

As a matter of fact, the study had discussed a lot of issues which can be summarised as follows: The idea of cultural integration and reintegration; perception of the Igala after the war; demographic loss; ethnicity and Nigeria politics; environmental pollution; civil military relations; social problems; socio-political justice on national reintegration; the position of the Igbo in local and national politics, termination of democratic experience; and revival of cultural identity.

The war was fought to retain sovereignty of the Nigerian State. In other words, sovereignty was sacrosanct to both parties involved. From Nigerian perspective to retain her unity, hence, it became a task that must be done. To Biafra, a war of survival and identity not as an individual alone but survival of Biafran State whose umbrella individual lives. The price of victory on the federal side, while on Biafra, the price of the imposition of the sovereignty and resistance was much greater. The masses paid the price in loss of lives and property and all forms of hardship and abuse.

The world had a lot to learn from Nigerian experience. This is the area of ease with which Nigeria effect lasting reconciliation among its warring citizens. Immediately after the war ended, the Federal Government proclaimed “no victor no vanquished”, a magnanimous gesture which was unmatched in many Civil wars in recorded history. The war also demonstrated that given the will and commitment, Nigeria could harness their energy and resources to the production of those things which go along towards making them self-reliant in many fields. It was in Biafra that innovations and self-reliance were most pronounced. The reason being that Biafra was blockaded by land, sea and air, short of foreign exchange with which to import weapons and other necessities of life Biafra looked inward and came up with innovations which sustained its war effort. These innovations including the manufacturing of local spare parts for the aging B26 and B25 helicopter to keep it flying, locally made bombs, efforts were made to increase food production and literature was produced showing that wild vegetables and barrins were fit for human consumption. There was no area in which innovative spirit was not felt.⁵⁷⁸

The Civil War should not just be seen as a war fought in order to preserve the unity of the country, for this unity to have any meaning, it should carry with it the

⁵⁷⁸ S. C. Ukpabi, *Strands in Nigerian Military History...*, P. 283.

conscious efforts to eliminate the political, social, economic and cultural causes of conflicts among Nigerians, not only to avoid another holocaust but also in order to create a nation which respects and nurtures fundamental human rights and ensures justice and equal opportunity for all.⁵⁷⁹

We may, however, ponder over certain historiographical issues: Ojukwu said “as far as I live, Biafra lives”. But today Ojukwu is no more with us but the agitation for actualisation of Biafra keeps ringing. Effiong, Ojukwu’s second in command in his unconditional surrender speech at Dodan Barack said, “that Biafra henceforth ceases to exist”. The two million naira question before us, is what is the reality of the statement Biafra ceases to exist in the socio-political justice of Nigerian State? One of the findings indicated that the study took dissimilar stance from the general literature of the Nigerian Civil War, for example, whenever the Nigerian Civil War is mentioned, what really comes to mind is that the agonies and victims were the Igbo speaking people. This study dispels this claim because the study area also suffered same fate with their Igbo speaking neighbours. Another finding was that the objectivity of the Nigerian Civil War is yet to be ascertained because most of the literature on the war revealed a kind of defence frontier in their analyses and approaches.

⁵⁷⁹ S. C. Ukpabi, *Strands in Nigerian Military History...*, P. 294.

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S/No	Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Date
1	Ogede Icheje	65	Civil Servant	Uchuchu-Ibaji	11 July, 2016
2	Usman Ojotu	73	Ex Service	Idah	14 July, 2016
3	Victoria Odiba	75	Farmer	Ayeke-Ibaji	16 July, 2016
4	Joel Ukwumaka	80	Ex Service	Uchuchu-Ibaji	17 July, 2016
5	Okachi Ugbojah	85	Farmer	Uchuchu-Ibaji	16 August, 2016
6	Peter Chidokwe	80	Farmer	Uchuchu-Ibaji	16 August, 2016
7	Umoneme Ezeagwalu	85	Farmer	Uchuchu-Ibaji	16 August, 2016
8	Baba Maliki	72	Retired Civil Servant	Angwa-Idah	13 June, 2016
9	Nathaniel Umoche	70	Rtd. Civil Servant	Affah	8 June, 2017
10	Joseph Ikedi Ubimago	65	Rtd. Civil Servant	Affah	7 June, 2017
11	Alami Okpanachi	60	Staff Idah Local Government	Idah	9 September, 2017
12	Ejimah Emmanuel Ojomah	72	Rtd. Civil Servant and Politician	Odeke-Ibaji	6 June, 2017
13	Adama Benjamin	60	Rtd. Civil Servant	Odolu	19 April, 2017
14	Omattah Stephen	75	Rtd. Civil Servant and District Head, Ujeh-Ibaji	Odochalla-Ibaji	21 September, 2017
15	Chiko Igo-Onu	78	Fisherman and Palm wine taper (Rtd) Biafran Soldier	Inachalo-Idah	6 September, 2017
16	John Nwobi (Alias Flamigo)	80	Businessman	Sabogari-Idah	21 September, 2017
17	Aba Stanly	70	Poultry Farmer	Akpanya Street Idah	21 September, 2017
18	Abu Ucha	72	Basket Weaver	Angwa-Oma Ayegeba-Idah	6 September, 2017
19	Francis Obidike	71	Shoemaker	Idah	18 September, 2017
20	Onuegwune Ude	80	Farmer	Echenu-Ibaji	13 July 2016
21	Joseph Enamakwu	65	Politician	Ekanyi-Ibaji	18 October, 2017
22	Adama Ochalla Angwa	60	Civil Servant	Angwa-Idah	6 September, 2017
23	John. J. Umoteli	60	Civil Servant	Ikah-Ibaji	21 September, 2017
24	Odiba Victoria	70	Farmer	Ayeke	13 July, 2017
25	Alaokolo Simeon	64	Ex-Soldier	Angwa-Ayegeba Idah	21 September, 2017
26	Gabriel Egwuye	60	Teacher	Ikaka-Ibaji	20 September, 2017
27	Onuh Emmanuel	60	Civil Servant	Odolu	24 October, 2017
28	Abubakar Aliyu Adama, Akposhi Attah Igala	55	Traditional ruler	Angwa-Idah	19 September, 2017
29	Friday M. Ekeke	50	Lawyer	No. 4, Sokoto Road, Zaria	6 Match, 2018
30	Anthony Okwute	89	Farmer	Ikah	29, December, 2016

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APPENDIX: 1

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE MATCH TOWARDS THE CIVIL WAR

The Action Group Crisis.....	1962
The Western House of Assembly Riots.....	1962 (May)
The Censusu Crisis.....	1963
Federal Election Crisis.....	1964
Western Region Election Crisis.....	1965-1966
First Bloody Coup.....	1966 (January)
General Ironsi's Unification Policies.....	1966
Provocative Drum Article.....	1966 (May)
The First Massacre of Easterners in the North.....	1966 (May, 20)
The First Exodus of the Easterners.....	1966 (May/June)
The Second Bloody Coup.....	1966 (July, 29)
Gowon takes over government.....	1966 (August, 1)
Controversy over Gowon's leadership.....	1966 (August/September)
Second Provocative Media Release.....	1966 (September)
The Second Massacre of Easterners in the North.....	1966 (September/October)
Esterner Region government calls home Igbo people.....	1966 (September)
The Final Exodus of Easterners from the North.....	1966 (September/October)
The Expulsion and Exodus of non-Easterners from Eastern Region.....	1966 (October)
Gowon's Dismissal of the Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference, and Threat of use of force to keep Nigeria together.....	1966 (November, 30)
The Aburi Conference and its Failure.....	1967 (January, 4-5)
Anti Federal Government Demonstrations in Eastern Region.....	1967 (February/March)
Unprecedented Propaganda cross fires between the Northern, and Lagos Media on one hand, and Eastern Nigeria Media.....	1967
Eastern Region government's call on easterners to be ready to defend if Lagos did implement Aburi Accord.....	1967
Gowon's conuter with Decree No. 8, and Reassertation his readiness to use force to crush any secession attempt.....	1967 (February, 28)
Military build up stepped up on the Federal and Regional sides.....	1967
Ojukwu gets Mandate to declare Eastern Region Independent.....	1967 (May, 27)
Gowon creates 12 states and declares state of emergency.....	1967(May, 27)
Ojukwu declares Republic of Biafra (Secession).....	1967(May, 30)
Final Preparation for war.....	1967(May 30-July, 5)
Civil War Begins.....	1967(July, 6) ⁵⁸⁰

APPENDIX: 2

CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS AND MILITARY OPERATIONS, 1967-1970

Year: 1967

July, 6:	Civil War began-Nigeria firing first shot at Gakem Sector. (Nigeria called her operations "Police Action").
July, 10/12:	Federal Forces captured Ogoja.
July, 14/15:	Federal captured Nsukka led by Lt. Col. Shuwa.
July, 25/26:	Federals captured Bonny led by Lt. Col. Adekunle.
June 26:	Lt. Col. C. Nzeogwu died at Nsukka Sector in a Federal ambush.
July/Aug:	The term "sabotage" entered the war from Nsukka sector.
Aug. 6:	Federal captuted Obollo Eke.
Aug. 9:	"Biafran" forces entered Midwest Region led by Lt. Col. V. Banjo. Nigeria turned her "Police Action" into full scale.
Aug. 10:	Gowon declares total war on "Biafra."
Aug. 19:	"Biafran" reached Ofusu River.
Aug. 20/22:	"Biafran reached Ore (Western Region) 130 miles from Lagos

⁵⁸⁰ O. B. Nwolise, "The Social Consequences of the Civil War in Biafra" in T. N. Tamuno (ed), *The Civil War Years*, Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1984, Pp.21-22.

and the whole of Nigeria was mobilised against “Biafrans.”

Aug. 29: Federals recaptured Ore led by Lt. Col. M. Mohammed.

Sept.-Mid : Federals captured Ikom.

Sept.19/20: Attempted coup in Biafra.

Sept. 20: The Independent Republic of Benin was born.

Sept. 20: Federals recaptured Benin City.

Sept. 20: “Biafran” government executed Majors: Ifeajuna, Alele, Lt. Cols. Banjo, Agbam.

Oct. 1: Federals captured the Ninth Mile Corner (near Enugu).

Oct. 4: Federals captured Enugu (“Biafra’s capital moved to Umuahia.

Oct. 4: Federals entered Onitsha by water, but pushed out. (Onitsha Market burnt).

Oct. 5/9: Federals recaptured Asaba (liberating Midwest Region).

Oct. 8/9: Federals invaded Onitsha by water again, but were sent back.

Oct. 18: Federals captured Calabar, led by Col. Adekunle who linked up Ikom, completing Biafra’s *Encirclement*.

Oct. Ukpabi Asika becomes Administrator of East Central State.

Nov. 13: Federals captured Nkalagu.

Year: 1968

Jan. 15: Nigeria changed old currency.

Feb. 18: Federals captured Awka.

Mar. 9: Federals captured Oron; Obubra fell same month.

Mar. 11: Federals captured Uyo.

April 4/5: Federals captured Abakaliki.

April 12: Federals captured Ikot-Ekpen.

April 13: Tanzania recognised ‘Biafra’ (first recognised).

April 21: Federal captured Afikpo.

Mar. 25: Federals captured Onitsha by land led by Lt. Col. M. Mohammed.

May 2: London Preliminary peace talks fixing Kampla as venue for talks.

May 8: Gabon recognised Biafra.

May 14: Ivory Coast recognised “Biafra.”

May 20: Zambia recognised “Biafra.”

May 23: Federals captured Okrika (oil refining area).

May 24: Federals captured Port-Harcourt sealing off Biafra from the sea.

May 23-30: Kampala peace negotiations failed.

June 14: Federals captured Agwu.

June 19: Federals captured Degema.

June 22: Federals captured Abonema, Nembe, and Bakana.

June 26: Federals captured Yenegoa.

July 8: Niamey peace negotiations failed.

July 29: Federals captured Ahoada-last Major town of Rivers State.

July : “Biafrans’ recaptured Ikot-Ekpen; Federals captured Igrita.

Aug. 5-15: Addis-Ababa peace negotiations failed.

Aug. 31: All Rivers territories were under Federals’ control.

Sept. Lt. Com. Spiff became Governor of River State.

Sept. International Observer Team arrived Nigeria to investigate genocide claim by Biafra.

Sept. 4: Federals captured Aba.

Sept. 10/12: Federals captured Oguta-6 miles to the Uli airstrip.

Sept. 10/11: Federals captured Egbema with its oil fields.

Sept. 12/14: Biafrans’ recaptured Oguta (after 48 hours Federals’ occupation).

Sept. 18: Federals captured Owerri and Mbaise.

Sept. 21: Federals captured Obilagu with its air-strip.

Sept. 30: Federals captured Okigwe.

Oct./Nov.: Night air raids on on Uli airport began.

Oct. Conscription commenced in “Biafra”

Nov. 27:	Federal Unsuccessfully attached Agulu-threatening Nnewi, Abatete etc
Dec. (early):	Federals' Division 1 linked Abagana and Onitsha (13 miles).
Dec. 26:	Biafraans' (11 Division) recaptured Nkpor Junction and Afor-igwe opening an 8 mile Onitsha corridor.
Year:	1969
Jan.:	'Biafran' Government lauched the Land Army, and formed the National Guidance Committee.
Mar.:	Haiti recognised 'Biafra.'
Apr.1:	Federals captured Uzualoli with its oil refinery.
Apr.4:	'Biafrans' captured Uzuakoli.
Apr.7:	Federal captured Ovim.
Apr.8:	Federals captured Uzuakoli (Second time).
Apr.14:	Federals captured Bende.
Apr.18-19:	Liberia peace talks failed.
Apr.22:	Federals captured Umuahia.
Apr.25:	'Biafrans' recaptured Owerri (becomes 3 rd capital).
May:8:	'Biafrans' re-entered Mid-West, captured Kwale oil fields.
June1:	'Biafran' government lauched the Ahiara Declaration.
June :	'Biafran' recaptured Owazza oil field.
June 31:	France announces support for 'Biafra.'
Aug. 10:	'Biafran' recaptured Ugba.
Sept.: (mid)	Algiers peace talks failed. Dr. Azikiwe moved to London and announces support for Nigeria, calling on the Igbo people to renounce O. Ojukwu and secession.
Sept.: (ending):	Federals closed the Onitsha corridor again linking Abagana with Onitsha
Sept:	A.O.U. Summit in Addis Ababa attended by Gowon and Azikiwe.
Oct. 18-20:	'Biafran' lauched 'Operation Do or Die' and re-opened the Onitsha Corridor.
Nov./Dec.	Last O.A.U. attempt to settle dispute peacefully failed.
Dec. 24:	Federals launch final attack on all fronts.
Year	1970
Jan. 8/9	Federals captured Owerri and Mbaise again.
Jan. 10:	Ojukwu made his last broadcast in 'Biafra.'
Jan. 11:	Ojukwu flew out of 'Biafra' with some officials.
Jan. 12:	Federals' 1 Division captured Orlu, Awo-omamma, Oguta, Atta, Ogu, led by Col. Bissal. Also Federals' 3 Division captured Ihiala and Uli airstrip, led by Col. Obasanjo. As these were happening, General Effiong who took overf from General Ojukwu announced 'Biafra's' surrender over Radio 'Biafra.'
Jan. 13:	Contact between Nigeria Field Commanders and 'Biafran' leaders at Amichi near Nnewi.
Jan. 14:	Col. Obasanjo made his broadcast over Radio 'Biafra' which minutes after became Radio Nigeria.
Jan. 15:	'Biafran' leaders led by General Effiong surrendered officially in Lagos to General Gowon, who in a later broadcast announced official end of the war, and general amnesty. And the war ended with about 2 to 3 million lives loss, huge amount of property damaged, and untold hardship for millions of people. ⁵⁸¹

⁵⁸¹ O. B. Nwolise, "The Social Consequences of the Civil War in Biafra" in T. N. Tamuno (ed), *The Civil War Years*, Gaskiya Corporation, Zaria, 1984, Pp.55-58.

APPENDIX: 3

Brigadier Banjo's Broadcast to Mid-West

NOTE: "Brigadier" BANJO was THE COMMANDER OF THE BIAFRAN INVASION
Benin, August 14, 1967, at 20:00 GMT.

Fellow Nigerians and Biafrans, I am sure I do not need to introduce myself either to you nor perhaps to many people outside our country. You have already had ample opportunity to hear of my name in January 1966 when this political crisis started in our country. Unfortunately at that time I also only heard about the circumstances under which my name was being publicised at a time when I was in no position to do anything about it. I was then accused of having attempted the life of the late Supreme Commander, Maj.-Gen. J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi, and that for the attempt I have been arrested and detained.

Fellow Nigerians, nothing could be further from the truth. The mutiny in the Army which started the revolution in January 1966 was as much of a surprise to myself as it was to some of my colleagues. I spent all of my time (words indistinct) of the events in ascertaining the true state of affairs in the country. My colleague, then Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon, was the first officer who gave me precise information about the state of affairs. It then appeared to me that sufficient had taken place to ensure the removal of several Governments of the Federation and that the sum total of the trend of events could be regarded as the beginning of a national revolution. I then considered it my duty to ensure that no further military action took place which might have the effect of totally destroying the stability of the nation.

I felt that the young officers who had started the action were only anxious to destroy what had become a most corrupt and discredited Government. As such, I spent a considerable time in an effort to urge the late Major General to assume responsibility of the State with the support of the Army from national collapse. It was then my view that any attempt to use the Nigerian Army for any military action within Nigeria would only have the effect of breaking the Army into its tribal components of which the Northern component would be represent the lion's share. This Northern component, effectively under the control of the Northern feudalists, would then inevitably be employed to impose on the rest of Nigeria the most repressive feudal domination. I was one of the senior officers of the Nigerian Army who took the decision to accept responsibility for Nigeria. In fact, on that occasion I was the chief spokesman for that decision. I therefore considered it my duty to remain with the Generals as closely as possible rather than accept the office of the Military Governor of the West which he then proposed to me and which I declined

in favour of the late Lt.-Col. Adekunle Fajuyi. On the day after the General had assumed full responsibility for the State I was arrested by a few of my colleagues while waiting to see the General. I was never given a reason for my arrest, nor given an opportunity to defend myself against any charges that could be raised. I went to prison for 14 months under a false accusation, the details of which I only found out from the press and radio after I got to prison. I have since had the opportunity of speaking to the so-called actors in that drama of my arrest, and I now appreciate that the action was an act of hatred motivated primarily by fear and suspicion. I spent a considerable part of my time in prison sending warnings to the late Major-General and my colleagues about the policies that would appear to represent a continuation of the policies of the Balewa Government, which could have the effect of encouraging counterattempts, which might not only destroy the Nigerian Army but would also, by the extent of the bloodshed and the tribal selectiveness of the (word indistinct), destroy the Nigerian nation as well.

The inevitable has now happened, which would seem to confirm that my fears were well-founded. There is now an army at the disposal of the feudal North, an army that has lost all the traditions, discipline, and standards of a responsible army. There is now a Government of the Federation that is sustained by violence and is therefore tied to the ambitions of the Northern Feudalists. There has been a considerable amount of bloodshed, chaos, and tribal bitterness among such people. Such tribal rivalry, as used to be exploited by our previous political parties for the harnessing of the opinion of the North and its people, is now translating itself into a most extreme form of brutality and of despicable savagery.

Finally, the dismemberment of our nation has commenced in the breakaway of Biafra. In August 1966, I wrote to my colleagues from prison to inform them that I did not consider that we, military leaders of this country, had the right to carry out such action as the proclamation of the dismemberment of presiding over the dismemberment of Nigeria. I still do not think that we have the right to destroy a nation that was handed over to us to save at a moment of crisis. The 29th July 1966 Federal Military Government came into being as a result of a mutiny in which the primary action was directed at the elimination of a particular ethnic group and the supremacy of another ethnic group in Nigeria. This has had the effect of destroying the basic mutual trust and confidence among the people of Nigeria and has created the decentralisation of the Nigerian people into tribal groups. This action, more than any other event that has occurred throughout the history of Nigeria; had had the greatest effect on the dismemberment of Nigeria.

The Federal Military Government cannot claim to represent the Government of the people of Nigeria and to fight for the unity of Nigeria while constantly rejecting fundamental human rights for all people forming parts of Nigeria. The Federal Military Government cannot claim to be seeking a peaceful solution to the problems of achieving Nigeria unity while at the same time contemptuously ignoring the wishes of the people of the Mid-West and West in their previous demands for the removal of the unruly troops of the North from their territories in order to allow the unfettered discussion of the present political crisis.

The Federal Military Government cannot claim to be genuinely interested in the progress and welfare of the Nigerian people while at the same time inflicting the bloodiest warfare on the people of Nigeria and employing unscrupulous foreign mercenaries in a total war that really destroys hundreds of our people and the economy of our nation...

The people of Biafra have a right to fight a Government that has constantly treated its people to the most savage forms of brutality and persists in denying these people its fundamental human rights while claiming to represent other interests. It is my view that the people of Biafra were prepared to remain part of the nation into which they have for so many years invested their resources of manpower and material and with which they had the closest social ties. Provided the people of Biafra could live within such a nation under a Government that truly represents all sections of its people and truly tries to pursue such measures as are designed to promote the welfare of all Nigerians irrespective of tribe or religion (sic) [sentence as broadcast]. It is the remnants of the old Nigerian Army that broke away in July that now threatens the Nigerian nation. This Northern army is now under the power and control of group of Northern feudalists who have as their aim the total conquest of Nigeria. The Federal Military Government, having been brought to power and control by that army, is playing to that end. Hence policies are inevitably directed toward achieving the objectives of the Northern feudalists who control that army....

It is my idea that the peaceful settlement of the Nigerian problem will be readily achieved when that fragment of the Nigerian Army now at the disposal of the Northern feudalists has been completely disarmed. Toward this end, the Liberation Army is irrevocably committed. It is not at all an invasion, and it is not intended to promote the domination of any group of the Nigerian people by any other group through the presence of the Liberation Army. I wish to stress once again what I said during the press conference and previously on the radio, that the movement of this Army into the Mid-West is not a conquest. It is also not

an invasion. It is to enable the people of the Mid-West to see the Nigerian problem in its proper perspective. I firmly believe that the people of the Mid-West would prefer to be able to declare their stand in the conflict that has arisen in Nigeria free from any (pressure) either from the North or from anywhere. I believe that the people of the Mid-West would like to be given an opportunity to state their case, free from the coercive influences due to the presence of Northern troops. It is my view that the political future of Nigeria rests with all the people of Nigeria. It has become a matter of great concern to me, however, to be informed that certain ethnic groups are jubilating as a result of the presence of the Liberation Army in this Region. As a consequence, I also understand that certain other ethnic groups are feeling depressed and frustrated. I wish to assure all ethnic groups in Mid-West that the achievement of the Liberation Army does not give any ethnic group an advantage over any other. I wish also to appeal to all ethnic groups to exercise restraint and humility and not to indulge in acts which may result in confusion, bringing distress to a large number of our people. Any misbehavior on the part of any group of persons will give rise to a chain of unpleasant reactions.

I am informed that since the Liberation Army came into the Mid-West a number of civil servants have become so frightened that they have either refused to come to their places of work or reported only for a few hours and then left before the closing time. I wish to take this opportunity to appeal to all civil servants to return to work not later than 15th August 1967, and to assure them of their safety. Those, however, who fail to report on this day will be in danger of permanently losing their jobs....

While on the question of cooperation among the various ethnic groups in the Mid-West, I would like to stress that all tribal meetings should stop, as such meetings are not conducive to peace and mutual understanding. In order to foster cooperation among the people of the Mid-West, I propose within the next few days to invite a cross section of the people of the Mid-West to a meeting to explain to them the present situation and objectives of the Liberation Army, and I believe this will go a long way to giving them the true picture of the situation and instill confidence in the future of the Mid-West. I understand that anxiety is being expressed in some quarters about the safety of the Military Governor of the Mid-West, Brig. David Ejoor. I wish to inform you that I have personally heard discussion with Brig. Ejoor and to assure you that he is in good health and is not under detention....

I have, therefore, today promulgated a decree setting up an interim administration in Mid-Western

Nigeria. This decree has suspended the operation in Mid-Western Nigeria of the Constitution of the Federation of Nigeria, the Constitution of Mid-Western Nigeria, and other constitutional provisions applicable in Mid-Western Nigeria, except those constitutional provisions absolutely necessary for the efficient functioning of the machinery of State. All legislative and executive powers have been vested in me during the period of interim administration. In order to assist me in the task of administering Mid-Western Nigeria during the interim period I propose to appoint a military administrator and an administrative council. I have also established a Mid-Western Nigerian Army and a Mid-Western Nigerian Police Force, which will for the moment remain independent of the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Police Force, the Biafran Army, the Biafran Police Force, or the Biafran Police Force. The Mid-Western Nigerian Army shall, however, during this interim period be part of the Liberation Army. All courts in Mid-Western Nigeria shall continue to function as usual and it may be necessary to establish a court of appeal until it becomes possible to resume (words indistinct) the Supreme Court of Nigeria. As soon as it is practicable I propose to hand over the administration of Mid-Western Nigeria in order to proceed to the war front and to complete the liberation of Nigeria.

Good Night.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸² C. Achebe, *There Was A Country*, Pp. 259-265.