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THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF THE NIGERIA–BIAFRA WAR 1967-1970 ON THE IGBO

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Abstract

The work explores the demographic consequences of the Nigeria-Biafra war fought between 1967-1970. Primarily, the Igbo people saw it, as a war of survival amidst intense marginalisation in Nigeria. From every indication, corruption, inequality, ethnicity and other factors led to the war. The paper however, shows how the revival of Igbo nationalism and resentment over perceived marginalisation was fueled by perceptions that the corrupt machinery of the federal government runs against the interest of the Igbo people and funnels resources away from the southeast as punishment for the failed separatist struggle. Using the historical method of data analysis of qualitative approach, which encourages enough utilization of primary and secondary sources in the study. Findings revealed that,

in Nigeria polity, necessary actions for conflict resolution extended more than the no victor no vanquished and reconstruction provisions available in the war's aftermath. In a democratic Nigeria neo-Biafran survival raises hydra-headed issues about the efficacy of official policies of re-integration. The revitalization and reimagining of Biafra after surrender also highlights the failure to shape a consensual public memory of the conflict.

KEYWORDS: DEMOGRAPHY, NIGERIA, BIAFRA, NATIONALISM, THE IGBO

Introduction

The consequences of the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War were very heavy on the civilian population of the Republic of Biafra. Many Igbo people lost their lives in the course of executing the war which lasted for about 30 months of an uninterrupted gun battle. The civil war was fought between the secessionists' state of Biafra and the Nigerian government from 6th July 1967 to 15th January 1970. The aspiration of the war represented the views of the nationalists' movement in Nigeria among the Igbo people mainly on marginalization ground due to the marriage of strange mates of 1914 by Lord Lugard's interest in controlling the entire entity called Nigeria, the aftermath of this unholy alliance was the civil war that broke out. Hence, the leadership of the Igbo ethnic region felt they could no longer co-exist with the exogamous domination of the Northern led Federal Government. This micro conflict resulted in economic, cultural, political, ethnic and religious

tension which followed Britain's official decolonization of Nigeria from 1960-1963. The burning issues that gave rise to the war in 1967 included ethnoreligious riots in Northern Nigeria, military coup and counter-coup in 1967 and maltreatment of the Igbo people living in Northern Nigeria. The issue of control over the lucrative oil production in the Igbo geographical environment was of significant importance. The civil war between Nigeria and the Republic of Biafra started from 6th July 1967-15th January 1970 which could be mathematically translated to as; Two Years, Six Months, One Week and Two days. Hence, consequent upon the war, Nigeria was victorious while the Republic of Biafra was forced to rejoin as the then Head of State and Government declared the war “no victor, no vanquished”.

At independence, The Nigerian politicians had bravely patched up a fragile unity which enabled the British to grant her self-rule on the 1st October 1960. However, soon after the independence, the different ethnic groups began to pay more allegiance to their groups and treated Nigeria as a mere project. As if this was not enough, the leadership that took over from the British was somehow feeble and allowed itself to be freely manipulated by the erstwhile colonial authorities. Many schools of thought were of the view that self-rule was only achieved on paper and the British and their cohorts were still directing and controlling the socio-economic and political affairs of Nigeria. Also, under such dispensation, the new administration was unable to fulfil its electioneering promises. Consequently, many Nigerians became

disillusioned and some of them even called for a return of the erstwhile colonial administration. The crises that confronted the first republic came into the western region where the political order completely collapsed. The crises were so much that a state of emergency (curfew) was declared by the Federal Government which the southwestern region saw as a political vendetta. The western region crisis exposed the weakness of the Government which continued to pretend as if nothing was happening. Besides, the different ethnic groups and regions bitterly contested the result of the National population commission conducted in 1963. The problem of the First Republic was many and varied which included:

- Election rigging and manipulation.
- Victimization of political opponents
- Muzzling of the press.
- The assassination of political stalwarts.
- Nepotism and Favoritism.
- Mediocrity and Incompetence.
- Mismanagement and misappropriation of public funds.
- Over influencing of contract values.
- Greed and total collapse of law and order among others.

When the civilian administration of the 1st republic failed to tackle the above problems, a group of young Army officers decided to overthrow the regime and this they did on January 15, 1966. The circumstances and controversies as at that time became the foundation for the eventual outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra war

of 1967. The coup claimed the lives of prominent Nigerians including the Prime Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa. Although the coup was welcomed by many Nigerians, it was later given an ethnic interpretation as Igbo people led and organized coup. On the lips of most people in the North was that the coup was Igbo masterminded and executed, this was also fueled especially with the emergence of an Igbo man as the new Head of State. Thereafter, the northerners got ready for an act of revenge and directed their misgivings on the Igbo people living in the north, many of whom were massacred in their thousands. The situation became so disturbing when on July 29, 1967, a group of Northern Military Officers planned a counter coup which led to the assassination of Major General J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi.

With the death of Major General Ironsi, a power vacuum was created and in the already charged atmosphere in Nigeria, a young military officer in the personality of Major Yakubu Gowon, declared himself the new Head of State and government. This was against the military hijack of power because Gowon was not the most senior Army officer by then. His new position was challenged by the Military Governor of the Eastern State in the person of Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, who questioned the morality and rationale of Gowon's greatest independent move. While these arguments were going on, more and more Igbo people were being killed in their thousands in the north and those who managed to escape relocated to their base without anything to start a living. When this situation was about to explode to an

uncontrollable degree, the then Ghanaian Head of State and government waddled into truce with various factions and organized a settlement conference leading to a pact among them in Aburi. The agreement reached and signed in Aburi favoured only the interest of Ojukwu representing the Eastern bloc and would have left Nigeria as a confederation state. When Gowon returned to the nascent country, he was rebuked by his permanent secretary for conceding a lot for Ojukwu.

Consequently, Gowon withdrew from the pact signed and reached in Aburi “saying that the Country must be seen and run as a Unitary and undivided state by Decree 34 of 1966. Based on the new approach and stand, Ojukwu and Igbo people felt disappointed and insisted “On Aburi Accord we stand”. It was at this point that the Easterners threatened to disintegrate/pull out if their socio-economic and political interest were no longer guaranteed. To this end, the Igbo people started to prepare for impending danger with their war drums. According to Akpan Ntienyong, in his book *'The Struggle for Succession 1967-1970: “A personal account of the Nigerian civil war' opined that the first evidence of Igbo succession came when the East started to recruit young men into the army, thousands from all over the region turned up daily for this exercise while non-Igbo candidates were regularly selected scarcely any from non- Igbo area were recruited”*.

It was in an attempt to break eastern solidarity that Gowon decided to divide the State into 12 from 4 regions on May 27, 1967. This move was done to grant the needed independence to the

minority groups in the region in the South-Eastern States. Ojukwu and Igbo people saw this as the straw and drumbeat of war. After a crucial meeting of the council of elders of the Eastern region, Ojukwu was mandated to declare former eastern Nigeria as a sovereign state of Biafra. Thus, in what appeared to be a national broadcast, Ojukwu informed the international community that with effect from May 30, 1967, the former Eastern region of Nigeria was to be referred to as and known as the Republic of Biafra.

Gowon reacted to this declaration by insisting that “to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be accomplished by the Federal Government. Thereafter, the Federal Government declared a total war on Biafra which lasted for two odd years, six months, one week and two days. Hence, with the help of some international communities like Gabon, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, among others, Biafra managed to resist federal government bombardment and shootings. Unfortunately, Ojukwu was advised to flee to Ivory Coast for political asylum and the Biafran surrendered to the Federal troops led by Olusegun Obasanjo in the early hours of January 15, 1970.

CAUSES OF THE NIGERIA-BIAFRA CIVIL WAR, 1967-1970.

The Nigeria-Biafra civil war was fought from July 1967-Jan 1970, an estimate of about 30 odd months. The war is believed to have started mainly as a result of the conflict within the Nigerian military which led to the take over power from the civilian

government in January 1966 and other causes which are classified as Remote and Immediate Causes.

Remote causes of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war:

- Several constitutions had been made in the wake of Nigeria independence, but none was able to act as a unifying factor for the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. These constitutions reflected the colonial ideology which further suggests domination of the people.
- Nigeria is made up of many ethnic groups, though this is not unique to Nigeria, the greater problem was the hatred that resulted from unhealthy competition Nigerian people for wealth and power.
- Nigerian politicians used population census figures for political competition among the various groups. For instance, the 1962/63 population census was grossly manipulated by northern politicians against the wish of other component units in Nigeria.
- It was not possible soon after the independence on 1st October 1960 to conduct a free and fair election because of selfish interest among the ethnic groups in Nigeria.
- One section/region of the country was bigger than the rest put together leading to bitter complaints and mistrust in the unholy alliance.
- The military had become divided along ethnic lines owing to the influence of politicians.
- The different political systems among the three major

ethnic groups reflected and produced divergent customs and values which they could not tolerate among themselves.

- The British colonial ideology that divided Nigeria into three regions exacerbated the already well developed economic, political and social differences among Nigeria's different ethnic groups.
- The formation of political parties was based on ethnic grouping. The political party faithful's thus paid more allegiance to their ethnic groups while treating Nigeria as a functional whole and a secondary project. For instance, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the North, the Action Group (AG) in the West, and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) in the East. These parties were not exclusively homogenous in terms of their ethnic or regional make-up.
- The disintegration of Nigeria resulted largely from the fact that the three regions were primarily based in one region and one tribe with great hatred against the others.
- The basis of creating a modern Nigeria formed in 1914 when Britain amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates was seen as a marriage of strange bedmates and an unholy alliance of a people who had nothing in common which thus introduced an indirect rule which was also strange among the various ethnic groups as it only favoured the Northerners because of their developed

Sultanate before the British advent in Nigeria.

Immediate causes of Nigeria-Biafra civil war:

- When the military first took over power in January 1966, those who led the takeover against the politicians did not eventually become the rulers. This gave rise to the more senior army officers becoming the rulers by staging a counter-coup the same year.
- Many of those killed during the takeover of government in January 1966 were political and military leaders from the northern and western region.
- Those who led the takeover of the government in January 1966 were Igbo military officers. As a result, many saw their action as sectional, seeing that most people murdered in the course of executing the coup were the non-Igbo.
- The second takeover of government in July 1966 led to the merciless killing of Igbo people, both military and civilian, this was perceived as an Igbo vendetta by the Igbo.
- General Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo Army Officer and the Head of State from January to July 1966 was killed during the second change of government in one year. This counter-coup was led by soldiers from the Northern region, and it sent signal of Igbo marginalization.
- Colonel Yakubu Gowon who became Head of State and government after J.T.U Aguiyi Ironsi's death was not acceptable to Colonel Ojukwu who was then the Military Governor of the Eastern region because Gowon was not the

most Senior Military Officer available.

- The indigenes of the Eastern region were recalled to their homeland because they were seen to be unsafe anywhere else in Nigeria, a clarion call which was quickly adhered to, as the government made readily available transportations to aid the mass return of the Igbo
- Gowon's inability to respect the agreement and fact signed in Aburi popularity known as "Aburi Accord", angered the majority of the Igbo, who felt that other regions in Nigeria were all against them, and had advised Gowon against honouring the Aburi agreement and using same as a working document
- Indiscriminate killing of the Igbo people in the Northern region.
- The politicization of population census in Nigeria before 1966.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF NIGERIA-BIAFRA CIVIL WAR ON THE IGBO 1970- 2006

With the eventual end of the civil war in 1970, the Republic of Biafra was hard hit with federal bombardment and other lethal missiles. Many lives were lost and property worth millions damaged; churches, schools, bridges, colleges were dismantled; farmlands abandoned and in its wake were untold hunger and starvation; a protein deficiency known as kwashiorkor claimed many lives of Igbo people; wealthy Igbo men and women living in the North and West came back home empty-handed and became

squatters in their previously owned lands and of course, many of them died out of frustration. As if these sufferings were not enough, the federal soldiers freely looted the Igbo people's treasures after the war including raping and forcefully taken away Igbo women. Thus, by the end of the war, the average Igbo man was economically prostrate and flat, this was accompanied by the issue of abandoned property slogans, especially in the present Rivers state, where property of the Igbo that ran to the East for shelter in the course of the war, were forcefully taken over by Rivers people, who referred them to as abandoned. For over 30 months, the educational sector suffered major setbacks as most schools and colleges were closed down and converted to military camps. The sole University in the region, the University of Nigeria Nsukka hitherto re-named the University of Biafra was destroyed and abandoned, both students and lecturers perished during the duration of the wartime.

Nevertheless, the need for survival led to the construction of technological masterpiece especially in the production of military war-head like the flying rocket, Ogbunigwe, Ojukwu bunker, Biafra baby jet and others). Economically, the Igbo people faced some devastating effects as the Biafra currency that people had accumulated became worthless that resulted in some dying since they could no longer bear the trauma of losing their economic prowess and vast empires. Many Igbo people still feel sidelined in Nigerian politics since the civil war, as no one from the ethnic group has become president of the country. The various general

elections held in Nigeria since after the war has been determined by some adult electorates as the Igbo are not densely populated to clinch the headship of Nigeria government instead they are playing second fiddle as they do not have the numerical strength to win elections in Nigeria. The last population survey census conducted in 2006 still estimated the south-eastern population to be about 14 million which is almost the population of Kano state alone. For instance, the last population census put the south-eastern states figures as follows: Abia 2,833,999, Anambra 4,182,032, Ebonyi 2,173,501, Enugu 3,257,298 and Imo 3,934,899. The above scenario has created a situation of distributive imbalance and subsequent injustice in the allocation of funds and other resources in the federation. In another backdrop, it has led to the introduction of an influx of strange cultures in Igbo land which is evidenced in the mode of dressing, culture, hairstyles, some eating habits; strange characters and values like stealing and kidnapping, sexual molestations, child trafficking and others

Although some of the issues that led to the war have been fully addressed, the truth remains that the federal government is not fully committed in building and upholding Nigeria as a united nation-state. She has at one time or another have made policies that appear to take the rights and privileges of any section of the country for granted. This paper sheds new light on the human cost of the war on civilian populations in Igbo land, having got first-hand information from interviews conducted from war survivors and their descendants, on the impact of the killings, pillaging and

rapes that followed the arrival of the federal troops, and the long-term impact on the memory of the physical and human devastation on the family structures, gender roles, educational opportunities and social structure.

The death of more than a million people of Igbo extraction as a result of the brutal civil war which ended exactly 50 years ago gave a scar on the mind of Igbo people and it remains a life-defining event. This as well as some perceived anti-Igbo policies for instance, the policy of dredging of Oguta Lake as an international seaport and that of Onitsha bridge which is a vent to the northern and western part of Nigeria has been politicized over the years with little or no hope of actualizing them. The Akanu Ibiam International Airport and Imo International cargo Airport have not been upgraded to international standard to affect the yearnings and aspirations of the people, as well as attract intending investors to a hitherto landlocked region, and make the environment economically viable. Howbeit, the inability of the federal government to look inward into the economic development of the south-eastern states has not yielded the desired results in the above mentioned areas of Oguta lake dredging, second Niger bridge, Akanu Ibiam International Airport, Imo Cargo International Airport among others

These economic sectors located in the south-east would have given the densely populated youths jobs and by so doing yield high internally generated revenue and also improve the living standard of the people within the zone. Since after the end of the Nigeria-

Biafra civil war 1967- 1970, with the accompanying declaration of no victor no vanquish by the then Head of State and Government of Nigeria, as a strategy to re-unite the Igbo people and integrate them back to Nigeria polity which has remained a mirage and a hard nut to crack over the years. The south-eastern geopolitical zone has not had the opportunity to clinch juice positions politically despite the federal character principle. For instance, in the case of a minister of justice, inspector general of police, federal chief of staff, petroleum minister and other sensitive positions for the fear of empowering them to gather momentum for dominating other ethnic groups within the Nigeria polity. The fear of Igbo man versatility in every sphere of human endeavour has threatened the federal government from doing the needful and applying equity and even distribution of resources and esteemed position in Nigeria. The Federal character principle has lost its mandate of equal representation and quota system, in that some federal appointments have not favoured the Igbo people as they are been treated as a vassal state since after the civil war. This status of the Igbo people in Nigeria has brought untold hatred of the Igbo by other sections of the nation even to the extent of some Igbo speaking communities denying their identity of Igbo origin which has resulted into the changing of their towns and villages as well as peoples names for some obvious reasons.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE DELIBERATE DEPOPULATION OF IGBO ON NATION-BUILDING AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

The Biafra war of secession within the period under study has raised multi-faceted profound nature and limits of self-determination, state sovereignty and decolonization process in Africa. The Nigeria –Biafra civil war and the Biafrans attempt to carve out a new state as an important reason of self -determination has created a history in world politics. However, the collapse of Biafra seemed to offer a series of lessons for movements asserting their right to self-determination. Biafrans failed secession attempt could highlight the complexities and contested nature of sovereignty and self-determination in nation-building and national integration. The continuous agitation by the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria for self-determination has made the government neglect the areas to their fate which to a great extent demote development. It appears to a great extent that the old ethnic affinities and religious conflicts remained a basic characteristic of the Nigerian politics, Nigeria government officials have from time to time been profusely accused of diverting resources earmarked for the rebuilding of Igbo land ravished by the effects of war. Military governments which has stayed more in power than the civilians has not helped in the integration of the Igbo into the Nigerian political system. This is also true to Igbo owned property

and houses, people from other ethnic blocs were fast to take over any house owned by an Igbo person, especially in the Port Harcourt area. The Nigerian government justified these by tagging them 'abandoned property'. This, however, has led to a feeling of injustice and total marginalization as the Nigerian government policies and were seen as economically disabling the Igbo. In another instance, the feelings of injustice were further felt when the Nigerian government change its currency so that Biafran supplies of pre-war Nigerian currency were no longer useful and cannot be used as a medium of exchange. At the end of the war period, only 20 pounds was given to any easterner despite any amount of money he or she had in the bank before the war. This was applied irrespective of their banking in pre-war Nigerian currency or Biafran currency. This was noticed as an international approach to hold back the Igbo middle class, leaving them with little wealth to expand their business empire.

The wanton killing of Igbo people during the periods of gunshots in Nigeria translate the main reason why these phenomena have continued to perpetuate as abled men and women died in their thousands due to bullet wounds, starvation, malnutrition of the necessary body nutrients which resulted from kwashiorkor while some girls and women died from pains of rape by the Nigeria federal troops. These in no small measure aggravated the clampdown of growth and development of the areas and in Nigeria in general. The first gunshots of the war were exchanged in Obudu, a provincial town in the then southeastern.

Nigeria. At the beginning of the conflict, the people of Obudu supported the Biafra out of geopolitical convenience. But the abrupt end of the war, after seeing upwards of a million civilian casualties of starvation, many youths from the town deserted the Biafra army to become informants for the Nigerian military, helping them to ultimately win the war. The interests of foreign powers played out during the wartime with Britain arming the Nigerians. The French and Russians sold guns and ammunition to the Biafrans while the Swedish aristocrat and aviator Carl Gustaf von Rosen helped establish the Biafran Air Force. Tanks and unexploded ordnance still litter the countryside of southeastern Nigeria. Over 300 people have been killed by landmines since the guns fell silent 50 years ago. The Biafrans. For instance, the Biafrans manufactured landmines, rockets and hand grenades, contributing to one of the most sophisticated indigenous weapons programmes in Africa's history. But instead of harnessing that ingenuity for industrial growth and development like Germany, China, Taiwan, Japan among others did, the Nigerian authorities let those knowledge go waste for fear of gathering momentum in the future. Those Biafran professionals who helped them in the manufacturing of some military warheads should have been invited, encouraged and motivated to develop those ideas in a favourable environment to boost the economy but for the fear of taking over the mainstreams the government ignored them. Hence, such talents are been wasted as they are not nurtured and utilized. Also, some of them even migrated to the western world where such

talents are much utilized. The brain drain which is experienced in Nigeria over the years is a result of unrecognition by the government and these rare talents are the main of Igbo extraction. The food blockade strategy adopted by the federal government to cut short of the food material as a relief that came into Igbo land through various points was to further cause the death of south-eastern Nigeria to bring the war to an abrupt end aided the death of Biafrans. The foodstuff was in short supply and the prices of the available ones skyrocketed. The war took its toll on the eastern region's finances and other resources. These could have been used for the development of the area, thus the war contributed in no small measure to the underdevelopment of the area even to date. Most of them lost their business empire as a result of the war. Some of the property of Igbo people were declared abandoned property especially in the Rivers state, some who could not withstand the pressure of the shock committed suicide and gave up than to watch people lay claim of their hard-earned business estate while alive. This was a sequel to the torture of the Ibibios by the Biafran troops. In the word of William Norris on the London Times who visited the Biafran land reported an eyewitness account in which some of the great men of Ibibio ethnic origin were beaten to death at Umuahia on April 2, 1968. These Ibibios who included old men and young men were suspected of collaborating with advancing Nigeria troops. They were reportedly frog-marched across an open space in which the local people attacked them with sticks and clubs. They were accused of sabotage on Igbo dominated areas by the Biafran

troops. The Igbo men and women whose money was in the bank was forced to forfeit no matter the amount and was given 20 pounds to start a living. The situation was very traumatic on these business giants. This has resulted, creating great hatred between the Igbo people and the people from that geopolitical zone. This in essence against the principle of federalism that Nigeria was adopting at that time as it negates nation-building and integration. Thus, the unity in diversity principle of co-existence was challenged. The economy was badly affected as economic activities were paralyzed. Both internal and international trade was greatly hindered and the foreign exchange dropped to the lowest ebb. The Igbo people who were known for their economic prowess were nowhere to be found which helped to cripple the economy of Nigeria even after the war.

Also, Olusegun Obasanjo, who happened to head a battalion during the war and later as a president commuted to retirement the dismissal of all military persons who fought for the Biafran during the gun battle 1967- 1970. All, these approaches were targeted at undermining the economic propensity of Igbo people and restricting their giant stride in nation-building and integration. These had continued to drawback the Igbo people in contributing their quota in nation-building and national integration. To worsen the situation, some of the Igbo peoples economic outfits and estates were banned by the federal government with unjustified laws passed. This was further to remind them that they are a vassal state (region) that must be

subject to their conquerors strictly. Biafran war is one of the bloodiest wars of independence ever fought in Africa. The Biafran children were airlifted to Gabon. The hard-hit was the Asaba massacre by the Nigerian troops. The soldiers grew hardened hearts and minds. Among the people, the suspicion that Nigeria - Biafra was an attempt by the Nigerian government to wipe out the Igbo race is firmly rooted. The Southeastern regions' leaders citing grievances including a pogrom of Igbo people by the locals in Northern Nigeria, declared independence on May 30th, 1967 to form the Republic of Biafra. But the Nigerian government of the day resisted the break-up of the country that was created by the British in 1914, though Nigeria is still grappling with the scourge. The Igbo people are treated as inferior even though the government promises to bring about reconciliation between the ethnic groups was a mirage. The distrust and continued ethnic rivalry between the ethnic groups in Nigeria is still in existence. Fighting micro battles regularly breaks out between the Muslims in the north and Christians and Animist group in the south. Above all, Biafra will be remembered and noted not for the Biafrans' military ingenuity nor the Nigerians' military might but the humanitarian fallout. The notion of international humanitarian aid as known today, was born out of the deaths of millions of Biafrans during the war of secession in Nigeria, 1967-1970.

CONCLUSION

The Nigeria -Biafra gunshots lasted in an estimate of 30

months, one week and two days will never be forgotten from the Nigeria corridor of history and the world over. The war brought untold hardship to the areas ravished by the war. It created the problem of rehabilitating the masses. To this end, the federal government embarked on a programme of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. On Biafra, a stretch of happenings has resulted in the North, the first coup, the Igbo massacre after the counter-coup of July 1966, failed international attempts to broker a peace pact between the two worrying factions and the declaration of Biafra as a sovereign state on May 29, 1967, by the military Governor the Eastern Region Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. However, the estimate of 30-month fratricidal exchange of gunshot between the separatists Biafra and the federal government of Nigeria with the variegated international partnership on both axis. The war ended in January 1970 after the surrendering of Biafrans, consequently, forced return as an integral part of Nigeria.

More so, many years after the gun battle, perceived feelings of injustice, marginalization and persecution for which the Igbo people went to the war continued. Consequently, agitations/struggle for self-determination resurfaced in the region. Hence, further driving a wedge into decades of old peacebuilding and integration efforts of the country. Since the wartime, the people have been vociferous, resilient and determined to disintegrate from Nigeria but has been undeterred by the threat, forces and clampdown pressure by Nigeria security agencies. The declaration

of 'no victor, no vanquished' after the capitulation of Biafra in January 1970 was praised/ commended as the best approach towards reintegration, reconciliation and transition from wartime to peace and harmonious co-existence. Despite the federal government approach, assurance of freedom and amnesty, the Nigerian government and its soldiers still engaged in activities that amounted to retributive justice as well as undermining their human dignity. They starved and killed harmless Biafran civilians, looted their valuables and raped their girls and women to traumatic mood. The war led to the loss of lives and property. It reduced the population of Igbo people in Nigeria. The unemployment rate was very high among the Igbo youths as many industries and factories were forced to close down. It made many youths to be frustrated and some became armed robbers and drug addicts while others engaged in other immoral and criminal activities. It thus lowered the moral standard in Igbo society. The education sector suffered greatly during the war periods as there was the destruction of education in many parts of Igboland. Several institutions of learning were either closed down or destroyed by the federal troops while others were made military camps during the war. This retarded the growth and development of education in the eastern region. Many towns and villages were deserted as were forced to flee their homes and became refugees. Similarly, farmlands were laid waste by the war. The Igbo people since after the war has not honestly fully reabsorb and reintegrated in Nigeria society despite the claims by the government to has done so. The Nigeria

government has deliberately neglected them to in their large numbers, thereby making it very hard for the war victims to recover from the difficulties of the conflicts experienced during the years of gun dull. These are to suggest that with the depopulation of Biafran people during execution of the war, it becomes virtually impossible to fully integrate and reabsorb them holistically in Nigeria for fear of accumulation of too much power and wealth. Hence, their numerical strength so far cannot empower them to clinch the number one citizen which could reduce the threats of marginalization and eventual secession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After a careful examination of the overall demographic consequences of the Nigeria-Biafra exchange of military might 1967-1970. The following number of actions could be undertaking to ameliorate future confrontations and foster unity in diversity in Nigeria.

- * The federal government should eschew atrocities against ethnic minorities.

- * The federal character principle should be considered to bridge the imbalance been experience in federal government establishments in order to cushion the effects of marginalization in the country.

- * The secessionist environments should be holistically reabsorb into the spheres of events in Nigeria.
- * Infrastructural facilities should be developed and dilapidated ones rehabilitated to avoid the feelings of neglect in Nigeria polity by some ethnic minorities.
- * Federal government should engender the spirit of unity in diversity in every available opportunity.
- * The federal government as a matter of urgency should decentralize government establishments to better all citizens and not domicile them in particular geo-political zones.
- * The federal government should explore the kind of education that will best serve the needs and processes of conflict resolution, reconciliation and nation building in Nigeria.
- * Ethno- religious violence and sentiments should be discouraged by all and sundry in Nigeria.
- *. The persecution of Igbo people living in other parts of the country should be checked as the case of Igbo pogroms in

Northern Nigeria prelude to the outbreak of the Nigeria-Biafra civil war.

- * The "No Victor, No Vanquished" slogan should be considered to foster unity in Nigeria.

If these recommendations are considered, it will go a long way in restoring sanity and peaceful co-existence within and among Nigerians.

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