

**DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL TECHNOLOGY AND NIGERIA CIVIL WAR,
1967-1970**

BY

PAULINUS MBETOBONG EFIOK

ART1900837

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **PAULINUS MBETOBONG EFIOK** with matriculation number **ART1900837** in the Department of History and international Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

DR. O.A. ONOBHAYEDO
Project Supervisor

DR. F. IKPONMWOSA
Head of Department

DATE

DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God for His protection and guidance, care and unending love throughout my stay in the University of Benin.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War broke out in 1967 and ended in January 15th 1970. Prior to the war, Nigeria was a federation of four regions namely: Northern, Western, Eastern, and Mid-Western regions. The amalgamation of Nigeria by Lord Lugard in 1914 brought people of diverse ethnic nationalities, religious, socio-cultural, economic and political backgrounds together.¹ The remote and immediate causes of the civil war are traced to the colonial and post- independence period. They include the Western Region crisis and the subsequent declaration of the state of emergency in the region in 1962. Others included the census crisis of 1963, the Federal election of 1964, the manipulation of Western Regional election of 1965 and massive corruption that prevailed in the First Republic.² The remote causes of the war was the Nzogwu led coup of 1966 and the counter-coup that led to the killing of Agu Ironsi, the killing of Igbos in the North, otherwise called the Igbo pogrom. The immediate cause that led to the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967 was the declaration of the Republic of Biafra by the Governor of the then Eastern Region, Odimegwu Ojukwu.

The Nigerian Civil War started on 6th June 1967, when the Federal Government shot the first gun at the northern part of Nsukka barely five weeks after the Eastern

Region had declared independence of the Biafran region in 1967.³ This was after all efforts to nip the civil war at the bud had failed. One of such last efforts made to end the crisis was the ‘Aburi Accord’ of 1967⁴ under the leadership of Ghana military leader, General Ankrah.

The outbreak of the war in 1967 and the continuous escalation of the crisis in for two and a half years involved the use of superior weapons by both the Federal forces and the Biafran troops. Beyond the high level of deprivation caused by the Federal blockage, the Biafrans were determined to survive against all odds. Instead of the bush men and women responding to the ‘Might of the Nigerian Army and her Backers’, in a perplexed and uncoordinated manner, the Biafrans put-up a well co-ordinated war efforts, the limitations notwithstanding.⁵ Scholars, scientists, engineers and people from all works of life, improvising equipment, ammunition and other materials to support the war efforts. In the Biafran Republic, there was the immediate built up of an armored tanks, jet fighters transformed from passenger plane, ground-ground surface missiles, dame guns and other local explosives.

The first armoured vehicle built in Biafra first deployment in battle though with numerous limitations was a source of hope and morale. The armoured tank was named ‘Genocide’⁶ by the Biafran soldiers. It was this local technological effort of the Biafrans that helped them to sustain the war for a long period. The Nigerian Civil War produced some manifestations that ranged from the involvement of foreign powers, the human

right abuses, the unexpected refugee problems and the marginalization of the Ibo after the end of the civil war. The war created gross-human right abuses particularly at Asaba that shared border with Biafra and other parts of Eastern Nigeria.

Armed with direct orders to retake the occupied areas at all costs, his divisions rounded up and shot as many defenseless Igbo men and boys as they could find. Some reports placed the death toll at five hundred, others as high as one thousand.⁷ The massacre was so great that the Asagba of Asaba, Obi Raymon Onyetenu ran away from Asaba and took refuge at an unknown place in Eastern Nigeria and returned to Asaba after the war.⁸

In the same vein, there was also the manifestation of humanitarian crisis and refugees problems in the region. In the course of the war, many people were displaced from their homes. Houses were burnt, while villages and towns in both Eastern and Western regions were razed to the ground and inhabitants became displaced and persons and refugees.

One of the greatest manifestations was the role played by the foreign powers in the period of the civil war. The civil war offered ample opportunities for foreign intervention in her internal affairs.⁹ The immediate reasons for the interference was the inability of the African states to manufacture weapons of war. Consequently, the African states are forced to rely solely on foreign powers for weapons of war. Before the civil war,

Nigeria was assured of normal supply and was able to purchase arms from Britain, Switzerland, Belgium, and the United States of America.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to examine the nature of the invention, the use and involvement of local science and technology by the Biafrans during the Nigerian Civil War.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the origin of the Nigerian civil war;
2. examine the invention and production of local war weapons by the Biafrans
3. assess the extent the role the indigenous weapons played in their sustenance of the war.

Significance of the Study

This project sets out to find out how Biafrans were able to invent and manufacture indigenous weapons of war during the Nigerian Civil War. In other words, the work tends to give a historical account of what gave rise to the manufacture of war weapons by the Igbo scientist. The significance of this study lies in the fact that it attempts to provide a historical perspective of the inventions, manufacture and display of the Igbo indigenous expertise during the war. This is to enable us comprehend how the Igbo were able to resist the Nigerian troops despite receiving assistance from external advanced countries

such as the United States of America, Britain, Russia and so on. This work will be relevant to government policy makers, Nigerian military, Ministry of Science and Technology, relevant government agencies and scholars who wish to conduct research on the Nigerian Civil War and related subjects. Further research in this vital area of the Nigerian Civil War is possible and encouraging.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study covers from 1967-1970. The starting date of 1967 marked the beginning of the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War; while the 1970 was the year the war came to end. The scope of the research is restricted to the former East-Central State which includes the whole Igbo land which at present is made of Enugu, Anambra, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi states. The research looks basically on the invention of local weapons such as *Ogbunigwe* by Biafrans during the war.

Methodology

This research used primary and secondary sources. Primary sources involves oral interview in which the researcher interviewed a wide range of persons which include former Biafarn soldiers, elders, and other persons who either witnessed the war or have knowledge of the events that happened during the Civil War. Secondary sources comprised the use of published and unpublished works such as articles in learned journals, book chapters, newspapers, magazines, and internet materials. These sources were

sourced from the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikwe University, Awka and so on. These sources were critically analyzed to either to validate, collaborate or debunk some views from oral sources and published works that dealt on the Nigerian Civil War. These varied sources are collected and objectively assessed in line with historical methodology.

Literature Review

There are scanty works that deal on the indigenous technology during the Nigerian Civil War. Works that deal on the war focused on other aspects such as causes, course and impact of the Nigerian Civil War. Other works dwell on the post-civil war Igboland, the reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation programmes initiated by the Federal government and the efforts made varied communities in reconstructing their war torn Igboland. This shows that there is a gap in the literature of the Nigerian Civil War. It is this gap in the literature of the Nigerian Civil War that this research intends to fill. This research reviewed relevant scholarly works that have bearing on the subject of research and they include the following:

Chinua Achebe in his book entitled, *There Was a Country*,¹⁰ discusses the nature, and escalation of the Nigerian Civil War with emphasis on the causes, courses of the war and the untold hardship the war brought to the people of the Eastern Nigeria. Achebe also narrates war events in Biafra exposing the ordeals of the Igbo people. He explores how the Nigerian Federal Military Government used hunger as legitimate weapon to

annihilate the Igbo through land and air blockade during the war. This work is useful to the present study as it highlights how the Nigerian government used hunger and starvation as means to weaken the Igbo struggle for statehood during the war.

Ogunbadejo's in his thesis entitled, "Nigerian and the Great Powers; The Impact of the Civil War on the Nigerian Foreign Relations",¹¹ is an indepth the involvement of foreigners during the Nigerian Civil War. The thesis also covered the post-war economic recovery structures of the General Yakubu Gowon's led Federal Government. The thesis differs from the present study; it is still useful to this research as it was the foreign involvement in the war that led to the extension of the war for three years. The foreign involvement was one of the factors that led to Biafran's invention and manufacture of indigenous weapons to match the Nigerian Government arms.

Ifidon and Orieso in their article entitled, "Civil Strife, Arms Supply and The Anglo-Soviet Struggle for Influence, 1967-1969",¹² focuses on the nature of the Nigerian Civil War, the escalation of hostiles and the deep involvement of the foreign powers in the Nigerian Civil War. The authors opine that the rationale behind the British change of her strategy during the course of the war was basically because of the Soviet involvement in the Nigerian side. The authors believed that the Britain decided to abandon their principle of neutrality for fear of Soviet influence in Africa.

Chimee Nkemjika Ihediwa's in his work entitled, *Reflections on the Post War Conditions of the Igbo After Biafra*,¹³ is a reflection of the Post-War Conditions of the

Igbo after Biafra. It also explores the severe challenges the Igbo people have been facing since the end of the civil war. Ihediwa maintains that the 3Rs of reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation program of the Federal Military government did little to ameliorate the conditions of the Igbo as they were excluded from the mainstream activities of Nigeria. Despite the fact that this work deals on the post-war condition of the Igbo, it was relevant to this study in terms of our analysis of the Igbo indigenous technology which helped the Biafran troops to give stiff resistance to the Nigerian troops during the war.

Paul Obi-Ani's in his book entitled, *The Post-Civil War Social and Economic Reconstruction of Igboland, 1970-1983*,¹⁴ concentrates on the Federal Military Government of Yakubu Gowon's efforts in the reconstruction of the economic and social infrastructure of the war torn Igboland. Despite the fact the book focuses on the reconstruction programme in the whole of Igboland, the book is a good source material for this research work because among the facilities that were destroyed during the Civil War were located Onitsha. In addition, the war provides us with insightful information on the reconstruction of critical infrastructure such as the Niger Bridge which connected Onitsha with Asaba, the telecommunication facilities, Onitsha Main Market amongst others.

Adigun Agbaje's in his book entitled, *The War and the Nigerian State*,¹⁵ deals among other issues on the socio-cultural, economic political and more importantly technology dimensions of the Nigerian state. Agbaje opines that the civil war years

promoted the development of invention of technology as Biafra encourage the policy of local fabrication and emergence of Biafran defence industry. The strength of Agbeje's article lies in its analysis of the Biafran technological innovations during the war which the present study has derived vital and insightful information.

Okigbo in his work entitled, *The Economics of the Nigerian Civil War: The Biafran Experience*,¹⁶ gives a detailed study of the economic conditions that prevailed during the Nigerian Civil War. It also explores how the Biafran Government assembled its intellectuals and put a firm policy for the development of indigenous war weapons in the face of western European and Soviet Russian assistance to the Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon. The work is one of the prominent works that looks at the state of the economy during the war which according to Okigbo helped in the development of indigenous genius among the Biafrans.

Emordi and Oseghale in their book entitled, *Technological Innovations in Biafra and Foreign Involvement*,¹⁷ maintains on the idea of military industrial research by the Biafran leaders was as a result of arm shortage. The authors posit that Biafran technological innovations was envisaged even before the outbreak of the civil war on 6th July, 1967 and this led to the establishment of the Research and Production unit (RAP) headed by Dr. B.C. Nwosu. The RAP comprised lecturers, scientists, engineers, technicians and professionals from industries and skilled workers from public agencies such as the Nigerian Coal Corporation, in Enugu, Public Works Department and Nigerian

Railway Corporation and in Enugu and other cities in Eastern Region. This traces the origin the of the Research and Production, RAP and its functions which helped the Biafra to production local arms to complement the foreign supplies which helped immensely in sustaining the Biafra and prolonged the war for three years.

Another work that is relevant to this present study is Dan Chukwu`s in his book entitled, *The Challenges of the Biafran War Technologies*,¹⁸ states that the Research and Production Unit made a lot of remarkable technological innovations and achievements in varied areas such as petrol distillation, gadgets designs, homemade rockets, self-detonating anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, anti-tank weapons and even soap and brandy production. This work is very useful to the present study as it was fully used in explaining the conditions that gave rise to the establishment of the Research and Production unit in Biafra during the civil war.

Ubong Essien in his article entitled, “The Making of Arms in Civil War Biafra, 1967-1970”,¹⁹ maintains that the Federal Military Government`s imposition of economic blockade on Biafra during the Nigerian *Civil War* greatly constrained Biafran and this led to technological stimulation, promote the acceleration of scientific discoveries and indigenous production of arms for the execution of the civil war.

Organization of Chapters

The study is divided into five chapters as follows.

Chapter One: Background of Study

This chapter presents the Introduction, aim and objectives, significance and the scope of the Study. It also contains sources and methodology and the Literature review.

Chapter Two: Causes of the Nigerian Civil War

This chapter looks at the background to the civil war. It presents the prelude to the crisis by highlighting on the 1966 coup and counter-coup and the outbreak of the civil war and the course of the war.

Chapter Three: Biafran Inventions and Application of Indigenous Technology

This chapter examines the inventions of indigenous technology by Biafrans during the Nigerian Civil War. This chapter explores the production of local arms based on the establishment of the Research and Production (RAP) by Biafrans.

Chapter Four: Impact of the War

This chapter dwells on the analysis of the consequences of the Nigerian Civil War such as the refugee and humanitarian problems, loss of property, economic ruins, as well as the lessons from the war.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This chapter is the summary and the general conclusion

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CHAPTER TWO

CAUSES OF THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

Introduction

In 1960 Nigeria experienced the euphoria of gaining independence from the British, yet within seven years the country was engaged in a brutal and vicious civil The Nigerian civil war. Before the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, the reality of running a country as diverse as Nigeria with seemingly multifarious interests was beginning to dawn on the political leadership and observant and concerned citizens of the country.

Though the ethnically aligned parties and elections of 1959 had given a pointer to what was to come, the context of friction inherent in post- colonial rule, without an outside arbitrator and mediator was soon apparent. The anxiety and struggle for power and concerns for the distribution of resources brought about misunderstanding and strained working relations along ethnic lines on a number of issues for which the nationalist experience had not prepared them as it were, the various regional governments and their representatives at the center were stuck in objectives which were often not only antagonistic to each other but also had inherent tendencies of alienating many of the minorities within them. Given this context, none of the regions or their prominent politicians were prepared to act in a manner in which they could be seen as compromising the goals of their parties and groups even when their positions were clearly anti-nationalist. It is however probable that had the First Republic remained

uninterrupted, the political process still in its infancy, and despite the mistake and discordant relations, may eventually have prevailed in the politicians' ability to debate realistically teething national issues. Unfortunately, this logical political evolution in Nigeria was brought to an abrupt halt on 15 January 1966 when the military's first incursion into politics occurred with the Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu coup. One of the major implications of the coup was that it set in motion a set of activities that invariably brought Nigeria on the path of ethnic discord and civil crisis. This chapter examines some of the causes of the Nigerian Civil War.

1966 Coup

In the 15 January 1966 coup, which many have written as a revolution that went wrong¹, given the initial outburst of celebrations in various parts of the country as on the face value, the reasons the coupists advanced for their intervention were altruistic², at last as far as the leaders of coup saw it.³ Sadly, their intervention plunged the country into a deeper crisis.⁴ As it became subdued especially in the Northern region when the pattern of killing as perpetrated by the coup plotter became established.⁵ The nature of the executions in which the North lost principal officers and politicians, and to a lesser extent the West, with no corresponding casualties for Eastern Region, the home of most of the major actors, clearly sowed seed of discord among the rank and file of the military that were of Northern origin.⁶ The gloomy mood in the Northern region would have been cleared if Aguiyi Ironsi, who became the Head of State had acted swiftly to punish the

plotters than held them in different prisons across the country.⁷ In retrospect and soon after it became evident what the January plotters had done, it was clear that course of Nigeria's history had been altered with dire consequences.⁸ The plotters intended to remove the failed political leaders of the first republic and to replace them with soldiers in command, so as to implore discipline socialist ideology and nationalist as distinct from the politics of tribal chauvinism, ethnic based regional body politics, religious bigotry, political intolerance and drift that characterized the regime of Sir Tafawa Abubakar Balewa.⁹ On the other hand, the 29 July 1966 coup is usually taken as a counter coup to that of January. The actions of the plotters, essentially Northern officers, in rounding up and killing of Igbo officers, soon spread to the civilian population, who then engaged in pogroms against the Igbo was to subsequently constitute a major threat to the very existence of the country.¹⁰

Ironsi Regime and Counter-Coup of 1966

Although, it appeared that Major General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi was only the inheritor of a coup that failed, there appears to be some doubts as to the veracity of still holding this opinion.¹¹ On the surface it appears that he was the only option in circumstances in which the remnant of the political leadership, weakened and decimated by the death of the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello, premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Samuel Akintola, premier of Western Nigeria and Sir Abubakar Tafawa, the prime minister, had no recourse but to invite the military to seize power. However, the fact that

Ironsi was spared by the coup plotters, while the execution of others in Lagos proceeded, and his eventual emergence were in themselves cause for concern to those that believed in the conspiracy theorist. Further doubts about whether Ironsi had foreknowledge or not about the January coup, came into the open by Gowon's assertion that it is probable by comments Ironsi made on the night of the coup that he might have had inside knowledge of the plotters plan.¹²

The fact however, was that by the time Ironsi was approached to assume power, the coup had already failed, and the original actors were not in position to take over the state as had been their plan. A question of fundamental importance here is, why did the civil administration not continue in office, and why did Ironsi choose rather not to offer support to the civil authority but to assume power himself? With a succession structure in place in case of the death of the prime minister or regional premiers, the political process should have been followed instead of the military option. The decision to adopt the military path had seem credence to the statements that the Igbo by the coup achieved by the gun what they could not achieve by the ballot.¹³

The later July coup however succeeded in the West, Mid-West and the North but had no immediate success in the East where Ojukwu held out and refused to recognized the Gowon regime with consequences that were proving telling on the cost to the nation as a result of the Civil War¹⁴

To the northern, Ironsi decision in office were such that alienated the North, these according to them included his failure to bring to trial the coup plotters of 15 January; surrounding himself with a dominance of Eastern bureaucrats and advisers, and for instance, promoting in the Army shortly after the coup which did not help matters, contrary to the advice of the Supreme Military Council, eighteen Igbo officers to the rank of colonel out of a pool of twenty one officers only reinforced Northern fears of Igbo dominations of the country. The Decree 34 of 24 May 1966 that made the country a unitary state by abrogating the regional civil services,¹⁵ outraged Northerners and the reaction in towns within the region was swift resulted in killing of the Igbos.

The riots caused a huge movement of Easterners back to their region. Ironsi attributed the riots to foreign incitement.¹⁶ It was in the wake of these riots that Northern officers planned and executed the counter coup. Ironically, the coup was coded “Operation Araba”, an expression of willingness to secede, with the planner, aiming to topple Ironsi and take the North out of the Nigerian federation.¹⁷ To wit the coup was followed by massive killing of Igbo officers and men¹⁸ which in turn elicited a mass exodus of Eastern army personal from the North to the East. It is shocking that the Ironsi regime exhibited gross insensitivity to unequivocal denunciation of the unitary system of government which seemed to have been his pet idea which he seemed to have discovered was the panacea of Nigeria’s myriad problems. It important to note that, the fate of the country hanged in a balance as for three days Nigeria was without a leader.

Gowon's Inability to Stopped the Igbo Pogrom

On August 1, 1966 Lt. Col Yakubu Gowon emerged as Head of State. His emergence did impress Lt. Col. Ojukwu because he argued that Gowon was a junior in the hierarchy of senior officers. On assumption of office, Gowon said that he was nominated by a majority of members of the Supreme Military Council.¹⁹ Ojukwu sneered at the claim arguing that the Supreme Military Council did not take majority decision and that the Supreme Military council had not met.²⁰ However, when, the Council met and confirmed Gowon in his new post, it was not plenary because it was held in conditions that it impossible for Ojukwu to attend and out alive.²¹ Once in power, Gowon's initial plans were to abrogate Decree 34, release Chief Obafemi Awolowo and other political in prison and detentions and establish the Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference to deliberate on the structure of the union Nigeria should adopt, all the four regions were represented. However, while the Conference was in progress, there were killing of Igbos in the North. Gowon did little to arrest this trend. The decision that Gowon sanctioned about officers and men of the Nigerian military moving back to their regions, even if it was a temporary move was one that was ill-considered.²²

Eastern Region Steps Towards Secession

It appear that Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu who was the Governor of Eastern Region, probably made up his mind to take out his people out of the so called Nigeria because of the inability of Gowon government halt the killing of the Igbos.

Ojukwu had practical reason not to accept Gowon's emergence as Supreme Commander. When information got to him that the random and sometimes methodically killing of Eastern soldiers and officers was still going on three days after the coup leaders had won, he called Gowon and told him to put a halt to it. To his dismay, nothing was done to the killing which went on till the end of August after three hundred Eastern officers and men were dead or missing.²³ so from legal and practical grounds as far as Ojukwu saw it, he would not accept Gowon as his Supreme Commander. Even though General Olusegun Obasanjo is of the opinion that Ojukwu's Eastern Regional government assumed the dimensions of a personal fiefdom. He has asserts that even when Ironsi was still the head of state, when the May 1966 riots broke out, Ojukwu was quoted expressing doubts about the continued existence of Eastern Nigeria within the Nigeria federation.²⁴

The failure of the Nigerian government to obey the Aburi accord which was aimed at a peaceful resolution was what eventually lead the country into war. Apart from the Pogroms against Igbos, the oil resources of Eastern Nigeria were also a factor that influenced Ojukwu.²⁵ It is important to noted that while the core Igbos were in support to the idea of secession and Biafra, most of the Eastern Region minorities were for continued unity of one Nigeria.

Aburi Accord Agreement

After the killing of Ironsi and the execution of Igbo officers which anger the Igbos to considered secession as a viable option to protect their death of their people lead to

serious conflict between the federal government and the Eastern government. The September riots that broke out and Eastern delegation withdrawal the Ad Hoc constitutional conference of September 12 in protest of the riot, the postponement of the conference and the expulsion of all non-Easterners from the region²⁶ was a serious issues that gave rise to the Aburi meeting since Ojukwu could not attend meeting of the Supreme Military Council held outside the Eastern region. To avert war, the Supreme Military Council met in Aburi on 4th- 5th January 1967. At Ojukwu' instance the leaders agreed among other that

1. Force should not be used to resolve the Nigeria crisis
2. A con-federal status was allowed the regions
3. A law of collective responsibility which vested all powers of the federal Military Government in the Supreme military Council, making unanimous concurrence imperative
4. The Head of State should assume the title of Commanders in-chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.²⁷

The apparent misinterpretation or conflicting interpretation of the Aburi resolutions created a gap of misunderstanding between the Federal Government and the Eastern government.²⁸ The two parties interpreted the Aburi outcomes differently, the Federal Government alleging bad faith on the path of the Eastern Government,

while the latter accusing the former of refusing to honor the Aburi agreement. Eventual declaration of secession and the Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1960 and the resolved to used force by the Federal Government lead to the avoidable consequence of the Nigerian Civil War.

Conclusion

The major cause of the war is located in ethno-political crises that engulfed the country on the eve of independence through the immediate post independent era. Among these are the pogroms against the Igbo, the census crisis of 1962|63, the Tiv riots of 1964, the 1964 federal election crisis and violence and the 1965 western election crisis. Above all it was apolitical struggle of who control what and how.

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CHAPTER THREE

BIAFRAN INVENTIONS AND APPLICATION OF INDIGENOUS TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

The Nigeria Civil War was fought between 1967 and 1970. It was an internal conflict that military officers in the Nigerian Army fought on both sides of the Federal Government of Nigeria and Biafra. Before the commencement of hostility in 1967, Col. Ojukwu was able to look for arms from Israel as part of the Biafra preparedness for the crisis. Consequent upon the failure of Aburi Accord, Ojukwu took to the offensive against the Federal Government by declaring the Republic of Biafra. The Federal government initially responded by declaring a "police action" and later a total war invading northern Igboland through the Nsukka sector. Biafra at the onset did not have adequate arms and as the events continued to unfold, the arms stockpiled by the Biafrans continued to diminish as the Federal forces from 1968 started pushing them from Nsukka to Enugu to the heart of Eastern Region. With the combined support of Britain and Russia, the Federal Government under General Yakubu Gowon announced economic blockage of Biafran. By the end of 1968, it had become evident that it would take more than military supplies to sustain Biafra's independence.¹

However, direct military intervention by either France or China would not seem to have been contemplated. Whereas, on the federal side, the Anglo-Soviet supports was

taken to be an official policy of the government. On this note, the Ojukwu led Biafra government had to design an urgent internal means of producing arms to meet up with the challenges of shoot fall in the arms supplies from their foreign partners. This brought Biafra republic to the challenges of local arms interventions and technologies for prosecuting the war. The extent the local arms supplies and inventions and how successful were they are the main focus of this section of the chapter.

Establishment of the Research and Production Unit (RAP)

Before the outbreak of the Civil War, Biafra had arms shortage. It was reported to have only 150 rifles in stock. The Biafran scientists and technologist had anticipated the shortage and this led to the establishment of the Research and Production Unit (RAP). The RAP was made up of scientists, technicians, engineers and other professionals from public works such as the Nigerian Coal Corporation in Enugu, Public Works Department and other cities in the defunct Eastern Region. In the course of the war, the RAP was able to produce great technological innovations such as petrol distillation, gadgets designers, homemade rockets, self-detonating anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, anti-tank weapons and soaps.²

The Federal government economic blockade affected Biafrans` arms supplies and this forced them to embark on local arms inventions. That is to say, necessity is the mother of invention. Ojukwu had to assemble scientist, scholars, engineers and people from all works of life to think and improvise equipment, ammunition and other material

support for the prosecution of the Biafran war efforts. All of these developments take the form of local production such as Ogbunigwe, armoured tank, jet fighters, local refineries, Biafra radio among others.³

Ogbunigwe

The Biafran scientist from the research think tank RAP-the Biafran Research and Production Unit developed a greater number of rockets, bombs and telecommunication gadgets.⁴ The *Ogbunigwe* was one of the most important instrument lay at the disposal of the Biafran government. The bomb was a complex three chambers apparatus that often included delayed action devices containing a propellant, and explosive substance often gunpowder in igniting base-and scraps of metal for maximal effects.⁵ *Ogbunigwe* bombs struck great terror in the hearts of many Nigerian soldiers, and were used to great effect by the Biafran army throughout the conflict.⁶ The Nigerian army so dreaded the *Ogbunigwe* bombs and rockets to the extent that each advancing battalions were preceded by a herd of cattles.⁷ This invention of *Ogbunigwe* was christened genocide by the Biafran soldiers, which literally means "mass killer". The armoured vehicle was blown to bits by a landmine soon after it was taken into battles.⁸

Ogbunigwe was the first model of Biafra's homemade anti-personnel weapon, indomitable Ogbunigwe, "a mortal type with bucket loads of devastation", made its catastrophic appearance.⁹ It was one of the defensive devices produced in large quantities for the dig-in battles and for ambush. It was a mass killer huge explosive of about 250

millimeter caliber packed with shrapnel detonator and time gases. Shaped like a bucket, and it was called "Ojukwu bucket". It was a weapon dreaded most by the Federal troops because of its devastating effects.¹⁰ There was also the *Ogbunigwe* rocket launcher. It was originally designed as anti-aircraft gun by the science and technology group of Biafra in 1967. The principal aim was to throw particles on the path of a low and fast flying Russian built jet MIG 15. This was an improvement on the ground weapons.¹¹

Biafran Tank

This constituted one off the many wonders of the scientific and technological innovations during the Nigerian civil war. The armoured tanks were constantly being reinforced. The armoured tanks had about six designs. The first of such tanks turned out to be steel-reinforced Range over. Later the Biafran armoured tank had the innovations and the designs of bulldozers or caterpillars that could move at any terrain. The Biafran forces succeeded in sustaining the war with these newly improvised armoured tanks. The invention of the armoured tanks and *Ogbunigwe* helped Biafrans to sustain the war for a long time.¹²

Modified Aircraft

Though the scientists of RAP unit did not produce aircrafts, but they were able to modify the existing civilian aircrafts to a fighter jets. Aircrafts were modified from trainers to fighters, from passenger's air craft to bombers. The point being made is that

within short period of time, the Biafran RAP scientists created the technological feats. For an African to pilot a plane can be said to be one of the inventions of the Biafrans, the Biafrans were able to show that Africans could pilot their own planes. The story of a Biafran piloting a plane goes: That a Biafran plane landed in another African country and the pilot and all of the crew came out and there was not a white man among them. The people of this other country-which is a stooge of France-couldn't comprehend plane being landed without any white people. They said where is the pilot? Where are the White people? They arrested the crew, presuming there had been rebellion in the air.¹³

Samba and Ogbunando

This derived its name from its shape. It is simple but deadly. It is efficient use of explosives, ease of manufacture, lightness in weight and ease of mounting. There was also which means "killer in cold blood". It was designed for launching from a wheeled gun. It had an armoured-piercing war-head and could be set off by the enemies' armoured vehicle rolling on a triggering wire in alignment with the launches. There were also armoured cars, called "Biafran Red Devils", rockets and "Ojukwu Bear". The Ojukwu Bear was used during the Abagana war front in 1969.¹⁴

Establishment of Refineries

The oil industry remains the sovereign wealth of the country till-date. As at the time the Biafran state of the Biafran Republic had to include all ethnic nationalities of the

Eastern Region. Against this background, Biafra seized all the oil industries in the region. There were oil industries in Port Harcourt, Ogoni and the entire Niger Delta area of the Eastern region. To further cripple the Biafran government economically, the Federal government ensured the bombardment of major oil installations which served as a major source of revenue. The Russian built MIG 15 fighter's jet bombed the oil facilities and refineries. The RAP was able to devise a local method of refining crude oil into petrol products. They were able to drill and refine crude oil of different petroleum. Many makeshift refineries were established to refine crude oil after the fall of Port-Harcourt in 1968. Two refineries were built at Uzoakoli and Amondugha communities in the present Imo State, but the refineries were abandoned after the capture of the area by the Federal government the war.¹⁵ The Biafrans extracted and refined petroleum products and helped Biafrans to survive the harsh economic realities caused by the Federal government economic blockade on the Biafran enclave.

Biafran Radio

One of the greatest innovations during the Nigerian Civil War was the establishment of Radio Biafra. This was the basic instrument of propaganda. The Biafrans received the war developments from the news room of Radio Biafra more than the news from the Radio Kaduna. To the Ibos, the Radio Biafra was comparable to that of the BBC world service, while news from Radio Nigeria Kaduna was unreliable.¹⁶

One of the major instruments that made the civil war to go beyond the police action as initially intended by the Federal Government was the successful and effective use of the Radio Biafra by the Biafra news collection on lost battle ground of the Federal forces. Biafrans were made to believe that the Federal forces would soon be defeated by Biafran soldiers. This was because Radio Biafra deployed propaganda to assuage the feeling of Biafrans by describing military setbacks and lost battles as due to temporary and strategic retreats by Biafran soldiers. Radio Biafra informed the public that Biafra forces would soon recapture the towns and villages under the control of the Federal forces.¹⁷ The Radio Biafra hardly air military reverses or failures on the part of the Biafran forces.

Uli Airport

Uli is a town of historic importance during the Nigerian Civil war. It is situated in the present Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State. During the war, the Biafran Airport code named Annabel Airport was located in land strip at Umuehima village, Uli. The land strip was designed that it became the source of relief supplies during the Nigerian Civil War. The Airport was handling up to 50 flights per night. It was all put together by Christian missionaries and humanitarian aid agencies operating in the Eastern region that refused to be bound by old missions, old diplomacy, old colonialism, and the power of big oil and the secrecy of murderous bush wars.¹⁸ Uli Airport was used to airlift foods, materials and other supplies into Biafra. It helped in saving the lives of many

Biafrans from starvation due to the Federal government's economic blockade and the relief operations to the Biafran enclave passed through the Airport.

Uli Airport was a product of the civil war exigencies. Even with all their problems, they had managed to develop a new airport at Uli-Ihiala, about 30 kilometers north of Owerri and about 15 kilometers from Oguta.¹⁹ Thus during the war, Uli was very strategic to the Biafran soldiers and the Federal forces and they struggled to capture Uli-Ihiala. The Federal forces knew that Owerri and other would collapse if only Uli-Ihiala was captured.

In recognition of the technological development made by Biafrans during the war, General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Biafran Head of State posits that: "In the three years of war, necessity gave birth to invention. During those three years, we built bombs, we built rockets, and we designed and built our own delivery systems. We guided our rockets, we guided them far, and we guided them accurately. For three years, blockaded without hope of imports, we maintained engines, machines and technical equipment. The state extracted and refined petrol, individuals refined petrol in her pack gardens, we built and maintained airports, and we maintained them under heavy bombardment. We spoke of the world through a telecommunications system engineered by local ingenuity. The world heard us and spoke back to us. We built armored cars and tank. We modified aircraft from trainers to fighters, from passenger aircraft to bomber. In

three years of freedom, we had broken the technological barrier. In three years, we became the most civilized; the most technologically advanced black people on earth." ²⁰

The Republic of Biafran within a period of its existence could boast of the production of local arms and technological equipment which aided immensely in the persecution of the war. The Federal Government could not invent anything and only depended on arm supplies from foreign countries. In the words of Mr. Ezeani, he states inter alia: "More than 50 years of political independence, the country cannot boast of the basic facilities such as reliable electricity and good network of road taken for granted in countries that cannot compare with it...the point is that since the end of the war, some people are still foolishly expecting slaves to work for them. And *Ndigbo* said we cannot be a slave that is all. Free us and we will give out our own, our internal resources to Nigeria. And I don't have to tell anybody, it is so obvious. You can distribute fuel, free us, and every state headquarters will have refinery. Free we, every state headquarters will have its landing air strip. Free us and we will cut down on importation of soap, buttons...". ²¹

Despite the invention of indigenous technology, Biafrans got assistance from foreign assistance from European which included Portugal, Poland, Germany, France and Israel. She also got arms supplies from Ivory Coast, South Africa, Gabon, Rhodesia, Haiti and so on. For example, French government supplied weapons to Biafra through Gabon and Ivory Coast. Rhodesia for example, supplied the rockets for B-26 bombers. Biafra

also had Saladins and Salacines, Italian-made cohete inta guns and 37 mm explosives, Soviet 7.62 mm AK sub-machine guns (SMG), Belgium FN9 rifle, the Israel Uzi SMG, Lancaster 9mm mark 1 SMG and so on.²²

In view of the above, it becomes clear that the technological innovations for the weapons used for the persecution of the war came from out Nigeria and Africa as many prominent Biafran personalities such as Christopher Okigbo, Kenneth Dike, K.O. Mbadiwe, Chike Obi, Mathew Mbu and C.C. Mojekwu among others shopped for arms in various parts of the world.²³ The Biafran technological achievement was based on adaptive research. It was a kind of transfer of technology which they expanded and improved them.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF THE WAR

Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War that started on June 6th at Nsukka sector in 1967 ended on January 15th 1970. The two and a half year war was over-heated with the Biafran war propaganda and the involvement of the foreign powers. The war that had no lessons for the future Nigerian leaders had a lot of consequences that include: loss of lives and human right abuses, loss of property, loss of scientific and technological inventions and innovations, enormous economic ruins, foreign competitiveness in Nigeria markets, diplomatic brevity and refugees crisis. It is important to state that the war for the maintenance of the unity of the country on the side of the Federal Government that was not negotiable on the one hand and the possible dissolution of the country on the side of the Biafra. The war had far reaching impacts on the Nigerian state and these are discussed below.

Impact of the War

Loss of Lives/Human Right Abuses

The civil war led to the loss of lives of many people in the East Central State and the Mid-Western Region. There were human right abuses from both side of the divide. The human right abuses took place in the Asaba massacre, the Calabar massacre, and a lot of indiscriminate killings that took place during the war period. There was blood

everywhere.¹ Biafrans found themselves under heavy assault after the Mid-Western Region offensive that led to the killing of many unarmed civilians in Asaba. The Federal forces armed with direct orders to retake the Mid-western Region at all cost rounded up and shot as many defenseless Igbo men and boys as they could find.² Some reports placed the death toll at five hundred, others as high as one thousand. The Asaba massacre was only one of many such post-pogrom atrocities committed by Nigerian soldiers during the war. There were other massacres such as the Onitsha massacre of 1968 and the Calabar massacre. The Nigerian soldiers decided to purge the town of its Igbo inhabitants.

All of these actions amounted to genocide. Ordinarily, genocide means ethnic cleansings. In actions reminiscent of the Nazi policy of eradicating the Jews throughout Europe during the Second World War, the Federal forces were also determined to kill Igbos from anywhere they captured. After several weeks of sustained air, land and sea attacks, the war was characterized by atrocities of raping, looting, and outright brigandage in which so many people lost their lives in the various fronts of the campaigns. Barrister Giwa Amu, a Solicitor -General gives an eye-witness account on the killing of Igbos in Benin-City by the Federal troops when he posits inter alia:

For record purposes, however, let me state fearlessly that I saw hundreds of unarmed civilians being shot at sight in Benin City when Federal troops arrived to liberate the city from the rebel soldiers.³

In some cases, all the men in a town were shot and the town set on fire and civilians were asked to dig their own graves.⁴ Some other instances of the genocidal act embarked upon by the Nigerian soldiers were the killing of 100 people and later 2000 Igbos in Calabar division.⁵ This action brought a lot of pressure on Nigerian government to end the war as military stand-off continues. In Orji River, Nigerian forces opened fire and murdered fourteen nurses and the patients in the hospital wards.⁶ In Uyo and Okigwe, many innocent lives were lost to the brutality of the Nigerian Soldiers.⁷

The Aba offensive led by Col. Adekunle was particularly gruesome as there was heavy casualty there. Col. Adekunle and his men shot gleefully through a fierce Biafran resistance and took Aba and Owerri in August and September 1968 after killing innocent civilians. The horrifying killings was reported in this way:

Young Igbos with terrifying eyes and trembling lips told French journalist in Aba that in the villages that Nigerian troops came from behind, shooting and firing everywhere, shooting everybody who was running, firing into the homes.⁸

Loss of Property

This was another negative impact of the Nigerian Civil War. Even before the war started in 1967, the northerners after the Second military coup of July 1966 that led to the killing of General Agui Ironsi and the enthronement of General Yakubu Gowon as the new Head of State, embarked on the massive destruction of the properties belonging to the Igbos in the Northern Region. In Jos for instance, before the war, the destruction of

lives and properties was to such an extent that the Gwong Gwom Jos (the traditional ruler of Jos) intervened to safeguard the lives and properties of Igbos. Sometimes, the traditional ruler drove along the streets of Jos with a convoy of cars and public address system to reassure the Easterners of their safety and property.⁹

The bombardment of the Eastern Region by the Federal troops MIG 15 Fighters Jet destroyed many public and private property including residential areas. The Port-Harcourt refinery was bombed by the Federal bombers as part of their winning strategy to annihilate the Igbo.

Refugee Crisis

The civil war produced humanitarian crisis and refugee problems in the region. There were shortages of food, leading to malnutrition, outbreak of disease epidemic. The International Society of the Red Cross set up refugee camps for the survived internally displaced persons (IDP). Other international aid agencies were Caritas International; Holy Ghost Fathers of Ireland etc. They provided foods, medicine and clothes to the displaced persons and destitute. There were many cases of outbreak of cholera, kwashiorkor, bed bugs, scabies and other diseases. There was widespread starvation in the region as military movements did not allow farmers to cultivate their crops and some of them were among the refugees. The worst of all, there were lice's, scabies and other fungi infections in the camps. Their skin became pale, dry and flaky; they all had shiny pot bellies, swollen feet and puffy faces with dropping eyelids, because of accumulation

of fluid in those parts of their bodies¹⁰. Children were more severely afflicted. Infections were very common and were difficult to treat in people with kwashiorkor. Diarrhea was very common in both adults and children. Most children collapsed and died while passing diarrhea stool. Some children emaciated to the point where they looked like walking skeletons.¹¹

Economic Ruins

Another negative impact of the civil war was the economic damage it had on both the Biafrans and the Federal government. The country was only six years after independence when the crisis started and the country was trying to find its feet. During the civil, the colonial legacies in the country particularly the Eastern Region were destroyed. Many schools were destroyed and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was badly affected. The Port Harcourt refinery was razed to the ground. The Niger Bridge that linked The eastern region with the Midwestern Region was blown up by the Biafran forces purposely to impede Federal troops invasion of Onitsha. The Main Market at Onitsha that was the center of economic activities in the Eastern region was set on fire by the Federal forces. The Nigerian economy was adversely affected by the civil war. The superior fire-power of the Federal forces deployment of superior weapons such as the Russian MIG-15 Fighter Jet, the new British Armored Tanks, MM22 AK47 Assault Rifles from Britain, Russia, Czech and other European countries caused monumental damage and ruins in Biafra.

Foreign Competitions in Nigeria Market

This was one of the positive impacts of the Nigerian Civil War. In the first place, it was a case of the unity of two veterans joining forces together to prosecute the civil war. Britain from the NATO camp was actively involved in the war, while Russian the leader of the Warsaw Pact was actively involved in the war and as such played a decisive role in Nigeria's victory over the Biafran forces. Britain colonized Nigeria and as such played a decisive role after the war. In support of the economic motives, some observers including Loyd Garrison of the New York Times have suggested that Britain moved in, when it saw that Biafra country contrary to the initial expectations was able to withstand the Federal forces and that, British oil interest in the Eastern Region were in danger.¹² This singular stance enabled Britain to play a vital role in the post-war economic reconstruction of Nigeria.

Russia on the other hand, played a decisive role in the war and the post-war economic reconstruction of Nigeria. For instance, Soviet Russia's interest in Nigeria may well have been partly economic and Russia's interest was not directly in Nigeria's crude oil, but on cocoa.¹³ However, the decisive factor which brought the Soviet Union down irrevocably on the Federal side seems to have been a combination of the refusal of the British to supply the arms requested and its assessment of the likely outcome of the war at the early stage of the war. At the end of July 1967 when Chief Anthony Enahoro arrived in Moscow for proper arms negotiation, this changed the British stance and she

supported Nigerian government. In addition to supplanting some Western influence, the Soviet Russia hoped to gain recognition in Africa or be a champion of legitimate governments against secessionist rebels. Hence, Nigeria was potentially the most promising ally.¹⁴

Consequently, Russians made an inroad into the economic fabrics of the country. For instance, in 1967, AVTOEKPORT, Soviet owned motor firm took up 80% interest in Nigerian company, known as West African Automobile and Trading Company and introduced a Russia built car Moskvitch. The company did not only sell their brand of cars, they also supplied other Soviet's products such as cement, sugar, passengers cars, motor scooters, welding machines, trucks and other types of capital and consumer goods¹⁵. By early 1969, the overall volume of trade between the two countries had reached 14.3 million¹⁶. However, despite these achievements in the economic sphere, to Ifidon asserted that the Soviet Union did not come to Nigeria to trade, its primary purpose in Nigeria was to secure political foothold from which it could challenge western influence.¹⁷

Technological Innovations

The Biafran scientists from the research think tank the Biafran Research and Production Unit (RAP) developed a number of rockets, bombs and telecommunication gadgets¹⁸. The *Ogbunigwe* as discussed in the previous chapter was one of the most important military weapons produced by the Biafran government. The bomb was a

complex three chambers apparatus that often included delayed action devices containing a propellant, and explosive substance often gunpowder in igniting base-and scraps of metal for maximal effects.¹⁹

Ogbunigwe bombs struck great terror in the hearts of many Nigerian soldiers, and were used to great effect by the Biafran military throughout the war.²⁰ The Nigerian army dreaded the *Ogbunigwe* bombs and rockets to the extent that each advancing battalions were preceded by a herd of cattles.²¹ This invention of *Ogbunigwe* was christened genocide by the Biafran soldiers. The armored vehicle was blown to bits by a landmine soon after it was taken into battles. It was called genocide because of the Igbo term for ‘mass killer.’²²

Apart from the *Ogbunigwe* bombs, there was also the *Ogbunigwe* rocket launcher. This rocket launcher was originally designed as anti-aircraft gun by the science and technology group of Biafra in 1967. The principal aim was to throw particles on the path of a low and fast flying Russian built jet MIG 15. This was an improvement on the ground weapons.²³ this great technological feats were part of the inventions by the Biafrans during the civil war, but unfortunately, the indigenous technology initiated by the Igbo was not sustained by the Nigerian government after the war.

Medical Research and Knowledge

Malnutrition in Biafra has contributed towards medical research and knowledge. A team of researchers from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden and the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital at Enugu found that babies born to Biafran women during the famine brought about by the war have grown up to be more susceptible to obesity and other associated health problems than those born before or after the famine. This finding has helped to prove that malnutrition in the womb causes greater susceptibility to certain health problems in later life. It was also for Biafra that celebrities rallied together for a major humanitarian cause of its kind for the first time.²⁴

Resurgence of Igbo Entrepreneurship

This was supposed to be one of the lessons of the civil war. The Ibos historically are known for trade and owned business. Due to the destructive nature of the civil war, the Ibos have no option other than to venture more into trading. After the war, many young people who were in colleges before the war could not continue with their education and instead went into various trades. The quest for self-improvement and self-reliance has driven Igbos more into business and entrepreneurship. The bringing of relations and acquaintances as apprentice in their trade for a specified period has been the general characteristics of Igbo entrepreneurship before and after the war.

The Igbos were more involved in this type of entrepreneurship after the war because it became the only way that a child is brought up in penury and the skills to embark on the trade of his choice without getting into debt. In other words, the Igbos were able to re-assert themselves and get proper integration into Nigeria body politics and trade because of this singular factor of being more involved into business. An analyst has said this about an Igbo entrepreneur: "The presence of Igbos on the Nigerian business scene is crucial to the economy of the nation.

Their absence would lead to the invasion of the country by Indian, Lebanese and Chinese-owned small and medium scale business. It will also lead to huge capital flight, which Nigeria cannot afford. That Igbo businesses areas not actively courted and encouraged in some parts of the country show that the leaders of such communities are ignorant about how capitalist economics operate. Businesses contribute substantially to tax revenue in any community; one of the main reasons businesses is courted by local, regional and national governments in western countries. They also bring development to the localities, and this is evident where many Igbos have settled in Nigeria. A challenge to the governments of Igbo states in particular and other states in general would be to maximize the resourcefulness of their people by increasing opportunities for manpower and entrepreneurship developments. This will put them in good stead to participate optimally in both national and regional economic development, both now and in the future.²⁴

Endnotes

1. O. Achebe, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, London: Penguin Books Limited, 2012, p.136.
2. *Ibid.*, p.134.
3. *Sunday Observer* 16th March, 1983.
4. E. Okocha, *Blood on the Niger: An Untold story of the Nigerian Civil War*, Lagos: Surray Publications Limited, 1994, p.65.
5. *New York Times*, January 4th, 1968.
6. *The Times* (London) 2nd August, 1968.
7. *Ibid.*
8. O. Achebe, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, 139.
9. D. Chukwurah, *Last Train to Biafra: Memoirs of a Biafran Child*, Ibadan: Constellation Nig. Limited, 2014, p.31.
10. *Ibid.*, p.110
11. *Ibid...pictures* p.112.
12. Suzanne Cronje, *The World and Nigeria: The Diplomatic History of the Biafran War*, London: Sidwick and Jackson Limited, 1972, p.261.
13. *Ibid*, p.264.
14. *Ibid*, p.264.
15. *Daily Times*, 9th November, 1970.
16. *Ibid.*
17. E. A. Ifidon, “The Resource Market Linkage and the Growth Problem in Soviet Nigeria Relations, 1960 – 1979”, *Journal of Humanities*, Faculty of Arts University of Benin, Benin-City, 2012, vol., No.18, p.55.

18. O. Achebe, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, p.156.
19. *Ibid*, p.156.
20. O. Achebe, *the Biafran Scientist: The Development of an African Indigenous Technology*, Lagos: Armet Ventures, 1997, p.30.
21. V. Chukwuemeka Ike, *Sunset at Dawn: A Novel about Biafra*, London: Collins and Hamitic Novel Press, 2006, p.78.
22. D. Chukwurah, *Last Train to Biafra: Memoirs of a Biafran Child*, p.23.
23. *Ibid*, p.167.
24. *Ibid*, p.173.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian Civil War was fought between the Federal Military government under General Yakubu Gowon and the Republic of Biafra under General Odumegwu Ojukwu started in 1967 and ended in 1970. This followed the series of protracted negotiations and disagreements between the Gowon led Federal Government and Col. Ojukwu led Biafran Republic following the collapse of the Aburi Accord that took place in Ghana under the auspices of the Ghanaian leader, General Ankrah, it became clear that the stage was set out for an all-round hostility. The Aburi Accord was supposed to be the last hope of averting the hostility, but for the continuous insistence of both leaders on their policies, it became clear that the civil war was inevitable. The war that was intended to be a "police action" by the Federal Military government and hoped to last for just few weeks eventually lasted for two and a half years. The war led to a lot of technological innovations and advancement on the part of the Biafra. After successful blockages of all fronts of arms supply to Biafra, available ammunition was inadequate to fight the well equipped and superior weapons of the Nigerian government. To augment the shortage of arms, the Biafran government established the Research and Production Unit to manufacture locally produced Biafran war weapons.

This research has established that the Nigerian Civil War certainly induced scientific innovations, promoted the acceleration of scientific discoveries, and

technological innovation on the Biafran side. Between 1967 and 1970 a domestic arms industry, forced by pressing military demands emerged in Biafra. A Research and Production unit was established with a common purpose and necessity with courage to complement the shortage of arms needed to prosecute the war. This reinforced the link between war and technological advancement. However, one of the limitations experienced in the making of arms in Biafra was that it was carried out on a relatively small-scale with low cost scientific research and by individuals and small groups.¹ Huge capital investment in domestic arms procurement is required for the growth of domestic arms industries. In the absence of this, such an industry would only survive but not thrive.

The Biafran domestic arms industry failed to transform into a large-scale arms industry partly due to the low level of government attention in terms of capital investment. Adequate government attention was rather given to the external sourcing of arms through third party actors and the young arms industry in Biafra was used to complement this feat. Commenting on this great indigenous technological achievement, the Biafran leader, general Ojukwu, avers that:

In the three years of war, necessity gave birth to invention. During those three years, we built a rocket launcher, modified aircraft to fighter's jet, refined petrol at the back gardens. In the three years, we became the most civilized; the most technologically advanced black people on earth. In all of these, the civil war supposed to be as source of lessons for the federal government and the Nigerian leaders seemed not to have learnt anything from the war. Today, corruption that formed part of the complaint of the failed Nzeogwu coup is on the highest order. The cabals the coupists complained about is still holding on fight to power. The technology that was developed during the Biafran struggle was abandoned. This brings us to the focus of corruption, tribalism and nepotism as the two steel

industries that were established by the post-war federal government are now shadow of themselves.²

The armored tank christened 'Genocide' was regarded to be the first armored tank to be put together by a black man in Africa over four decades ago that had the ingenuity to build a war machine in the form of an armored vehicle and send it to confront British made armored vehicles like the ferret, Saladin and Saracen that were being used by the federal government at the war fronts. The Federal government re-enact those achievements by developing them so as to lift the country up technologically. The war ought to set the stage of scientific and technological development for Nigeria. The creation of RAP to produce ammunition and other materials to support the war effort was a thing of pride. Those technological inventions are housed at the national war museum at Umuahia.

Despite the achievement in local arms production, Biafra encountered some problem in terms of arms procurement during the civil war. According to Umoh, "Biafra invested so much in arms bargain and supplies but achieved far less. With tedious bargains, inflated costs and erratic supplies, Biafra lavished its foreign reserve on the procurement of arms and ammunition which failed to produce the desired military result. This would have had a greater diversionary effect if invested in the young arms industry. The injection of funds would have further financed Research and Development (R&D) taking it a more realistic step further than what mere patriotism and zeal provided. Proper investment in capital and infrastructure was needed to boost the size and structure of

Biafran arms industry. This was relatively ignored by the Biafran government. Close relations between the Science Group, the Military Government and the fighting forces which defines the Military Industrial Complex (MIC) was also at its lowest." ³

Endnotes

1. Ubong Essien Umoh, "The Making of Arms in Civil War Biafra", *The Calabar Historical Journal*, Vol. 5, Nos. 1 & 2, December, 2011, p.14.
2. See F. Forsyth, (1982), *Emeka*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.
3. Ubong Essien Umoh, "The Making of Arms in Civil War Biafra", p.14.

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Okafor, Charles (Chief)	70	A Retired Civil Servant	Aba,	17/6/2023
Okpala, Lebechukwu	85	Chief and Retired Civil Servant	Umuahia,	11/6/2023

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