

**SECESSION, IMPACT, CHALLENGES ON A NATION USING BIAFRA AS A CASE  
STUDY**

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BENIN CITY.**

**JANUARY, 2025**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND  
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**BENIN CITY.**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by UDECHUKWU NWABUEZE OLUCHUKWU in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin, under my supervision.

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**Dr. Daniel O. Iwueze**  
Supervisor

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**Dr. Frank Ikponmwosa**  
Head of Department

Date-----

Date-----

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, and to all freedom fighter all over the world.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to God Almighty, for His great mercies and grace upon my life, from start to finish. His love has kept and brought me thus far.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

### Introduction

Secession has been noticeably absent from International Relations theory although its role in the creation and recognition of states is clearly relevant.' Traditionally, the dominant perspective in International Relations have not questioned state formation and this has effectively barred secession as a topic since it cannot be thoroughly treated without looking across the inside/outside divide of state sovereignty. Secession must be placed in its historical context — as a phenomenon only possible in the modern era and only perceived as a global threat in this century. Theorists from other disciplines who have discussed secession have reached on a problem-solving theoretical perspective which has kept them from considering secession as an outcome of problematic assumptions about identity and territory in the international system. In contrast, a critical theoretical perspective, which affirms the constitutive processes of historical discourse allows an analysis of secession which exposes the contingency of its basic assumptions.

Historicizing the territorial state allows us to recognize the different structures of political power through which we have already passed and thus to theorize about different forms for the future. The secessionist imperative narrates the boundaries of a specific people who must be secured by a territorial state. Textual analysis of secessionist documents reveals that the narrative

strategies they employ are exclusionist and historically short-sighted. Recognizing identity as a continuous and relational process is a necessary step towards a post-territorialist order. If different forms of political space are practiced, democracy must also be re-theorized. There is no single model which can guarantee peaceful democratic politics since ambiguity and conflict are inherent in the political process itself and must be encouraged. However, an understanding of the inter-subjective processes through which we have generated our present day politics of territory and identity can open up the theoretical space required for alternative politics. Secession refers to the act of a region or group within a country seeking to establish an independent state separate from the existing nation.

Biafra serves as an interesting case study when discussing secession, as it refers to a region in Nigeria that declared independence in 1967, leading to a civil war that lasted until 1970. Analyzing the impact and challenges of secession using Biafra as an example can provide insights into the broader implications of such movements.

### **Definition of Secession**

Secession is one of the few remaining options for the generation of new states in the international system; it would thus seem to be a subject of profound importance for the theory and study of International Relations. And yet it continues to be largely neglected by International Relations scholars both as a subject and as a concept. If the study of International Relations can be said to

consist of either the examination of relations between states, or of the existence of a global system or society among states, or the relations between various state and non-state actors in the international system, or a combination of all of the above, then secession — as an event which involves and effects all three of these types of relations — must be acknowledged as a highly relevant feature of the modern international system. Serious secessionist movements, as potential states themselves, affect relations between states by presenting all of the states in the system with the dilemma of whether or not to recognize them, and thus whether or not to bestow upon them the legal status of sovereignty and thereby establish international relations with them. Given the considerable privileges which accompany the status of sovereignty, as well as the likelihood of upsetting relations with the remaining parent state, the recognition decision is a weighty one. In fact, the untidy nature of the international system reflects this difficulty, with such important non-state players as Taiwan and the Palestinian authority.' The international system itself is also affected by secessionist movements since their success or failure indicates the relative balance of the tension between the principles of self-determination and territorial integrity. The prevalence of one of the principles.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim and objectives of the study include the following:

1. To understand the meaning and the major causes of secession.
2. To examine the impact and challenges of secession on a state.

3. To evaluate the effects of secession on a state, especially a country like Nigeria.
4. To ascertain the Social, political and economic effects of secession on Nigeria.
5. To evaluate the measures that should be taken to scuttle the chances of having a secessionist group in a country.

### **Scope of study**

The study focuses on the impacts as well as the challenges of secession on a Nation. However, for the purpose of specification, the emphasis will be placed on Nigeria, using BIAFRA as a case study. The scope of the study is therefore, limited to Biafran agitation in Nigeria from its inception to its resurgence in 15 November 2015.

### **Methodology**

The study adopts the historical research method in examining issues, concepts and events. However, the nature of the topic under consideration makes it expedient that historical analysis be employed, to ensure a proper and objective evaluation of events.

The research is qualitative in nature, involving the use of secondary data as sources of information. The study will focus on journals, reports, articles, newspapers, textbooks, conference papers, thesis and dissertation, and various online publications related to the subject matter under consideration.

## Literature Review

Though varieties of literatures already exist on this subject matter, the reality presents a situation whereby the story of Biafra war is either exaggerated or certain facts are deliberately or subconsciously omitted. This identified gap however, is principally the major area of focus in which the contributions of this study would attempt to fill.

To sum up the varied literary legacies of the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967-70) in a single volume is no easy task. The conflict, which ended in the deaths of an estimated 3 - 4 million people, has produced a vast array of biographical, historical and fictional texts by writers from diverse backgrounds and with myriad political proclivities. This, however, is the impressive aim of Toyin Falola and Ogechukwu Ezekwem in *Writing the Nigeria-Biafra War* (James Currey 2016). While the editors frame the work as an intellectual history of the war rather than a complete critical compendium of textual responses, they still describe the book as “the first attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the civil war writings”. The volume certainly explores a large range of issues and texts: from Ogechi Anyanwu’s theoretically rich investigation into the causes of the war and Hugh Hodges’ fascinating reading of Chris Abani’s novel *GraceLand* (2004) through the lenses of the Nietzschean concepts of redemption and nihilism, to Fiona Bateman’s assessment of the theatrical reception of Biafra in the Irish imagination.

The ambition of the project is certainly to be commended, and a number of its chapters make important interventions in the field. Particularly compelling are the contributions from

Austine Okwu and Biodun Jeyifo, who offer personal perspectives on aspects of the war literature. Okwu, who worked as a Biafran diplomat during the war, gives unique insight into the history of the notorious Ahiara Declaration, a document published by the Biafran regime in the dying months of the conflict. Okwu argues as the declaration tried to shore up support for the secession, it hastened Biafra's downfall by alienating powerful interest groups within and outside the enclave. In addition, Biodun Jeyifo's essay offers a thoughtful response to Chinua Achebe's controversial final publication, his war memoir titled *There Was A Country* (2012). In it, Jeyifo finds a different Achebe to the one canonised in Africa literary studies: an alternative Achebe whom Jeyifo argues rejects subtlety for the purposes of ideological zealotry. However, despite these contradictions, Jeyifo ultimately asserts that *There Was A Country* offers a productive first step towards a fuller understanding of the war's divisive legacies.

These chapters, and many others besides, effectively combine scholarly rigour and passion, producing contextually grounded and original insights. And yet, the success of these contributions is undermined by the volume's broader structure. The book is split into four parts, with each section centering on a different paradigm: namely, the historiography of the war, the critical debates in Biafra scholarship, the war's portrayal in fiction and memoir, and the position of gender in the corpus. While these subjects represent important critical concerns, they are so deeply interrelated that the use of such a general organising framework risks producing an incoherent narrative. Indeed, while essays by Akachi Odoemene and Meredith Coffey both

explore the significance of ethnicity in historical and literary responses to the war, they are inserted in different sections despite their clear correspondence. This decision certainly demonstrates the difficulty involved in trying to distinguish between ‘history’ and ‘fiction’. The editors could, however, have created a clearer and more dynamic framework by rejecting narrow formalistic classifications and drawing out links between chapters that cut across disciplines and genres. This confusion is also demonstrated by the uneven length of the four sections. Although the first and second parts, which set up the historiographical and theoretical debates around the war, both include four chapters, the fiction and memoir section is more than double that length, spanning nine essays. The final gender section, by contrast, comprises only three. Although this imbalance reflects the critical and commercial dominance of literary portrayals of Biafra, it makes the ‘gender’ section feel like an afterthought. It is as if the editors felt obliged to make a progressive gesture to the work of female writers even though the writings of renowned authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Buchi Emecheta are explored earlier in the volume. Why not break out of these narrow formal and identity divides, and offer a more radical interpretation of the war’s legacies by dedicating a section to queer and other marginal voices? This seemed particularly urgent given the work done in this area by several contributors. I felt the volume could have also benefited from bringing the visual arts and music into the discussion: a move which would offer new formulations that better reflect the diversity of Biafra’s intellectual and artistic impact.

These reservations notwithstanding, writing the Nigeria-Biafra War provides an engaging and often enlightening exploration of the Biafran war's cultural and intellectual history. While there is a tendency to re-enforce established approaches rather than forge new directions, many of the most striking contributions to this volume begin this urgent intellectual work. In so doing, they dare to pursue unfamiliar pathways in the effort of reinvigorating understanding of Biafra's extraordinary creative influence.

## **Chapterization**

### **Chapter One: Background to the Study**

This chapter will look at the introductory part of the work, methodology, aims and objectives of the work, scope as well as the literature review of the work which is very imperative.

### **Chapter Two: Brief History of Secession, Types and Origin of Secession**

This chapter will provide the history of secession as well as how secession in other countries of the world originated.

### **Chapter Three: Causes, Impacts and Challenges of Secession on a Nation Specifically, Nigeria**

This chapter will look into the various close and remote causes of secessionist movement in a country as well as their impact and challenges with clear references to the Biafran war fought in the Eastern region of Nigeria.

## **Chapter Four: Impact of the International Community in the Biafran War and Final Resolutions to the War**

This chapter examines the role of the international governments, organizations and unions in the Biafran War as the final resolution to the war.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

This chapter will focus on rounding up the subject of the study, it would observe the dimension of research findings this study has carried out.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF SECESSION

Secession refers to the act of withdrawing or breaking away from a larger entity, such as a country or state. Its origins can be traced back to ancient times when city-states or regions sought independence. Notable historical examples include the secession of the 13 American colonies from British rule in 1776, leading to the formation of the United States, and the Southern states' secession from the Union in 1860-1861, which triggered the American Civil War. 1 Throughout history, secession has been driven by factors such as cultural differences, political disputes, economic interests, and desires for self-governance. Threats of secession can be a strategy for achieving more limited goals. It is a process, which commences once a group proclaims the act of secession (e.g. declaration of independence). 2 A secession attempt might be violent or peaceful, but the goal is the creation of a new state or entity independent from the group or territory it seceded from. 3

Prominent examples of secession and secession attempts include the Confederate States of America seceding from the Union, the former Soviet republics leaving the Soviet Union after its dissolution, Texas leaving Mexico during the Texas Revolution, Biafra leaving Nigeria and returning after losing the Nigerian Civil War, and Ireland leaving the United Kingdom.

## Types of Secession

- Secession theorists have described a number of ways in which a political entity (city, county, canton, state) can secede from the larger or original state: 4

Secession from federation or confederation (political entities with substantial reserved powers which have agreed to join together) versus secession from a unitary state (a state governed as a single unit with few powers reserved to sub-units)

- Colonial wars of independence from an imperial state although this is decolonisation rather than secession.
- Recursive secession, such as India decolonising from the British Empire, then Pakistan seceding from India, or Georgia seceding from the Soviet Union, then South Ossetia seceding from Georgia.
- National (seceding entirely from the national state) versus local (seceding from one entity of the national state into another entity of the same state)
- Central or enclave (seceding entity is completely surrounded by the original state) versus peripheral (along a border of the original state)
- Secession by contiguous units versus secession by non-contiguous units (exclaves)

- Separation or partition (although an entity secedes, the rest of the state retains its structure) versus dissolution (all political entities dissolve their ties and create several new states)
- Irredentism where secession is sought in order to annex the territory to another state because of common ethnicity or prior historical links
- Minority (a minority of the population or territory secedes) versus majority (a majority of the population or territory secedes)
- Secession of better-off regions versus secession of worse-off regions.
- The threat of secession is sometimes used as a strategy to gain greater autonomy within the original state.

### **Right to Secession**

Most sovereign states do not recognize the right to self-determination through secession in their constitutions. Many expressly forbid it. However, there are several existing models of self-determination through greater autonomy and through secession.

In liberal constitutional democracies, the principle of majority rule has dictated whether a minority can secede. In the United States Abraham Lincoln acknowledged that secession might be possible through amending the United States Constitution. The Supreme Court in *Texas v. White* held secession could occur "through revolution, or through consent of the States". The

British Parliament in 1933 held that Western Australia could secede from the Commonwealth of Australia only upon vote of a majority of the country as a whole; the previous two-thirds majority vote for secession via referendum in Western Australia was insufficient.

The Chinese Communist Party followed the Soviet Union in including the right of secession in its 1931 constitution in order to entice ethnic nationalities and Tibet into joining. However, the Party eliminated the right to secession in later years, and had anti-secession clause written into the Constitution before and after the founding the People's Republic of China. The 1947 Constitution of the Union of Burma contained an express state right to secede from the union under a number of procedural conditions. It was eliminated in the 1974 constitution of the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma (officially the "Union of Myanmar"). Burma still allows "local autonomy under central leadership".

As of 1996, the constitutions of Austria, Ethiopia, France, and Saint Kitts and Nevis have express or implied rights to secession. Switzerland allows for the secession from current and the creation of new cantons. In the case of proposed Quebec separation from Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada in 1998 ruled that only both a clear majority of the province and a constitutional amendment confirmed by all participants in the Canadian federation could allow secession.

The 2003 draft of the European Union Constitution allowed for the voluntary withdrawal of member states from the union, although the representatives of the member-state which wanted

to leave could not participate in the withdrawal discussions of the European Council or of the Council of Ministers. There was much discussion about such self-determination by minorities before the final document underwent the unsuccessful ratification process in 2005. Although in 2007 the Treaty on European Union included Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, the right to withdraw from the EU, which has been the case with Brexit. 5

As a result of the successful constitutional referendum held in 2003, every municipality in the Principality of Liechtenstein has the right to secede from the Principality by a vote of a majority of the citizens residing in that municipality.

Indigenous peoples have a range of different forms of indigenous sovereignty and have the right of self-determination, but under current understanding of international law they have a mere "remedial" right to secession in extreme cases of abuse of their rights, because independence and sovereign statehood is a territorial and diplomatic claim and not one of self-determination and self-government respectively, generally leaving rights to secession to the internal legislation of sovereign states.

## **Secession Movements**

### **Australia**

During the 19th century, the single British colony in eastern mainland Australia, New South Wales (NSW) was progressively divided up by the British government as new settlements were formed and spread. Victoria (Vic) in 1851 and Queensland (Qld) in 1859.

However, settlers agitated to divide the colonies throughout the later part of the century; particularly in central Queensland (centred in Rockhampton) in the 1860s and 1890s, and in North Queensland (with Bowen as a potential colonial capital) in the 1870s. Other secession (or territorial separation) movements arose and these advocated the secession of New England in northern central New South Wales, Deniliquin in the Riverina district also in NSW, and Mount Gambier in the eastern part of South Australia. 6

### **Western Australia**

Secession movements have surfaced several times in Western Australia (WA), where a 1933 referendum for secession from the Federation of Australia passed with a two-thirds majority. The referendum had to be ratified by the British Parliament, which declined to act, on the grounds that it would contravene the Australian Constitution. The Principality of Hutt River claimed to have seceded from Australia in 1970, although its status was not recognised by Australia or any other country. *ibid*

### **Austria**

After being liberated by the Red Army and the U.S. Army, Austria seceded from Nazi Germany on April 27, 1945. This took place after seven years under Nazi rule, which began with the annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany in March 1938. The secession only took place once Nazi Germany had been defeated by the Allies. *ibid*

## **Bangladesh**

The Banga Sena (Bengal Army) is a separatist Hindu organisation, which supports the making of a Bangabhumi/separate homeland for Bengali Hindus in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. The group is led by Kalidas Baidya. The Shanti Bahini (Bengali: শান্তি বাহিনী, "Peace Force") is the name of the military wing of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti - the United People's Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts aims are to create an indigenous Buddhist orientated Chacomas state within SE Bangladesh. 9

## **Belgium and the Netherlands**

On August 25, 1830, during the reign of William I, the nationalistic opera *La muette de Portici* was performed in Brussels. Soon after, the Belgian Revolt occurred, which resulted in the Belgian secession from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. 10ibid

## **Brazil**

In 1825, soon after the Empire of Brazil managed to defeat the Cortes-Gerais and the Portuguese Empire in an Independence War, the Platinean nationalists in Cisplatina declared independence and joined the United Provinces, which led to a stagnated war between both, as they were both weakened, without manpower and fragile politically. 11ibid The peace treaty accepted Uruguay's independence, reasserted the rule of both nations over their land and some

important points like free navigation in the Silver River. Three rather disorganized secessionist rebellions happened in Grão-Pará, Bahia and Maranhão, where the people were unhappy with the Empire (these provinces were Portuguese bastions in the Independence War). The Malê Revolt, in Bahia, was an Islamic slave revolt. These three rebellions were bloodily crushed by the Empire of Brazil.

The Pernambuco was one of the most nativist of all Brazilian regions, which in five revolts (1645–1654, 1710, 1817, 1824, 1848), the province ousted the Dutch West India Company, tried to secede from the Portuguese Empire and from the Brazilian Empire. In the attempts the rebels were crushed, the leaders shot and its territory divided, nevertheless, they kept revolting until its territory was a little fraction of what it was before. 12

In the Ragamuffin War, the Province of Rio Grande do Sul was undergoing a (at that time common) liberal vs conservative "cold" war. After Emperor Pedro II of Brazil favoured the conservatives, the liberals took the Capital and declared an independent Republic, fighting their way to the Province of Santa Catarina, declaring the Juliana Republic. Eventually they were slowly forced back, and made a reunification peace with the Empire.

The war was not a secessionist war, even if it could become if the Empire were defeated, after the Empire agreed to aid its economy by taxing Argentina's products (like dry meat), the rebels reunited with the Empire and even filled its ranks, as the rebels were very good fighters. In

modern times, the South Region of Brazil has been the centre of a secessionist movement led by an organization called The South is My Country since the 1990s.

Reasons cited for South Region Brazil's secession are taxation due to it being one of the wealthiest regions in the country and political disputes with the northernmost states of Brazil as well as the recent scandal revolving around the Workers Party found to be making shady deals with state-owned oil company Petrobras and the impeachment of then-President Dilma Rousseff additionally there is also an ethnic divide as the South Region is predominately European populated primarily by Germans, Italians, Portuguese and other European countries in contrast to the rest of Brazil which is a multicultural melting pot "Racial Democracy". The South Region in 2016 voted in an unofficial referendum called "Plebisul" in which 616,917 (or half a million) voters overwhelmingly supported secession and the creation of an independent South Region by 95%. Another Brazilian secession movement is based in the state of Sao Paulo which seeks to create to make the state an independent country from the rest of Brazil.

## **Cameroon**

In October 2017, Ambazonia declared its independence from Cameroon. Less than a month beforehand, tensions had escalated into open warfare between separatists and the Cameroon Armed Forces. The conflict, known as the "Anglophone Crisis", is deeply rooted in the October 1, 1961 incomplete decolonization of the former British Southern Cameroons

(UNGA Resolution 1608). On January 1, 1960, French Cameroon was granted independence from France as the Republic of Cameroon and was admitted into the United Nations. The more advanced democratic and self-ruling people of British Cameroon were instead limited to two choices. Through a UN plebiscite, they were directed to either join the federation of Nigeria or the independent Republic of Cameroon as a federation of two equal states. While the Northern Cameroons voted to join Nigeria, the Southern Cameroons voted to integrate into the Republic of Cameroon, but they did so without a formal UN Treaty of Union on record at the UN. In 1972, Cameroon used its majority population to abolish the federation and implement a system which resulted in the occupation of the former South Cameroons territory by French-speaking Cameroon administrators.

To make matters worse in 1984, Cameroon returned to its name at independence "Republic of Cameroun" which did not include the territory of the former British Southern Cameroons or Ambazonia. For more than fifty years the English-speaking people of the Former British Southern Cameroons made multiple attempts both nationally and internationally to get the Cameroon government to address these issues and possibly return to the previously agreed federation at independence. When all these attempts failed in 2016 and Cameroon engaged in a military crackdown including cutting the internet in the English-speaking regions, the people of Southern Cameroons declared on October 1, 2017, the restoration of their UN state of Southern Cameroons, which they called the "Federal Republic of Ambazonia".

## **Canada**

Throughout Canada's history, there has been tension between English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians. Under the Constitutional Act of 1791, the Province of Quebec (including parts of what are today Quebec, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador) was divided in two: Lower Canada (which retained French law and institutions and is now part of the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador) and Upper Canada (a new colony intended to accommodate the many new English-speaking settlers, including the United Empire Loyalists, and now part of Ontario). The intent was to provide each group with its own colony. In 1841, the two Canadas were merged into the Province of Canada. The union proved contentious, however, resulting in a legislative deadlock between English and French legislators. The difficulties of the union led (amongst other factors) in 1867 to Confederation, the adoption of a federal system that united the Province of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (later joined by other British colonies in North America). The federal framework did not eliminate all tensions, however, leading to the Quebec sovereignty movement in the latter half of the 20th century. Other occasional secessionist movements have included anti-Confederation movements in the 19th century Atlantic Canada (see Anti-Confederation Party), the North-West Rebellion of 1885, and various small separatism movements in Alberta particularly (see Alberta separatism) and Western Canada generally (see, for example, Western Canada Concept).

## **Central America**

After the 1823 collapse of the First Mexican Empire, the former Captaincy-General of Guatemala was organized into a new Federal Republic of Central America. In 1838 Nicaragua seceded. The Federal Republic was formally dissolved in 1840, all but one of the states having seceded amidst general disorder.

## **China**

- The Anti-Secession Law against the Taiwan independence movement
- Western regions of Xinjiang (East Turkistan) and Tibet are the focus of secessionist calls by the Tibetan independence movement and East Turkestan Independence Movement.
- The Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong has a secessionist movement in the city that the Chinese Communist Party has placed on the national security agenda in 2017 which is called the Hong Kong independence movement.

## **Congo**

In 1960 the State of Katanga declared independence from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. United Nations troops crushed it in Operation Grand Slam.

## **Cyprus**

In 1974, Greek irredentists launched a coup d'état in Cyprus, in an attempt to annex the island with Greece. Almost immediately, the Turkish Army invaded northern Cyprus to protect the

interests of the ethnic Turkish minority, who in the following year formed the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus and in 1983 declared independence as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, recognized only by Turkey.

### **East Timor**

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (also known as East Timor) has been described as having "seceded" from Indonesia. After Portuguese sovereignty was terminated in 1975, East Timor was occupied by Indonesia. However, the United Nations and the International Court of Justice refused to recognize this incorporation. Therefore, the resulting civil war and eventual 2002 East Timorese vote for complete separation are better described as an independence movement.

### **Ethiopia**

Following the May 1991 victory of Eritrean People's Liberation Front forces against the communist Derg regime during the Eritrean War of Independence, Eritrea (formerly known as "Medri Bahri") gained de facto independence from Ethiopia. Following the United Nations observation 1993 Eritrean independence referendum, Eritrea gained de jure independence.

Before the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on 1 December 2009 no provision in the treaties or law of the European Union outlined the ability of a state to voluntarily withdraw from the EU.

The European Constitution did propose such a provision and, after the failure to ratify the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, that provision was then included in the Lisbon Treaty.

## **European Union**

The treaty introduces an exit clause for members who wish to withdraw from the Union. This formalises the procedure by stating that a member state may notify the European Council that it wishes to withdraw, upon which withdrawal negotiations begin; if no other agreement is reached the treaty ceases to apply to the withdrawing state two years after such notification. On June 23, 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union in a non-binding referendum, and finally left the European Union on January 31, 2020. This is informally known as Brexit.

## **Finland**

Finland successfully and peacefully seceded from the newly formed and unstable Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in 1917, the latter led by Lenin who had goodwill towards the Finns due to their help in his revolutionary struggle. Unsuccessful attempts at greater autonomy or peaceful secession had already been made during the preceding Russian Empire but had been denied by the Russian emperor.

## **Gran Colombia**

After a decade of tumultuous federalism, Ecuador and Venezuela seceded from Gran Colombia in 1830, leaving the similarly tumultuous United States of Colombia, now the Republic of Colombia which also lost Panama in 1903.

## **India**

Pakistan seceded from the British Indian empire in what is known as the Partition. Today, the Constitution of India does not allow Indian states to secede from the Union. The Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir hosts some paramilitary Muslim-state-advocating nationalists, operating against the Indian establishment. They are mostly in the Valley of Kashmir since 1989, where the Indian Army sometimes patrols, having bases along the nearby international border. They are supported by Pakistan which has allegedly funded many terrorist, separatist outfits for destabilising India according to the Indian Research and Analysis Wing, though the country denies any direct involvement. The Kashmir insurgency reached at its peak influence in the 1990s. Other secessionist movements in Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Punjab (known as the Khalistan movement), Mizoram and Tripura, Tamil Nadu . The violent Naxalite–Maoist insurgency operates in eastern rural India is rarely considered secessionist as its goal is to overthrow the government of India. The Communist Party of India (Maoist)'s commanders idealise a Communist republic to be made up swathes of India.

## **Iran**

Active secession movements include: Iranian Azeri, Assyrian independence movement, Bakhtiary lurs movement in 1876, Iranian Kurdistan; Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI), Khūzestān Province Balochistan and independence movement for free separated Balochistan, (Arab nationalist); Al-Ahwaz Arab People's Democratic Popular Front, Democratic Solidarity Party of Al-Ahwaz (See Politics of Khūzestān Province: Arab politics and separatism), and Balochistan People's Party (BPP) supporting Baloch Separatism.

## **Italy**

The Movement for the Independence of Sicily (Movimento Indipendentista Siciliano, MIS) has its roots in the Sicilian Independence Movement of the late 1940s; they have been around for 60 years. Today, the MIS no longer exists, though many other parties have been born. One is Nation Sicily (Sicilia Nazione), which still believes in the idea that Sicily, due to its deeply personal and ancient history, has to be a sovereign country. Moreover, a common ideology shared by all the Sicilian independentist movements is to fight against Cosa Nostra and all the other Mafia organizations that have a very deep influence over Sicily's public and private institutions. Also, the Sicilian branch of the Five Star Movement, which is according to the polls Sicily's most popular party, has publicly expressed the intention to start working for a possible secession from Italy in the case where the central government would not collaborate in shifting the nation's administrative organization from a unitary country to a federal state. Lega Nord has been seeking the independence of the so-called region of Padania, which includes lands along the

Po Valley in northern Italy. Some organizations separately work for the independence of Venetia or Veneto and the secession or reunification of South Tyrol with Austria. Lega Nord governing Lombardy has expressed a will in turning the region into a sovereign country. Also, the island of Sardinia is home to a notable nationalist movement. In Southern Italy, several movements have expressed a will to secede from Italy. This newborn ideology is so-called neo-Bourbonic, because the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was under the control of the House of Bourbon. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was created in 1816 after the Congress of Vienna, and it comprised both Sicily and continental Southern Italy. The Kingdom came to an end in 1861, being annexed to the newborn Kingdom of Italy. However, the patriotic feelings shared among the southern Italian population is more ancient, starting in 1130 with the Kingdom of Sicily, which was composed by both the island and south Italy. According to the neo-Bourbonic movements the Italian regions which should secede are Sicily, Calabria, Basilicata, Apulia, Molise, Campania, Abruzzo, and Latio's provinces of Rieti, Latina and Frosinone. The major movements and parties which believe in this ideology are Unione Mediterranea, Mo! and Briganti.

## **Mexico**

Texas seceded from Mexico in 1836 (see Texas Revolution), after animosity between the Mexican government and the American settlers of the Coahuila y Tejas State. It was later annexed by the United States in 1845.

The Republic of the Rio Grande seceded from Mexico on January 17, 1840. It rejoined Mexico on November 6 the same year.

After the federal system was abandoned by President Santa Anna, the Congress of Yucatán approved in 1840 a declaration of independence, establishing the Republic of Yucatán. The Republic rejoined Mexico in 1843.

## **Netherlands**

The United Provinces of the Netherlands, commonly referred to historiographically as the 'Dutch Republic', was a federal republic formally established from the formal creation of a federal state in 1581 by several Dutch provinces seceded from Spain.

Secession movements have surfaced several times in the South Island of New Zealand. A Premier of New Zealand, Sir Julius Vogel, was amongst the first people to make this call, which was voted on by the Parliament of New Zealand as early as 1865. The desire for South Island independence was one of the main factors in moving the capital of New Zealand from Auckland to Wellington in the same year.

## **New Zealand**

The NZ South Island Party with a pro-South agenda, fielded only five candidates (4.20% of electoral seats) candidates in the 1999 General Election but achieved only 0.14% (2622 votes)

of the general vote. The reality today is that although "South Islanders" are most proud of their geographic region, secession does not carry any real constituency; the party was not able to field any candidates in the 2008 election, as they had less than 500 paying members, a requirement by the New Zealand Electoral commission. The party is treated more as a "joke" party than any real political force.

## **Nigeria**

Between 1967 and 1970, the Eastern Region seceded from Nigeria and established the Republic of Biafra, which led to a war that ended with the state returning to Nigeria. In 1999, at the beginning of a new democratic regime, other secessionist movements emerged, including the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, formed as a military wing of the Republic of Biafra. In 2012, another wing for the actualization of a homogenous Biafran nation known as the Indigenous People Of Biafra (IPOB) was established. Till today, the group has continued to exhibit their willingness to pull out of Nigeria. In the next chapter where we shall talk specifically about the effects, impacts and challenges of secession, we shall discuss it based on the Nigerian settings.

## **Pakistan**

After the Awami League won the 1970 national elections, negotiations to form a new government floundered, resulting in the Bangladesh Liberation War by which East Pakistan

seceded, becoming Bangladesh. The Balochistan Liberation Army (also Baloch Liberation Army or Boluchistan Liberation Army) (BLA) is a Baloch nationalist militant secessionist organization. The stated goals of the organization include the establishment of an independent state of Balochistan free of Pakistani, Iranian and Afghan Federations. The name Baloch Liberation Army first became public in the summer of 2000, after the organization claimed credit for a series of bomb attacks in markets and removal of railways lines.

## **Somalia**

Somaliland is an autonomous region, which is part of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Those who call the area the Republic of Somaliland consider it to be the successor state of the former British Somaliland protectorate. Having established its own local government in Somalia in 1991, the region's self-declared independence remains unrecognized by any country or international organization.

## **South Africa**

In 1910, following the British Empire's defeat of the Afrikaners in the Boer Wars, four self-governing colonies in the south of Africa were merged into the Union of South Africa. The four regions were the Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Natal and Transvaal. Three other territories, High Commission Territories of Bechuanaland (now Botswana), Basutoland (now Lesotho) and Swaziland (now Eswatini) later became independent states in the 1960s. Following

the election of the Nationalist government in 1948, some English-speaking whites in Natal advocated either secession or a loose federation. There were also calls for secession, with Natal and the eastern part of the Cape Province breaking away. Following the referendum in 1960 on establishing a republic, and in 1993, prior to South Africa's first elections under universal suffrage and the end of apartheid, some Zulu leaders in KwaZulu-Natal considered secession as did some politicians in the Cape Province.

In 2008, a political movement calling for the return to independence of the Cape resurged in the shape of the political organisation, the Cape Party. The Cape Party contested their first elections on 22 April 2009. They finished the Western Cape provincial elections in 2019 with 9,331 votes, or 0,45% of votes, gaining no seats. The idea gained popularity in the early half of the 2020s, with polling suggesting that 58% of Western Cape Voters want a referendum on independence in July 2021.

## **South Sudan**

A referendum took place in Southern Sudan from 9th to 15th January 2011, on whether the region should remain a part of Sudan or become independent. The referendum was one of the consequences of the 2005 Naivasha Agreement between the Khartoum central government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M).

A simultaneous referendum was supposed to be held in Abyei on whether to join Southern Sudan but it has been postponed because of conflict over demarcation and residency rights. On 7th February 2011, the referendum commission published the final results, with 98.83% voting in favour of independence. While the ballots were suspended in 10 of the 79 counties for exceeding 100% of the voter turnout, the number of votes was still well over the requirement of 60% turnout, and the majority vote for secession is not in question. The predetermined date for the creation of an independent state was 95th July 2011.

### **Soviet Union**

The Constitution of the Soviet Union guaranteed all SSRs the right to secede from the Union. In 1990, after free elections, the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic declared independence and other republics soon followed. Despite the Soviet central government's refusal to recognize the independence of the republics, the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

### **Spain**

Present-day Spain (known officially as "the Kingdom of Spain") was assembled as a central state in the French model between the 18th and 19th centuries from various component kingdoms with varying languages, cultures and legislations. Spain has several secessionist movements, the most notable ones being in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia.

### **Sri Lanka**

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, operated a de facto independent state for Tamils called Tamil Eelam in eastern and northern Sri Lanka until 2009.

## **Switzerland**

In 1847, seven disaffected Catholic cantons formed a separate alliance because of moves to change the cantons of Switzerland from a confederation to a more centralized government federation. This effort was crushed in the Sonderbund War and a new Swiss Federal Constitution was created.

## **Ukraine**

In 2014 after the start of Russian intervention in Ukraine, several groups of people declared the independence of several Ukrainian regions:

The Donetsk People's Republic was declared to be independent from Ukraine on 7 April 2014, comprising the territory of the Donetsk Oblast. There have been military confrontations between the Ukrainian Army and the forces of the Donetsk People's Republic when the Ukrainian Government attempted to reassert control over the oblast.

The Lugansk Parliamentary Republic was proclaimed on 27th April 2014 before being succeeded by the Lugansk People's Republic. The Lugansk forces have successfully occupied vital buildings in Lugansk since 8 April, and controlled the City Council, prosecutor's office, and police station since 27th April. The Government of the Lugansk Oblast announced its support for a referendum, and granted the governorship to independence leader Valeriy Bolotov.

## United Kingdom

The Republic of Ireland withdrew from the United Kingdom after Ireland proclaimed independence in 1916 and, as the Irish Free State, gained independence in 1922. The United Kingdom has a number of secession movements:

- In Northern Ireland, Irish republicans and nationalists have long called for the secession of Northern Ireland to join the Republic of Ireland. This is opposed by Unionists. A minority have supported the independence of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom without joining the Republic of Ireland.
- In Scotland, the Scottish National Party (SNP) campaigns for Scottish independence and direct Scottish membership in the European Union. It has representation at all levels of Scottish politics and forms the devolved Scottish government. Later pro-independence parties have had lesser electoral success. The Scottish Greens and the Scottish Socialist Party are most widely publicised. However, all independence movements/parties are opposed by unionists. A referendum on independence in which voters were asked "Should Scotland be an independent country?" took place in September 2014. It saw "no" win, as 55.3% of voters voted against independence.
- In Wales, Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales) stands for Welsh independence within the European Union. It is also represented at all levels of Welsh politics and has often been the second largest party in the Senedd (Welsh Parliament).

- England: In Cornwall, supporters of Mebyon Kernow call for the creation of a Cornish Assembly and separation from England, giving the county significant self-government, whilst remaining within the United Kingdom as a fifth home nation.

London has supporters of an independent or semi-autonomous city-state since the 2016 EU Referendum in which Londoners voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. A London independence party, known as Londependence, was established in June 2019. Their calls increased after the 2019 General Election in which most Londoners voted for the Labour Party, gaining a representative, bucking the national trend.

The Northern Independence Party is a party formed in 2020 that seeks to make Northern England an independent state under the name Northumbria.

## **United States**

Discussions and threats of secession often surfaced in American politics during the first half of the 19th century, and secession was declared by the Confederate States of America in the South during the American Civil War. However, in 1869, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Texas v. White* that unilateral secession was not permitted, saying that the union between a state (Texas in the case before the bar) "was as complete, as perpetual, and as indissoluble as the union between the original States. There was no place for reconsideration or revocation, except through revolution or through consent of the States."

## **Yemen**

North Yemen and South Yemen merged in 1990; tensions led to a 1994 southern secession which was crushed in a civil war.

## **Yugoslavia**

On June 25th, 1991, Croatia and Slovenia seceded from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia also declared independence, after which the federation broke up, causing the separation of the remaining two countries Serbia and Montenegro. Several wars ensued between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and seceding entities and among other ethnic groups in Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later, Kosovo. Montenegro peacefully separated from its union with Serbia in 2006.

Kosovo unilaterally declared de facto independence from Serbia on February 17th, 2008, and was recognized by several dozen countries, but officially remains under United Nations administration.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### CAUSES, IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES OF SECESSION ON A COUNTRY; USING NIGERIA AS A CASE STUDY.

#### Introduction

Nigeria is a multi-ethnic nation, diversified in cultural affiliation and tradition. Nigeria is divided into three different regions – Northern, Western and Southern region, with six geopolitical zones namely, North West, North East, North Central, South South, South East and South West. Of all these regions and zones came the three major tribes which are Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa who occupied the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Nigeria respectively.

Although the secessionist movement in Nigeria started immediately after the amalgamation through to the civil wars of 1967-1970, it has experienced a new dimension in the last two decades. This movement in Nigeria has its historical antecedents to the “unholy marriage” known as the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorate in Nigeria. Between August 9th, 1967 and January 14th, 1970, Nigeria witnessed her first civil war which claimed millions of lives of the Nigerian citizens.

The aim of this research is to examine the root cause of the different secessionist movements in Nigeria. To know the reasons why there are dissenting voices even in the various agitating groups. To examine the reasons why the IPOB movement have taken the front burner on the media today. To achieve this, oral interview has been maximally consulted. People of

various background, tribe, occupation and professionalism have been interviewed for the purpose of this research. And this is to maintain a high level of accuracy and objectivity.

To understand both the remote and immediate causes of this civil wars orchestrated chiefly by the Biafran movement led by late col Odumegwu Chukwuemeka Ojukwu and which has reared its ugly head to the present, there is need to examine the work of Charles G. Thomas,- and Toyin Falola On “secession and separatist conflicts in post-colonial Africa” who highlighted that “the Nigerian civil war, like all civil wars, did not exist In a vacuum. [1] According to the authors, things began to change in the 1914 when Britain connected the previously separate Northern Nigeria to the South, making a single administration. At this time, the union was unequal and unholy where the northerners appeared to have little or nothing to offer. However, after independence in 1960, things escalated very quick than expected. According to this book, the easterners in the southern Nigeria felt marginalized and politically subjugated to the north who by all and sundry received the bigger share of the national revenue. The war broke out on August 9, 1967 through January 14, 1970. Although the aftermath of this conflicts was surprisingly gentle, the fragments remained in the memories of every Nigerian who either observed directly or indirectly.

Secessionist movement in Nigeria has gained the maximum recognition and attention both at the international and national scale. This secessionist movement which rides on popular narratives have birthed varied groups with similar interests and this has its fundamental principle

on the assertion “the labour of heroes past shall never be in vain.” The return to democracy in 1999 came with it various groups with varied political voices asking political and economic questions in their own interest.

Secessionist Movement is an expected development in a multi-ethnic or multi-religious society like Nigeria. People will always feel that they are not getting enough or they are not fairly treated and at every point in time, these are the causative factors that leads to agitations. The people usually create this kind of messiah that will deliver them from their predicament. First of all after the civil war, people still felt marginalized in a reintegrated country. Then coming to democracy which is the period under review, a group called The Movement For The Actualization Of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) led by Ralph Uwazurike, rouse and said they wanted to create and republic of Biafra. The feeling was very popular among the people and it was a peaceful movement. It is important to note that agitations always come in with the quality of leadership available to the people at the time. The president of the country Chief Olusegun Obasanjo at that time was able to reintegrate the people, that is, having a balanced cabinet. So the agitation was not popular because agitations usually sell on popular narrative. Between 1999 and 2007, the agitation on political marginalization among the South Easterners was not their, the Yoruba were not agitating for a separate republic even though they were in the opposition as Alliance For Democracy known as AD. Same thing with the South Southerners

who only clamoured for a proper resource control and each time their demands are met, there is always a relative peace in the region.

In 2007, the MASSOB created its own passport based on the popular demand from the Biafrans in the diaspora, although the federal government slammed against this move. However, since it is based on popular narratives, it has the tendency of being hijacked by politicians and this is because often time in Nigeria, such agitation can be quite lucrative because the politicians will tend to exploit it for their selfish interest and this was seen with MASSOB. Any supposed leader whom people believes and see as a messianic personnel and maintains status quo would need money to fund the movement and the disciples and most times they don't have the big businesses to fund it and are prone to manipulation by the politicians and more often than not, the followers would derail and create splinter groups. Hence, from MASSOB, we have IPOB which means Indigenous People Of Biafra. IPOB started around 2010-2012 when their leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu started the radio Biafra in London and from there he used the narrative to pull out from his former boss and started IPOB movement which started as a peaceful movement. The difference between IPOB and MASSOB is that MASSOB secessionist philosophies is more recognized in the South South region that IPOB which means that the popular narrative of IPOB is not common among the South Southerners. IPOB secessionist philosophies are very clear and unambiguous. The popular narratives both among the locals and the states have given credence to the ideologies of the Nnamdi Kanu. The desire to secede from the country is fundamental on

the following principles namely, poor federal infrastructure in the region, inadequate distribution of the national revenue, maladministration, insecurity, despotism, favoritism and little or no regards to the region especially by the current administration. Although IPOB movement was not really popular when it started in 2012, it has gained prominent in the last three years because its philosophies are in tandem with the popular narratives and demand in the region due to poor administration of the present leader in the name of President Mohammed Buhari. Despite the fact that the leader of IPOB has been arrested and charged with treason and he is currently in federal government detention without traceable conviction, the disciples of Nnamdi Kanu have in efforts uphold their voices against the federal government. In practice, they observe a sit-at-home policy on any day their leader is appearing in court in solidarity to their leader.

Another agitating group in Nigeria is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). MEND was very prominent and very much organized. Unlike the South Easterners who are predominantly Igbos, the South Southerners had different tribal groups with the Ijows and the Uhrobo appearing to be more predominant. Their agitation was centered on a better deal from the government. This is because a large amount of the country's income revenue like crude oil comes from their region. Therefore the agitation made a lot of sense to the people. They could go any length to draw the attention of the federal government even by vandalizing the economy. Due to the nature of their environment, the mining of crude oil usually affects their occupation and the atmospheric conditions of the place therefore it was difficult for the federal

government to quell their agitation but only to respond positively to their plight and meet their demand. The MEND were not really after a republic but a proper recognitions from the federal government and when the late former president Umaru Musa Yar'adua led government came in 2007, he promised a lot of reforms, created the ministry for Niger Delta, NDDC, and granted them amnesty. All these only temporary dowsed the agitation but did not solve the problems permanently because environmental issues are still there such as gas flaring which in turn destroys the ecological composition of the area which results into acidic rain, damage of their crops as farmers, hot weather at night etcetera. Between 2015 and 2021, the incumbent president has not properly looked into this temporarily solved issues and the people of this area has taken a violent way to convey their needs to the federal government by distorting and vandalization of the oil pipeline and which in turn played heavy cost of economy and finance on the federal government. MEND are not really interested in a republic as at now but they are exploiting on the bad leadership of the present to convey their demands of resource management and control.

In the South West, like other agitating groups clamours for Oduduwa Republic or Yoruba Nation. Like every other secessionist groups, it always rides on popular narratives. The most popular among all other leaders of the Oduduwa group is a man called Sunday Igboho. The common narratives among the locals of this region is the issue of insecurity. The farmers in the rural area of the region have been attacked and killed in most cases by some murderers whom the people tagged the Fulani Herdsmen from the North. The state and federal government have been

treating the issues of insecurity in this region with cosmetic care and the people's lives are being threatened on a daily basis and there came Sunday Igboho who demonstrated absolute will to liberate the people and pronounce peace. Although he went about it in a way that is not civil, the people are interested in results. And this brought a relative but temporary sense of calm in the region. This birthed the ideologies of the Yoruba Nation and the mantra became popular among the people. Agitation usually result from a lacuna in leadership, thus, insecurity was the point of departure for the South Western region.

In the Northern region, we barely see secessionist movement of any kind, although there are numerous cases of insecurity especially in the North Central and North East. The popular narratives of insecurity and killings in the region have not gained enough weight to form a movement. Most of their outcry is channelled towards the federal government which often result into oblivion. The Northern region has witnessed numerous attacks from groups like the Boko Haram, Bandits, Hoodlums etcetera yet there haven't really been any strong agitation.

### **Causes of Secession on a Country**

#### **1. Ethnic and Cultural Differences**

Ethnicity is often used as a veneer by the elites to mask their intra-elite and intra-class struggles over power and resources. Over time, though, in Nigeria ethnicity has acquired a more objective character, tending towards more or less an ideology and a prism through which most government measures are filtered. It is also a potent instrument of mobilization. For instance, the

fact that Nnamdi Kanu was detained for a long period of time and denied bail despite court rulings for him to be so released stoked ethnic solidarity, even from people averse to his brand of rhetoric. The more his ethnic brethren use the refusal to grant bail as another instance of injustice against the Igbo or more evidence of Buhari's alleged hatred of the Igbo, the more Buhari's "kith and kin" from the north feel compelled to defend one of their own. The dominant ethnic groups routinely use threats of secession as bargaining tools when things are not going their way.

Nigeria is a marriage that has always threatened to fail. With all its abundant natural resources and early prospects among Africa's newly independent states, Nigeria has proven that it is not by how vast but how politically structured amidst the vastness and diversity. Nigeria's secessionist agitations are partly primordial in nature for the fact that they look to establish more ethnically homogenous states. They are packed with emotional aspects that are hard to rationalise. However, this is not surprising given that secessionist movements are often formed on the basis of a common history, religion, race, tribe and ethnicity. For this reason, secessionist agitation is usually persistent and hard to completely die out. Secessionist agitations that are not based on primordial relationships are rare but relatively easier to quell. A good example of this is the US North-South divide that led to the American civil war.

The recent reemergence of secessionist agitations in Nigeria are more ethnic than anything else. According to Horowitz, ethnicity-based secessionism is a special species of ethnic conflict. Undoubtedly, Nigeria's ethnic, religious and cultural heterogeneity is one of the many reasons

why the country is susceptible to secessionist movements. Nigeria's secessionist agitations are, by their very nature, a reflection of ethnic disharmony and conflict, particularly among the country's three main ethnic groups. However, why some elements from the country's South East and South West regions find it currently convenient to resume their secessionist agitations can be aggregated to a number of factors.

Biafra's population largely consisted of the Igbo ethnic group, which had distinct cultural and historical ties. Ethnic and cultural differences can create a sense of identity that leads to calls for secession.

## 2. Political and Economic Marginalization

Nigeria's political/institutional structure, which continues to concentrate power at the centre is another factor that promotes secession. A head of state from one section of the country means perceived marginalisation and fear of domination in the others. That has been the way Nigerians interpret power relations and has been the discourse since independence. Nigeria should devise a system that reduces the concentration of power at the centre and more to the lower levels. The notion of restructuring the country is, therefore, not only desirable but necessary if Nigeria is to continue to remain as one nation. Restructuring itself has been a notion we like to abuse. Like other political and economic interests, it unsurprisingly means different things to different

sections of the country. Nigerians therefore, have to come to a consensus on what restructuring itself means before using it to salvage what remains of the country.

Of all the factors contributing to secessionist agitations in Nigeria, the growing number of marginalised masses is perhaps the most dangerous. The vast majority of these masses are youths as Nigeria's current population median age is estimated to be around 18 years. The lives of these large number of youths are increasingly becoming less affected by government, whereas elites and politicians have been corruptly amassing wealth at the expense of the impoverished masses. Consequently, a large number of masses are unemployed, underemployed while the white-collar workers are grossly underpaid. The impoverished middleclass theoretically and logically forms the social basis of secession.

Less economic dependence on the federal government also makes regions more susceptible to secessionist agitations. Whether the currently ongoing East and West agitations take into consideration their respective regions economic dependence (or lack of it thereof) in relation to the federal government in their rational choice to secede requires some proof. However, we are almost certain that the masses that support these agitations must believe that their individual and collective wellbeing will be better off if their regions secede. They must also believe that they stand to gain little or nothing if the country remains united.

Biafra felt marginalized in terms of political power and economic resources within Nigeria. Perceived unequal distribution of resources can drive regions to seek independence to have more control over their own affairs.

### 3. Resource Control

There is a big disparity in geographic size and population among the various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups in Nigeria, which makes notions like “fairness” and “justice” relative and contentious when it comes to access to power and the allocation of investments by the federal government. For instance, the northern part of the country constitutes about 79 percent of the country’s land mass and an estimated 53.6 percent of its population. The north is, however, much poorer than the south and similarly lags behind the south in education and other modern indices of development. For this reason, some people in the north believe that the region should control a majority, if not all, governance power. Some people from the south, on the other hand ridicule this idea as part of north’s “sense of entitlement” and desire to dominate the south politically. Thus, power sharing and access to privileges at the federal level are often at the heart of the north-south conflict.

Biafra held significant oil reserves, which played a role in its desire for independence. The region believed that controlling its resources would lead to economic growth and stability.

### 4. Historical Grievances

Nigeria seems to struggle with the skill to conclusively resolve grievances by several groups in the country. One of the consequences of this is that many groups appear to have institutionalized memories of hurt or perceived sense of injustice, which they popularly express as “marginalization.” This inability to conclusively resolve group grievances has contributed to the rise of the notion that only groups with the capacity to hold the state to ransom will have their grievances addressed. For instance, some believe that the Yoruba-led National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which vigorously challenged the annulment of the 1993 election, made the country “ungovernable,” and thus influenced the concession of the 1999 election to the Yoruba.

Biafra's push for secession stemmed from historical grievances, including the 1966 anti-Igbo pogroms and the perceived lack of protection from the Nigerian government, the first genocide against the Igbos in 1950s in Jos, present day Plateau state, before Nigeria's independence. Not to forget that after the war in 1970, all the assets and properties especially those outside the eastern region, were seized and taken by other people from other tribes and every Igbo person was given just 20 pounds to start life with. It didn't matter if the person had millions in their account, they were restricted to nothing. Although the then military government established a policy known as the three Rs (Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation) which was aimed at bringing back peace and fostering synergy between the hurt Igbo people who just lost a war and were reintegrated into the country they did not want to be part of, having fought so

gallantly, coupled with the death of over 3 million Igbos of mostly children that died during the war, had a long-lasting effect on the Igbos mentally, psychologically and emotionally and that has even persisted till date. All these contribute to the grievances of the major call for secession in Nigeria especially that of the eastern region otherwise known as the Biafran people.

## 5. Failed Negotiations

Efforts to address the concerns of the Biafran region through negotiations failed to yield satisfactory results, prompting calls for secession.

Agitations around Biafra have drowned out other separatist agitations, giving the wrong impression that Biafra is the only separatist threat in the country. The truth is that there is separatist agitation in virtually every area in the country—underlying the fact that the foundation for Nigeria’s nationhood remains on shaky ground. Among the Yoruba, for instance, echoes of separatism come in different forms—from a direct call for Oduduwa Republic to those championing a Sovereign National Conference to decide if the federating units of the country still want to continue to live together, and, if so, under what arrangements. In the north, there are intermittent demands for Arewa Republic, while some talk of the “north” as if it is “a country within a country.” In the Niger Delta, apart from the demand for Niger Delta Republic, shades of separatism are embedded in the demands for “resource control” by regional activists.

In essence, there is a fairly generalized feeling of alienation and dissatisfaction among the various constituents of the Nigerian federation, a situation that has also deepened mistrust and incentivized separatist agitations. However, because there has never been a referendum in any of the areas agitating for separation, it is difficult to know whether the leaders of the various separatist groups actually reflect the wishes of the people of those areas or whether the agitations are mere masks for pursuing other agendas.

The separatist agitations took a new turn on June 6, 2017 when a group of northern youths under the aegis of Coalition of Arewa Youths gave the Igbos until October 1, 2017 to leave the 19 northern states in what they called The Kaduna Declaration. They also said an inventory of assets owned in the north by the Igbos would be taken and confiscated at the expiration of the ultimatum. The so-called Kaduna Declaration further heightened the tensions and the social distance among Nigerians.

Though there is no known research on the economic impacts of these tensions and separatist agitations, it can be speculated that they may be having a dampening effect on commerce. For instance, shortly after the quit notice on the Igbos in the north there were reports that some Igbos that dominate the retail trade in many cities in the north had already started relocating to the east. It can also be assumed that the northerners in the southeast, who dominate the cattle trade market in the area, are likely to be very cautious, given the level of tensions and stand-off.

Separatist movements are a global phenomenon, as seen in the 300-year-old Scottish separatism movement and the long-time Quebec separatism in Canada. Thus, it is not unusual for some form of separatist agitation to form in low-trust, multi-ethnic, and multicultural societies such as Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and Morocco.

The desire for groups in a diverse country to clamor for self-determination is, in the case of Nigeria, exacerbated by the fact that in newly democratizing states, there is often a tendency for pent-up feelings—that were not allowed expression during periods of dictatorships—to be released under the freedom of speech guarantees of liberal democracy. Since virtually every part of the country has an institutionalized memory of hurt and feelings of injustice that it wants addressed, such freedoms of expression understandably sometimes include separatist threats—sometimes as bargaining chips. It is not surprising, then, that democracy in fragile states can, in the short term, aggravate the structures of conflict, though it also, in the long run, presents the best opportunity for peaceful resolution of such conflicts.

Similarly, many believe that the protracted violent agitations of the militants in the Niger Delta played a role in the choice of Goodluck Jonathan of the Niger Delta to be the running mate of Umaru Musa Yar'adua in the 2007 elections in the country. Again, many believe that the economic incentives offered to former militants in the Niger Delta to quell militancy and destruction of oil pipelines in the area may have had the unintended consequence of incentivizing insurgencies and violent agitations. In the same vein, some politicians from the south such as

some supporters of former President Jonathan interpreted the Boko Haram challenge in the northeast as the north's strategy of laying overwhelming claim to its "entitlement" to the presidency in 2015. Thus, it is difficult to know the extent to which separatist agitations are mere bargaining chips for groups' assumed entitlements versus true attempts at succession.

Separatist movements feed on local grievances by magnifying them or making whatever obvious benefits their in-groups get from the Nigerian federation to appear less than what other parts of the country get. [5] This makes it easier for them to position themselves as liberators or even messiahs to such groups. In this way, separatists, including Biafra agitators, often use a shared victimhood narrative as a tool of mobilization and bond-building among the people they claim they are trying to "liberate."

For instance, Biafra agitation gained traction after Buhari gave an address at the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) on July 22, 2015 where he created the impression that he would discriminate against the Igbos for not voting for him in the 2015 election. Similarly, Buhari's transfer of suspected Boko Haram prisoners from elsewhere in the country to a prison in Igboland early in the life of his government—without offering any explanation—was interpreted by the Biafra agitators as more evidence that he hates the Igbos or that he has interest in exporting jihadism to Igboland. Biafra agitators have labelled Nigeria a zoo and too often chose to see nothing good in the Buhari government or even concede that the Igbos have benefitted anything from the Nigerian federation.

## 6. Leadership and Ideology

More alarming is the state weakness that Nigeria has been exhibiting. It gives the impression that the Nigerian state is overwhelmed by the goings within its territorial boundaries. There is virtually not a single aspect of governance in which Nigeria appears to be doing even moderately well. One needs not be reminded of the dwindling state of the country's security, the shambled state of its economy, weak institutions and bad policies. Affairs in the country continue to seem perpetually and eternally out of state control.

In addition to the frightening state of insecurity in the country, an increasing number of the masses have been rapidly falling into the deep well of destitution. The southern part of the country perceived economic deprivation in favour of the north where the incumbent president comes from. Ironically, many people in the north also perceive that the president is serving the interests of the other regions of the country despite having hailed from the region and their overwhelming support for him. Like state weakness, economic depression and perceived economic deprivation are strongly linked to secessionist agitations.

Biafra's leadership, particularly figures like Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, played a role in advocating for secession based on their ideology and belief in the viability of an independent Biafra. It's important to note that each case of secession is unique and influenced by

a combination of historical, cultural, political, and economic factors. The Biafran case is just one example of how these factors can come together to drive a region's desire for independence.

## **Impacts of Secession on a Country**

### **1. Political Instability**

Secessionist movements often lead to political instability within a nation. In the case of Biafra, the declaration of independence sparked a civil war, resulting in significant loss of life and displacement of people. Political tensions and conflict can arise between the secessionist region and the central government, leading to a breakdown of law and order. Just like in the case of the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) their leader Maazi Nnamdi Kanu, and the federal government of Nigeria.

### **2. Economic Consequences**

Secession can have severe economic consequences for both the secessionist region and the remaining nation. In the case of Biafra, the region experienced economic hardship during the civil war, with infrastructure damage, disruption of trade, and scarcity of essential resources. The remaining nation also faced economic challenges, including the loss of natural resources, disruption of supply chains, and the cost of military operations. Even till now, the Economic consequences have continued to ravage the eastern region due to the perpetual Sit-At-Home order observed every Monday in solidarity of the continuous and illegal detention of the pro-Biafran leader, Maazi Nnamdi Kanu.

### 3. Social Divisions

Secessionist movements often exacerbate existing social divisions within a nation. In the case of Biafra, the conflict was largely along ethnic and regional lines, leading to deep-seated animosities between different ethnic groups. These divisions can have long-lasting effects on social cohesion, trust, and reconciliation efforts even after the conflict ends. We can relate this to the fact that even though the war ended in 1970 and a three R was implemented which was aimed at healing the injury created by the war, it still didn't stop the fact that the major aim for that policy was not realised as tribal hostilities still very much flow in the vein of every Nigerian.

#### **Challenges of secession on a nation**

##### 1. International Recognition

Secessionist regions often struggle to gain international recognition as independent states. In the case of Biafra, the international community largely supported the territorial integrity of Nigeria, which limited Biafra's ability to establish diplomatic relations or gain access to international aid and resources. Lack of recognition can isolate the secessionist region, making it difficult to sustain its independence.

## 2. Internal Governance

Establishing effective governance structures is a significant challenge for secessionist regions. It requires building institutions, maintaining law and order, providing essential services, and managing the transition from the previous administrative framework. In the case of Biafra, the region faced difficulties in establishing a functional government, resulting in internal divisions and governance challenges.

## 3. Economic Viability

Secessionist regions must address economic viability to sustain independence. They need to establish sustainable revenue sources, attract investments, and develop economic infrastructure. Biafra faced economic challenges during her brief existence, including limited access to resources, international trade sanctions, and an underdeveloped economic base, which made it difficult to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

## 4. Reconciliation and Reintegration

After a secessionist conflict ends, reconciliation and reintegration efforts become crucial for long-term stability. Rebuilding trust between the secessionist region and the remaining nation, addressing grievances, and fostering inclusive political processes are significant challenges. After the Biafran-Nigerian Civil War, a policy known as the three Rs was implemented. Biafra experienced difficulties in achieving lasting reconciliation, and scars from the conflict still

persist in Nigeria today which begs the question whether the said policy was ever actually in full implementation or used to cajole the Biafran people into thinking they are one in a united Nigeria.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### IMPACTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ON THE BIAFRAN WAR AND FINAL RESOLUTIONS

#### Introduction

The Biafran Civil War, also known as the Nigerian Civil War, took place from 1967 to 1970 when the southeastern region of Nigeria, predominantly inhabited by the Igbo ethnic group, attempted to secede and form the independent Republic of Biafra. Although the international community played significant roles in both the course of the conflict and its resolution, there are some people who still feel that the international community didn't do much to avert the relatively high number of death toll that caused the death of nearly 4 million Biafrans of mostly children and women. Some have attributed this to the fact that Biafra itself wasn't internationally recognized as it were just few countries that recognized her and helped with some aids and humanitarian services.

However, At the start of the Nigerian Civil War, both the Nigerian and Biafran armies were in disarray. Each could soon rally significant manpower to their cause, but they needed weapons to assert their dominance, particularly heavy weaponry. Global superpowers, primarily Great Britain, were ready to supply the Nigerian head of state Yakubu Gowon with the money and supplies needed to give them the edge against Biafran forces.

The Soviet Union also supplied Gowon with a significant number of aircraft, manned by Egyptian pilots. This advantage gave the Nigerian military ownership of the skies, making it easy to encircle and trap Biafran soldiers. The knock-on effect of this Soviet aid was that it made British diplomats nervous, and so they, in turn, pushed their government to intensify the material support from Britain to limit Russian influence in the region. One of the few powers to provide substantial aid to Biafra was France. Covertly, the Quai d'Orsay sent weapons, mercenaries, and technical specialists to help halt the advance of the Nigerian Army. China also provided some weapons, but this was more of a diplomatic affront to the USSR after the Sino-Soviet split than an actual attempt to turn the tide of the war.

The United States declared neutrality but, in secret, supported the Nigerian government, as they had significant investments in the region that could be under threat if Gowon's leadership was destabilized. Outside of Africa, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Bulgaria were the minor countries supporting the Nigerian government. Conversely, Israel (after 1968), Czechoslovakia, Haiti, Portugal, and Spain helped Biafra in some capacity. However, this material aid was not significant enough to affect the war as a whole. Therefore, the deciding factor was the impact of the major powers due to their greater weapons supplies and aid budgets. While minor players were more likely to be driven by ideology, for the superpowers, control over resources motivated their actions. This can be seen clearly in Britain's decision to side with Nigeria. At the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War, BP/Shell was the largest exporter of oil from Nigeria. [3] The British

government had a 49% stake in the merged company and, therefore, significant interest in its continued dominance. Biafra held 60% of oil within Nigeria, and its leader Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu had admitted that he wanted more control over oil revenues within Eastern Nigeria, a key reason negotiations broke down in the runup to the war. Previously, he had felt they had been unfairly divided and sold on unfair terms to foreign companies. One of the key promises Ojukwu made to the nascent Biafran state would be to reverse these agreements. Instead, Gowon promised to honor the existing agreements, particularly keeping Nigeria's oil supply regular and favorable to Britain. The British government, therefore, swiftly backed him to protect their investment. When Nigerian forces captured the valuable oil terminal at Bonny in July of 1967, Prime Minister Harold Wilson agreed to fully commit to supplying the federal government.

The Soviet Union had similar material concerns influencing their involvement. Following a failed coup in Guinea, a frustrated Politburo wanted more influence over West Africa. The Nigerian Civil War offered this opportunity, as Gowon had promised to continue trading on neo-colonialist terms, which the USSR hoped to take advantage of. Furthermore, the Soviets hoped that supporting a majority Muslim government would bring allies in the Middle East, which in turn could secure future oil supplies.

France's involvement in the Nigerian Civil War was similarly motivated by economic concerns. The French government feared that a unified Nigeria would grow too strong and

dominate their smaller colonies in Western Africa. If Biafra's attempt at secession was successful, French companies could potentially make their own trading agreements. When war broke out, key oil company SAFRAP was quick to sign deals to secure Biafran oil reserves. Another leading oil producer, Elf Aquitaine, heavily influenced discussions in government, pressuring cabinet members to increase support for Biafra.

The emphasis on economic concerns trumping all others in France's choice to support Biafra was reflected in how quickly trading resumed with the Nigerian government, not only after but also during the war, exposing the extent of influence the oil lobby had within French politics. Unfortunately for Biafra, the French lack of conviction meant that its support was nowhere near the same as British or Soviet. Therefore, the Nigerian government quickly gained military superiority, particularly over the skies, and would keep it for most of the war. Nevertheless, the Nigerian Civil War demonstrates how foreign intervention from the three most important powers in the conflict was all primarily motivated by economic benefit and neo-colonialist attitudes. Despite some aid from other nations, Biafra's hopes of survival then rested on Nigeria's immediate neighbors and the power of international organizations.

Within Africa itself, the conflict was much more decisive. Biafra received recognition from Gabon, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania, and Zambia, including some material aid and passage for its fighters once the war turned fully against Ojukwu. This was motivated partly by sympathy for the struggle of the Biafran people but, more importantly, in the hopes that it

would weaken Nigeria as a state and potentially cause further fragmentation of Africa's most populous country. A fractured Nigeria would then be less aggressive and solidify the rule of its neighbors. Unfortunately for Biafra, this was the extent of support that it received on the African continent throughout the Nigerian Civil War. The majority of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) supported maintaining the status quo in Nigeria, a decision which was then replicated in the United Nations. The move to defend the existing state followed a similar vein to the action the OAU and UN had taken in the Congo Crisis less than a decade previously. Similarly to the Nigerian Civil War and Biafran secession, a series of political assassinations had caused the mineral-rich state of Katanga to declare its independence. The international community had acted swiftly, preventing the state from seceding for many of the same reasons witnessed in Biafra. A key facet of OUA's reasoning for its decision was that it was hesitant to criticize the domestic policy of member states. Instead, its primary goal was to preserve external authority, particularly borders. Many states had only recently gained independence and were still struggling to establish their authority over their populations. Due to the lazy division of Africa by colonial powers and their ignorant map-making, a lot of these states had several minority ethnic groups which were themselves calling for independence. The success of Biafra would have only emboldened them, and so states were hesitant to support such moves, even if they quietly agreed.

- **Arms and Support:** Several countries, including France, Israel, and some others, provided arms, military advisors, and humanitarian aid to Biafra, while the Nigerian

government received support from the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and others. This foreign intervention exacerbated the conflict by prolonging it and intensifying the fighting.

- **Humanitarian Aid:** International humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), provided relief assistance to those affected by the conflict. This aid was crucial in mitigating the humanitarian crisis that emerged, including severe food shortages and famine.
- **Diplomacy and Mediation:** Various countries and organizations attempted to mediate the conflict diplomatically. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), with support from other nations, made efforts to negotiate a ceasefire and peaceful resolution, but these initiatives were largely unsuccessful.
- **Economic Sanctions:** Nigeria's position as a significant oil exporter influenced international policies. Some countries imposed economic sanctions on Biafra, which added to the economic hardships faced by the secessionist state.

Ultimately, the Biafran War came to an end with a series of event:

1. **Surrender of Biafra:** In January 1970, Biafra's leader, Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, fled into exile, and his second-in-command, Philip Effiong, signed an instrument of surrender on January 15, 1970. This marked the official end of the secessionist movement.

2. Reintegration of Biafra: Nigeria implemented policies to reintegrate the former Biafran territory into the country, although ethnic tensions persisted for many years.
3. Reconstruction and Healing: Efforts were made to rebuild the war-torn region and address the humanitarian crisis. The international community continued to provide humanitarian assistance during the post-war period.
4. Long-term Effects: The scars of the Biafran Civil War continue to affect Nigeria to this day, with ongoing ethnic and political tensions in the country. International actors continue to monitor and engage with Nigeria on various issues, including conflict resolution and human rights.

In summary, the international community played a complex and influential role in the Biafran Civil War, both in prolonging the conflict through military support and in providing humanitarian aid to mitigate its effects. The war ultimately ended with the surrender of Biafra and efforts to reintegrate and rebuild the war-torn region, but its legacy continues to shape Nigeria's political and social landscape.

Therefore, without broader international support or significant diplomatic recognition from key organizations, Biafra was almost doomed before the Nigerian Civil War had even begun. Like the Congo Crisis at the start of the decade, Biafra's struggle showed the importance of natural resources in determining which side foreign intervention would choose to support in a conflict. Weakened by decades of colonialist destruction and extraction, these fledgling African

secessionist states needed international help if they were to stand any chance of succeeding. Biafra's secession lays bare the extent of influence the oil lobby had within the governments of international superpowers.

With a timeline of the Nigerian Civil War and an investigation into its most decisive factor, foreign intervention, lastly remains to look at the consequences of the conflict. In particular, the humanitarian crisis which would envelop Biafra in the last years of the war would see some of the most horrific scenes broadcast from conflict zones, often for the first time for international audiences. The mass starvation in Eastern Nigeria would help spawn the international aid movement, but not before a significant and devastating loss of life.

## **Resolutions**

After the reintegration of Biafra into Nigeria in 1970 and the series of reconciliatory moves made by the Nigerian government to smoothen the relationship between the secessionist Biafran people and Nigeria, policies like the state creation and allocations have continued to make the people of the South East to nurture more injuries over the Biafran agenda and that has caused incessant calls for a disintegration till date. The international community on this aspect of resolution didn't do much since most of the then superpowers already backed Nigeria during the war. So, there was no case of intervening again since Biafra surrendered and was reintegrated into Nigeria.



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## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Nigerian Civil War, also called Nigerian-Biafran War, was between Nigeria's federal government and the secessionist state Biafra that lasted from 1967 to 1970.

Nigeria became an independent country on October 1, 1960. Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was its first federal prime minister—he had held that position since 1957—and Nnamdi Azikiwe became its president of the Senate, which was a largely ceremonial role. Following a UN-supervised referendum in 1961, the northern part of the Trust Territory of the Cameroons joined Nigeria's Northern region, while in October the Southern Cameroons united with Cameroun to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. On October 1, 1963, Nigeria became a republic, with Azikiwe as its president, although, as prime minister, Balewa remained more politically powerful. In Nigeria and its surrounding region, long-standing regional stresses—ethnic competitiveness, educational inequality, and economic imbalance being the most prominent—again came to the fore in a controversial census during 1962–63. In an attempt to stave off ethnic conflict, Nigeria's Mid-West region was created in 1963 by dividing the Western region. Despite this division, the country still was segmented into three large geographic regions, each of which was essentially controlled by an ethnic group: the west by the Yoruba people, the east by the Igbo people, and the north by the Hausa-Fulani people. Conflicts were endemic, as regional leaders

protected their privileges; the south complained of northern domination, and the north feared that the southern elite was bent on capturing power. In the west the government had fallen apart in 1962, and a boycott of the federal election of December 1964 brought Nigeria to the brink of breakdown.

The point of no return was reached in January 1966, when, after the collapse of order in the west following the fraudulent election of October 1965, a group of army officers attempted to overthrow the federal government, and Balewa and two of the regional premiers were murdered. A military administration was set up under Maj. Gen. Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, but his plan to abolish the regions and impose a unitary government met with anti-Igbo riots in the north. The military intervention worsened the political situation, as the army itself split along ethnic lines, its officers clashed over power, and the instigators and leaders of the January coup were accused of favouring Igbo domination. In July 1966 northern officers staged a countercoup, Aguiyi-Ironsi was assassinated, and Lieut. Col. (later Gen.) Yakubu Gowon came to power. The crisis was compounded by intercommunal clashes in the north and threats of secession in the south.

Gowon's attempt to hold a conference to settle the constitutional future of Nigeria was abandoned after a series of ethnic massacres in October 1966. A last-ditch effort to save the country was made in January 1967, when the Eastern delegation, led by Lieut. Col. (later Gen.) Odumegwu Ojukwu, agreed to meet the others on neutral ground at Aburi, Ghana. The situation deteriorated, however, after differences developed over the interpretation of the accord. In May

the Eastern region's consultative assembly authorized Ojukwu to establish a sovereign republic, while, at the same time, the federal military government promulgated a decree dividing the four regions into 12 states, including 6 in the north and 3 in the east, in an attempt to break the power of the regions.

On May 30, 1967, Ojukwu declared the secession of the three states of the Eastern region under the name of the Republic of Biafra, which Nigeria's federal government interpreted as an act of rebellion. Fighting broke out in early July. Within weeks the conflict had escalated into a full-scale civil war. In August 1967 Biafran troops crossed the Niger, seized Benin City, and were well on their way to Lagos before they were checked at Ore, a small town in Western state (now Ondo state). Shortly thereafter, federal troops entered Enugu, the provisional capital of Biafra, and penetrated the Igbo heartland. The next two years were marked by stiff resistance in the shrinking Biafran enclave and by heavy casualties among civilians as well as in both armies, all set within what threatened to be a military stalemate.

Peacemaking attempts by the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), the pope, and others were ineffective, and Biafra began gaining recognition from African states (Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Tanzania, and Zambia). France provided weapons to Biafra, while the U.K. and the Soviet Union sent arms to the federal government. Biafra also received aid from international organizations for its population, which was suffering from starvation.

The final Biafran collapse began on December 24, 1969, when federal troops launched a significant offensive. Biafra was short on ammunition, its people were desperate for food, and its leaders controlled only one-sixth of the territory that had formed the Biafran republic in 1967. Ojukwu fled to Côte d'Ivoire on January 11, 1970, and a Biafran deputation formally surrendered in Lagos four days later. The Republic of Biafra had come to an end.

Estimates of the number of people who died during the Nigerian Civil War vary significantly, from 500,000 to 3,000,000. Causes included battlefield deaths, ethnic cleansing, and starvation. Gowon was able, through his own personal magnetism, to reconcile the two sides so that the former Biafran states were integrated into Nigeria once again and were not blamed for the Nigerian Civil War. The oil boom that followed the war allowed the federal government to finance development programs and consolidate its power. In 1974 Gowon postponed until 1976 the target date for a return to civilian rule, but he was overthrown in July 1975 and fled to Great Britain.

Nigeria's new head of state, Brig. Gen. Murtala Ramat Mohammed, initiated many changes during his brief time in office: he began the process of moving the federal capital to Abuja, addressed the issue of government inefficiency, and initiated the process for a return to civilian control. He was assassinated in February 1976 during an unsuccessful coup attempt, and his top aide, Lieut. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, became head of the government. He did not run for

the presidency in 1979, and Nigeria shifted to civilian rule, thus closing the era of military control during and around the Nigerian Civil War.

Despite the Biafran War coming to an end 50 years ago. Secession still remains a relevant topic in the international politics with various independence movements in Catalonia, the Ambazonia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria and various parts of North America. The international community has stayed quiet on many of these, opting on most occasions to retain the borders of nation-states, indirectly legitimizing the violent actions that are taken by the parent state that are looking to crush any opposition to their rule. While the agitations for the declaration of the sovereign state of Biafra has long been in existence in Nigeria's political space following the Nigerian civil war, the challenge of marginalization and perceived injustice are also factors advancing the clamor for secession by pro-Biafra groups in the region. The study however concludes that the renewed agitations in the south-east region are borne out of the failure of the Buhari-led administration to protect the lives and property of people (regarding the eastern region) at the instance of the banditry, kidnap for ransom, and violent clashes between suspected Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the region. The implication will continue to be made manifest by the way of national disintegration and the promotion of ethnic nationalism in the country. The government should as a matter of urgency strive to implement the aforementioned recommendations so as not to let the nation move into a state of further disintegration and

aggravation of the emergence of non-state actors and ethnic warlords each region will have to rely upon rather than the state and federal government.

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