

**THE POST CIVIL WAR POLICIES: A CASE STUDY OF PROPERTY
ACT LAW IN NIGERIA, 1966-1980**

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**A PROJECTSUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **OGHENEGARE OGHENEMARO ETHELDRED** in the Department of History and International Studies, Faculty of Art, University of Benin, Benin City, under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

This project work is dedicated to God Almighty the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge who made it possible for me to carry out this project research and also for seeing me through from the beginning to the end of the project.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The end of the Nigeria-Biafra War was marked by the magnanimous proclamation of “no victor, no vanquished” by the General Yakubu Gowon-led Federal Military Government (FMG). This was widely welcomed and immediately followed by the policy of “Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction (3Rs)” toward the victims of the war. In a national broadcast, titled “The Dawn of National Reconciliation,” Gowon declared that the task of reconciliation had truly commenced.¹ The harsh conditions of surrender expected from the FMG did not materialize; rather, the period was marked by the magnanimity of the FMG in pronouncements that guaranteed the personal safety and security of the Igbo and their properties, the right to re-side and work anywhere in Nigeria, the reabsorption of civil/public servants of Igbo extraction into the civil service and the military, and the granting of general amnesty to the Igbo. John de St. Jorre,

whose popular account referred to the conflict as “The Brothers’ War,” argues that this was probably the only armed conflict of its magnitude in history, perpetrated with so much viciousness and bitterness, where no reprisals, trials, or executions occurred.² It is on this backdrop, this study examines the post-civil war policies with reference to property act law in Nigeria, 1966-1980.

As the war ended in 1970, some policies were pronounced by the federal government and the most prominent was the Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs) programmes. With the new twelve states rather than the former four regions, reconstructing the physical infrastructures that were intentionally destroyed by the Nigerian soldiers no doubt required human and material resources.³ After 1970, the entire Igboland and Niger Delta regions were extremely destroyed. Hence, the reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes were meant to resettle those who had been displeased and displaced; rehabilitate both the Biafran troops and civilians; reconstruct damaged infrastructure and social amenities; and correct the general social problems like diseases, squalor, hunger, starvation and ignorance.⁴ In addition, the federal government promised to provide welfare packages such as food, shelter, and drugs for the affected people, draft a new constitution that will reflect true federalism, conduct election and hand over power to a democratically elected

government that will take care of all interests. Incidentally, only a few of the above promises were fulfilled.⁵

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the post-war reintegration, reconstruction and reconciliation with reference to the post-civil war policies property act.

- i. To examine the historical antecedence of the Nigeria civil war.
- ii. To examine the condition of Igbo after the civil war.
- iii. To examine nature of the property act law in the aftermath of the civil war.
- iv. To examine effect of the civil war on the development of Igbo land.

Scope of the Study

The study will cover the impact of post-civil property act policies in Igbo land. The study will cover nature of the property act law in the aftermath of the civil war, and the condition of Igbo after the civil war, especially as its it to property act law and the development of Igbo land.

Methodology

In carrying out this research, relevant materials were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources such as oral interviews, personal diaries

and memoirs as well as consultation with old newspapers. The principal materials will be from secondary sources such as library visitations, use of learned academic journals, surfing the internet for related materials as well as perusal of serial publications such as magazines and newspapers

Literature Review

Francis C. Anyim, work titled “Post-Civil War Labour Policy in Nigeria and its Impact on Industrial Relations: A Critical Appraisal,”⁶ examine the objectives of the government labour policy, ascertained the extent to which they have been met and also the factors responsible for those that were not met. Looking back on industrial relations scene in the past years, there can be no doubt that great strides have been made in finding solutions to some of the problems affecting good conduct of industrial relation in Nigeria. However, much more remains to be done to transform industrial relations to an enviable field in order to meet the challenges posed by technology and rapid economic–social–political changes in the country. The government should provide adequate safeguards against abuses and excesses and should avoid doubt standards. It should strive as much as possible to be even handed as an unbiased umpire. The government should not regard public initiative as superior to private initiative at all times. However, there is no doubt that government’s role in industrial relations will

continue to increase rather than diminish in importance in response to the ever-changing state of the economy and in line with global trends.⁷

Odigwe A.Nwaokocha, “Post-War Reintegration, Reconstruction and Reconciliation Among the Anioma People of Nigeria,”⁸ focuses on the rehabilitation and reintegration of the Anioma into the society. The author examines how the Nigerian government’s policy of rehabilitation and the trumpeted principle of “no victor, no vanquished,” which dominates discourses on the war. Employing primary and secondary sources, the work probes how the Anioma people fared under the post-war rehabilitation program at different levels. It argues that it was difficult for the Nigerian government and society to completely forget the bitterness of the war even while implementing the rehabilitation program. This left the program struggling to manage two diametrically opposed principles, resulting in its merely scratching the surface after promising much.⁹

Celestine Udoka Ugonabo, article titled “Nigerian Land Policy: Issues, Challenges and The Way Forward,”¹⁰ posits efficient administration and management of land ownership, holding and uses cannot be adequately achieved without sound land policy and its effective implementation. Land policy is essentially aimed at ensuring land accessibility to citizens of the society as well as

protection of their interests. The contemporary land policy in Nigeria is the Land Use Decree No. 6 of 1978, now Land Use Act (LUA), Cap L5, Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004. The author examines the contemporary review of the issues and challenges of land policy in Nigeria in order to proffer ways to ameliorate them and ensure that land is accessible to citizens at reasonable ease. The issues and challenges of Nigerian land policy include: the abrogation of freehold interest which affect the free market economy; excessive bureaucracy in obtaining Governor's consent and approval for land transactions and issuance of certificate of occupancy; underdeveloped or bare land not having commercial value according to the LUA which limits the use of land for mortgage and some other purpose transactions; insecurity of private land ownership, etc. National sustainable economic development and growth depend largely on the land policy in operation; hence it should be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all land users. The author later recommended that the LUA, should be excised from the 1999 Constitution to ease requisite amendments to address these contemporary issues and challenges of the land system and use.¹¹

Namnso Bassey Udoekanem, work titled "Land Ownership in Nigeria: Historical Development, Current Issues and Future Expectations,"¹² examines land ownership in Nigeria. The author argues that land ownership structure in Nigeria

has evolved over the years until 1978 when a single land policy document, otherwise known as the Land Use Act of 1978 was established to harmonise and regulate land ownership in the country. The author further contends that the present land ownership system in Nigeria as enshrined in the Land Use Act of 1978 has socialist inclinations with excessive state control of land ownership, use and development. Asserts that land is essential for every human activity on earth as it is the source of all material wealth. In order to regulate the ownership, use and development of land and land resources, nations the world over have instituted land ownership systems aimed at consistent balancing of the interests of the government, the land owning class and the landless class. The author concludes that such land system cannot effectively support private sector-driven enterprises and development initiatives as it creates too much bureaucracy in the documentation of land transactions, land registration and land titling. The author later recommends an urgent amendment of the nation's Land Use Act to facilitate access to land with ease for various purposes.¹³

Thaddeus T. Ityonzughu, work titled "The Nigerian Civil War, 1967-1970: Issues And Perspectives,"¹⁴ The author dwells on the Nigerian Civil War. He argues that conflicts and crises usually emanate from society as a result of competition over scarce resources. The author espouses the contending schools of

thought on the Nigerian Civil War with specific attention to the colonial school of thought, the genocidal/religious school of thought, the dominion school of thought, and the economic school of thought. Besides, the author analyses the debilitating effects of the Nigerian civil war. He later concludes that the internecine war has negatively affected the Nigerian State in all areas of life. In this wise, the study notes that all the conflicts that have the tendency of degenerating into war should be properly manage in other to prevent a second civil war in the country.¹⁵ This work will be useful in the chapter two of this study when discussing the historical antecedence of the Nigerian civil war. This work is essential restricted to only the nature and historical overview of the Nigerian civil war and the study did not capture the ICRC contributions to the Nigerian civil war, which this study fill the existing vacancy.

Michael Aaronson, book titled “The Nigerian Civil War and ‘Humanitarian Intervention,’”¹⁶ posits that the 1967–70 Nigerian Civil War (also known as the ‘Biafran War’) was notorious for the prolonged suffering of the civilian population in the secessionist enclave of ‘Biafra’ and the failure of repeated international attempts to bring about an early end to the conflict. At the time the term ‘humanitarian intervention’ was used to denote the international emergency relief operation, rather than a military intervention which is how the term has

subsequently come to be used. Ironically this humanitarian relief operation may have contributed to the prolongation of the war and thereby added to the human suffering. In the book, based partly on the author experience working on the ground in this conflict, the author argue that other forms of intervention, which could just as reasonably be described as ‘humanitarian’, were neglected by the principal international actors engaged with the conflict. The author compares this state of affairs with subsequent approaches to intervention in Africa and elsewhere and concludes by suggesting that the lessons from ‘Biafra’ could be used to inform a more enlightened approach to ‘humanitarian intervention’ in present-day crises.¹⁷ this work generalize the humanitarian contributions to the Nigerian civil war and the author did not specifically examine the Red Cross humanitarian contributions to the Nigerian civil war. Thus, this study will fill the existed vacuum.

Idara C. Aniefiok-Ezemonye work titled “Post-Civil War Reconstruction in Eastern Ibibioland, Nigeria: An Appraisal,”¹⁸ asserts that the end of a war is usually followed by a period of reconstruction. This involves three parallel and many of the time, inter-woven activities which include reconstruction of physical facilities damaged by the war; economic rehabilitation of individuals and groups; reconciliation which sees to the establishment of normal relations between

individuals and groups that fought on either side of the (war) divide. The author examines the situation of the people at the end of the war, the transition to peace and most importantly assesses the efforts made by the war survivors and the nature of the federal government expression of the policy of reconstruction, and rehabilitation in Ibibioland. The author finds that the Ibibio who described themselves as reluctant Biafrans and showed antipathy towards Biafra acquired different skills and also learned different crafts that became useful after the war when reconstruction of damaged roads and bridges began. He also finds that reconstruction was done communally and heavily anchored by families, in-laws and kinsmen.²⁰ this study will be useful in examine the role of the Red Cross in the post war resettlement and rehabilitation of the people of Eastern Nigeria.¹⁹

Kenneth Chukwuemeka Nwoko, article titled “Counting the Cost: The Politics of Relief Operations in the Nigerian Civil War, a Critical Appraisal,”²⁰ The author examines the role of international humanitarian organizations and the politics of relief operations during the Nigerian Civil War. The author investigates the nexus between the politicization of humanitarian operations during the three-year conflict, and the death, hunger and starvation of millions of Biafrans. The author explores how the triangular politics among the Federal Military Government of Nigeria, the Biafran authorities, and the humanitarian

organizations, in particular, the International Committee of the Red Cross impacted on the women, children and the elderly in Biafra. The author argues that the issue of sovereignty was only a cover to politicize the relief assistance going to Biafra and consequently abort the operations, thus, serving as a war strategy for both the Nigerian and Biafran authorities.²¹

Arua Oko Omaka, work titled “Mercy Angels: The Joint Church Aid and the Humanitarian Response In Biafra, 1967-1970,”²² The work aims to fill a gap in the historiography of international humanitarian aid in the Nigeria-Biafra War by focusing on the Joint Church Aid (JCA), a consortium of Catholic and Protestant Churches that provided relief aid for the starving civilians in Biafra. The work of the JCA is broken down into three parts: the humanitarian impulse in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict, the formation of the JCA and its relief organization, and the challenges of relief operation in Biafra. The author provides a window into understanding the complex nature of international humanitarian aid in political conflicts. The author argues that the JCA’s humanitarian operation, though relatively successful, had unintended consequences. While the JCA aimed to provide relief for the starving Biafran population, it was interpreted by the Nigerian government as political support for a “rebellion.” Convinced that the humanitarian organizations engaged in arms dealings with the Biafran government,

the Nigerian government intensified military counter-action against the relief operation. The Nigerian government refused to separate international humanitarian aid from the political objectives of the war hence starvation came to be seen as a legitimate instrument of warfare.²³

Ugwuja, Alex Amaechi, work titled “The Nigeria - Biafra War and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Nigeria, 1967-2007,”²⁴ examines how the war and its aftermaths conducted to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Southeast Nigeria. Posits that the Nigeria-Biafra war, a protracted war which raged between July 1967 and January 1970 was fought, lost and won. Ostensibly, a “domestic” conflict, in a strictly narrow sense, the war has been described as „an intensely international“ conflict, engaging both world opinion and world powers. As with all major historical occurrences, the war has generated a lot of scholarly interest and has engaged the attention of not only historians – professional and amateur – but also scholars of other cognate as well as some seemingly disparate disciplines, who have written copiously on the subject-matter. Furthermore, like all significant historical realities, the consequences of the Nigeria-Biafra war continuously reveal themselves in hitherto unconsidered perspectives. Thus, newer studies are often seen updating the extant knowledge on some areas of the war and or broaching new and fresh themes

altogether. One of the areas in which the effects of the war appears not to have received significant historical attention is the nexus between that war and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country, especially in the Southeast Region of the country. Given the naval and aerial blockade of Biafra by Nigeria as well as the international diplomatic odds against the secessionist enclave, the people resorted to local production of arms and weapons to supplement the meagre external supplies. In view of the fact that there was no serious arms mop-up/disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) after the war, these civil war arms quickly found their ways into the civil society, thereby creating the basis for unprecedented small arms and light weapons proliferation in the country, especially in the Southeast Region.²⁵

Endnotes

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3. Idara C. Aniefiok-Ezemonye, "Post-Civil War Reconstruction in Eastern Ibibioland, Nigeria: An Appraisal," *European and International Law*, Vol2, No.1, 2013, p.112.
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7. Ibid., p.46.
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23. Ibid., p.180.
24. Ugwuja, Alex Amaechi, work titled "The Nigeria - Biafra War and the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southeast Nigeria, 1967-2007," *International Journal of Academic Studies*, 2(12), 2016, 507.
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CHAPTER TWO

THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR, ITS AFTERMATH

Introduction

The Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), also known as the Biafran War, remains one of the most defining and tragic events in the country's history. Rooted in deep-seated ethnic, political, and economic tensions, the war erupted following the secession of the Eastern Region, which declared itself the Republic of Biafra.¹ What followed was a brutal conflict marked by intense military engagements, widespread humanitarian crises, and immense suffering, particularly in the Eastern Region, where famine and displacement devastated millions. The war officially ended on January 15, 1970, with the surrender of Biafra and the declaration of a policy of "No Victor, No Vanquished" by the Nigerian government under General Yakubu Gowon. However, the end of hostilities did not immediately translate into peace, as Nigeria was left with the enormous task of healing its deeply fractured society.²

The aftermath of the war presented significant challenges, necessitating deliberate efforts to promote reconciliation, rebuild shattered communities, and restore national unity. The Nigerian government introduced the "Three Rs" policy: Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation as a framework to address the post-war crisis. While these measures aimed to reintegrate former Biafrans into the Nigerian state and reconstruct war-ravaged infrastructure, their implementation was met with mixed

success.³ Economic policies such as the controversial £20 compensation for Biafran account holders, the abandoned property issue, and the reintegration of former Biafran soldiers into national life all played crucial roles in shaping post-war Nigeria. Additionally, social and psychological scars lingered, affecting inter-ethnic relations and perceptions of national unity.⁴

This chapter examines the Nigerian Civil War and its aftermath, focusing on the efforts made toward reconciliation and reconstruction. It explores the political, economic, and social dimensions of post-war recovery, the challenges that hindered true national integration, and the long-term impact of the conflict on Nigeria's unity. By analyzing these aspects, the chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Nigeria attempted to mend its divisions and the extent to which these efforts succeeded in fostering a lasting sense of national cohesion.⁵

Overview of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970)

The Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, was a brutal conflict that lasted from July 6, 1967, to January 15, 1970, marking one of the darkest periods in Nigeria's history. The war was primarily a result of deep-seated ethnic, political, and economic tensions that had plagued the country since its independence in 1960. These tensions were exacerbated by the 1966 military coups, which led to widespread instability and violence, particularly against the Igbo ethnic group in Northern Nigeria.⁶ The first coup, led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and other young officers, overthrew the civilian government of Prime Minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa but was perceived as

ethnically biased due to the killing of mainly Northern and Western political leaders while sparing Igbo leaders. This perception fueled resentment in the North, culminating in a counter-coup in July 1966, which brought Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power and triggered widespread massacres of Igbos in the North, forcing thousands to flee to the Eastern Region.⁷ The failure of the Nigerian government to protect the Igbo people, combined with unsuccessful peace talks such as the Aburi Accord, ultimately led the Eastern Region, under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, to declare itself an independent state called the Republic of Biafra on May 30, 1967.⁸

The secession of Biafra was met with immediate opposition from the Nigerian federal government, which viewed the act as a threat to the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. On July 6, 1967, Nigerian forces launched a military campaign to reclaim the Eastern Region, marking the beginning of the civil war. The conflict quickly escalated, with initial Nigerian military advances meeting stiff resistance from Biafran troops, who launched a counteroffensive into the Mid-Western Region, advancing as far as Ore in present-day Ondo State. However, this advance was short-lived as federal troops, aided by superior firepower and foreign military support, recaptured lost territories and pushed deep into Biafran strongholds². The war became a drawn-out conflict, with both sides experiencing heavy casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and severe humanitarian crises.⁹ One of the most devastating aspects of the war was the blockade imposed by the Nigerian government, which cut off food and medical supplies to Biafra. The resulting famine led to the deaths of an estimated one to two million

people, mostly children, due to starvation and malnutrition. The images of starving Biafran children captured global attention, prompting international humanitarian organizations such as the Red Cross and the World Council of Churches to provide relief aid, despite the Nigerian government's efforts to limit external interference.¹⁰

The international dimension of the conflict further complicated the war, as both the Nigerian government and Biafra sought external support to strengthen their respective positions. The Nigerian government received military and diplomatic backing from Britain and the Soviet Union, both of whom saw the unity of Nigeria as strategically important to their geopolitical interests. The United States maintained a largely neutral stance but supported a unified Nigeria due to its oil interests in the Niger Delta.¹¹ On the other hand, Biafra gained sympathy from countries such as France, Portugal, and Israel, as well as various international non-governmental organizations that provided humanitarian assistance. The war also witnessed the use of propaganda, with Biafra effectively using international media to highlight the humanitarian crisis and garner global sympathy, while the Nigerian government sought to control the narrative by portraying the war as an internal security issue rather than an ethnic conflict.¹²

Despite Biafra's initial military successes, the war gradually turned in favor of the Nigerian government due to superior manpower, better resources, and sustained military pressure. By late 1969, Biafra had lost most of its territory, with federal troops advancing rapidly towards its last stronghold in Owerri. On January 10, 1970, Ojukwu fled to Côte d'Ivoire, leaving his deputy, Major General Philip Effiong, to negotiate surrender terms.

On January 15, 1970, Effiong formally surrendered to the Nigerian government, marking the end of the war. In a bid to foster national unity, General Gowon declared a policy of "No Victor, No Vanquished," signaling an intention to reconcile with the former Biafrans and rebuild the nation.¹³ However, the post-war period presented significant challenges, as deep ethnic mistrust, economic hardship, and social dislocation persisted, necessitating deliberate efforts towards reconciliation and reconstruction.

The Nigerian Civil War had profound and lasting effects on the country, shaping its political, economic, and social landscape for decades to come. The conflict exposed the fragility of national unity and underscored the dangers of ethnic divisions, poor governance, and political exclusion. It also set a precedent for how the Nigerian state would handle future secessionist movements and internal conflicts. While the war officially ended in 1970, its consequences were felt long after, as the process of reconciliation and reconstruction proved to be a complex and enduring challenge.¹⁴ The next section will delve into the post-war measures taken to heal the wounds of the war, restore national unity, and address the socio-economic consequences of the conflict.

The Need for Reconciliation and Reconstruction

The end of the Nigerian Civil War in January 1970 marked the beginning of a new phase in Nigeria's history one that necessitated deliberate and sustained efforts to repair the deep wounds inflicted by the conflict. The war, which lasted for thirty months, had devastated the Eastern Region, left millions dead, and caused untold suffering to the civilian population, particularly in Biafra. In addition to the humanitarian catastrophe, the

war had also created deep-seated ethnic divisions, heightened political distrust, and weakened the national fabric.¹⁵ The federal government, under General Yakubu Gowon, recognized the enormity of the post-war challenges and sought to initiate a process of healing and reconstruction to foster national unity. However, despite the official rhetoric of “No Victor, No Vanquished,” the reality on the ground revealed significant obstacles to true reconciliation and effective reconstruction. The need for reconciliation and reconstruction stemmed from multiple factors, including the economic devastation caused by the war, the displacement of millions of people, the psychological and social disintegration of affected communities, the reintegration of former Biafrans into Nigerian society, and the necessity of preventing future conflicts by addressing the root causes of the war.¹⁶

One of the most pressing reasons for post-war reconciliation was the deep ethnic animosity that the war had exacerbated. Nigeria's fragile unity had already been tested by the political crises of the mid-1960s, particularly the 1966 coups and the subsequent anti-Igbo pogroms in the North, which fueled the Biafran secessionist movement. These events had entrenched mutual distrust among the major ethnic groups Igbo, Hausa-Fulani, and Yoruba making national unity a difficult goal to achieve. The war had further widened these divisions, as both sides engaged in propaganda and military actions that demonized the other. Many Igbo people viewed the Nigerian government's blockade of Biafra, which led to mass starvation, as an act of genocide, while many in the rest of Nigeria saw the Biafran secession as an unjustified rebellion. Rebuilding trust and

fostering a sense of national identity was, therefore, imperative for the stability of the country. Without a genuine process of reconciliation, Nigeria risked remaining a divided state, prone to future conflicts and instability.¹⁶

In addition to ethnic tensions, the war had left the Eastern Region in a state of economic and infrastructural ruin. Most of the major towns and cities in the region, including Port Harcourt, Enugu, and Onitsha, had suffered extensive destruction due to sustained military bombardments and ground battles. Factories, schools, hospitals, and essential public utilities had been either destroyed or rendered inoperable. The region's economy, which had once been one of the most vibrant in Nigeria due to its industrial activities and trade, was severely crippled. Many Easterners who had fled their homes during the war returned to find their properties either looted, confiscated, or destroyed.¹⁷ The Nigerian government faced the enormous task of reconstructing roads, bridges, and public buildings, as well as reviving economic activities to enable the reintegration of war-affected individuals into the national economy. This economic devastation necessitated an urgent and well-coordinated reconstruction effort to prevent further marginalization of the Eastern Region and to ensure national economic stability.¹⁸

Another critical issue that underscored the need for reconciliation and reconstruction was the plight of millions of displaced persons and returning soldiers. During the war, large segments of the Igbo population had fled from conflict zones to seek refuge in makeshift camps within Biafra or in neighboring regions. The war's end did not automatically guarantee their resettlement, as many had lost their homes,

businesses, and sources of livelihood. The challenge of resettling displaced civilians, particularly women and children who had suffered the most during the war, was a daunting task for both the government and humanitarian organizations. Additionally, thousands of Biafran soldiers who had fought in the war needed to be reintegrated into society, either through employment, vocational training, or reintegration into the Nigerian armed forces. While the Nigerian government declared a general amnesty for all former Biafran soldiers, many faced discrimination and difficulty in finding employment, leading to long-term socio-economic struggles. Effective reconciliation efforts had to address these issues to prevent further alienation of a significant portion of the population.¹⁹

Beyond the economic and humanitarian concerns, psychological and social healing was also crucial in the aftermath of the war. The conflict had left deep emotional scars on those who had lived through it, particularly those who had witnessed the horrors of starvation, mass killings, and the destruction of their communities. Many children who survived the war grew up with trauma, affecting their ability to integrate into normal society. The loss of loved ones, the experience of violence, and the forced separation of families created a lingering sense of loss and resentment. Social integration efforts had to include psychological support, community rebuilding programs, and initiatives aimed at fostering national cohesion through education and cultural reintegration. Schools, religious institutions, and local community organizations were instrumental in these

efforts, as they played a significant role in reshaping narratives, encouraging inter-ethnic interactions, and promoting the idea of a united Nigeria.²⁰

Furthermore, the need for reconciliation and reconstruction was deeply linked to Nigeria's political future. The war had exposed the weaknesses of the country's federal structure, raising questions about the nature of governance and the equitable distribution of resources and power among the various regions. Many Easterners felt politically marginalized, and post-war policies needed to address their concerns to prevent future secessionist tendencies. Political reintegration efforts involved restoring the region's representation in national politics, appointing Easterners to key governmental positions, and ensuring that post-war policies did not further alienate the former Biafran territories. The reorganization of Nigeria's political system, including the creation of new states in 1967, was an attempt to address some of these grievances, but much more needed to be done to foster true national integration.²¹

The Nigerian government, in recognition of these pressing needs, introduced the policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation, commonly known as the "Three Rs." This policy was designed to guide the country's post-war recovery efforts by promoting national unity, rebuilding war-torn areas, and rehabilitating displaced persons. While the policy had noble intentions, its implementation was met with mixed success. Many Easterners felt that the federal government's approach was inadequate and that certain policies, such as the controversial £20 policy which restricted former Biafrans to a mere twenty pounds irrespective of their pre-war bank deposits were unjust and

counterproductive to reconciliation. Additionally, issues such as the abandoned property controversy in Port Harcourt, where many Igbo property owners were unable to reclaim their assets, further complicated the post-war reconciliation process. These challenges underscored the complexities of achieving true post-war recovery and the need for continuous efforts to address lingering grievances.²²

The need for reconciliation and reconstruction after the Nigerian Civil War was driven by the devastating impact of the conflict on the country's ethnic unity, economic stability, social cohesion, and political structure. The war had left deep scars that could not simply be erased by the cessation of hostilities; rather, deliberate and sustained efforts were required to heal the nation. While the Nigerian government took several steps to address these issues through its post-war policies, the effectiveness of these measures remains a subject of debate. The next section will examine the various reconciliation efforts undertaken and their impact on national unity.²³

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CHAPTER THREE

POST-CIVIL WAR PROPERTY ACT LAW AND THE IGBO CONDITION

Introduction

The Nigerian civil war was also known as the Biafra war had ended on 15th January 1970. This war was between the Nigerian federal government and the failed secessionist state of Biafra that had left the Igbo people in deplorable conditions.¹ The Igbo's after the war had incurred great losses in terms of lives, food and properties. An estimated number of three million people had their lives taken from them with 40 % of them being children.² Gowon had made it a prerogative for the Nigerian government to rebuild the devastated Igbo land. Despite this initiative of the three R's of reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation, it was argued by critics that the Nigerian government had made the secessionist state pay for their failed efforts of departing from Nigeria it was disputed by Gowon who had argued that he had given Ukpabi Asika the administrator of eastern region sufficient funds to rebuild war scarred region in areas of economy, education and healthcare.³

The war had left the Eastern parts of Niger in economic ruins and this was seen in mainly the East Central state which was were must of the war had taken place. The Igbo's had seen not only their lives and that of their children lost, they had incurred the damages and losses of about 53,732 commercial and private

buildings,750km of roads,65 bridges and about 781 primary and post primary schools. Most of the infrastructures which had aided their everyday ways of life were lost due to the violent advent of the war.⁴

The abandoned property act saga has become an integral part of the aftermath of the Nigerian civil war. According to Grace O Awolowo the abandoned property act laws had directly affected constitutional protection of property rights as well as tensions which had grown between the state government intending to keep the interest of its minority population and formerly influential non indigenes which had been displaced during the war.⁵

Abandoned Property after the Civil War

Land an integral part in any country's economy and a beneficial way of decreasing poverty and a significant contributor to economic growth was what the Igbo's were forced to abandon due to the advent of the Nigerian civil war⁶.Before the advent of the war and the Aburi accord Nigerians region was solely divided into the Northern, Western, Eastern and mid-western regions. In the Eastern region in terms of economic power Igbo had economic and political hegemony over other minority ethnic groups in the region and had possession of lucrative business and land properties in other minority regions around Eastern Nigeria and during the war the Igbo's were forced to flee these property which circulate around our topic of discuss "Abandonment" a word that had been used to justify the acquisition of property that

had been fled by the Igbo's during the civil war became controversial surrounding laws that the Nigerian government had made in order to solve land disputes.⁶ This term according to blacks law dictionary page two of black law dictionary sixth edition was "to desert, surrender and forsake or cede. To relinquish or give up with intent of never again resuming one's right or interest. To give up absolutely It includes the intention and also external act by which is carried into effect". It had also gone to define abandoned property in a legal sense is when an owner has relinquished all rights, title, claim and possession but without vesting it to another persons and with no intention of reclaiming it or resuming its ownership, possession and enjoyment in the future.⁷

The war had emptied out half of the city of Calabar and Port Harcourt for the first time since the transatlantic slave trade and left Igbo run businesses abandoned leaving the streets completely deserted. Due to Port Harcourt being on heavy watch list by the Nigerian military, the local people of Port Harcourt saw this as an opportunity to fill in the professional positions that were formerly for the Igbo's even going ahead in nearby Uyo to establish identity cards for residents which was an attempt to prevent Igbo's from settling there.⁸ During the war Gowon had set up a committee named The abandoned property implementation committee(APIC) to protect the property left behind by the Igbo's and these communities had stood as the temporary owners collecting rent as well as keeping the property in good shape.

Despite committees set up minority states such as Port Harcourt and Rivers state held grievances towards the Igbo's and blamed them for the disastrous event that have plagued not only the Igbo's but other minority groups in the region.⁹ It was seen that even the River state commissioner for rehabilitation Dr Obi Wali himself an Ikwerre Igbo had claimed that the Igbo's having access towards their property can led to a disruption in law and order and that the people who seized Igbo properties were victims of the civil war who had their houses allegedly recked down by "rebel" Biafran groups when properties were being returned majority in places like Kano and the North in the 1970s the Rivers State government had defied the federal government by refusing to let the Igbo's reclaim their properties and in most scenarios protected trespassers who had occupied these territories.¹⁰ In South-Eastern Nigeria note ably Calabar had terminated a high Court Judge from the bench for returning a Cinema back to the Igbo owner against the wishes of the federal government and in East Central State where there were large numbers of displaced people disputes over ownership of land always arose.¹¹

The ministry of justice with the commissioner and state attorney general being Dr Nabo B. Graham Douglas goal in Rivers State was to provide as much as possible to the state government and its citizens. This was accomplished by creating different divisions and one of those pertinent division was the legal drafting division which had placed a major part in the enactment of the abandonment property edict of 1969. This

law had empowered the state government to take custody of Igbo owned properties left behind during the war particularly in Port Harcourt under Commander Alfred Diete-Spitt.¹²

Igbo's hard earned properties they had established all over the country despite the proclaimed "reconciliation" had been legally confiscated and denied repossession especially in Port Harcourt and Rivers state where there buildings were confiscated without the government intervention.¹⁶In Rivers State alone the Igbos had lost properties worth £56 million among these had lost 5600 buildings worth £28,253,000. These properties were sited in Eleme, Umamasi, Obia, Bonny, Port Harcourt and Elele during 1970s period. Despite Gowons 3R plan, the government had with intent turned their backs away from the wrong acquisition of their property and it was believed by scholars that the Rivers State was an accomplice to the Federal government in divide and rule among the Igbo's.¹³ The issues that came with the abandoned properties in Rivers state was seen as measures carried out by victors of the war to impoverish the Igbo's and to demote them to second class citizens.

The plans of keeping the abandoned property of Igbos was set in place and these where to declare Igbo properties as abandoned, create a legal excuse to prevent restitution claims, redistribute these properties to Indigenous residents, military officers and political allies along with avoiding federal interference and silence Eastern political voices.¹⁴ This was carried out by the promulgation of edict no. 5 of

1976. These laws had given the definition of abandonment vague and codified meanings in order to slow down the process of legal repossession of lands for the Igbo's. Victim testimony from these acts was seen with Chief Nnamdi Okeke a businessman in Port Harcourt who had returned after the war and saw his three story home had been occupied. he says " We were told the property was abandoned and given away, we fought for years in court but lost every time. "¹⁵

Despite the nature of how Igbo's were legally dispossessed after the Nigerian Civil War, they were cases where the meaning of "deserted " and "abandoned" evaluated which was seen in *Ndomi-Egba V. Chukwuogor* where the court had declared that just because the owner was away didn't mean the plaintiff had "deserted" his property. There were also cases like that of *Olale v. Ekwelendu* where the defendant had intended to invoke the Rivers state edict of 1969 to lay claim to the Plaintiff's property and was denied due to the edict having limits to its application.¹⁶

Land Act Law of 1978

The Nigerian Civil War left the country in social and economic disarray. Land ownership, particularly in eastern Nigeria, was deeply politicized and contested, with returning communities facing displacement and loss of ancestral land. To mitigate recurring land crises, the Federal Military Government sought a centralized framework for regulating landholding. The Land Use Act of 1978 thus vested all land in each state in the hands of the Governor, who was to hold it in trust for the people of

Nigeria. The Governors task was to be carried out with the support of the advisory Land use and Allocation Committee (LUAC).The Chairman of local governments were also assisted by the land allocation advisory Committee (LAAC).¹⁷

According to Yusuf Yahaya, the rationale was to “remove the bottlenecks of customary tenure and provide a uniform system for equitable access to land,” especially in urban areas where speculation and scarcity were rife.¹⁸ The land use act was promulgated on March 29th 1978 by the federal military government to control lands in across the country. Die to the promulgation of this act the governor since then has had autonomy for state land and the acquisition when necessary to the state. Since the land act of 1978,a new certificate was introduced as the title document known as Certificate of Occupancy. Before the land use act was introduced in Nigeria, title documents were document of conveyance which previously gave individuals full allodial rights over their land thus having full ownership over their property. Presently due to this act holders of the certificate of occupancy only hold possession of the land for 99 years and are expected to pay rent to the governor at the expiration of his tenancy.¹⁸ Those with certificate of conveyance were expected to convert theirs to a certificate of occupancy since it was made statutory evidence of title. This transition from certificate of conveyance to certificate of occupancy created major challenges for Igbo’s who wanted to reclaim properties they had lost after the civil war due to the fact that before 1978 they made use of certificate of conveyance. This radical article

had handed over lands to the governor which has made the transaction of commercial more tedious. In section 28(1) of the article gives the governor full right to revoke a right of occupancy for overriding public interest but there are limitations as well as compensation given to the holder of the land.¹⁹ This act entrenched the loss of the Igbo's by vesting ownership to state governors and limiting private ownership to mere rights of occupancy. The act which was brought in for the stabilization of government projects, streamlining of land administration and to curb hoarding by elites mostly had caused more problems than the solutions it was brought to solve.²⁰ This is seen with the provision of section 9(i)(c) that even with evidence and certificate of right of occupancy does not guarantee as a claim or title to the land and if it were to be given to a court it would be seen as insignificant and inadequate enough to claim title of ownership to the land and this was enunciated in the Supreme Court case of Oguniye V. Oni 23.²¹

The displacement of customary and regional ownership system and the centralized control of land under the federal government were put in place in order to get rid of customary and regional ownership systems. This had made it difficult for people to reclaim their properties lost during the civil war. With the introduction of Land use Act, right of occupancy had the effect of all other forms of ownership invalid both under customary law and common laws .This meant that due to the Land

Use Act, These documents were no longer seen as sufficient to lay claims to a property.²²

After the Nigerian Civil War and a decade of political instability (1966–1976), the government introduced the Land Use Act of 1978 as part of the new constitution. This Act marked a major shift in how land was owned and managed in Nigeria. Unlike earlier regional land laws, the Act applied nationwide. Its main goal was to reduce the dominance of the three largest ethnic groups in land matters and to promote unity across the country. Although it was based on ideas from the 1962 Land Tenure Act, the Land Use Act went further by decentralizing control of land and limiting tribal monopolies on ownership.²³ Under the Act, all land in each state was vested in the governor, who holds it in trust for all Nigerians. In practice, however, the Act was introduced into a system already struggling with regional inequalities. Between 1962 and 1978, Nigeria's decentralization policies had encouraged the growth of four major urban-industrial regions: Lagos–Ibadan, Kano–Kaduna–Zaria, Benin–Sapele–Warri, and Port Harcourt–Aba–Onitsha–Enugu.²⁴ These areas became economic hubs but also drove up the demand for land, creating tension between state-controlled ownership and informal land markets. While the Act was supposed to bring fairness and structure to land ownership, it soon revealed many bureaucratic flaws. Obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy the legal proof of ownership was often slow and expensive, making land access even harder for many Nigerians.²⁵

The Igbo Conditions after the Civil War

The end of the Biafra war was a time of reconstituting broken lives, settling scores and finding ways to get by. The reintegration of former Biafra into Nigerian society was set in place under a policy called "no victor no vanished". A post war emblem which had promised the Igbos who had fought for the Independence of Biafra would not be punished for doing so bringing Nigeria back into Nigeria which had involved a drawn out plan of the process of reconciliation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation famously called the "three R's". Despite this it was seen that the end of the war sustained conditions where the insecurity and violence thrived.²⁶ The end of the civil war had seen the annihilation of the achievements and had uprooted much of the economic infrastructures of Igboland which had taken the lives of many and left some disabled. Ukpaki Asika an appointed loyalist of Gowon's appointee for the East Central State had failed to notice the enormity of the plight of the Igbos. He had made radio broadcasts for the return of civil servants to return back to work in Enugu but had made no provision for their transportation neither did he take steps to take away multiple road blockades filled with Federal government troops all around the road leading to Enugu leading to very few responses for administrative calls.²⁸ This was due to people being afraid of the federal troops due to the trauma caused by federal

military troops in pre and post war times. The cessation of the war had not brought an end to the starvations left behind aftermath realities of the civil war with the thousands of the sick and hungry, the absence of means of transport, lack of farming instruments and the total collapse of social economic life basics for the Igbo people.²⁹

After the Nigerian Civil War ended and secession was defeated, the federal military government faced the difficult task of rebuilding the nation. General Gowon's government succeeded in keeping Nigeria united, but many of the political problems that led to the conflict remained unresolved. The old federal system, which was meant to balance power among the three largest ethnic groups, had failed to do so and may even have made the crisis worse. The new leaders many of them from smaller ethnic groups wanted to build a new structure that would prevent domination by the larger tribes. Some reforms had already begun, though the leadership was still experimenting and unsure of the best approach. In foreign affairs, Nigeria became more confident and nationalistic, though Gowon's government was expected to maintain a practical foreign policy. At the same time, Nigerians remained cautious and distrustful of foreign powers.³⁰ The reintegration of civil servants from the East has also been happening, though very slowly. In mid-May, a federal official reported that just over 1,000 eastern civil servants had been formally reinstated. More than half of them were posted outside the East Central State, and nearly 200 were sent to four

northern states. These were the first easterners to return to the North, where more than a million had lived before the war.³¹

One federal program that helped persuade the Ibos that Lagos was serious about reconciliation was the food relief effort. The precise extent of food shortages in the three eastern states was never fully known, but the Nigerian Red Cross (NRC) had been helping feed at least 2 to 3 million people soon after the war ended. The large relief program was scaled back this month, and after June the NRC's role might end entirely, leaving the remaining food relief responsibilities to the state governments. Because state administrations are not as well organized as the NRC, it is likely that malnutrition would increase if the NRC is withdrawn. Whether the NRC will remain in operation past June 30 had not yet been decided.³²

According to A. E. Afigbo, the Igbo were treated as social outcasts, such that their fellow countrymen wanted nothing to do with them. One of such events was the denial of Igbo identity by the inhabitants of Rivers State, the Ikwerre Igbo, who affixed the letter "R" to the names of their towns. This saw towns such as Umuigbo becoming Rumuigbo and Umukurushi metamorphosing into Rumukurushi, and so on. This was an attempt by the Rivers people to erase their Igbo identity so as to tell the rest of the country to forget that they are or were ever Igbo.³³ According to some Igbo historians and community leaders, Igbo people were treated very badly during and after the Nigerian Civil War. They say in Rivers State, people from the Ikwerre group

(who speak Igbo) tried to deny being Igbo by changing the names of towns adding an “R” in front of them (so, for example, “Umuigbo” became “Rumuigbo,” and “Umukurushi” became “Rumukurushi”). This change was meant to hide the Igbo identity of those towns, to make other Nigerians believe they were not Igbo. Also, it’s reported that many Igbo people abandoned property in Rivers State and other places when they fled during the war. These properties were never restored. Many Igbo lost their businesses or investments, often sold off cheaply, and some Igbo businesspeople suffered serious health problems even dying of hypertension or heart attack because of the stress and losses.³⁴

The civil war left Nigeria much poorer. Federal soldiers often cut down bushes and even fruit or economic trees so they could see their enemies better. They also destroyed homes through bombings, shelling, or by tearing off roofs (the zinc sheets), which they then used for their own shelters. Along with destruction came looting of valuables. After the war, the federal government made a policy that really hurt war survivors: people who had bank accounts in the Eastern region during the war were only allowed to claim £20 (twenty pounds) regardless of how much money they had deposited before the war. Many Igbo people lost their businesses because operations were interrupted, workers couldn’t continue, and investment vanished.³⁵

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CHAPTER FOUR

IMPACT OF PROPERTY ACT LAW ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF IGBO

Introduction

At the end of the Nigeria-Biafra War that raged between 1967 and 1970, Igbo people as defeated people incurred huge loss in all spheres of life and forced back into the union membership of one Nigeria. Although the war ended on ‘no victor, no vanquish’ verdict the clear indication that the people lost the war is obvious.¹ An estimated three million Igbo people died. About 40% of those killed were Igbo children, either by gunshot or through starvation. Some women carried the burden of shame for seeing their children die on their backs and their womanhood being assaulted by the rampaging victorious Nigerian army.² The men folks were not left out in the shame of defeat as many who survived the war were frustrated for the rest of their lives. The people were debased and their sense of dignity was trampled upon so that somehow life seemed meaningless for those, who survived the war. There was no family that did not lose a person, had one misfortune or the other. Those who survived the menace and brunt of the war were roundly devastated.³ There were many wounded and diseased people who needed medical attention that was lacking.

Nature of Abandoned Property

The Abandoned Property Programme impacted seriously on the lives of many people in Nigeria. Many could not reclaim their properties and investments in their States of residence after the war because having fled to their homes during the war, the properties came under the control and management of the state governments where they are situated and became subject to new conditions and laws. Some of the properties were converted to public uses while others were destroyed or rebuilt resulting in loss of the character of the buildings.⁴

Many other buildings now under the control of the Abandoned Property Authority were purchased by persons other than the owners, who capitalised on the provisions of the Abandoned Property Edict of 1969 to acquire these properties. This purchase of properties tagged 'abandoned' by private persons who are indigenes of the States where these properties were located brings to the fore, the allegations from various quarters that the abandoned property programme was highly politicised.⁵ On the one hand many indigenes exploited the uncertainties of the period after the war to appropriate properties of non-indigenes to themselves while some others colluded with the Abandoned Property Authority officials to personally purchase the buildings at ridiculously low prices rather than returning same to the original owners as envisaged by the Edict. This group argue that the loss of property during the war was general and not particular to any groups described as non-indigenes. They claimed that most of the properties were destroyed during the war and the matter should be foreclosed as loss resulting from war.⁶

Persons who claim that their properties were confiscated however see the programme as the government's deliberate effort in emasculating some groups in Nigeria especially the Igbos who were accused of starting the civil war. They claimed that their properties were compulsorily acquired by the government, who while denying them access to them gave same to their own persons to ensure that they became economically disadvantaged in contrast to their pre-war status. The writer in the course of this work discovered a misconception and confusion as to the properties actually tagged "abandoned" and those tagged State Lands upon expiration of their leases. This possible confusion fuelled the claim of confiscation of property under the guise of abandonment.¹⁷ Whether these allegations were true or false, it is important to state that many claimants to the properties tagged abandoned confused what had become State lands after the war with properties under the control of the Abandoned Property Implementation Committee.

These persons did not make a clear distinction between the properties actually considered abandoned and under the control and custody of the Abandoned Properties Authority or Implementation Committee and those properties whose leases had expired (since most of leases granted by the Eastern Region government were for a short duration usually for 99 years). These expired leases reverted to the government and were treated as State Lands and not as Abandoned Properties. Most of the allegations made by the Igbos of purposeful deprivations of property by the Rivers State government for instance were untrue as the leases they held had expired by effluxion of time and were not renewed.¹⁸

This position was highlighted in *Ogua/aji v A. G. Rivers State*, 10 where the court of appeal held that the property in question was not really an abandoned property but a property which had reverted to government on the expiration of the lease. So, it is not every claim of confiscation that may be correct. The claim that setting up the Abandoned Properties Authority was altruistic has been confirmed by the opinion of Craig J.S.C that the Abandoned Properties Edict of 1969 was not targetted at particular persons but from the-definition given in the Edict, "was promulgated in order to protect the property of non-indigenes of Rivers State who have had to abandon their property during the civil war; that the Edict would therefore also apply to the indigenes of the State".¹⁹

The Abandoned Properties in Rivers State

The term 'Abandoned Property' is generally used to describe the property acquired by non-indigenes in the various States in Nigeria before the Nigerian Civil War, and which property was left in the States where they were resident before returning to their states of origin. It was an official term used by the Nigerian government to describe the property of fleeing Nigerians from their States of residence to their home States and which property was taken over by the Nigerian state.²⁰ In Rivers State, it was used to designate premises or compounds, buildings and lands belonging to the Igbos who were resident in Port Harcourt before the Nigerian Civil War but who left to return to their states; and which properties were handed over to the abandoned Property (Custody and Management) Authority.²¹ According to the Rivers State Edict on Abandoned Property

“Abandoned Property means any moveable or immovable belongings to a person whose hometown or place of origin is not situated in the Rivers State of Nigeria, which in the opinion of the Military Government or the Authority has been abandoned by the owner thereof as a result of the civil war in Nigeria or the disturbances in the country leading to it and is at the time of the making of this Edict not in the physical occupation or under the personal control and management of such owner”.²²

As part of the unification and reintegration of the country after the civil war with the hope of giving a sense of belonging to the Igbos back into Nigeria and also finding a lasting solution to the disenchantment and frustration of the Igbos who lost their properties outside their territory, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime that took over power from Gowon in 1975 set up the Col. Daramola Panel on Abandoned Properties in Rivers State. The Policy marked the first serious attempt to find a solution to the problem of abandoned properties during the post-civil War era. It was seen by many to have transcended ethnic politics.²³ In accepting the recommendations of the Panel, the Head of State, Gen. Murtala advised in a broadcast to the nation: “At this stage, any just solution to the question of abandoned properties must involve the spirit of give-and-take on all sides”. Afterwards, a package of N14 million naira was announced by the Murtala to enable the two states (Rivers and East Central) to pay rent arrears on all the building property. Both State governments were directed to pay adequate compensation on all acquisitions to the owners.²⁴

Selling 85% of the houses to Rivers people and other Nigerians excluding the Igbos when the properties in question legitimately belonged to the Igbos is not in tune

with the dictum of No Victor, Vanquished as declared by Gowon after the end of the war. Even the federal government implementation committee on Abandoned Properties (APIC-Abandoned Properties Implementation Committee) under Maj. David B. Mark was unfair to the Igbos and as a result increased political pressure on the government.²⁵ It impacted severely the lives of many Igbos because many could not reclaim their properties and investments in their States of residence after the war having fled to their homes during the war. As a result, the properties came under the control and management of the state governments where they were situated and became subject to new conditions and laws. Some of the properties were converted to public use while others were destroyed or rebuilt resulting in loss of the character of the buildings. Up to this moment, the Igbos have always shown dissatisfaction with the implementation of the API Committee.²⁶ In 1990, a bill to repeal the Abandoned Properties Act Cap 1, Laws of the Federation 1990 and declare void the sale or disposition of abandoned properties conducted by the Abandoned Properties Implementation Committee and also seeks to revert and vest all rights and interests in the properties tagged ‘abandoned’ to their original owners was sponsored by Hon Tony Anyanwu.²⁷

Social and Economic effect of the War on the Igbo People of Nigeria

Social Impact

The massacres in the North and the subsequent war made many people to become disabled. Some were victims of the unprovoked attacks and massacres. The war merely aggravated these tendencies through military action, bombing or other forms of accidents.

It was a credit to Biafra medical ingenuity that these people did not die of their disability in spite of the inadequate medical services. Another negative effect on the people was psychological fear the war induced on the Igbo people. While the war lasted by enemies attack and there was a fear of conscription for the young men, the tension created the constant fear of losing a relative in the battle field. The fear that arose during the war continued even at the end of the war as a result of anti-social and criminal activities forced upon the demobilized soldiers by joblessness. With firearms at their beck and call, many easily resorted to robbery and corruption.²⁸

Individual and group animosity also increased. Many people became mortal enemies to each other because of war experiences. The major cause of this lay particularly in the anger which arose from forced conscription into the war by aggrieved individuals and families. The situation is worsened in cases of death of victims. The alleged individual responsible for such tragedy is held in perpetual enmity. Moreover, various families were broken down as a result of the war. The separation of husbands from their wives as a result of the war led to broken families either as a result of death or directly on the part of one partner. Some people lost their social standing because of war impoverished them while others fared better due to enhanced war opportunities. Few positive social effects arose from the war.²⁹ It seems that people learnt to have strong mind to face their problems following war experiences. They also inherited a sense of pity from their experiences with the refugees. Apart from this, it would appear that the Igbos have learnt after the war that 'charity begins at home' considering the way people

invest at home now (think home philosophy), but ironically, a greater setback for the Igbo is the war guilt and marginalization.³⁰

The war united the Igbos more with the progeny of the Igbos in the Northern Nigeria; they all rushed back to their base with a few properties they could carry. They united for first of its kind under one leader-Ojukwu and fought the war which they believed would give them safety, their rights and privileges. With this spirit of unit of the civil war, Igbo leaders of thought and ordinary citizens are united today under one umbrella via 'Ohaneze ndi Igbo'. Under this umbrella, they still continue to pursue their common goal. Today, in the whole world or country anywhere Igbos are, they are united and treat one another as brothers and sisters irrespective of state of origin.³¹

Economic Effect

The economic impact of the civil war tended more towards poverty. When particularly Nigerian soldiers came in, they had to cut down bushes and even economic trees around them so as to have a clear view of their enemy. There was also the destruction of houses through bombings, shelling and even deliberate removal of roofs. These roofs (zincs) they used to provide bashers for themselves. As they destroyed, so they looted valuables items. The federal government further impoverished the war returnees by granting them as a matter of policy the paltry and insulting sum of twenty pounds for accounts in banks operated during the war.³² There were cases of people the war stopped their businesses and workers who automatically had to stop work. Again, certain individual enterprises that existed before the war died at the end of it bringing

with them mass poverty for their former owners. Consequently, they could not go into their various businesses again. They lost what they could have acquired from daily transaction or payment for their service to the nation. The economic effect that heated Biafra most was the change of currency by the federal government in January 1968. Biafrans faced financial disaster, if not a total collapse as a result of the change which was the most important single reason why we lost the war. On the positive side, however, some people who were clever made their way to new riches while some fell completely.³³

There is no doubt that the war of Nigerian unity was fought with bravely. It is a war with lots of lessons. The fact that there was reconciliation after the war does not mean there was reintegration. The clause that says “No Victor No Vanquished” in the Nigerian war is a fallacy for there was the Victor and there was the Vanquished. The treatment being meted to the Igbos since after the war shows that they were defeated. If not, why was much made about reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation.³⁴ Yet, the government offered no tangible assistance for the people to reconstruct and rehabilitate themselves instead their accounts in banks were frozen and a man with many problems was forced to collect only twenty pounds to face these problems. It was a lost war, if not why were the easterners particularly the Igbos being marginalized in subsequent national governments. When Ojukwu questioned this in the 1993 formation of National government why was he cautioned that the ministerial post was not a compensation for the civil war. According to Nwankwo, Biafrans lost the war. Indeed Biafran lost the revolution before the war. It also lost survival as a nation. But it has left

behind it an ideal. This ideal remains the only hope for Black Africa and what is the hope? Indigenous development and lessons of the war in general. This is the challenges of Biafra For Biafra had the qualities to win the war but a large heart had to be supported by large armies and ranks to win major wars. The later qualities Biafra lacked.³⁵

The war made manifest the problems of Nigeria, though they remain unsolved till today. These are unfaithfulness to the nation and to each other in particular, tribalism, nepotism, corruption, unnecessarily optimism, power dominances, avarice, irrationalism, insecurity and richness of our resources. All these dominate present Nigeria's social, political and economic life. What is heart-breaking, the geniuses made manifest in Biafra were thrown into the dustbin of history for unnecessary political fear.³⁶ The optimism of Gowon over what he thought would end with a police action ended in a full blown thirty months war and what Ojukwu thought was the greatest power in black Africa was dragged to the mud. Both Gowon and Ojukwu underrated the capabilities of each side. As a nation, we are yet to build within our political ethos honesty, tolerance and patriotism. The future continues to be annulled and mortgaged in the interest of the few and to the detriment of the majority.³⁷

The Implications to the Southeast Geopolitical Zone

According to Gen Yakubu Gowon the philosophy of the No Victor No Vanquished dictum which he pronounced at the end of the civil war in 1970 was to roll up their sleeves as they set their hands on the plough to rebuild Nigeria after they had silenced the guns. However, 53 years down the line the speech is yet to walk the talk

resulting in social inequality, political exclusion, economic marginalization as well as discrimination and deprivation on the people of the region with severe implications on the region.³⁸ The implications are as follows:

Emergence of Separatist Movements in the Southeast Geopolitical Zone

The poor implementation of the No Victor No Vanquished Dictum of the Federal Government and the continuous inequality and inequities meted out on the southeast by the federal government have cumulatively brought about several lamentations, disenchantments and disharmony against the federal government which have found expression in the emergence of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) with its severe implications to the unity of Nigeria. According to Professor Ebere Onwudiwe, the mismanagement of General Yakubu Gowon's Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (3Rs) policy, which the military government put in place to erase the scars of war was the major reason for the resurgence of Biafra uprisings.³⁹ He further stated that "it was the failure of Nigeria to vigorously and successfully implement the Tree Rs policy that was partly responsible for the establishment of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)".⁴⁰

MASSOB led the way in the early period of the fourth republic precisely in 1991. Due to the loss of trust in the leader, Chief Ralph Uwazurike, IPOB, a more vociferous and radical group was formed in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. IPOB By 2015 with the

establishment of the “Radio Biafra” IPOB became the rallying point of the Igbos’ agitation against the inequity and inequality of the federal government over the years, especially the disenchanting youths who see Nigeria as a failed state that offers them nothing but “blood, pains and sorrows”. Their belief is that the realization of the independent and sovereign state of Biafra is key to the end of social injustice, marginalization, deprivation, inequity and inequality that are being meted out to the Igbos. Unfortunately, the federal government rather than address the demands of the group, decided to coercively shut them down.⁴¹ Firstly, it arrested and incarcerated the leader of IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Then followed by the pronouncement and proscription of the group as a terrorist organization in 2017 by an ex parte order granted by the Federal High Court, Abuja. However, the proscription of IPOB has turned out to be one of the most politically divisive actions taken by the Federal government under the Buhari Government. Today, IPOB, a non-violent and unarmed group agitating for an independent state of the former Eastern region known as the blight of Biafra have been forced to wield arms against the government with severe implications for the security and unity of the country. A situation that has led to several factors between federal government security forces against members of IPOB.⁴²

Sadly, there is the emergence of different faceless and vicious groups in the region in the name of Unknown Gun Men (UGM) unleashing all manners of violent attacks such as arson, the brutal murder of high-placed individuals and politicians in the region, kidnapping for ransom, violent attacks on police formations and barracks, prisons,

market places and event centres, etc., In many instances, the UGM have threatened and attacked businesses of other ethnic groups who are either bringing their wares for sale or residence in the region from other regions in the name of fighting for the release of IPOB leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu or implementing a “sit-at-home order in the region”.⁴³ Statistics from Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) show that 970 incidents were reported between 2019 and 6 January 2023, with an estimated 1,360 deaths reported. About 60 per cent of these attacks were carried out by Unknown Gun Men, while the IPOB carried out 129 attacks and communal militia 101. All these put together stand opposed to the unity and integration of the country which the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria envisages.⁴⁴

Conclusion

It should be noted here that, there is no gainsaying that the emergence of separatist movements such as the MASSOB and now IPOB, the rising disenchantment and acrimony, the recoil to regional politics, the violent uprising, the hatred and divisive politics and the rising distrust in the southeast over the federal government are offshoots of the negligence of the federal government towards the implementation of the No Victor No Vanquished dictum that was pronounced at the end of the Nigeria Civil War, aimed at healing the wounds of the war by reconciling the two groups, rehabilitating the war-torn eastern region and reintegrating the people back to the Nigerian system to maintain one indivisible entity. Therefore to find a lasting solution that would assuage the people of the southeast region, douse the tension and resolve the anomalies for national peace and unity.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The post-war reconstruction in Igboland was shoddy. There were no genuine efforts on the part of the victorious Federal Government to assist the Igbo people towards the rebuilding of their war-damaged infrastructure. On the contrary, sometimes the Federal Military Government deliberately aborted the efforts of some humanitarian organizations and countries in rendering assistance to the prostrate Igbo people at the end of the war. The little assistance the Federal Government extended to the Igbo was mere window dressing and inadequate to prevent thousands of them from dying of starvation immediately after the war.¹

It is usual to solicit assistance from all over the world at the end of a major catastrophe. Biafra was a human tragedy. Disease and infrastructural damages due to the war were more than the Federal Government could have handled even if it was favourably disposed to do so. Thus, all external assistance should have been accepted no matter the country they came from. What the Igbo got from the Federal Government was inadequate finance and discrimination. Save for the Igbo man's self-help efforts, Igboland would have remained in a state of decay and neglect.

There were deliberate measures by the General Gowon regime aimed at impeding the quick recovery of the Igbo people at the end of the war.² The enactment of Decree

No.46, The Public Officers (Special Provisions) Decree 1970, the vexed issue of abandoned property, the Indigenization Decree of 1972, among others, seemed targeted at frustrating and hindering the reintegration of the Igbo into the Nigerian family. Despite General Gowon's proclamation of "no victor no vanquished" after the war, a decree was enacted to screen out top- ranking Igbo Federal civil servants on the pretext that they had collaborated with the Biafran government.³

The Decree No.46 of 1970 was used to witch-hunt senior Igbo civil servants and deny them reinstatement after the civil war. Thus, the contradiction and insincerity of the "no victor no vanquished" declaration was discernible to any observer. It was not only in the public service that the Igbo were weeded out of service but also in the armed forces. All top ranking Igbo officers in the armed forces were either dismissed or retired without benefits while those who participated in the January 15, 1966 revolution were clamped into further detention after the civil war .When they were eventually released, they were dismissed from the armed forces without any benefits in spite of the services they had rendered to the country. There was no offence which those Igbo officers in the armed forces committed which their colleagues from the North did not do to a far greater degree during the counter coup d'etat of July 29, 1966. They dispensed to their Igbo colleagues vengeance not justice.⁴ One expects that this miscarriage of justice should be corrected. The dismissed Igbo officers in the armed forces should be restored to their appropriate ranks and their full benefits paid to them or their relatives in arrears or posthumously. One side should not be made to bear the pains alone. It is time for us to truly heal the

wounds of the civil war by rehabilitating those harshly punished in the aftermath of the war.⁵

The abandoned property issue has continued to irritate the Igbo people. It has up till now received cosmetic attention from the government. The way and manner Igbo properties were confiscated in Rivers and the then South Eastern States, with the tacit support of the Federal Government, is disgusting and against the spirit of national reconciliation. The Federal Government should set aside a substantial sum of money to be given to the five core Igbo States of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo to develop housing estates as a final act of compensation for the unjust seizure of Igbo properties after the end of the civil war.⁶ Once this is done, the Igbo would be in a position to forgive the injustices perpetrated against them before, during and after the civil war. The issues that led to the civil war such as insecurity of lives and property of all Nigerians in all parts of the country have not been addressed. Thus, sporadic riots directed at certain ethnic groups living outside their home bases are more rampant these days than even before the civil war.

Islamic fundamentalists in the Northern parts of the country, under the guise of maintaining religious purity, have frequently attacked Igbo people living in the area. The rioters usually burnt-down churches, business premises and individual homes while killing and maiming anybody they- could lay their hands on. The most devastating and horrifying religious riots took place in April 1991 in most Northern cities particularly Katsina and Bauchi. These riots have often put to question the unity of this country.

Nobody is sure again of residing in any part of the country to carry out legitimate business unmolested by hoodlums masquerading under the guise of religion or economically disadvantaged local indigenes.⁷

In a true Federation, these riots should be nipped in the bud by the State security. But most of these riots were allowed to spread through police indecisiveness or even connivance. Nigeria should not be allowed to disintegrate through poor leadership and economic mismanagement. The sacrifices during the civil war would be in vain if ethnicity and nepotism ruin this country. The futility of war is underlined by the difficulties encountered in reconstructing war damages. Besides, wars rarely solve the problems they set out to address. The Nigerian civil war could have been averted if those who were unjustly massacred had received sincere apologies and compensations from the authorities. The post-war reconstruction period was an opportunity for the Gowon regime to show empathy to the Igbo for all their sufferings before and during the war. But that golden opportunity was lost when the regime used all subtle means to undermine Igbo interest in Nigeria.⁸ There is still time to correct the injustices against the Igbo since the end of the war.

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