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Military Governance and Civil War: Ethnic Hegemony as a Constructive Factor in Nigeria

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Military Governance and Civil War: Ethnic Hegemony as a Constructive Factor in Nigeria

Ojo, John Sunday ^o & Fagbohun, Francis Oluyemi ^a

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Keywords: *military, governance, ethnicity, politics, biafra, civil war, nigeria.*

I. INTRODUCTION

"The dominance of the NPC and the perceived dominance of the North in the centre were like a threat to the presumed more enlightened and better educated Southerners who believed they were the backbone of the movement for Nigerian independence but did not succeed the colonial power to run the affairs of the state. So with that background one can now lay the foundation of the perception of

the military struggle in Nigerian politics. (Major General IBM Haruna).¹ "The failure of the Aburi meeting..., and the outbreak of ethnic hostilities and the indiscriminate killings in the North and East further complicated and aggravated the situation....There was also the growing inter-ethnic rivalry and suspicion between the three major ethnic groups-Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba.... (General Yakubu Gowon).²

The existence of heterogeneous caption of Nigeria cannot be pulled off without the colonial stratagem which provides ill-fated matrimony of divergence pluri-ethnic groups for the smooth running of British colonial occupation in Nigeria. Nigeria is a country estimated with over 160 million people, comprised of three dominants ethnic groups (Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo), concomitantly, with more than 250 minority ethnic classes, therefore replicates pluralistic rhetoric of Nigerian amalgamation; it was observed that ethnic consideration serves as a significant value in determining the political leadership of the country since independent. The proxy of ethnicity with meritocracy has continued to hampering the political survival, its affiliation with political leadership has hijacked the political control of the country amid its reflection in daily governmental businesses in Nigeria. Thus, ethnic fondness protracts to frustrate numerous steps taken to sustain the amalgamation of the various social groups; the fear of marginalization of minority groups utterly contributes to the ethnic consciousness in the political array of Nigeria.

The intercession of Military personnel in politics has been conventionally chastised as an aberration, despite their forbidden operation in political engagements, various countries of the world such as Nigeria, France, Ghana, Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, Thailand, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Azerbaijan Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, just to mention a few, have experienced military skyjacking of political power at one time or the other. It is usually proclaimed that the involvement of military in governance habitually resulted in absolute crippling down of political system; this has crafted an enduring damage to many political systems all over the world. Observably, the military intervention in

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¹ Major General IBM Haruna quoted in Omoigui .N. (2002) The Prelude: Bloody Coup of January 1966; Urhobo Historical Society

² General Yakubu Gowon

Nigerian body politics has rooted in ethnic chauvinism which metamorphosed into civil war in 1967. Notably, during this political clampdown, which was later transmuted into ethno-religious violence, myriad of Igbos were lynched while their properties were either looted or destroyed in the Northern region.

Ethnic consciousness was so pronounced in Nigeria that the old national anthem adopted at independence read in part "though tribe and tongue may differ in brotherhood we stand" Subsequent events that plunged the country into ethnically enhanced political crisis showed that much more was needed than mere lyrics of a national anthem. The civil war, militarism, and military intervention in politics, enabled one ethnic group to perpetuate its domination of governance to the bitter exclusion of the other component nationalities. The long history of ethnic intransigence to rule the roost of central political vigor has continued to fabricate incongruous political character of diverse ethno-linguistic Nigerian society. The application of favourism and nepotism in military governance immensely has effectual connotation on Nigerian amalgamation which is currently endangering the political togetherness in Nigeria³. The history of military governance and civil war cannot be completed without mentioning unquantifiable roles of some military heroes like Majors Nzeogwu, General Benjamin Adekunle, General T.Y. Danjuma, Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi, General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed, General Olusegun Obasanjo, General Muhammadu Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida, General Sani Abacha, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, Martins Adamu, Captain Mamman Shuwa, Hassan Katsina, Ifeajuna, Adaka Boro, Philip Effiong and the rebel leader, Colonel Ojukwu.

Ako-Nai cited in Ojo posits that ethnic politics and rivalry had been the handiwork of colonial manipulators who used the method of divide and rule to govern. The ethnic groups were used against one another for the colonizers' economic gain. At the inception of colonization, the British authorities emphasized separation. It is against this background that one can readily appreciate the nature of continued conflict among the major ethnic groups even after independence was attained in 1960.⁴ Nigeria gained political independence from imperial Great Britain in 1960. In 1966 its elected civilian regime was toppled in a coup d'etat that ushered military rule into Nigeria's public affairs. Since 1966, Nigeria has been dominated by military rulers. Even during the two brief non-military periods, in which civilians were voted into office, military

men were never far away. Few Nigerians have bothered to probe the gory details of the coups that have maimed Nigeria's post-independence history⁵. as the military took over in the mid-1960s, and the economic situation worsened, ethnic tensions broke out⁶.

The goals of military takeover in Nigeria or most part of the world was to effect changes. In trying to achieve these, they often engaged in bloody revolution. When in January 15th 1966 Major General Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and those loyal to him staged a coup, these were their intentions, to eradicate: "our enemies who were the political profiteers, swindlers, the men in the high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIPs of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds. These good intentions are insurmountable. Yet, military intervention can never be a panacea to civilian inadequacies since their intervention in politics is unconstitutional. Venturing into politics negates the tenets of their traditional roles⁷ .

Ethnic politics has always been the major source of growing political tension in Nigeria which has resulted in periodic outbreaks of violence between different ethnic groups in the country. This scenario has been detrimental to national unity and socioeconomic development of the country. Ethnic tensions increased after a military coup in January, 1966 led by Major Kaduna Chukwuma Nzeogwu. The coup was seen by the Northerners as an attempt by the Igbos to dominate the country. This led to a counter coup led by the Northerners few months later. In the counter coup, Aguiyi Ironsi, an Igbo Major General who was the then Head of State was killed and widespread reprisals were unleashed against the Igbos in the Northern part of the country. Fearing marginalization within the state, on May 30, 1967 the Eastern region dominated by the Igbos declared its independence as the Republic of Biafra⁸.

From the onset of independent government in Nigeria in 1960 to the end of 1990, the military had ruled for twenty-one years. Altogether there were five coups d'état involving changes of government: those of January 15, 1966; July 29, 1966; July 29, 1975; December 31, 1983; and August 27, 1985. There was also an unsuccessful coup in which the head of state,

⁵ Omoigui .N. (undated) Nigerian Civil War File Federal Nigerian Army Blunders of The Nigerian Civil War (1) available at www.dawodu.com/omoigui25.htm

⁶ BBC News, Thursday, 13 January, 2000

⁷ Gimba .N. (2012) Military Rule And Nation Building Process In Nigeria; Journal of Arts, Humanities and Diplomacy Volume 2, Number 1, Insuderc Academic Publishers

⁸ Ebegbulem .J. (2011) Ethnic Politics and Conflicts in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspective; Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

³ Orji .E. (2001) Issues on Ethnicity and Governance in Nigeria: A Universal Human Rights Perspective; Fordham International Law Journal; Volume 25, Issue 2

⁴ Ojo .J. (2014) An X-ray of Inter-Governmental Relation Conflicts and Resource Control in the Fourth Republic in Nigeria; International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, Vol 6(3)

General Murtala Muhammad, was killed in February 1976, and another was nipped in the bud in December 1985. An attempt to overthrow General Ibrahim Babangida was made in April 1990. Of these coups, only those of January 1966 and December 1983 were against civilian governments. Several explanations of military intervention have been added to those given by the coup plotters themselves. Whereas the latter have cited economic mismanagement and corruption, other explanations have ranged from the continuation of ethno-regional politics by military means to the personal ambitions of officers⁹. The coups and counter-coups that started with the bloody coup of January 1966 heralded into the Nigerian governance institution, an ethnically biased and one-sided military. The various military regimes did very little to repair this ethnic relationships within the force or in Nigeria. The military took many decisions that aggravated the ethnic situation in the country. This gave rise to national question¹⁰. Axiomatically, this has been the origin of ethnic sexism in politics after independent which has been an injurious to political solidarity of divergence ethnic caste towards sustainable amalgamation in Nigeria. Premised from the above background analyses, this study therefore explores ethnic hegemonic as a constructive factor for military takeover and civil war in Nigeria.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnicity is a cultural heritage shared by a category of people. Objective criteria are those of ancestry, cultural practices, language, and dress while subjective criteria are those involving the internalization of a distinctive identity¹¹. Ethnicity is a group of people having a common language and cultural values¹². Ethnicity refers to a selected cultural and physical characteristic used to classify people into (ethnic) groups or categories considered to be significantly different from others¹³. It is defines as a subgroup that shares a common ancestry, history, or culture, ethnicity is determined by a number of factors: geographic origins, family patterns, language, values, cultural norms, religion, literature, music, dietary patterns, gender roles, and employment patterns¹⁴. Ethnic groups are defined as a community of people who share cultural and linguistic characteristics including history, tradition, myth, and origin. Ethnic conflicts are therefore

often caused by an attempt to secure more power or access more resources¹⁵.

Ethnicity and nationalism, interethnic conflicts, and secessionist movements have been major forces shaping the modern world and the structure and stability of contemporary states. In the closing decades of the twentieth century, such forces and movements emerged with new intensity. Drawing examples, from a wide variety of multiethnic situations around the world¹⁶, with a great emphasis on African nations.

"If you are born poor, you may die rich. But your ethnic group is fixed"¹⁷. So goes the "primordialist" way of thinking about ethnic identity. According to it, each of us belongs to one and only one ethnic group that group membership remains fixed over a lifetime and it is passed down intact across generations. Wars begin and end, states grow and die, economies boom and crash, but through it all, ethnic groups stay the same. Although theories of the formation of ethnic groups are driven by the constructivist assumption that ethnic identities can change over time, theories of the effect of ethnicity on economic and political outcomes are driven by the primordialist assumption that these identities are fixed¹⁸.

Ethnic identity can be expressed either in action or feeling, or combinations of these, and the kinds of situations in which it is expressed are nearly limitless¹⁹. Once a group has won control over the country's riches, however, it faces the task of enforcing the exclusion of non-members. Agents not belonging to the winning group will attempt to infiltrate it, so as to participate in the distribution of the spoils. For example, they will apply for land titles, mining concessions, scarce places in higher education, or for government jobs. This infiltration defeats the winning group's purpose, as it dilutes the dividend each original member receives²⁰. The on-going agitations by various ethnic groups are a direct result of what has widely become known in Nigerian lexicon as "marginalization." The Hausa/Fulani of the North are complaining about marginalization in the area of education and economic development. The Igbo are crying marginalization in almost every aspect of national endeavor, including political, military, and senior civil service appointments and promotions, as well as economic and social development. They also complain about the non-implementation of the Reconciliation, Reconstruction, and Rehabilitation program promised at

⁹ U.S. Library of Congress Studies

¹⁰ Ako-Nai .R. (2008) The Politics of "Marginalization" in Nigeria: Challenges of the 4th Republic "in" Nigeria and Globalization Discourses on Identity Politics and Social Conflict; published by Centre for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC).

¹¹ Macionis .J.& .L. Gerber, (1995) Sociology; Fifth Canadian Edition; Pearson Education

¹² Rakov S. (1990) Ethnicity in Nigeria; Vassar College '92 (English 32, Fall 1990)

¹³ Ibid 3

¹⁴ Ibid 12

¹⁵ Irobi .E. (2005) Ethnic Conflict Management in Africa: A Comparative Case Study of Nigeria and South Africa; The Beyond Intractability Project, The Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado

¹⁶ Brass .P. (1991) Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison; Sage Publications, UK.

¹⁷ Chandra .K. (2010) Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics; (Ed) Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ Ibid 16

¹⁹ Gans .H. (1979): Symbolic ethnicity: The future of ethnic groups and cultures in America, Ethnic and Racial Studies, 2:1, 1-20

²⁰ Caselli .F. & Coleman .W. (2012) On the Theory of Ethnic Conflict London School of Economics, CEP, CEPR and NBER

the end of the civil war in 1970. The Yoruba are displeased, among other things, with the early retirement of their qualified and experienced nationals from the civil services during the military dictatorships. The South-South, which comprises the oil-rich states of Nigeria, are pushing for full control of their natural resources²¹. Therefore, Ethnocentrism channels the competition along ethnic lines; and the power differential determines whether either group will be able to subordinate the other²². Ethnicity has been used as a ploy by the military to perpetuate itself in power at the expense of national development. The military slove for power stems partially from a love for wealth and partly from its self-image as the custodian of the independent and corporate existence of the country²³.

Previous research on civil wars, in the same vein as the research on riots, tends to treat ethnic groups as unitary actors and ethnic identities as given ex ante, automatically salient, fixed during the conflict, and predictive of individual political behavior²⁴. Ethnicity as a Social phenomenon associated with the identity of members of the largest possible competing communal groups (ethnic groups) seeking to protect and advance their interest in a political system. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture, race religion and/or common history. Ethnicity is only one of the phenomena associated with interactions among communal groups (ethnic groups). Others include trade, diplomacy, friendship enmity, corporation, self-abnegation and self extension. What is peculiar to ethnicity is that it involves demands by one group on other competing groups²⁵.

A severely divided society is one in which ascriptive cleavages are highly salient in politics (more salient than alternative cleavages such as social class), a few groups contend for power at the center, and there is a history of interethnic antipathy²⁶. The relative wealth of the country and the large size of some ethnic groups has allowed them to express their ethnicity in remarkable and sometimes problematic ways that are not mirrored in other similar countries. Dominance of particular ethnic groups in certain sectors of the economy has significant implications for equity. The pattern of dominant and excluded minorities is embedded in the administrative and economic subsystems and has important implications for access

to justice and equitable resource-sharing. Ethnic conflict has been a perennial feature of the Nigerian scene since pre-colonial times²⁷.

The Nigerian socio-topography comprises three major ethnic groups, that is, Hausa/Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba with other minority groups, as Rakov validates it that the Hausa are themselves a fusion, a collection of Sudanese peoples that were assimilated, long ago, into the population inhabiting what is now considered Hausaland. They believe in the religion of Islam. Their origin is a matter of dispute: legends trace them back to Canaan, Palestine, Libya, Mecca and Baghdad, while ethnologists hold them to be from the Southern Sahara or the Chad Basin. The Fulani are also Muslims, and, like the Hausa, their origin is more or less an open question. Once a nomadic people, they believe themselves to be descended from the gypsies, Roman soldiers who became lost in the desert, a lost "tribe" of Israel, or other groups such as the relatives of the Britons or the Tuaregs, who inhabit the southern edge of the Sahara in central Africa. The second majority ethnic group is the Ibo, who like the Hausa-Fulani are a synthesis of smaller ethnic groups. In this case the smaller groups are the Onitsha Ibo, the Western Ibo, the Cross River Ibo, and the North-eastern Ibo. Their origins are completely unknown, as they claim to be from about nineteen different places. The third ethnic majority group, the Yoruba, is like the others made up of numerous smaller collections of people. Those who are identified as Yoruba consider themselves to be members of the Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ife, Ilesha, Ekiti or Owu peoples. The Yoruba are united, however, by their common belief in the town of Ife as their place of origin, and the Oni of Ife as their spiritual leader. Their mythology holds that "Oduduwa" created the earth; present royal houses of the Yoruba kingdoms trace their ancestry back to "Oduduwa," while members of the Yoruba people maintain that they are descended from his sons²⁸.

In the post independent regime, ethnicity serves as an instrument of development until someone used it to garner votes for political and economic gains of one of the zones, the South West, following which, the military elevated the abuse of ethnicity to an unimaginable level²⁹. The original justification for military rule in Nigeria arose from the claim that the country's civil politics were unruly and required a dose of military discipline. This naive assumption overlooked the universal historical fact that since the invention of the nation-state some five centuries ago, its civil politics have been disorderly. Order and discipline were the military's twin mantras. But the Nigerian military's

²¹ Ibid 16

²²Noel .D. (1968) A Theory of the Origin of Ethnic Stratification; University of California Press

²³ Anugwom. E. (2001) The Military, Ethnicity and Democracy In Nigeria; Journal Of Social Development In Africa, Vol 16 No 2

²⁴ Ibid 16

²⁵Nhoh, 1978:5 cited in Felicia .H. & Akuva .I. (2013) The Origin And Development Of Ethnic Politics And Its Impacts On Post Colonial Governance In Nigeria; European Scientific Journal June 2013 Edition Vol.9, No.17 ISSN: 1857 – 7881

²⁶ Horowitz .D. (2014) Ethnic Power-Sharing and Democracy; Journal of Democracy, Volume 25, Number 2

²⁷ Blench .R.& Dendo .M. (2003) Position Paper: The Dimensions Of Ethnicity, Language And Culture In Nigeria; DFID, Nigeria

²⁸ Rakov S. (1990) Ethnicity in Nigeria; Vassar College '92 (English 32, Fall 1990)

²⁹ Vanguard Newspaper, August 23, 2013

meaning of discipline was completely defective. Overthrowing a government which military officers had sworn to protect was in fact an act of indiscipline. Discipline signifies an inner code of behavior that honors important societal principles. *Coups d'etat* have no redeeming values as acts of discipline; because they destroy respect for a societal institution of governance³⁰, it is believed that ethnic manipulation has been a handiwork of political elites in Nigeria, as it was stated that:

Why we have been fighting along ethnic, regional and religious affiliations for years is caused

by the elites competing for the control of political and economic powers..... But because of competition among the elites, they instigate the people to fight one another while the elites convert the resources of the nation for their personal benefits³¹.

Therefore, ethnicity has been an apparatus of political manipulation to get to power. The origin of military takeover in Nigeria was as a result of thrilling ethnic dogma to control the affairs of the nation in Nigeria.

Table 1 : Structure and Composition of Military Government in Nigeria

Structure	Composition	Functions
Supreme Military Council (SMC)	The Head of State (Chairman), Chief of Staff Supreme Military headquarters, Head of Army, Air force and Navy, minister of Justice, vice president, inspector General of Police, Attorney General of Federation and other top military officers	It is supreme military organ vested with power to make law and responsible to appoint military Governors to various states in Nigeria
National Executive Council (NEC)	It constitutes Head of State as the Chairman, the Ministers with different portfolio, the secretary to the federation, some top military officers	It is assigned with the responsibility of formulating and implementing government policies and programmes
Council of States	It consists Head of State as the Chairman, the Military Governors, some top Military officers and Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters	This organ serves as advisory in nature. It advises the government on any related matter affecting the country

Source: By Author

III. CAUSES OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

Military intervention in Nigerian politics has been part of the unrelieved ethnic competition for power. There are various reasons for military occupation in politics, among them are the following:

- i. *Ethnicity*: The major problem facing Nigerian State is sketches' along ethnic competition for power. The 1966 military coup was colorized as an attempt to exclude Northerners from the cloak of political leadership which was later corrected through another coup devised by the Northern military officers calculatingly to recuperate their political credence in Nigeria.
- ii. *Political Upheaval*: Political crisis has been a major reason for military intervention in politics as it was reflected in the South-Western Nigeria political crisis

during the first republic. The intervention of military to quench the flame of political tension resulted in synchronized usurping of political power from the incumbent civilian government.

- iii. *Corruption*: In many occasions, the civilian government were accused of been corrupt, dwelling on this premise, military takeovers were justified as it was experienced in the past military coups in Nigeria.

³⁰ Ekeh .P. (1998) Theory And Curse Of Military Rule And The Transition Program; Available at www.nigerianscholars.africanqueen.com

³¹ Nigeria News Day, Thursday, 03 April 2014

Table 2 : Rank And Background Of The Nigerian Army's High Command As At January 14, 1966

NAME	POSITION	BACKGROUND
Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi	GOC – Nigerian Army	East: Igbo
Commodore Joseph Wey	Commanding Officer – Nigerian Navy	Mixed Yoruba/eastern minority heritage
Brigadier Samuel Ademulegun	CO – 2 nd Brigade – Kaduna	West: Yoruba
Brigadier Zakariya Maimalari	CO – 1 st Brigade – Lagos	North: Kanuri
Brigadier Babafemi Ogundipe	Nigerian military attaché in London	West: Yoruba
Colonel Thimming	CO – Nigerian Air Force	German expatriate officer
Brigadier Varma	CO – Nigerian Military Training College – Kaduna	Indian expatriate officer
Colonel Kur Mohammed	(Acting) Chief of Staff at Army HQ – Lagos (in place of Colonel Robert Adebayo)	North: Kanuri
Colonel Ralph Shodeinde	Deputy-Commander, Nigerian Military Training College: Kaduna	West: Yoruba
Colonel Robert Adeyinka Adebayo	Attending a course in London	West: Yoruba
Lt-Colonel Yakubu Gowon	Preparing to take over command of the 2 nd battalion from Hilary Njoku	North: Angas
Lt-Colonel Francis Fajuyi (was on leave in his home town of Abeokuta during the coup)	CO – 1 st Battalion – Enugu	West: Yoruba
Lt-Colonel Hilary Njoku	CO – 2 nd Battalion – Lagos	East: Igbo
Lt-Colonel George Kurubo	CO – 3 rd Battalion – Kaduna	East: Rivers
Lt-Colonel Abogo Largema	CO – 4 th Battalion – Ibadan	North: Kanuri
Lt-Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu	CO – 5 th Battalion – Kano	East: Igbo
Lt-Colonel James Pam	Adjutant-General of the Nigerian Army	North: Birom (his father was the Chief of Jos and his brother was in the air force)
Lt-Colonel Arthur Unegbe	Quartermaster-General of the Nigerian Army	Mid-West: Igbo
Lt-Colonel Ime Imo	CO – Lagos Garrison	East: Igbo
Major Hassan Usman Katsina	CO – 2 nd Reconnaissance squadron - Kaduna	North: Fulani
Major John Obieniu	CO – 1 st Reconnaissance squadron – Abeokuta	East: Igbo

Source: *Siollun, (2005)*

Note: Those whose names are italicised in the above table were killed in the coup of January 1966. May their souls rest in peace.

IV. THE HISTORICAL ROOTAGE OF MILITARY GOVERNANCE AND CIVIL WAR IN NIGERIA

This section of the paper examines various military regimes from 1966-1999. Military rule instigated against the government of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa in Nigeria on January 15, 1966, the military coup d'e-tat was led by Major, Chukwuma Nzeogwu, and therefore, the Balewa's regime was short-lived with the immediate replacement of Major-General J. T. U. Aguiyi-Ironsi. In

another military coup, General Yakubu Gowon (1966 - 1975) which also witnessed the Nigerian Civil War (1966 - 1970) and the regimes of Brigadier (later General) Murtala Mohammed (1975 -1976) and Lt. General Olusegun Obasanjo (later General) (1976 - 1979). General Olusegun Obasanjo handed over to democratic regime of President Shehu Shagari (1979 - 1983) which was overthrown by a military coup on December 31, 1983. Thereafter, the successive military regimes were headed by General Mohammadu Buhari (1983 - 1985), General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (1985 - 1993),

which later handed over to ersatz-civilian regime headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan (August - November, 1993), this regime was later truncated by General Sani Abacha (1993 - 1998), after the demise of General Sani Abacha,

General Abdulsalami Abubakar ruled from 1998 – 1999. In 1999 Abdulsalami Abubakar handed over power to civilian regime which signals the winding-up of military administration in Nigerian politics.

Table 3 : Names and Ethnic Backgrounds of Military Head of States in Nigeria

NAME	ETHNICITY	YEAR OF RULING
Aguiyi Ironsi	Igbo	1966-1966
Yakubu Gowon	Hausa	1966-1975
Murtala Muhammed	Hausa	1975-1976
Olusegun Obasanjo	Yoruba	1976-1979
Muhammadu Buhari	Hausa	1983-1985
Ibrahim Babangida	Hausa	1985-1993
Sani Abacha	Hausa	1993-1998
Abdulsalam Abubakar	Hausa	1998-1999

Source: By Author

V. BRIEF HISTORY OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN NIGERIA

❖ General Aguiyi Ironsi 1966-1966

Following the assassination of Tafawa Balewa (Nigerian Prime Minister) in the first republic, Dr Nwafor Orizu (the Acting President) was informed by General Ironsi to handover power either voluntarily or forcefully, this scenario led to the handing over of power to military government in a broadcast announced by Dr Nwafor Orizu. Contributively, the political crises that enveloped the political parties system strengthened military takeover in 1966.

Misunderstanding between the political leaders, tribal or ethnic interests, or nationalist impetus played a vital role in the January 15, 1966 military *coup d'etat*. The docile nature of the post-independence ruling elites also contributed to the first coup in Nigeria. The smoldering volcano of rampage, arson, pillage, and jungle justice, triggered off by the allegations that the Western region elections were rigged, provided a fertile ground for the military to seize power on January 15, 1966. Announcing the reasons for the coup, Major C.K. Nzeogwu, said:

In the name of the Supreme Council of the Revolution of the Nigerian Armed Forces, I declare martial law over the Northern provinces of Nigeria ... We seized power to stamp out tribalism, nepotism and regionalism ... The constitution is suspended and the regional government and elected assemblies are hereby dissolved. All political parties, cultural, tribal and trade union activities, together with all demonstrations and unauthorized gatherings, excluding religious worships, are banned until we established a strong, united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife ... All treaty

*obligations previously entered into with any foreign nation will be respected, and we hope that such nations will respect our country's territorial integrity and will avoid taking sides with enemies of the revolution and enemies of the people*³²

At the same time, in exercise of his constitutional prerogatives as the Senate president, Dr. Nwafor Orizu, who by virtue of his office was then the Acting President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, made the following broadcast to the nation:

*I have to-night been advised by the Council of Ministers that they had come to the unanimous decision voluntarily to hand over administration of the country to the armed forces of the Republic with immediate effect . . . I will now call upon the General Officer Commanding Nigerian Army, Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi, to make a statement to the nation on the policy of the administration*³³

Citing a laundry list of complaints against the political class, there was a military rebellion in Nigeria against the first republic. Led by a group of Majors who were predominantly of eastern origin, the Prime Minister, a federal minister, two regional premiers, along with top Army officers were brutally assassinated. A number of civilians were also killed. The coup succeeded in Kaduna the northern region capital, failed in Lagos the federal capital and Ibadan the western regional capital, but barely took place in Benin the Midwestern capital, and Enugu the eastern capital. The majority of those murdered were northerners, accompanied by some westerners and two Midwesterners. No easterner lost his

³² Ibid 16

³³ Ibid 16

or her life. (Omoigui ³⁴. The deep division in the political class and the military institution itself, encouraged a few young army officers to overthrow the civilian government of Alhaji Tafawa Balewa at the dawn of 15th January 1966 the five military officers who initially planned and executed the coup were Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu (Chief Instructor, Nigerian Military Training College, Kaduna), Major Wole Ademoyega, Major Christian Anuforo, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna and Major Donatus Okafor³⁵. Aptly, the above mentioned names mirrored ethnic agendum of some Igbo military officers to takeover the government forcefully from Tafawa Balewa who is a Northerner.

Major-General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi was killed a few months later, and was followed by Lt-Col Yakubu Gowon from the Christian North. Relations became extremely poor between the federal government and the Ibos of the Eastern Region. In 1967, the Eastern Region proclaimed its independence as the Republic of Biafra (BBC News, Monday, February 15, 1999). The principal coup plotters behind the assassination of Major General Aguiyi Ironsi were mainly Hausas from Northern Nigeria,

these include Lt. Col. Murtala Muhammed (Inspector of Signals), Major TY Danjuma (General Staff Officer II, SHQ) and Captain Martin Adamu (2nd Battalion, Ikeja). The coup leader was T/Lt. Col. Murtala Muhammed.

A mistake in the execution of the 1966 coup was viewed with a mind full of vengeance, and desire to take over the ruler ship and dominium of Nigeria by some military officers from the Northern zone, such that they launched a counter-coup, followed by genocide against the Igbos in the North, leading the country to a 30-month civil war. But these officers kept blaming ethnicity as their reason³⁶. Therefore, these two political epochs signifies the beginning of ethnic distrust in Nigerian politics which later transformed into civil war in 1967, the allusions that the Igbos were been sentimental in plotting 1966 military coup resulted in the death of Tafawa Balewa and other Nigerian politician, therefore, dictated the emergence of General Aquiyi-Ironsi (an Igbo man) as first military Head of State which prompted Northern military officers in the Nigerian Army to safeguard their tribe from ethnic subjugation of Ironsi, unequivocally led to the origin of ethnic suspicious after independent.

Table 4 : Principal Actors and Victims in the January 15, 1966 Revolution

Names	Ethnicity
Major Chukwuma K. Nzeogwu	Igbo
Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna	Igbo
Major D. Okafor	Igbo
Major C.I. Anuforo	Igbo
Major I.H. Chukuka	Igbo
Major T. Onwuatiegwu	Igbo
Major Adegboyega	Yoruba
Captain G.O. Oji	Igbo
Captain Gbulie	Igbo
Captain E.N. Nwobosi	Igbo
Lt. B.O.O. Oyewole	Igbo
2nd Lts. N.S. Wokocha	Igbo
2nd Lts. Ojukwu	Igbo
2nd Lts. Azubuogu	Igbo
Victims	
Brigadiers Sam A. Ademulegun	Non-Igbo
Brigadier Z. Maimalari	Non-Igbo
Colonel .K. Mohamed	Non-Igbo
Colonel Ralf A. Sodeinde	Yoruba
Lt. Colonel. Y. Paur	Igbo
Lt. Colonel .A.C. Unegbu	Igbo
Major Sam. Adegoke	Non-Igbo

Source: Adapted from Orji, 2001

❖ General Yakubu Gowon 1966-1975

Following the bloody coup d'état of 29th July, 1966 which led to the killing of Major-General Johnson

Aguiyi-Ironsi, Ironsi was assassinated during a state visit to the western region; Lt. Colonel Adekunle Fajuyi was the military governor of western Nigeria in this political epoch. In this coup, General Ironsi, Colonel Adekunle

³⁴ Ibid 4

³⁵ Madiebo, 1980 cit in Akinbade .J. (2008) Government Explained; Macak Books Ventures, Lagos

³⁶ Vanguard Newspaper, August 23, 2013

Fajuyi and other numerous military officers mainly from Igbo tribe were killed. The immediate causes of the coup include the following:

- People in the North were generally dissatisfied with Ironsi’s handling of the officers who carried out the January 1966 coup. The coupists were not officially tried and sanctioned in accordance with military regulations.
- The January 1966 coup was perceived in the North as an attempt by Southerners, especially the Igbo to regain power from the North. The urge for revenge and the need to retake power was always there.
- The decision by Ironsi government to turn Nigeria into a unitary state was unpopular in several parts of the country
- The government of General Ironsi was weak and, was unable to act on several reports of attempts to overthrow it³⁷.

The assassination of many Igbo military officers prolonged the ethnic problem facing Nigeria. Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu refused to cooperate with the new regime of Yakubu Gowon due to killings of some high-ranking military officers originated from Igbo dynasty. Concomitantly, the Republic of Biafra was declared by Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, this led to three years civil war in Nigeria. In May 27th, 1967, 12 states were created in order to weaken the regional government and also to arrogate power to the central government along federal structure. The civil war ended on 15th January, 1970 in which General Yakubu Gowon proclaimed three political agenda including reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation in order to bring Igbo back into Nigerian political system. In July 29th, 1975, General Yakubu Gowon was overthrown in a bloodless coup; therefore, marked the end of his military administration.

Table 5 : Principal Actors and Victims in the Counter-coup of July 29, 1966

Name	Ethnicity
Victims	
Lt. Colonel I.C. Okoro	Igbo
Lt. Colonel G. Okonweze	Igbo
Majors T.E. Nzeogwu	Igbo
Majors B. Nnamani	Igbo
Majors C.C. Emelifeonwu	Igbo
Majors J.I. Obieniu	Igbo
Majors P.C. Obi	Igbo
Majors Ibanga Ekanem	Non Igbo
Majors O.U. Isong	Non Igbo
Majors A. Drummond	Non Igbo

Source: Adapted from Orji, 2001

³⁷ Ibid 34

VI. GENERAL MURTALA MUHAMMED 1975-1976

In another related military coup embarked upon on 29th July, 1975 which serves as the third in the history of military governance in Nigeria produced General Murtala Muhammed as a new military Head of State and commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Federal republic of Nigeria. It was discovered that General Murtala Muhammed contributes a lot the downfall and hijacking of power from General Yakubu Gowon. The regime of General Murtala Muhammed created more additional 19 states and the relocation of federal capital territory to Abuja. This regime devoted to curbing of corruption in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the regime of General Murtala Muhammed was short-lived in a military coup orchestrated by Lt. Colonel Dimka who was also killed after the coup.

❖ General Olusegun Obasanjo Administration 1976-1979

Following the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed, General Olusegun Obasanjo was declared new a new Head of State. The regime witnessed changing of military structure as it related to creation of Council of State. This regime made a pronouncement of Major-General Musa Yar’Adua as the new Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters. The appointment was made to conciliate the Hausa/Fulani tribe which produced General Murtala Muhammed who was assassinated in a bloody coup. The regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo promised to handover power to civilian regime which came to fulfillment in 1979. A civilian Shehu Shagari was declared Head of State after the general election conducted by the military government.

❖ General Muhammadu Buhari 1983-1985

Following another military coup which hijack power from civilian regime of President Shehu Shagari on 31st December, 1983, marked the end of Second Republic in Nigeria. Major General Muhammed Buhari was proclaimed as a new military Head of State. The military administration of General Muhammed Buhari indicted the civilian regime in relation with corruption while this led to imprisonment of major political leaders in Shagari’s administration in Nigeria.

❖ General Ibrahim Babangida Administration 1985-1993

In a place coup that took place on 27th August, 1985, Major General Ibrahim Babangida, the Chief of Army Staff under the Buhari government, was declared as the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the federation (Akinbade, 2008)³⁸. President Babangida pledged to transfer power to a

³⁸ Ibid 36

civilian administration in 1990 though in 1987, this transitional period was extended until 1992. A comprehensive timetable to democracy was published, local government elections were held, and a draft constitution was drawn up. Political parties were legalized in 1989. A military coup was attempted in 1990, but was suppressed on the same day. Elections to the bicameral National Assembly were held in 1992. Presidential elections were due to be held later in the year, but electoral irregularities led to their postponement. When the presidential elections were finally held in June 1993, confusion over the election meant that only around 30% of the registered electorate actually voted. The initial results from the elections indicted that Chief Moshood Abiola had won the majority of votes in 19 states and he declared himself president. A couple of days later, however, the results were annulled by the ruling National Defence and Security Council, and Mr Babangida said that the polls had been marred by widespread irregularities. The annulment of the election was condemned internationally³⁹. Therefore, this led to major protest by the Yorubas in South-Western Nigeria unequivocally lengthen ethnic suspicious between Yoruba and Hausa tribes. To appease Yorubas tribe, General Babangida handed over power to Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan who happened to be a Yoruba by origin. The regime of Chief Ernest Shonekan was trampled upon by a military coup synchronized by General Sani Abacha.

❖ General Sani Abacha 1993-1998

Following the military coup which overthrown Chief Ernest Shonekan interim national government in October 17th 1993, General Sani Abacha emerged as a new military Head of State. Abacha's regime showcased the true nature of authoritarian tradition of military administration; this is evident in the killings of Ogoni environmental activists, namely; Ken Saro-Wiwa, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuine. The Sani Abacha regime witnessed another attempted coup d'état which was foiled by the military in Nigeria. The principal stakeholders in the coup were Lieutenant General Oladipo Diya, Major General Tajudeen Olanrewaju, and Major General Abdulkarim Adisa circumcised with Yoruba ethnic background.

General Sani Abacha's regime could be credited with the following:

- Prominent members of the opposition such as Ebenezer Babatope, Olu Onagoruwa, Lateef Jakande, and Alex Ibru were appointed as ministers by the Abacha government in 1993 but they were all dropped in the first cabinet reshuffled about one

year later. Soon after, Alex Ibru was shot by people suspected to be agents of the government. The first son of Onagoruwa was also killed in mysterious circumstances,

- The government organized the 1995 Constitutional Conference. Although widely boycotted in Western Nigeria, the conference achieved some modest success. The report of the conference was submitted to the government in 1996. Some of the recommendations such as division of Nigeria into six geo-political zones have proved to be of great political significance long after the collapse of that government.
- Five political parties were registered by the government in readiness for election scheduled for the end of 1998, although the five political parties later adopted Abacha as their joint presidential candidate, a development which appeared abnormal in a competitive party system.
- The government creates six additional states on 1st October, 1996 bringing the number of states in Nigeria to 36
- The Abacha government was able to put in place the vision 2010 programme, which was acknowledged as far sighted. The Obasanjo government did not however find it useful.
- It set up the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) under the leadership of general Buhari. Through PTF, Nigerians were able to enjoy some of the country's oil wealth through various interventionist programmes. The major criticism of PTF was that the federal character of the country was not observed in the distribution of projects⁴⁰.

❖ General Abdulsalam Abubakar 1998-1999

As a result of General Sani Abacha's death in June 8th, 1998, General Abubkadir Abubakar was pronounced as a new military Head of State. The regime recorded huge successes in the area of registering new political parties which include People's Democratic Party (PDP), Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All People's Party (APP). A new constitution was also drafted to suit the incoming democratic regime while election was conducted accordingly in 1999. Former Nigerian military president, Olusegun Obasanjo was declared as presidential winner of the election. This marked a new historic era of Nigerian fourth republic.

⁴⁰ Ibid 36

³⁹ BBC News, Monday, February 15, 1999

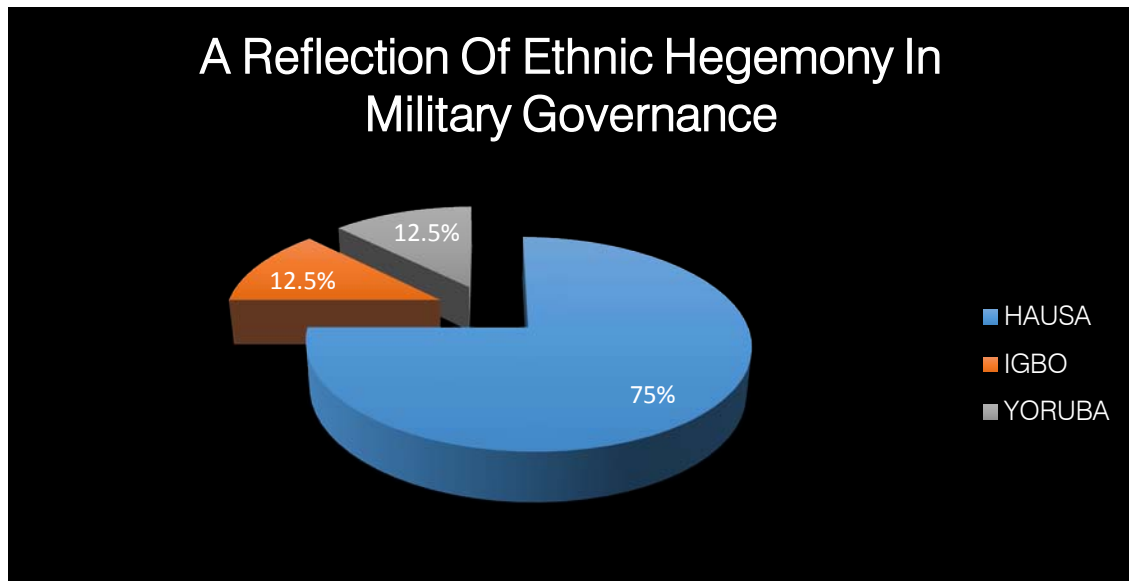


Figure 1

Source: By Author

VII. MILITARY COUPS AND CIVIL WAR IN NIGERIA: A SYMPTOM OF ETHNIC HEGEMONY

Before the infamous military incursion into governance in Nigeria in 1966, life was good and expectation for a better and greater nation was high. The regional leaders between 1960 and 1966 were competing to out-do one another in their respective regions. It was indeed a people-focused government providing free education to all school age children, irrespective of which part of the country they come from, also as part of its cardinal programme, free medical services, clean pipe-borne water supply, integrated agricultural programme, among others, were undertaken. The schools were well laid and equipped with both educational and sporting facilities and a maximum of 30 pupils to a teacher was the standard. Unfortunately, it is not only the old Western region's socio-political and economic life that has become estranged from our realities. The whole of Nigeria has become alienated from the modern and democratic world. Nigeria and Nigerians have also become victims of socio-economic stagnation, imposed fear, insecurity, unprecedented psycho-cultural damage and trauma. Between 1966 and 1999, except for the interlude of four years of civilian regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), the military through many coups and counter-coups ruled Nigeria without the consent of Nigerians⁴¹.

Nigeria's First Republic dated October 01, 1963 - January 15, 1966 was terminated on January 15, 1966.

In an attempt to overthrow the federal government, a group of young army officers led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu assassinated the Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Premier of the North, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Premier of the West, Chief Samuel Akintola, and the Federal Minister of Finance, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh. It was an abortive coup that led to Nigeria's first military regime headed by General J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi, the GOC of the Nigerian Army. General Ironsi, an ethnic Igbo, caused the arrest of the coup plotters. Since the coup was aborted and the plotters arrested, the federal government was secured. However, as there were no civilian successors from the federal cabinet willing to take over power, General Ironsi was therefore compelled to fill the void as head of Nigeria's first military government. That the coup plotters were ethnic Igbo, and there were no Igbo politicians among those assassinated, the coup attempt was perceived as an Igbo-inspired plot. In a series of coups and counter coups, the military subsequently ruled Nigeria from 1966 to 1979, and from 1983 - 1999, for a total of 29 years since independence on October 01, 1960 (Natufe, 2006)⁴². David Muffett, a British colonial officer outlines the Igbo elite's detailed plan to take control of not only the political structures but even the social structures of the North by killing all the then northern emirs in the final⁴³.

⁴² Natufe .O. (2006) Governance And Politics In Nigeria; A Lecture Delivered On November 21, 2006 At The Staff And Graduate Seminar Department Of Political Science & Public Administration University Of Benin, Benin-City, Edo State, Nigeria.

⁴³ Sahara Reporter, October 11, 2012

⁴¹ Vanguard Newspaper, June 28, 2011

The remote cause of the civil war was the January 15, 1966 coup that claimed the lives of prominent Northern and Western politicians such as Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ladoke Akintola, Premier of Western Nigeria, Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh, Minister for Finance etc. The coup caused indignation in Northern and Western Nigeria as the people of these two regions saw the coup as one targeted against their people. Thus, there was a countered coup on July 29, 1966 that was executed by army officers of Northern extraction. The Head of State, Gen. Aguiyi Ironsi was killed along with his host and Governor of Western Nigeria, Lt. Col. Francis Adegunle Fajuyi. After the countered coup, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon was appointed Head of State⁴⁴. The Igbos had made the secessionist move with the promise from Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the Southwest that the Yoruba would follow suit. The plan was if the southeast and southwest broke away from the Nigerian federal union, the federal government would not be able to fight a war on two fronts. Awolowo, however, failed to honour his pledge, and the secession proved a nightmare for the Igbos. Awolowo in fact became the Minister of finance of the federal government during the civil war⁴⁵. In similar vein, The Origins of the civil war could be located in a complexity of factors ranging from the remote which includes the military coups d'état of January 15, and July 29, 1966. Other remote factors are the regional election crisis in Western Nigeria in 1965; the Tiv riots of 1964; the Federal Elections of 1964; the killing of the Igbos living in Northern Nigeria from May to September 1966⁴⁶; the structural imbalance of the Nigerian federation; and, most importantly, the asymmetrical distribution of power among the various ethnic and geopolitical groups⁴⁷.

The January coup led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, an Igbo, saw the demise of two senior Northern political leaders and four senior Northern soldiers. Given the ethnic distribution of the casualties of the January coup and the fact that the leader of the coup and Ironsi were both Igbo, allegations were levied against the new regime as being an attempt at domination of the country by the Igbos⁴⁸. The January 1966 coup brought to the fore the ethnic factor in the makeup of Nigeria in that most of the leaders of the coup were of Igbo ethnic nationality but the victims were largely from some other ethnic nationalities of the then Northern and Western Regions. In May 1966, a wave of ethnic hatred and cleansing erupted in the North which was targeted at the Igbo and resulted in the violent and

premeditated death of hundreds of thousands of the people. This was quickly followed by the July 1966 counter coup, the end result of which was the three year Nigerian-Biafran war of 1967 to 1970 (The Nigeria Ethnic Nationalities Movement)⁴⁹. A mistake in the execution of the 1966 coup was viewed with a mind full of vengeance, and desire to take over the ruler ship and dominium of Nigeria by some military officers from the Northern zone, such that they launched a counter-coup, followed by genocide against the Igbos in the North, leading the country to a 30-month civil war. But these officers kept blaming ethnicity as their reason. Ever since the 'Araba' of 1966 in the North of Nigeria, the life of an Igbo man means very little to an average Northerner till date. That is why the Igbos could be killed in the North and nothing is done; foreigners would be killed there and nothing is done⁵⁰, up to 30,000 Ibos were killed in fighting with Hausas, and around 1 million refugees fled to their Ibo homeland in the east. On 30 May, 1967, the head of the Eastern Region, Colonel Emeka Ojukwu, unilaterally declared the independent Republic of Biafra⁵¹. Supportively, many African nations recognized the existence of Republic of Biafra, among them are Tanzania, Zambia, Ivory Coast. Tanzania was the first country to recognize Biafra nation on 13 April 1968, Nyerere in his defence asserted:

For 10 months we have accepted the federal government's legal right to our support in a 'police action to defend the integrity of the state'. On that basis we have watched a civil war result in the death of about 100,000 people, and the employment of mercenaries by both sides. We watched the federal government reject the advice of Africa to talk instead of demanding surrender before talks could begin. Everything combined gradually to force us to the conclusion that Nigerian unity did not exist⁵²

The Igbos who ran for their lives during the pogroms and war returned to find their positions had been taken over; and when the war was over the government did not feel any need to re-instate them, preferring to regard them as having resigned. This reasoning was also extended to Igbo owned properties and houses. People from other regions were quick to take over any house owned by an Igbo, especially in the Port Harcourt area. The Nigerian Government justified this by terming such properties "abandoned". This,

⁴⁷ Ibid 45

⁴⁸ Ojeleye .O. (2010) The Politics of Post-War Demobilization and Reintegration in Nigeria; A Copyrighted Material Available at www. ashgate.com

⁴⁹ Nigeria Ethnic Nationalities Movement

⁵⁰ Vanguard Newspaper, August 23, 2013

⁵¹ BBC News, Thursday, 13 January, 2000

⁵² Muhammadu .T. & Haruna .M. (1979) The Civil War: Causes and Course "Ed" in Oyediran. O. (1979) Nigerian and Politics Under Military Rule, 1966-79

⁴⁴ Daily Independent, Saturday, June 14, 2014

⁴⁵ Sahara Reporter, October, 21 2012

⁴⁶ Falode .A. (2011) The Nigerian civil war, 1967-1970: A revolution? African Journal of Political Science and International Relations Vol. 5(3),

however, has led to a feeling of injustice as the Nigerian government policies were seen as further economically disabling the Igbos even long after the war⁵³.

The crises and killings that led to the civil war were fallout of the bitter 'politicization of ethnicity, feigned by the corrupt elite', who encourage the gullible members of their ethnic group to cast aspersion on other ethnic nationals. Therefore, one would better conclude that the civil war started as a result of the coup and counter-coup led by dissident military officers against corrupt politicians and military leaders. The unfortunate incident was hijacked by berserk civilians, with support from undisciplined army officers, who engage in callous killings everywhere, due to the failure of the coup⁵⁴. Ethnicity therefore has become a strong factor in the political life of Nigeria. Most often ethnic sentiments are used to replace merit and skills, such that round pegs are no longer found in round holes. This chauvinistic behavior affects the efficiency and productivity of Nigeria⁵⁵. Therefore, the old ethnic and religious tensions remained a constant feature of Nigerian politics⁵⁶.

Since Nigeria achieved political independence in 1960, there has been struggle among the various ethnic nationalities in the country over control of political power and natural resources which led to the civil war from 1967 – 1970⁵⁷. Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu's declaration of the state of Biafra on May 30, 1967, was the immediate factor responsible for the civil war. Before this declaration, the Nigerian polity was geographically divided into 3 regions. These are the Northern, Western and Eastern regions. The Igbos are of Eastern extraction. Ojukwu's declaration will effectively excise the eastern part of Nigeria out of the federation. Thus, it was the effort of the federal government of Nigeria to truncate the east's secession from the federation and Ojukwu's desire to ensure the survival of Biafra that started the civil war in 1967. Like all civil wars, the Nigerian civil war was unique in the context of the nation's history. This is because it was the most vivid expression of a country turned against itself⁵⁸. In foregoing, the following are the remote causes of the Nigerian civil war:

- The counter coup of July 29, 1966 which led to the killing of Head of State, General Aguiyi Ironsi and unguarded statement of the new head of state, Colonel Yakubu Gowon (as he then was) that the North should take consolation from the fact that "another Northerner has come to power" and there was no basis for Nigerian unity"⁵⁹.
- The massive killings of Igbos residing in the Northern Nigeria ignited ethnic suspicious in Nigeria.
 - The struggle for resources control
 - The fear of ethnic marginalization in the political affairs of the country
- The concentration of power at the centre which makes Nigeria to have unitary outlook, therefore,
- parroting suspicious of Hausa/Fulani domination of the central government.

The following analysis explicates how Eastern Nigeria was captured by Nigerian Army during the civil war:

⁵³Adimekwe .K. (2010) History of The Nigerian Civil War; Available at www.allnigeria.info/index.php?board=8.0

⁵⁴ Ekhaton .O. (2013) "There was a Country": The Reminiscence of Nigeria-Biafra Civil War and Elites' Perception of Nation and Nationalism in Nigeria; A paper presented at an expert workshop tagged "Nation, Nationalism and National Integration in Nigeria" organized by Nationalism Research Network, Nigeria in June, 2013

⁵⁵ Ibid 24

⁵⁶ Ibid 29

⁵⁷ Ojo ,J. (2014) An X-ray of Inter-Governmental Relation Conflicts and Resource Control in the Fourth Republic in Nigeria; International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, Vol 6(3)

⁵⁸ Ibid 45

⁵⁹ Ibid 36

Table 6: Analysis of the 1967 Nigerian Civil War

Date	Combatant Advancements
1967	
6 July	Fighting breaks out between the federal and Biafran troops
10 July	The First Division of the Nigerian Army under Colonel Mohammed Shuwa captures Ogoja. Biafran aircraft bombs Lagos
15 July	Shuwa captures Nsukka
25 July	Third Marine Commandos Division of the Nigerian Army under Colonel Benjamen Adekunle captures Bonny
9 August	The rebels invade Mid-West and capture Benin. Later, in a hurried response, a Second Division of the Nigerian Army under Colonel Murtala Mohammed is formed
10 August	Gowon declares total war. Lagos bombed again
29 August	Murtala recaptures Ore and thus halts Biafran threat to Ibadan and Lagos
14 September	Murtala recaptures Benin
4 October	Shuwa captures Enugu
9 October	Murtala captures Asaba. Subsequent attempts to cross the Niger and capture Onitsha proved abortive
18 October	Adekunle captures Calabar
1968	
January	After the abortive attempts to capture Onitsha from Asaba Murtala moves up the Niger, crosses it at Idah and advances down to Awka and Onitsha
21 March	Murtala captures Onitsha
5 April	Shuwa captures Abakaliki
21 April	Shuwa captures Afikpo
Late April	The entire South Eastern State liberated by Adekunle
6 May	Adekunle captures Bonny Oil field in Rivers State
19 May	Adekunle captures Port Hacourt and thus completes the sealing off of Biafra from the sea
26 May	Colonel I.B.M Haruna replaces Murtala as G.O.C. Second Division
29 July	Adekunle captures Ahoada, last major state in Rivers State
4 September	Adekunle captures Aba
10-11 September	Adekunle captures Oguta and advances on the Uli airstrip which was Biafra's major link with the outside world
15 September	Biafrans retake Oguta
16 September	Adekunle captures Owerri
30 September	Shuwa captures Okigwi
November/December	Nigerian airforce begins air strikes on Biafran airstrips especially Uli but with little effect
21-24 December	Biafran offensive to recapture Owerri and Aba foiled
1969	
22 April	Biafra recaptures Owerri
12 May	Major reshuffle of Nigerian's Army commanders. Obasanjo takes over from Adekunle, Jalo from Haruna and Bisalla from Shuwa
27 December	Third Division links up with the first at Umuahia
1970	
7 January	Third Division recaptures Owerri
11 January	Ojukwu flees Biafra for Ivory Coast
12 January	Obasanjo captures Uli airstrip. Lieutenant-Colonel Philip Effiong who took over from Ojukwu brocasts surrender over on Radio Biafra
13 January	Gowon accepts Biafra surrender

Source: Adapted from Muhammadu & Haruna (1979)

VIII. THE AFTERMATH OF THE CIVIL WAR

The aftermath of the civil war witnessed a reconciliatory delegation organized by the military Head of State under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon. The official members of the Biafran and federal delegations who attended the formal war ending ceremony at Dodan Barracks on January 15, 1970 were:

a) Biafran Delegation

- Major-General Phillip Effiong – Officer Administering the Republic of Biafra
- Sir Louis Mbafero – Chief Justice of Biafra
- Matthew Mbu – Biafran Foreign Minister
- Brigadier Patrick Amadi – Biafran Army
- Colonel Patrick Anwunah – Chief of Logistics and Principal Staff Officer to Ojukwu
- Colonel David Ogunewe – Military Adviser to Ojukwu
- Patrick Okeke – Inspector-General of Biafran Police

b) Federal Military Government Delegation

- Major-General Yakubu Gowon – Nigerian Head of State
- Obafemi Awolowo – Deputy Chairman, Supreme Military Council
- Brigadier Emmanuel Ekpo – Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters
- Brigadier Hassan Katsina – Chief of Staff, Nigerian Army
- Brigadier Emmanuel Ikwue – Chief of Air Staff
- Rear-Admiral Joseph Wey – Chief of Naval Staff
- Dr Taslim Elias – Attorney-General
- H.E.A. Ejueyitchie – Secretary to the Federal Military Government
- Anthony Enahoro – Commissioner for Information
- The Military Governors of the 12 states: , Ukpabi Asika, Audu Bako, David Bamigboye, Alfred Diete-Spiff, Jacob Esuene, Usman Faruk, Joseph Gomwalk, Mobolaji Johnson, Abba Kyari, Samuel Ogbemudia, Oluwole Rotimi, Musa Usman.

Source: <http://maxsiollun.wordpress.com/>

IX. CONSEQUENCES OF THE CIVIL WAR IN NIGERIA

- *Starvation:* Many of Igbos died of starvation during the war. According to Adimekwe, (2010), the Biafran government claimed that Nigeria was using hunger and genocide to win the war, and sought aid from the outside world. A Nigerian commission, including British doctors from the Liverpool University School of Tropical Medicine, visited Biafra after the war and concluded that the evidence of deliberate starvation was overplayed, caused by confusion between the symptoms of starvation and various tropical illnesses. They did not doubt that starvation had

occurred, but were unsurprisingly not clear of the extent to which it was a result of the Nigerian blockade or the restriction of food to the civilians by the Biafran government⁶⁰. As this could also be justified in the word of Major General Benjamin Adekunle that "I want to see no Red Cross, no Caritas, no World Council of Churches, no Pope, no missionary and no UN delegation. I want to prevent even one Ibo from having even one piece to eat before their capitulation. We shoot at everything that moves and when our troops march into the centre of Ibo territory, we shoot at everything even at things that do not move," - (*Benjamin Adekunle, Commander, 3rd Marine Commando Division, Nigerian Army to French radio reporter*). All is fair in war, and starvation is one of the weapons of war. I don't see why we should feed our enemies fat in order for them to fight harder." - *Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Nigerian Minister of Finance, July 28th 1969)*⁶¹ "

- *Destruction of lives and properties:* it was believed that over a million people lost their lives in the war, among the top military leaders such as Christopher Okigbo, Emmanuel Ifeajuna and Adaka Boro lost their lives in the battle."One word now describes the policy of the Nigerian military government towards Biafra:- genocide. It is ugly and extreme but it is the only word which fits Nigeria's decision to stop the International Committee of the red Cross, and other relief agencies, from flying food to Biafra , " The Nazis had resurrected just here as Nigerian forces,⁶². "The greatest single massacre occurred in the Igbo town of Asaba where 700 Igbo male were lined up and shot as terrified women/children were forced to watch" ⁶³ "Federal troops, killed, or stood by while mobs killed, more than 5000 Ibos in Wari, Sapele, Agbor"⁶⁴
- *Backwardness in socio-economic development:* The war had adverse effect on socio-economic development; as many infrastructural facilities that have been put in place were destroyed during the war.
- The war cost Nigerian federal government huge amount of money, as Alade, cited in Akinbade buttresses this statement that the war cost federal military government about \$158,000 a day⁶⁵.
- The reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation projects embarked upon by the federal government

⁶⁰ Ibid 52

⁶¹ Washington Post, editorial, July 2, 1969 *quoted in* Ogbuefi, (2012) Gowon must live to answer the genocide question; available at www.wordpress.com

⁶² Ibid 60

⁶³ London Observer, 21 January, 1968 cit Ibid 61

⁶⁴ New York Times, 10th January, 1968 cit Ibid 61

⁶⁵ Ibid 36

impound a huge amount of money from the nation's financial purse

- The war cost the Igbos a great deal in terms of lives, money and infrastructure. It has been estimated that up to three million people may have died due to the conflict, most from hunger and disease⁶⁶
- Many properties own by Igbos were confiscated and tagged as "abandoned properties" by the government especially in Port Harcourt, therefore, this led to persistence injustice in Nigerian political landscape.

propelled grenades, etc. They built refineries with which they refined their crude oil; ambulances were manufactured; bunkers and other war armaments⁶⁹. After the civil war, these prominent engineers and nuclear scientists were not assembled by the Nigerian government to foster economic and technological development in Nigeria. This would have been a grand opportunity to manufacture locally made weapon for Nigerian military capacity.

X. UNTAPPED OPPORTUNITY IN NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR

During the Nigerian Civil War, the Igbo scientists and engineers gave good account of themselves in terms of technological inventions. In the heat of the civil war, the leader of the young Biafra Republic, Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Ojukwu called a meeting of engineers and scientists, and challenged them to produce a counter weapon to all that Britain and Russia were providing to the Nigerian Government. The Biafran inventors were led by Ugah Aguata, a science genius, Engineer Roy Umenyi, Ben Nwosu, Godian Ezekwe, Emma Osolu, Sam Orji, Njoku Obi etc manufactured unfathomable weapons not expected of young nation like Nigeria that got independence only six years back. Thus, the Igbo engineers first invented shore batteries with which they devastated marine craft. They also invented anti-aircraft weapons which they used to control the excesses of the federal fighting jets⁶⁷. Biafran scientists from the research think tank RAP-the Biafran Research and Production Unit developed a great number of rockets, bombs, and telecommunications gadgets, and devised an ingenious indigenous strategy to refine petroleum⁶⁸.

The Biafran Army made a bomb they called "Ojukwu Bucket" or "Ogbunigwe," which means the mass killer. Dr. Sam Orji, a world-renowned nuclear physicist and bomb expert and Dr. Felix Oragwu, also a nuclear physicist played a crucial role in sustaining the Biafran war effort by inventing bombs for the secessionist Biafra. Engineer William Achukwu, an Agricultural Engineer actually fabricated the metallic bucket that was used for making the Ogbunigwe bomb. The Biafran Armed Forces engineers also manufactured armoured cars which were very effective and comparable to those made by advanced nations. They invented ground to air missiles, assault rifles, gun boats for amphibious attacks, rocket launchers, rocket

⁶⁶ Ibid 52

⁶⁷ Daily Independent, Saturday, June 14, 2014

⁶⁸ Achebe .C. (2012) There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra; Published by Allen Lane an imprint of Penguin Books

⁶⁹ Ibid 64

Table 7 : Political Killings as a Legacy of Military Governance In Nigeria

	Name	Year	Location of Death	Affiliation	Position	Nature of killings	Ethnic Identity	Killer
1	Tafawa Balewa	1966	Lagos	Northern People's Congress (NPC)	Prime minister and Head of Government	Gunshot	Hausa	Military
2	Ahmadu Bello	January 15, 1966.	Sokoto	Northern People's Congress (NPC)	Premier of Northern Nigeria	Gunshot	Hausa	Military
3	Aguiyi-Ironsi	July 29, 1966	Lagos	Nigeria Military	Military Head of State	Gunshot	Igbo	Military
4	Adekunle Fajuyi	July 29 th 1966	Oyo	Nigeria Military	Military Governor of western Nigeria	Gunshot	Yoruba	Military
5	Ladoke Akintola	January 15 th 1966	Oyo	Action Group	Premier of western region	Gunshot	Yoruba	Military
6	Alfred Rewane	October 6, 1995	Lagos	National Democratic Coalition (NADECO)	Business man, Elder statesman and NADECO financier	Gunshot	Ijaw	Military
7	Shehu Musa Yaradua	December 8 th 1997	Abakaliki prison	Military	Military chief of staff and SDP Presidential candidate	Poisoned	Hausa	Military
8	Muritala Mohammed	Feb 13, 1976	Lagos	Nigeria Military	Head of State	Gunshot	Hausa	Military
9	Tunde Idiagbon	1999	Ilorin, kwara state	Nigeria Military	Military vice president	Poisoned	Yoruba	Yet to be identified
10	Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni compatriots	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Leader of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
11	Saturday Dobe	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
12	Nordu Eawo	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
13	Daniel Gbooko	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
14	Paul Levera	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental	Member of (MOSOP)	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state

				activist	Ogoni Environmental activist			
15	Felix Nuate	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
16	Baribor Bera	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
17	Barinem Kiobel	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
18	John Kpuine	November 10 th 1995	Gokana	(MOSOP) Environmental activist	Member of (MOSOP) Ogoni Environmental activist	Hanged	Ogoni	Military state
19	Moshood Abiola		Lagos	SDP	Presidential winner of 1993 election	Poisoned	Yoruba	Military
20	Dele Giwa	October 19, 1986	Lagos	Newswatch Newspaper	Editor Newswatch	Parcel of Bomb	Yoruba	Military
21	Kudirat Abiola	June 4 1994	Lagos	SDP	Business mogul	Gunshot	Yoruba	Military

Source: By Author

XI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

From 1966-1999, Nigeria has experienced eight military regimes, Hausa ruled for (6) six years, Igbo (1) year, Yoruba (1) one year which showcase ethnic hegemony of Hausa military officers; military have ruled without the consent of the citizens through many coups and counter coups branded with ethnic hegemonic doggedness. Ethnicity has been a fervent dominant component in the historical evolution of Nigeria; it plays a major role in the daily political and economic businesses in Nigeria. This study therefore has carefully explored how ethnicity influences military takeover and civil war in Nigeria. it is believed that ethnic suspicious claimed the blow-up of civil war and general social unrest from Nigeria independent; the fear of marginalization that has been maneuvering social conflict among different ethnic groups impair the temperament of Nigerian politics. Lack of mutual trust among the political elites in the military regime has prolonged tawdry politics of ethnicity which has transmuted into trans-generational political impasse in Nigeria. Part of the legacies of military governance and ethnic chauvinism in Nigeria has led to the selective killings and assassinations of prominent political leaders and innocent citizens in Nigeria. Hence, it is very

germane to sketch out the reconstruction of the state christened "Nigeria" for the sustenance of Nigerian federal polity through justice, fairness, equity and sustainable development.

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