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The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970): A Theoretical Resurrection

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Abstract:

War Termination theory emerged in the new millennium as a supplement to existing war theories. In the past, the focus of scholars was on the causes and consequences of war. Little or no attention was given to war termination, ceasefire agreements, the duration of wars, and the stability of peace. With this new theory, it becomes very easy to subject war termination to theoretical explication. This article reviews the theory using the Nigerian civil war to argue that the Biafran surrender during the war was mere war termination and not an end to the war as the underlying issues of the war were never addressed during and after the termination of the war. The article posits that for the state to finally bury the Biafran Ghost, it should endeavor to institutionalize necessary mechanisms to generate harmony and peace among the multifarious ethnic nationalities that make up the country.

Keywords: War termination. Surrender. Biafra, Harmony, Peace. Ethnic nationalities

1. Introduction

Until recently, attention on intrastate wars was beamed on the causes and consequences of wars, not war termination. In light of new research, the focus has shifted to war termination (Geomans, 2000a). This paper aims to contextualize the circumstances under which the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) was terminated. Besides, the resurgence of insurgency in the South East through the activities of the Movement of the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has also compelled a revisit of the Nigerian Civil War. Though the Federal troops won the war, the latest actions of these two movements have shown that the war was only terminated but never ended. A side surrendering when the war was on was only an indication of war termination, not an end to the conflict in question. The fact that the reasons for the Biafran war and the agitation of MASSOB and IPOB correlate lends credence to the undying spirit of the Biafran State. Ensnared in the euphoria of a victory over an adversary, the Federal Government abandoned the underlying issues of the war, believing that victory over Biafra signposted the death of their agitation.

This is a fallacious assumption. That the Biafrans surrendered was not sufficient to conclude that they had abandoned their demand for a separate state. They never renounced Biafra. In any war, the warring parties should endeavor to resolve the causes of the war, discuss them, address them, agree on them, append their signatures to the agreement, and move on from there. If the victorious party discountenances this process, keeps celebrating the defeat of its enemy, ignores the demands of the defeated side, and fails to correct the pre-war anomalies by concentrating and expending its energy on post-war jubilation, a *déjà vu* is very likely to happen. It is pestilential on the part of the Federal Government that no single post-war confab was organized to discuss the Biafran War. Angered by this provocative snub, the Biafrans were left with no other alternatives than to resort to self-help. With the formation and formalization of the Resistance Movements, the Igbo are simply trying to draw the attention of the world to the kind of atrocities and marginalization that exist within the Nigerian State. Rather than focus on proper integration and rehabilitation of the Igbo after the war, the federal government allowed them to keep feeling alienated by not convoking a national confab to address the Igbo question vis-à-vis their future in the federation.

Convinced that the principle of federal character and quota system enshrined in the constitution would eventually give the Igbo a sense of belonging and, invariably, a feeling of accommodation, the federal government moved on as if nothing had happened. This is unfortunate. The reality was that a lot happened during the war, and the scars of war were only cured, but they never healed. The Biafran cause was not just a community affair; it was a secession attempt by one of the dominant regions in Nigeria. There were three of them, namely, the Northern region, the Western region, and the Eastern region, before their bifurcation into states. Agreed that the principles of federal character and quota system are enshrined in the federal constitution to ensure a structural balance in the demographics of federal appointments, the application of these principles has been politicized. Appointments into federal parastatals, agencies, and institutions have never been fairly distributed among the various ethnic groups in the country, including the minority groups. Having lived with these discriminatory practices for so many years after the civil war, the Igbo resorted to self-help to redress these perceived injustices in a nation where they have equal rights with the rest of the composite groups.

2. Bargaining Approach and Aburi Reproach

Before the outbreak and escalation of hostilities between the federal government and the Biafra secessionists, a last-minute attempt was made by Ghana to reconcile the two groups. However, it was like the two actors in the dispute had made up their minds to go to war. They simulated a peace meeting when they were both making payments for arms and ammunition they would use for the war. They chose the venue of the meeting while simultaneously setting up war materiel in the theatre of war. This is why conflict scholars believe that the Bargaining approaches view civil war as a puzzle: Given the existence of a less costly alternative to setting disputes, why do actors resort to violent, costly behavior? (Thompson, 2018) At the Aburi meeting, the actors turned a farcical meeting into an elaborate funfair, pretending that something constructive and meaningful would come out of a settlement drama that was full of insincerity. Rather than an outcome of bargaining failure, the war seemed to have been produced by the situation in which the antagonists (i.e., the rebels and the federal government) had rational incentives to fight. Both the insurgents and the government were confident that they would prevail militarily and, as a consequence, made little or feeble effort to prevent the onset of hostilities (*Ibid*).

Though the Chairman of the Ghana National Liberation Council, Lt. General I.A. Ankrah, was the host of the meeting, his presence was very brief. He merely declared the meeting open and made his exit immediately after admonishing both parties, Gowon and Ojukwu, on the need to settle their internal affairs amicably like good statesmen. It was inconceivable that a meeting of that nature, a meeting that was meant to prevent a catastrophic war, was left in the hands of two friends who were already possessed by ego, pride, and arrogance. The scenario at the meeting and the outcome of the meeting did not surprise watchers of the events as the absence of a mediator's finger posted the unseriousness that pervaded the meeting. For instance, in his opening remarks at the meeting, Lt. Col. Ojukwu had stated categorically that no useful purpose would be served by using the meeting as a cover for arms build-up. He accused the Federal Military Government of having engaged in large-scale arms deals by sending Major Apollo to negotiate for arms abroad (Aburi Accord Minutes, 1967). In a counter-accusation, the Federal Government team reminded Ojukwu that it was the East that was indulging in arms build-up and that the plane carrying arms, which recently crashed on the Cameroon border, was destined for Enugu (*Ibid*).

In a conventional bargaining scenario, one would have expected to see both parties devoting significant efforts to put serious offers on the table-offers that have a positive probability of being accepted (Fearon, 2013, p.2.). Rather, the mistrust between the two of them influenced the deliberations. A critical assessment of the deliberations, decisions, and positions taken at the meeting showed that there were offers that could be negotiated. However, because of the level of distrust between them, nothing constructive came out of the meeting. According to Chinua Achebe, it was obvious that the goal of the Gowon-led Nigerian government was to emerge from these deliberations with Nigeria intact as a confederation of the regions. Many intellectuals and key members of Ojukwu's cabinet in the East had been battling with solutions to these issues for months before the Aburi meetings, thinking through various possible answers to these key questions:

- What is a confederation?
- How would it work in the Nigerian setting?
- How much power would be delegated to the central federal government as opposed to the regions?

In my estimation, there was not as much rigorous thought given by Gowon's federal cabinet and the powerful interests in the North. The two parties, therefore, left Aburi with very different levels of understanding of what a confederation meant and how it would work in Nigeria (Achebe, 2021).

Both Ojukwu and Gowon, therefore, left Aburi with two different perceptions about the conclusion of the meeting. Gowon believed that the federation had been preserved at Aburi, while Ojukwu claimed the Aburi agreement gave him wide-ranging powers to control the government of the Eastern Region and even to secede from the federation if he so chose. In March, Ojukwu announced that as of April 1, the government of the Eastern Region would take over all federal departments, taxes, and other revenues, essentially making the Region independently administered. Gowon responded by blockading the coast and instituting economic sanctions against the East. Last-ditch efforts at a peaceful settlement broke down, and, on May 30, Ojukwu declared the independence of the Eastern Region, which he renamed the independent Republic of Biafra (Falola & Heaton, 2008). To counter Ojukwu's war declaration, Gowon also announced a state of emergency all over the country and also promulgated Decree No.14, which divided the country into 12 states. The outbreak of hostilities had been attributed to Gowon's inability to halt the killings of Ibos in the North and Gowon's lack of commitment to the Aburi accord. This is one aspect of the Bargaining approach that remains complicated. Bargaining theories suggest that war breaks out because antagonists cannot credibly commit to abide by an agreement. Problems of commitment tend to arise with expected shifts in the relative power distribution between disputants and divisions within the organizational structure of each veto player with a say over government policy. Radical factions within an insurgency may oppose a proposed settlement and continue fighting (Cunningham, 2011).

The collapse of the Aburi accord was a serious disaster in statecraft considering the fact that the two major actors were present and could have given a stamp of finality to the agreement and strived to make it work. Given the funfair accorded the meeting and the quality of attendees, one expected that all areas of disputation should have been presented as parts of the negotiation that was to take place. At the stage of the Aburi meeting, tempers and tension should have given way to compassion and sobriety. At that point, the actors were not even considering the number of lives that would be lost, the destruction of infrastructure, or the losses of revenues and personal losses that individuals would experience in terms of their assets and properties. Though Gowon claimed he was more concerned about the unity of the country, this same unity could still have been achieved without sacrificing the lives of the citizens. This is why some have tagged the civil war as an unnecessary war fought without justification. The worst part of it was that there was no breakdown in the

negotiation for the two days that the meeting lasted. This reinforces the view that both parties only used the period of the meeting to consolidate their preparation for war or used the time to strategize on the delivery of arms and ammunition they had already imported. For instance, it took three months after the meeting for Ojukwu to declare the independence of the state of Biafra, while the Gowon administration responded almost seven months after the meeting. The first barrage of bullets was fired on July 6, 1967. This was a considerable time for the two parties to take delivery of the arms and ammunition they ordered before the Aburi meeting, an allegation they both denied at the meeting. Commitment issues tend to be severe in internal conflicts because expected shifts in the power distribution in governments favor following negotiated settlements, which generally provide for insurgent mobilization and offer incentives for these governments to renege on promises. Walter (2009) pointed out, "Government can offer to reform the political process, share power, or transfer autonomy to competitors, but these weaker competitors will have little ability to penalize a government should it fail to follow through." (p.246)

Unfortunately, this was not the case with the Biafrans. The federal government was excited about a winner-takes-all resolution rather than agreeing to a negotiated settlement. They did not offer the Biafrans any reform of the political process, nor did they promise to share power with them. There was nothing to suggest that the federal government was ready to transfer autonomy or allow any break-up of its territory. It was a sad ending for Biafra.

3. Terminating a Civil War in a 'Small Room'

Assured that further resistance by the Biafran soldiers was getting feeble, the Biafran army, led by Philip Effiong, decided to surrender to the Federal troops.

This is Philip Effiong's broadcast:

At 4:40 p.m. on Monday, January 12, 1970. Lt. Col. Philip Effiong announced the surrender of Biafra in the following words:

Fellow Countrymen,

As you know, I was asked to be the officer administering the government of this republic on January 10, 1970. Since then, I know that some of you have been waiting to hear a statement from me. I have had extensive consultations with the leadership of the community, both military and civil, and I am now encouraged and hasten to make this statement to you by the mandate of the Armed Forces and the people of this country. I have assumed the leadership of the government.

Throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self-defense, where peaceful negotiations fail. We are no exception. We took up arms because of the sense of insecurity generated in our people by the events of 1966. We have fought in defense of that cause.

I take this opportunity to congratulate officers and men of our Armed Forces for their gallantry and bravery, which have earned them the admiration of the whole world. I thank the civil population for their steadfastness and courage in the face of overwhelming odds and starvation. I am convinced now that a stop must be put to the blood-shed which is going on as a result of the war. I am also convinced that the suffering of our people must be brought to an immediate end. Our people are now disillusioned, and those elements of the old government regime who have made negotiations and reconciliation impossible have voluntarily removed themselves from our midst.

I have, therefore, instructed an orderly disengagement of troops. I am dispatching emissaries to make contact with Nigeria's field commanders in places like Onirsha, Owerri, Awka, Enugu, and Calabar with a view to arranging an armistice. I urge General Gowon, in the name of humanity, to order his troops to pause while an armistice is negotiated in order to avoid the mass suffering caused by the movement of population.

We have always believed that our differences with Nigeria should be settled by peaceful negotiations. A delegation of our people is, therefore, ready to meet representatives of Nigeria Federal Government anywhere to negotiate a peace settlement on the basis of OAU resolutions. The delegation will consist of Chief Justice Sir Louis Mbanefo as the leader, Professor Eni Njoku. Mr. J.I. Emembolu, Chief A.E. Basse Mr. E. Agumah. The delegation will have full authority to negotiate on our behalf.

I have appointed a council to advise me on the government of the country. It consists of the Chief Justice Sir Lotus Mbanefo, Brigadier P.C. Amadi Army, Brigadier C.A. Nwankwo Army, Captain W.A. Anuku Navy, Wing Commander J.I. Ezero - Air Force, Inspector-General of Police, Chief P.I. Okeke, Attorney-General Mr. J.I. Emernbolu, Professor Eni Njoku, Dr. I. Eke, Chief A.E. Udoffia, Chief A.E. Basse, Mr. M.T. Mhu, Mr. F. Agumah, Chief Frank Opigo, Chief J.M. Echeruo. Any question of a Government in exile is repudiated by our people.

Civilian populations are hereby advised to remain calm and co-operate with the Armed Forces and the Police in maintaining law and order. They should remain in their homes and stop mass movements that have increased suffering and loss of lives.

On behalf of our people, I think those foreign governments and friends who have steadfastly given us support in our cause. We shall continue to count on their continued help and counsel. I also thank His Holiness, the Pope, the joint church Aid, and other relief organizations for the help they have given. I appeal to all governments to give urgent help for relief and to prevail on the Federal Military Government to order their troops to stop all military operations. May God help us all (Obasanjo, 1980).

While commenting on the broadcast made by the Biafran leader, Obasanjo said he told Effiong that his broadcast did not go far enough. He was referring to the statement made by Effiong in the broadcast that negotiated settlement and peace talk must be in accordance with OAU resolutions. This was described as ridiculous and unrealistic by Obasanjo.

It was absurd that the Nigerian civil war was terminated in a 'small room' of a private apartment. A civil war that claimed over 2 million lives, destroyed properties worth several billions, incapacitated thousands of people, caused the displacement of numerous people, and disrupted national peace and stability. No wonder most writers believe that the war was unnecessary. Definitely, the drama of the termination of the war in Amichi, where Obasanjo and his team met Effiong in Biafran Army Uniform on the first floor of the house of Odogu, the head of Biafra's directorate of military intelligence, attests to the triviality of terminating an unnecessary war, (Obasanjo, 1980). In his own accounts, Alabi-Isama stated that it was Achuzia who took Akinrinade and Yomoye to a house nearby, where they met Achuzia's European wife, and Achuzia broke kola nuts (Alabi-Isama, 2013). The impression that the Biafrans were trying to be hospitable does not invalidate the atmosphere of facetiousness that pervaded the surrender ceremony. In the two accounts, Obasanjo's and Alabi-Isama's, there was no semblance of seriousness on both sides if they had to be eating kola nuts and taking themselves into a 'small room' to discuss how to terminate a 3-year war. This is how Agwu put the whole drama: "The 30 months war which was fought in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970 was not necessary at all because it was at most fought to promote selfish ambition of certain Actors in the political landscape of Nigeria" (Agwu, 2020).

While Obasanjo was talking about the futility of the war (1980), Alabi-Isama (2013) was lamenting the paradox of the war. This is how he put it:

Did the killings stop or reduce corruption since the first coup? We had the so-called military, corrective regimes for a greater part of our 50 years of independence, with each coup leader quoting corruption, tribalism, hospitals becoming clinics, etc., as justification. However, by the time the next coup took place, the clinics were no more there. Should we have fought the civil war? Should we have gotten all these people killed? Are we better now than in 1966 when the first coup took place in the country? The killed leaders were then accused of corruption, among others. Where are their estates? Balewa, Sardauna, Akintola? Today, who owns the Estates in Nigeria?" (Alabi-Isama, 2013)

Alabi-Isama's position was controverted by Adewale Ademoyega (1981), who stated that the civilian regime they overthrew had exhausted its goodwill and that practically everybody in every part of the country was glad that it was removed.

There was no doubt that the civil war was improperly terminated, going by the absence of discussion on post-war reconciliation. Some officers only gathered themselves in one house to celebrate the surrender of the Biafran army without any formal agreement being signed between the two groups apart from the broadcast made by Effiong. Going by what transpired in Amichi, the war was not formally ended. The conflict continues till today because there has been no resolution to end the war. The resolution would have addressed the underlying issues in the conflict. The Federal Government terminated the war because it was gaining victory. There were no peaceful negotiations, no negotiated settlements. When Obasanjo wrote that the war had come and gone, he was probably elated by the kind of attention given to him by the media as the man who won the war for the nation, being the officer that supervised the surrender ceremony. Even at that, Obasanjo himself had a premonition that it was not over until it was over. He wrote:

The story of the war and what led to it has been told, is being told, and will continue to be told. And so will the story of what came after it. What seems to me a human tragedy all through the ages is the inability of a man to learn a good lesson from the past to avoid the pitfalls of those who had gone before. There is also the innate and unconscious desire of man to remain oblivious to the lessons of the past. He hopes and believes that the past can be ignored, that the present is what matters, and that no mistake of the present can be as serious and grievous as the mistakes of the past. As a result, history tends to repeat itself (Obasanjo, 1980).

They have forgotten the war, but how about the underlying issues of the war? The underlying issues would have been a thing of the past, but because the past failed to address them, they want the present to resolve them.

However, which past is Obasanjo talking about when we still have the present to contend with? Resurrecting the past in this instance will further complicate the present because Obasanjo and his superiors buried the past when they did not make any plan for the 'Vanquished' of the war. Thomas (2018) has argued and warned that the past is not eternal, nor is it immortal. He asks, "Why must we expend much energy studying the past when the lessons we seek are right here in our midst?" Obasanjo and his men should not bother about why men do not learn from history. Instead, they should be concerned about what men need to learn from the present, which History has produced by addressing the underlying issues that led to the war. Without this, the war has not ended. Thompson (2018) argues that war termination entails the formal end of fighting, not necessarily the end of conflict. In his words, "War termination is not, though it may lead to, resolution of the underlying issues in conflict between rivals." In his surrender broadcast, Effiong was talking about negotiations with the Federal Government on the basis of OAU resolutions. Obasanjo told him point blank at the surrender meeting that his negotiated settlement and peace talk in accordance with OAU resolutions at this stage is not only unrealistic but ridiculous to the extreme (Obasanjo, 1980). Why? He did not explain. Instead of explaining why it was unrealistic, Obasanjo said, "We have no time for that (Ibid)." Obasanjo's position was given an official endorsement by the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief, Gen.

Yakubu Gowon, in his broadcast to the nation on the Biafran Surrender, said, "The so-called 'Rising Sun' of Biafra is set forever. It will be a great disservice for anyone to continue to use the word 'Biafra' to refer to any part of the East Central State of Nigeria (Ibid)." However, in a veiled response to Gowon's declaration that nobody should continue to use the word Biafra again, Ojukwu responded, "The concept 'Biafra' was a line drawn for persecuted people to have a beckon of hope, a line drawn so that a fleeing people can at least know that once they reach there, they would have love and succor (Ojukwu, 1989)." Nwankwo (1972) also cautioned that there were rough times ahead unless the Nigerian government

resolved the contradictions inherent in the structure of the state. The fate of Nigeria, he warned, depends on how far it wants to go in strengthening the buffer that engenders confidence in the different ethnic groups that make up Nigeria.

4. Power Transition Theory and Biafra's Post-War Trajectory

The arrogance of the Nigerian government in treating the Biafran struggle as an inconsequential issue of the past is linked with the Power Transition Theory (PTT). Briefly put, the PTT describes a hierarchical international system in which the distribution of power is uneven and concentrated in the hands of a few. According to Thompson (2018), the dominant nation, which controls the largest portion of resources within the system, sets the rules of the game or *status quo* for the entire system.

A critical examination of the Power Transition Theory (PTT) and its applicability to the Nigerian civil war shows power disparity between the two rivals, which makes negotiations impracticable. The condition for negotiation is dependent on power parity. When rivals perceive themselves to be in a Mutual Hurting Stalemate (MHS), they will agree to engage in negotiations to end their conflict (Thompson, 2018). According to Zartman's ripeness model, a mutual hurting stalemate will occur when each side realizes that it does not possess sufficient military power to achieve unilateral victory over the opponent and that continuation of the conflict entails the accumulation of hurting costs (*Ibid.*). Perhaps, this was why the civil war was terminated when the challenger had already expressed its reluctance and unwillingness to continue with the war. Effiong admitted, "I am convinced now that a stop must be put to the blood-shed which is going on as a result of the war. I am also convinced that the suffering of our people must be brought to an end immediately. Our people are now disillusioned, and those elements of the old government regime who have made negotiations and reconciliation impossible have voluntarily removed themselves from our midst."

In addition to the perception of an MHS by both sides, the ripeness model describes another factor necessary for war termination. A Way Out (W.O) has been seen as a necessary condition for the onset of negotiations to end conflict (*Ibid.*). What Effiong did was to search for better and less costly outcomes, especially those that would reduce the number of deaths or avoid blood-shedding unnecessarily. The Way Out for the Biafran side, to at least negotiate its surrender, was necessitated by the advent of a new leadership to replace the previous one, which made negotiation and reconciliation impossible. This situation is well-captured in this argument. Authors, who put forward a new leader theory, suggest that leadership changes increase the bargaining range between nations allowing leaders to pull away from belligerent policies (Lieberfeld, 1999; Mitchell, 2000; Stedman, 1991). Though there was no report or news of an open disagreement between Ojukwu and Effiong, Effiong's statement on the voluntary removal of the elements in the old government regime who had made negotiations impossible suggests that Ojukwu decided to go into exile to allow Effiong and his new team negotiate a ceasefire with the federal government.

In curtailing intrastate conflict, the established authority needs to de-emphasize or de-escalate divisive tendencies as they catalyze extant tensions among aggrieved groups into an all-out war. In most African countries where the imprints of colonial mergers and amalgamations still linger, conditions for cooperation and cohesion are necessary to ensure that peace and harmony prevail. In such societies where there is a problem with political integration, a major re-engineering needs to be done by the authority to motivate political, cultural, and social interaction towards a new national consciousness. When authorities fail to address underlying issues of war like marginalization of a group, disenchantment with the system and domination of other groups by another major group within the state, reactionary and aggrieved groups take to subterranean activities that will later manifest in the form of violence and guerilla warfare. If these are not managed well or fail to result in constructive engagement between the government and the aggrieved groups, the possibility of these secessionist activities snowballing into an all-out war is very high. The panacea for peaceful and harmonious co-existence in any society is for government to be open and transparent by allowing every citizen or group to freely express their grievances with the state if there are any infractions or violations that border on marginalization and domination.

In relating this to the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970, it was fought and won. Yes, the Nigerian government won the war, but it has not been able to defeat the spirit of Biafra. Disillusioned and frustrated by the odds against them, the Igbos surrendered to the Federal troops. Though it was not set as a condition for terminating the war, in the broadcast made by Philip Effiong, who made the surrender on Biafra's behalf, he called for a peace settlement on the basis of OAU resolutions. Without making any contact with the Head of State, who should be the only authority to make decisions on such issue, Olusegun Obasanjo, who led the Federal troops to where the surrender took place, rejected that clause in the broadcast. He boasted, "Now, I said to Phillip Effiong, your broadcast did not go far enough. To talk of negotiated settlement and peace talk in accordance with OAU resolutions at this stage is not only unrealistic but ridiculous to the extreme. We have no time for that" (Obasanjo, 1980).

In what appeared to be a contemptuous dismissal of the Biafran cause, Gowon stated emphatically in his own broadcast, "The so-called 'Rising Sun of Biafra' is set forever. It will be a great disservice for anyone to continue to use the word 'Biafra' to refer to any part of the East Central State of Nigeria. We are at the dawn of national reconciliation. Once again, we have an opportunity to build a new nation (*Ibid.*)"

Possibly reacting to this forever damnation by Gowon, Ojukwu said this about Biafra, "The concept 'Biafra' was a line drawn for a persecuted people to have a beacon of hope." (Ojukwu, 1989)

This new description of Biafra, as a concept, was very novel because it emphasizes and symbolizes the spirit, passion, emotion, and force behind the Biafran struggle.

5. The Resurrection of the Biafran Ghost

Unfortunately for the federal government, more than five decades after the war was terminated, the Biafran ghost has risen again this time, with more aggression and intensity. Two separatist organizations, MASSOB (founded in 1999) and IPOB (inaugurated in 2012) by Biafran elements to promote the Biafran struggle, should have sent a very strong message to the federal government that it was a strategic blunder on its part not to have engaged the Igbo in a dialogue since the termination of the war. It was sheer ego that made the federal government believe that its defeat of Biafra signposted the end of their struggle. As argued earlier in this paper, surrender is mere war termination, not an end to the conflict. War termination entails the formal end of fighting, not necessarily the end of conflict (Thompson, 2018). A classical example that shows the difference between these two words is the Korean War of 1950. Fighting in the war was terminated in July 1953 without resolution of the underlying issues (until this day). The conflict still lingers between the two Koreas today (*Ibid*). As far as the Igbos are concerned, the underlying issues have not been resolved. Therefore, the conflict has not ended; it was only the fighting that was terminated. The danger now is that since the war was terminated, the condition of the Igbo within the federation has not improved. In fact, it has become more intolerable than before the war. Since the termination of the Civil War in 1970, the Igbo are the only major tribe in Nigeria yet to occupy the presidential seat. The Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba have been rotating the Presidential position between each other. In a country with multi-ethnic nationalities and multifarious challenges, this situation can ignite or rekindle primordial rivalries or war. Our polity is not only fragile but too frangible to allow the domination of political power by two major ethnic groups to the detriment of multiple others, including a major one, i.e., the Igbo, for such a long period. In a splintery polity, a marginalized group becomes very sensitive to issues like power monopolization and political ostracization. Though there are institutional mechanisms like power rotation and power sharing in party manuals, these are susceptible to human manipulations and tendentious infractions that will not make them work as envisioned. Arthur A. Nwankwo (1972) warned, "Indeed, the Nigerian nation is threatened today by a new kind of monster-state consciousness, as Nigerians have begun to place their loyalty more in their own states than in the nation. Moreover, there seems to be no consideration for the health of the Federation in the pursuit of individual or group interests." These group and individual interests are the basic problems with Nigeria's political arrangements. Both the individuals and groups are adopting a self-help approach to infringe on agreements and understanding made to create stability, equality, justice, equity, and fairness in power sharing. For instance, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) were believed to have agreed, in principle, to zone the Presidency to the South East in 2023. This understanding or arrangement was thwarted by both parties. However, for the sudden flight of Peter Obi from PDP to Labour Party, the South East would have been excluded from political participation for another eight years. Disoriented by this systemic marginalization by the North and South West, the South East seems to be latching on to the general disenchantment the people have against the government to build a strong and cohesive movement to ensure Peter Obi's victory at the polls. The consequence of Obi's defeat in 2023 could best be imagined. If it did not lead to a state of anarchy, it would definitely unsettle the Igbo as to what their future would look like in the Federation. It will also be difficult to predict the next line of action by MASSOB and IPOB. The continued detention of Nnamdi Kanu, Obi's defeat at the polls, and an uncertain future in the Nigerian state may incontrovertibly precipitate an unprecedented crisis that may be difficult to control.

The belief is that:

- The present political situation in Nigeria is favorably slanted towards the North and the South West, and
- The South East is not involved in any national power configuration, nor is the Nigerian government showing any sign of readiness and willingness to accommodate its demands for a Biafran state

This makes the Igbo keep playing the victim. However, not everybody believes they are being persecuted. In an address to the World Igbo Congress in Washington in 2014, President Jonathan pointedly declared:

In our dogged determination to develop our country, the Igbo are well-represented, and in some of these appointments, the Igbo are having them for the first time. Some have said that this government has done more in appointments than any other in our history for the Igbo, but that is a matter for the pundits and historians. Let me state that appointments by this administration across the country will continue to be based on equity, fairness, and competence.

Buttressing Jonathan's assertion, a newspaper columnist with *The Nation*, Seguin Ayoola, attributed the predicament of the Igbo to their excesses in government. Ayoola referred to when Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was the Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the economy and that by this status, Okonjo-Iweala was the *de facto* vice president during the Jonathan administration. Ayobolu alleged that Okonjo-Iweala, a native of Ogwashi-Ukwu, an Igbo town in Delta State, and married to Dr. Ikemba Iweala, a neuro-surgeon from Umuahia, Abia State, appointed Igbos as heads of virtually all agencies under her Ministry which included:

- The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC),
- Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS),
- Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCOM),
- Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF), and
- National Pension Commission (PENCOM), among others

Ayobolu stated that this kind of brazen Igbo bias in appointments and promotions was also widely perceived as going on under Senator Pius Anyim as Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SGF) in the same administration. He argues further that anytime the Igbo have the opportunity to be in power, they always abuse it by tampering with an extant arrangement of structure. Here is an excerpt of his piece on August 13, 2022:

At that time, under Jonathan, as the Igbos savored their favored time in the sun, there were hardly any Biafra separatist agitations. Nigeria was not routinely labeled as a zoo, among other derisive names, by Igbo irredentist movements. Indeed, in reference to the perceived excessively Igbo-centric character of the Jonathan administration, the Northern Senators Forum (NSF) had publicly lamented what it called gaping marginalization against the North over appointments and promotions in the military and lopsidedness in favor of Igbo officers in the Army. It is not unlikely that the perceived sectional imbalance in the constitution of the high-security command under Buhari is partly a reaction to the excesses of the influential Igbo appointees under Jonathan in this regard.

The arguments on marginalization are neither here nor there, going by what the various parties canvassed as the way forward. The clamor for restructuring this time around is, however, more intense in the South East than in other parts of the country. This is what Ojukwu (1989) advised:

Anybody putting himself forward for the presidential election should resolve to remove the scars of the civil war once and for all. We have had wide experiences in this country on how to lift and fully reintegrate disadvantaged groups. We have seen to it that those disadvantaged by accident of history are reassured. To go on without this reassurance believing that these things do not matter is to create a sense of apathy, anger, and disillusionment in the minds of future generations who did not know anything about the war. The real question is, are we one? Or are we not? If we are one, let us then embrace one another and do what has to be done to make amends. The aim should not be to create intellectual Bantustans in our polity (Ojukwu, 1989).

This advice captures the mind of a leader who knows his people and their unquenchable desire for their own state. There is no doubt that what Ojukwu wanted the government to do for his people was to restructure or rebuild the Nigerian state in such a way that every ethnic group would be accommodated and treated fairly and equitably within the federation, not to feel marginalized in any way. The process of reintegration should encapsulate the dreams of all the ethnic groups with a view to accommodating them in the national vision. There can be no national vision without national cohesion. To avoid another civil war, the process of appeasement, not only of the Igbo but of all the ethnic groups which have one grievance or the other with the center, should begin now. In the spirit of Gowon's declaration of 'No Victor, No Vanquished', it is safe to admonish the Igbo and the federal government not to pursue any vengeance mission. They should rather pool their energies together in search of peace and harmony, for it is worthwhile to live together as one country than bifurcating the nation into splinter entities.

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