

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Economics and Administrative Science

Department of International Relations

MASTERS THESIS

IGBO NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA: 1966-1970

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NICOSIA – 2015

IGBO NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA: 1966-1970

by

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**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

In

**THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF
NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY**

June 2015

NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Social Science
Department of International Relations
Jury Report
Academic Year: 2014-2015

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Title	IGBO NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA: 1966-1970
Abstract	This thesis analyzes the Igbo's nationalism and secessionism (inhabited mostly in Eastern Nigeria) during the two seizures of power and the Biafran war in Nigeria (1966-70). It utilizes theoretical approaches about Nationalism and Ethnic Conflicts in order to account for the social, political, cultural, economic and political aspects of the coups and the civil war in Nigeria. Under the Nigerian military governments, the regions were fragmented based on their political and economic interests. The northerners (Hausas), the westerners (Yorubas) and the easterners (Igbos) were pushed into a power competition regarding Nigerian politics. This thesis therefore asserts that the nationalism is about political and economic interests and the nations are products of the modern era. The thesis analyzes the political, religious and economic aspects leading to the civil war between the central government and Biafra (East Nigeria dominated by Igbos). The conflict broke out, first, when General Ironsi tried to render Igbos dominant in central government of Nigeria with his seizure of power and, second, when the Igbos of Biafra tried to secede. This thesis provides a historical analysis of the civil war as regards to intra-Nigerian politics and inter-national politics.
Supervisor	Dr. Sevki Kiralp

Jury's Decision

The Jury has decided to accept the student's Thesis. The decision has been taken unanimously.
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Graduate School of Social Science**

**International Relations Master program
Thesis Defence**

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DEDICATION

To GOD Almighty and to my Late kid Brother GEORGE ASUMBUGU

JONATHAN

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the Igbo's nationalism and secessionism during the two seizures of power and the Biafran war in Nigeria (1966-70). It utilizes theoretical approaches about Nationalism and Ethnic Conflicts in order to account for the social, political, cultural, economic and political aspects of the coups and the civil war in Nigeria. Under the Nigerian military governments, the regions were fragmented based on their political and economic interests. The northerners (Hausas), the westerners (Yorubas) and the easterners (Igbos) were pushed into a power competition regarding Nigerian politics. This thesis therefore asserts that the nationalism might be used as an instrument of motivation for political and economic interests and the nations can be conceptualized as products of the modern era. The thesis analyzes the political, religious and economic aspects leading to the civil war between the central government and Biafra (East Nigeria dominated by Igbos).

Özet

Bu çalı ma 1966-70 yılları arasında meydana gelen askeri darbe, kar ı darbe ve iç sava dönemlerinde boların milliyetçili ini ve ayrılıkçılı ını ele almaktadır. Milliyetçilik ve etnik çatı malar hakkındaki teorik yakla ımlardan yararlanarak iki askeri darbe ve Nijerya iç sava ının sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ve siyasal boyutlarını incelemektedir. Nijerya'daki askeri rejimler boyunca bölgeler arasında sürdürülen siyasal ve ekonomik güç yar ı ları vardı. Kuzey'de Hausalar, Batı'da Yorubalar ve Do u'da gbolar Nijerya siyasetinde daha fazla güce sahip olabilmek adına ya adıkları çatı ma sonrasında bir ayrı ma içerisine sürüklenmi lerd. Bundan dolayı bu çalı ma milliyetçili in siyasal ve ekonomik çıkarlar için bir motivasyon aracı olarak kullanılabilece ini ve ulusların modern ça ın birer ürünü olarak kavramla tırılabilce ini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalı ma merkezi hükümet ile Biafra (nüfusunun ço unlu u bolardan olu an Do u bölgesi) arasında ya anan iç sava ın ardında yatabilecek siyasal, dini ve ekonomik ko ulları analiz etmektedir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I want to sincerely give thanks to my creator, the almighty God for his guidance, protection and provision in the course of this research. I dedicate this research to Jesus Christ who brought me this far. I am grateful to my awesome parents, Mr. & Mrs. Amos Jonathan Tsaku who immensely supported me, most importantly with their prayers, advice and financial help. I would not have completed my MA programme without them. I would like to express how much I love them.

The next person I want to thank is my credible lecturer and supervisor, Dr Sevki Kiralp, who saw my interest in his course “NATIONALISM” and gave me the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge in the field of nationalism. I am heart fully grateful for his time, encouragement and efforts, even in my mostly challenging moments. I appreciate all his help and his humbleness. Not forgetting my wonderful lecturers; Assist. Prof. Dr. Nur Koprulu, Dr. Bilge Azgin and Erhan Ayaz and my Head of Department (HOD) Assoc. prof. Zeliha Khashman who spent their time to give me the knowledge that I deserved and required to obtain for my future career.

I want to express my appreciation towards my siblings; Ayinda Blessing Jonathan and Raymond Aren Jonathan, who supported me with prayers and their advice in times when I needed. I would like to articulate how much I love them as well. I also owe a “thank you” to my uncles Joshua Jonathan and Kuje Jonathan for their prayers and support. I would also like to say “thank you” to my second mummy, Mrs. Grace J.D Mamba, for her support, encouragement and moral advice. God bless her.

I have a family I cannot forget, a family that groomed me in the knowledge of Christ: The Lefkosa Christian student fellowship in Nicosia, North Cyprus. I appreciate their help spiritually and friendship. Finally, I would also like to express my appreciation towards my sisters, brothers, course mates and friends in Cyprus and Nigeria, for their love and warm friendship. I am glad that I found them. God bless them all.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Literature Review

Scholars who theorized nationalism can roughly and briefly be categorized into two main groups: The Modernists and the anti-Modernists. The Modernist School (Gellner, Breuilly, Brass, Mann, Hobsbawm, etc.) argue that the nations are post-Modern entities created during the era of post-Industrialization and nation-states. These scholars do not search for ethnic or historical origins beyond the formation of the contemporary nations. On the other hand, the anti-Modernists (Smith, Berghe, Eriksen, etc.) argue that the nations are originated by the pre-modern entities. They therefore search the sociological backgrounds of societies before the modern era (before the nation-states). This thesis shall analyze the Igbo nationalism based on the Modernist line and shall argue that the political and economic conditions of the modern era played a role in the Biafran secessionism.

Methodology

In my research, the main limitation is the restrictions on Nigerian archives that deprived me of using primary sources. However, since the thesis is analyzing the historical period (1966-1970) based on a theoretical and conceptual framework, this limitation does not affect the validity of the thesis's arguments. As its secondary sources, this thesis uses sources such as leader's speeches, official declarations, videos, interviews, online sources, books and articles. This thesis is a case study focused on the Igbo

nationalism in Nigeria in 1966-1970. It tests a theoretical and conceptual framework about nationalism theories and approaches on ethnic conflicts. Since it accounts for the dynamics beyond the Igbo nationalism, it constitutes an explanatory case study. Based on the relevant framework, as it will be seen in Chapter 1, this thesis' research question is: "What were the conditions motivating the Igbo nationalism in 1966-1970?"

CHAPTER PLAN

The first chapter of my research explains the way Nationalism is described and conceptualized by different scholars within the field. It also constructs a conceptual framework about nationalism and ethnic conflicts. The second chapter is about the coup de' tats and Biafra war in Nigeria. It provides historical information, the causes, the key actors involved and the civil war itself. In the third chapter, an analysis of nationalism and ethnic conflicts based on the military interventions and the Nigerian civil war is provided. The third chapter provides different views and approaches on nationalism and accounts for the economic, political and social reasons driving the ethnic nationalism and the secessionism of Igbos. Lastly, the final chapter articulates the conclusions of the research, and also summarizes its findings.

1. NATIONALISM AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

This chapter shall explain the main theoretical approaches about nationalism and ethnic conflicts. It shall also explain some relevant concepts. Based on the relevant framework, it will generate a research question that will be answered based on the case study focused on the Igbo nationalism in 1966-1970.

1.1. NATIONALISM: Theory and definition

According to Smith (2010), nationalism is a form of socio-cultural and political awareness, with its essential emphasis on cultural gestation (Smith 2010:7). On the other hand, Marx, Durkheim and Weber identify nationalism with the historical progress materialized by the humanity, which terminated the dynastic empires and created the democratic states (Gellner 2006: 16). Thus, one point of view characterizes the nation as a cultural entity, while the other conceptualizes it as a political society. Hans Kohn (1944) characterizes nationalism as a social doctrine generated by the intellectual development of the humanity, and particularly by the development of the Western Culture. In Elie Kedourie's terms, 'nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century... for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization a society of states' (Kedourie 1960). On the other hand, Breuilly (1993) describes nationalism as a political ideology which prioritizes the nation's interests over all the other groups in the world.

Theorists such as John Armstrong (1982) and Anthony D. Smith (1981) argue that there is a historical continuity between ethnic groups and modern nations. They assert that the nations are the contemporary extensions of ethnic groups. According to the two

scholars, before the era of nation states (post-1776), nations had existed in forms of ethnic groups and nationalism had existed in a form of ethnic affiliation. On the other hand, the Modernist School, represented by Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm (1983) and Anderson (1991), argues that the nations are products of the “modern era”, based on the socio-cultural and political transformations generated by foundation of nation-states and the growth of industrialization and urbanization. According to the three scholars, the scholars learn about “being a nation” in the modern era. Thus, the nations are not historical extensions of ethnic groups. Instead, they are creations of the industrial society. No nation existed before the nation-states.

According to Mann (1990), the most principal cause of the emergence of nationalism was the rise of commercial capitalism. Combined by the fiscal military pressures exerted by geopolitical rivalry, nations produced politics of popular representation and they formed varieties of modern nationalism. Mann’s notion might be categorized as a “Modernist” approach, since he characterizes nations as post-modern, instead of pre-modern, entities. The theoretical approach of Mann is useful in illustrating for the Biafran war. The sources of social power, political power, military power and the secessionist movement led by General Ironsi (from the East) in 1966 appears to the northerners as ‘Igbo ideology power dominance’. Ideologically, the quest for secession arise when the incumbent president, Gowon failed to honor the Aburi agreement in Ghana and the Igbos (easterners) who felt ignored that their master (leader) Lt. Col Ojukwu was taken for a ride began to demand for autonomy, that was the beginning of the civil war. The military dominated when General Ironsi’s enlightenment campaign was to explain to the northerners that his decree was a temporal measure designed for the administrative convenience of the military regime.

1.2 CIVIC NATIONALISM

Civic nationalism is described as society's collective identity and political sovereignty based on its adherence to a common set of political values and on its common allegiance to a territorially defined state. Civic nationalism encompasses all people living in a country. Nationalism, as a political doctrine, is the belief that people in the world are divided into nations, and that each of these nations have the right of self-determination, either as self-governing units within the existing nation-states of their own. As a cultural ideal, nationalism is the claim that while men and women have many identities, it is the nation that provides them with their primary form of belonging. According to Michael Ignatieff (1995), civic nationalism "maintains" that a nation should be composed of all people regardless of race, color, creed, gender, language or ethnicity who subscribed to the nation's political creed". This nationalism is civic because it sees the nation as a "community of equal, rights-bearing citizens united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values". He sees this type of nationalism as necessarily democratic, "since it vests sovereignty in all of the people" (Ignatieff, 1995:6).

The first contemporary nation, the American nation, is a typical example of a civic nation. The Americans, regardless of ethnicity, language and origin, managed to create a collective attachment to the USA and to its territory. Another typical example of civic nationalism was the British Nationalism. Britain by the mid-eighteenth century was already a nation-state composed of four nations: the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh, and the English. They were united by a civic rather than ethnic sense of belonging, based on their shared attachment to certain institutions as the crown, parliament, and the rule of law. National identity should represent the essential demands of the populace and be

endorsed by the whole society, otherwise it will not only fail to motivate people and unit them around single goal, but it will also turn into a major source of discontent and conflicts. If civic nationalism is adopted in the central Asian states, it could not only unite people domestically but also contribute to friendly relations among the neighboring states. On the other hand, Ethnic nationalism creates boundaries and in-group and out-of group members not only domestically but also internationally. As a result, it leads to divisions both within and among states (Fedorenko 2012: 21).

1.3 ETHNIC NATIONALISM

The term ethnic group or ethnic community refers to a large or small group of people, in either backward or advanced societies who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress, and customs and practice), racial similarities, common religion, and belief in common history and ancestry, also who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group (Taras & Ganguly 2002).

‘Ethnic’, its first usage is attributed to the American sociologist David Reisman in 1953. It is derived from the Greek (*ethnos*), and also is derived from the word (*ethnikos*), which originally meant heathen or pagan (R. Williams, 1976: 119). In the United States, the term ‘ethnics’ was used as a political term referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people apart from the British originated people. Nonetheless, all the anthropological approaches agree that ethnicity has something to do with the classification of people and group relationships. Ethnic nationalism stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents and, by implication; it draws boundaries separating the ethnic group from the other groups. Nationalism regulates the relations between the groups and the state. A

nationalist is the one who designs the future of such relations. When a nationalist movement privileges ethnicity and ethnic ties within society overshadow the civic ties, nationalism gains an ethno-centric form. Thus, it becomes “ethnic nationalism” (Eriksen 2002: 4-7).

1.4 SECESSIONISM

According to Jason Soren (2012), secessionism is the search of a region, an ethnic group or a group defining itself as a nation to become independent from the state they politically belong to, by founding their own sovereign state. The most outstanding indicators of ‘uniqueness’ are language and custom, but religion (as for Jews) may also set a group apart from all others. In many cases, we observe that the ethnic affiliation of groups might lead them to ethnic nationalism and secessionism (Smith, 1971: 220-221). During the decolonization and early post-independence eras, the right for “self-determination” inspired nationalist movements of ethnic groups. However, the international scene generally refused to support secessionist movements and the right for “self-determination” be used for secession. (Sorens 2012: 5-12). Ethnic nationalism and secessionist demands are still powerful in many regions all around the world.

1.5 ETHNIC CONFLICTS

An “ethnic conflict” is a socio-political conflict, which can lead to intra-state violence. If a socio-political conflict is about the political rights or of ethnic groups, or their representation in politics, it is named as an “ethnic conflict”. Ethnic conflicts and ethnic wars happened mostly in ex-Colonial and ex-Communist states. During Cold War, in

the socialist states, there was no sense of Western Democracy (multi-party systems) and Liberal Capitalism. Thus, under the Communist rule, there was no opportunity for the ethnic groups to form a Capital-holding social class and rule the economy. Likewise, it was nearly impossible for the political scene to be dominated by any ideology but Communism. Therefore, ethnic groups could not embrace the ethnic nationalism. The case was mostly similar in the ex-Colonial peoples. Under the colonial rule, some ethnic groups were given the chances to constitute the upper classes within the society and become richer than the others. This led to economic inequalities, which created dissatisfaction in post-Independence era. In ex-Communist and ex-Colonial societies we witnessed ethnic conflicts since the ethnic groups were in competition to rule the state and the economy. Additionally, under the Colonial administrations, there was no sense of Western Democracy, and ethnic or nationalist demands could not be expressed, ethnic nationalism could not be imposed to ethnic groups. Moreover, in many post-Colonial societies liberated after 1945, “consociational democracies” were established. Ethnic groups (Brown 1998).

1.6 ECONOMY AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Ethnic conflicts are sometimes analyzed based on Marxist or Marxian analyses about class conflicts. Even though the form of ethnic conflicts show that in ethnically divided societies the ethnic identity overshadows the class-consciousness, economic inequalities between different ethnic groups might play an important role in ethnic conflicts. The poorer ethnic groups might be exploited as cheap labor by the richer ones. Since their educational level is lower, the poorer ethnic groups are likely to face with difficulties in finding government jobs. And, the poorer ethnic groups might fail to compete with the

richer ones at national market. On the other hand, the members of richer ethnic groups might be asked to pay additional taxes so that the requirements of the poorer ethnic groups are fulfilled. Such conditions might inflame the ethnic conflicts (Horowitz 1985).

1.7 INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS AND POLITICS

In societies where ethnic conflict and violence occur, we generally witness that the dominant ethnic groups tempt to centralize the governance and this endangers the political will of the minor groups by creating the risk of being assimilative. Likewise, the minor ethnic groups might tempt to decentralize the government (by demanding greater rights for their regional or ethnic affairs) in order to defend their identity and political will. Further decentralization might be converted into a search of secession. Further centralization might be converted into a search of political assimilation directed against the minor groups. Assimilative policies of major groups and secessionist movements of minor groups mutually inflame each other. Assimilative and secessionist policies become dominant particularly in societies where the political system does not enable ethnic groups to vote for each other's candidates (Horowitz 1991; Brancati 2006)).

1.8 RELIGION AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

As explained before in this thesis (see 1.4), religion might also another infrastructural element of ethnicity. Furthermore, it might also be a crucial factor shaping ethnic conflicts or ethnic violence. For instance the “cow sacrificing” Brahmans and “cow sacrificing” Muslims of India suffered due to inter-communal conflict and violence due

to their differences in religious beliefs. Religious and political leaders of the two communities pushed the religious differences forward in order to manipulate the masses to stand for the political projects (Brass 1991). Religion is another important character of the civil war in Nigeria, because Biafra was composed of a Christian majority and it, in a sense, stood against the Muslim majority predominant in Nigerian culture.

1.9 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

This chapter concludes that the nationalism can be in “civic” or “ethnic” character. It can be driven by economic or political conditions. Furthermore, religion can be used as a motivation for a nationalist movement. In multi-ethnic states, major groups might try to suppress the minor ones and the minor ones might try to secede. Accordingly, these conclusions create the following research question: “What were the conditions motivating the Igbo nationalism in 1966-1970?” The following chapters shall analyze the Igbo nationalism in Nigeria (1966-1970) and shall answer the relevant question. The rest of the thesis shall analyze the coup, the counter-coup, and the civil war based on the ethnic politics (centralization and decentralization attempts), economic interests and the factor of religion.

CHAPTER TWO

2. HISTORY OF BIAFRAN WAR

This chapter shall provide information about the Nigerian political history (1966-1970) and about Nigeria itself. Since the next chapter shall account for the Igbo nationalism and answer the research question based on the conclusions articulated in Chapter 1 (see 1.9), this thesis shall explain the political incidents in Nigeria in 1966 and the role of Igbo nationalism I these incidents.

2.1 ABOUT NIGERIA

Nigeria is located at the corner of the gulf of guinea in the west of African continent. Its territory covers 373,000 miles, from the gulf of guinea on the south, to the Sahara desert on the north. From south to north, four main physical and geographical regions are distinguished in the country. The most outstanding physical element of Nigeria is the Niger River. Nigeria has a multi-cultural character with different ethnic groups and regions. Within the boundaries of Nigeria, 248 languages are spoken. During the war-time, the total population of the country was approximately around 50-55 million people. The population was, and still is, young and dynamic. The large ethnic groups of Nigeria are the Hausas, Fulanis and the Kanuris in the north; the Tivs and Nupes in the middle belt, and the Yorubas, Igbos, Ibibio and Edos in the south. From the western region, the dominant group is Yorubas, and they constitute the majority of population in Lagos, Ibadan, Osun and Ondo. The eastern region of Nigeria is dominated by Igbos and Ibibio-Efikis. These groups constitute the majority of the population in cities like Enugu, Anambra, Imo and Abia. They are also the majority of settlers of the Eastern delta. For the south, we have the Ijaw and Ishekiri groups as the majority. In the North, the Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Nupe and Tiv groups are the majority. They are mostly located in cities of Kano, Katsina, Jos, Benue and Taraba (Coleman 1960: 15).

Before the Colonization of Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, states like Benin Kingdom, Oyo Kingdom, Ashanti Kingdom, Nupe and the Hausa city states were dominant over the territories where we name as Nigeria. It is noteworthy that none of these states had a direct correlation with the contemporary Nigerian state. In 1914 the Nigeria and its borders were created by Colonialists. While in the Western states the political borders mostly coincide with geographical barriers, or are at least determined based on agreements between societies living within the territories, in the Colonial territories neither the geographical boundaries nor the will of peoples were taken into consideration in creation of political borders. At this very point, with regards to the creation of its borders, Nigeria is not an exception at all. The colonial rulers had decided for the borders of African countries including Nigeria in order to make Colonial administration easier (Falola & Heaton 2008: 16 -18).

2.2 THE COUP AND THE COUNTER-COUP

Before the civil war, Nigeria suffered due to the federative structure which rendered the North quite advantageous when compared to the East and the West (Mwakikagile, 2001:3). Additionally, the society was sharply fragmented based on ethnic identities and corruption grew as a threat for political and economic stability (Oyediran, 1976:25). These conditions led Eastern region Biafra to launch a secessionist movement and declare independence. Nigerian leaders failed to provide inter-ethnic and inter-regional accommodation. The civil started on 6 July 1967 (Okachi, 1990:211).

Nigeria became an independent state in 1960. It was first divided in to three main federative centers as the North, the West and the East. In 1963, further decentralization occurred and the region Mid-West was established. Corruption, lack of inter-ethnic accommodation and the unsatisfactory performance of the federal governance were the main problems the fresh state suffered. On 15 January 1966, General Aguyi Ironsi (an

Igbo) seized power. His main motivation to seize the cup was Igbos' dissatisfactions with the federal governance rendering the North dominant in Nigerian politics. Nevertheless, Ironsi followed a rather "clientalist" policy in regulating the promotions of officers within the army. He manifestly favored Igbo officers in promotions and the seniority lists were significantly ignored. This led anti-Ironsi officers to organize a counter-coup. On 29 July 1966, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, whose leadership was preferable to the Hausa majority, seized power and became the new leader of Nigeria. Extremists of Northern Nigeria conducted violence against Igbos in the North, in order to expel them and provide "ethnic cleansing" in the North (Muakikagile 2001:3).

The tension between the Igbos and the North created the basis of Biafran secessionism. Oil resources located within the East and the sea access at that region promised Biafrans economic development and independence from the rest of Nigeria. General Ironsi made some reforms and strengthened the central governance. Under his rule, the North lost its influence over Nigerian politics. His successor, General Gowon, followed a different strategy and made a set of reforms that opened the way for further decentralization. He divided Nigeria into 12 regions on 27 May 1967. By changing the regional borders, he disabled Igbo's access with sea and minimized their role in exploitation of oil. However, in Biafrans' eyes, this was another way of suppression and the consequence of these politics was the break out of the civil war on 6 July 1967 (Okachi 1990).

2.3 THE CIVIL WAR

Ironsi's policy was to enhance Nigeria's solidarity by centralizing the governance. He organized visits to different regions of the country, and he made speeches asserting that

the measures he took (such as the limitations he exerted on freedom of expression) were just temporary. He stated that he would help with the restoration of Democracy in the country after the state mechanism was reformed in a feasible way. During one of his visits, he was kidnapped and murdered (on 2 July 1966). As a consequence, the North remained influential over the other regions. This led Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, the leader of Biafra, to declare independence one year later (Okachi 1990).

The cultural conflict between Igbos and the central government of Nigeria was a multi-dimensional issue. First, the North witnessed the clash between Christianity and Islam. Second, the pressures from the central government deprived Biafrans of their equality, autonomy, freedom and citizenship rights. And third, the mutual insecurity between Biafra and central government led to a conflict between assimilative policies of the latter and secessionism of the first (Irobi 2005).

On 27 May 1967, Gowon reformed the regional borders and the operation of the federation in Nigeria. He created 12 regions. On 30 May 1967, Ojukwu proclaimed the independence of Republic of Biafra. On 6 July 1967, the civil war started. On 4 October 1967, Nigerian forces captured Enugu. On 22 February 1968, Nigerian forces captured Onitsha. On 16 September 1968, they captured Owerri. On 22 April 1969, Biafran forces recaptured Owerri, however the Nigerian government was still advantageous and dominant in military power. On 10 January 1970, Ojukwu left Biafra and on 12 January, Biafra surrendered (Burgess 2004: 453).

Ojukwu realized that Biafra was unlikely to win the war. So did his successor Major General Philip Effiong. The war has caused huge human and material loses for Biafrans.

Accordingly, Effiong and the rest of Biafran elites decided to surrender. On 12 January 1970, Effiong declared the surrender of Biafra with the following speech:

Fellow Countrymen, as you know I was asked to be the officer administering the government of this republic on the 10th of January, 1970. Since then I know some of you have been waiting to hear a statement from me. Throughout history, injured people have had to resort to arms in their self-defense where peaceful negotiations have failed. 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 am now convinced that a stop must be put to the bloodshed 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. Our people are now disillusioned and those elements of the old 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 urge on Gen. 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 negotiation. A delegation of our people is therefore ready to meet representatives of Nigerian Government anywhere to negotiate a peace settlement on the basis of OAU resolution (Atofarati, 1992).

After the surrender of Biafra, General Gowon made the following speech on 12th January, 1970 and declared the end of the war:

Citizens of Nigeria, It is with a heart full of gratitude to God that I announce to you that today marks the formal end of the civil war. This afternoon at the Doddan Barracks, Lt. Col. Phillip Effiong, Lt. Col. David Ogunewe, Lt. Col. Patrick Anwunah, Lt. Col. Patrick Amadi and commissioner Police, Chief Patrick Okeke formally proclaimed the end of the attempt at secession and accepted the authority of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria. They also formally accepted the present political and administrative structure of the country. This ends thirty months of a grim struggle. Thirty months of sacrifice and national agony. The world knows how hard we strove to avoid the civil war. Our objectives in fighting the war to crush Ojukwu's rebellion were always clear. We desired to preserve the territorial integrity and unity of Nigeria. For, as one country, we would be able to maintain lasting peace amongst our various communities; achieve rapid economic development to improve the lot of our people; guarantee a dignified future and respect in the world for our posterity and contribute to African unity and modernization. On the other hand, the small successor states in a disintegrated Nigeria would be victims of perpetual war and misery and neo - colonialism. Our duty was clear. And we are today, vindicated. The so - called "Rising Sun of Biafra" is set for ever. 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. The tragic chapter of violence is just ended. We are at the dawn of national reconciliation. Once again we have the opportunity to build a new nation. On our side, we fought the war with great caution, not in anger or hatred, but always in the hope that common sense would prevail. Many times we sought a negotiated settlement, not out of wickedness, but in order to minimize the problems of reintegration, reconciliation and reconstruction. We knew that however the war ended, in the battlefield or in the conference room, our brothers fighting under other colors must rejoin us and that we must together rebuild the nation anew. All Nigerians share the victory today. The victory for national unity, victory for hope of Africans, and black people everywhere. We mourn the dead heroes. We thank God for sparing us to see this glorious dawn of national reconciliation. We must seek His guidance to do our duty to contribute our quota to the building of a great nation, rounded on the concerted efforts of its entire people and on justice and equality. A nation never to return to the fractious, sterile and selfish debates that led to the tragic conflict just ending. The Federal Government has mounted a massive relief operation to alleviate the suffering of the people in the newly liberated areas. We are mobilizing adequate resources to provide food, shelter, and medicines for the affected population. My government has directed that former civil servants and public corporation officials should be promptly reinstated as they come out of hiding. Details of this exercise have been published. Plans for the rehabilitation of self - employed people will also be announced promptly. We have overcome a lot over the past four years. I have therefore every confidence that ours will become a great nation.

The signing was made in Lagos on 14th of January, 1970 as the abandonment of secession and the civil war in Nigeria ended (Atofarati, 1992).

The conflict and the war between the central government and Biafra was a humanitarian tragedy. The civil war led to thousands' of casualties due to violence and starvation. The civilian deaths of were also huge in number. The destruction of roads, school, hospitals, towns and villages in Biafra made many people refugees. However, there were evidences that demonstrated plans aimed at the extermination of the Igbo ethnic group in the Northern region of Nigeria even before the conflict began in other parts of Nigeria. On the other hand, the international actors failed to mediate the two sides of the civil war and the humanitarian tragedy became even sharper (Korieh 2012).

In an interview conducted by Malcolm Macbain for British Diplomats Oral History Projecty, British diplomat Denis Doble, who served for the British High Commission in Nigeria said the following about his experiences:

I went in late 1968 and I did feel that the FCO had quite given up their experiment of sending me to a chandelier post, so they sent me off to Lagos to do the Aid portfolio, which didn't look very exciting at the time (there was a certain amount of aid being given), really working for the ODM, I think it was then (Overseas Development Ministry). But of course it did develop into a full-scale relief programme because of the Biafran War, which was in full swing at the time. When I arrived it was actually being dealt with by Chancery, because David Hunt, who was then High Commissioner, regarded it as politically very sensitive and didn't really trust the chaps upstairs in the Aid department to do it; so it was done by the Second Secretary in Chancery. When a new Aid counsellor arrived, he decided that this was really rather silly, because it was ODM money and the Aid department ought to take it over. So we did take it over and I found myself in the middle of this relief programme. The war was still on at the time. Harold Wilson gave £5 million to be spent particularly on relief, and as the war came to an end (it ended in 1970), a great number of doctors and nurses were flown in by Oxfam and Save the Children Fund essentially, who were funded almost entirely by the British Government, by the ODM, and they worked with the Nigerian Red Cross, which was their Nigerian counterpart, trying to do something about the Biafran children, who were left on the Nigerian side of the line; and there was a huge programme of inoculations, vaccinations and medical attention and so on going on in the east in Nigeria, which I found fascinating. (Doble, 2004:21).

2.4. BIAFRAN WAR AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

International actors also played a role during the Nigerian Biafran civil war. There have been African and foreign actors that supported the secessionist Biafra and central government against each other. African countries such as Tanzania, Zambia, Gabon and Ivory Coast. Nigeria recalled its diplomats and technical staff in Tanzania (Okochi, 1990:210).

The Aburi Accord meeting that held in Ghana on January 5th 1967 was held to end the civil war between the secessionists Biafra and the federal government of Nigeria. The meeting pointed out some key-points that both parties should adhere to, that will bring the war to an end. However the meeting failed to provide peace. The resolution, which was not respected by the parties, was as follows:

- (i) A military committee comprising representatives of the regions should meet to take statistics of arms and ammunition in the country. Unallocated stores of arms and ammunition held in the country should be shared equitably between the various commands in the federation.
- (ii) The Army should be reorganized in order to restore discipline and confidence, Specifically,

- a. the army should be governed by the Supreme Military Council which would be chaired by a Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and

- the Head of the Federal Military Government;

- b. Area Commands under Area Commanders and corresponding to existing

- Regions should be created;

- c. During the period of the military government, Military Governors should have control over Area Commands, for internal security;

- d. A military headquarters, comprising equal representation from the regions and headed by a Chief of Staff, should be established;

- e. A Lagos Garrison, including Ikeja Barracks, should be created.

- (iii) In accordance with the decision of August 9, 1966, Army personnel of

Northern Nigerian origin should return to the North from the West. In order to meet the security needs of the West, a crash programme of recruitment and training is necessary but the details should be examined after the Military Committee has finished their work.

- (iv) The Supreme Military Council should deal with all matters of policy

including promotion to top executive posts in the Armed Forces and the Police.

- (v) The legislative and executive authority of the federal Military Government should be referred for determination, provided that, where a meeting was not possible, such a matter must be referred to the Military Governors for their comments and concurrence.

- (vi) Appointments to the Diplomatic and consular posts as well as to superscale posts in the Federal Public Service and equivalent posts in the Federal Corporations must be approved by the Supreme Military

Council.

(vii) With a view to promoting mutual confidence, all decrees or provisions of decrees passed since January 15, 1966, which detracted from

the previous powers and positions of the Regional Governments should be

repealed. Law officers of the Federation should meet in Benin on January

14, 1967, and list all the decrees or provisions of Decrees concerned, so that they may be repealed not later than January 21, 1967, if possible.

(viii) A meeting of Permanent Secretaries of the Ministries of Finance of all the governments in the federation should be convened within two weeks to consider ways and means of resolving the serious problems posed

by displaced persons all over the country.

(ix) Displaced civil servants and corporation staff (including daily-paid employees) should continue to be paid their full salaries until March 31, 1967, provided they have not secured alternative employment. The Military

Governors of the East, West and Mid-West should send representatives (Police Commissioners) to meet and discuss the problems of recovery of property left behind by displaced persons.

(x) The Ad Hoc Constitutional Committee should resume sitting as soon as

practicable, and the question of accepting the unanimous recommendations

of September 1966 should be considered at a later meeting of the Supreme

military Council.

(xi) For at least the next six months there should be purely a Military Government having nothing to do with politicians.

(xii) The deceased military leaders should be accorded full military honors due them.

(xiii) All government information media should be restrained from making

inflammatory statements and causing embarrassment to various Governments

in the Federation.

(xiv) Lt.-Col Ojukwu should keep his order - that non-Easterners should leave the Eastern Region - under constant review with a view to its being lifted as soon as practicable.

(xv) The next meeting of the Supreme Military Council should be within Nigeria at a venue to be mutually agreed. (Kolawole 2014: 68-69).

The leaders of governments of African states were invited by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to a conference held in Kinshasa in Congo on 11-14 September 1967. The conference ended with a resolution condemning secessionism in any member

states and asked the member states to ‘adhere to the principle of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states’. Thus, the OAU remained on Gowon’s side (Heinonline Citation: 2 N.Y.U. J. Int’l L. & Pol. 398 1969). The major supporter of Biafra was France who supplied weapons to the secessionist army. In a visual documentary they were interviewed, some foreign soldiers who delivered weapons to Biafrans said that “Nigeria was about to win the war but the things changed with the delivery of weapons to Biafrans” (youtube video) <https://maxsiollun.wordpress.com/tag/biafra/>.

Biafran war happened under Cold War conditions. So, it was nearly inevitable for the Western Bloc, Eastern Bloc and the Non-Aligned Movement to not get involved. The Western bloc had favored Biafran secessionism and France, one of the leading members of the West an ex-Colonial ruler, manifestly aided Ojukwu. USSR favored the central government’s stance. Non-Aligned Movement manifestly supported the integrity of Nigeria, thus the stance of the central government, in UN assemblies (Stremlau 2015).

2.5 OJUKWU’S JUSTIFICATION: THE NORTH AND NIGERIA

Biafran leader Ojukwu asserted in his speeches that the North was not reliable in preserving the entity of a “Nigerian” nation. He many times underlined with references to the past that the North itself wanted to secede from the rest of Nigeria. Ojukwu also argued that the North could favor the Nigerian entity only on the condition that the entire state remained under North’s dominance. In a speech he delivered in Ethiopia in 1968, he said the following:

In northern Nigeria we were physically and socially segregated from the indigenous people... in the field of political and constitutional development... northern Nigerians consistently and openly maintained that the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria (comprising the east and the west) in 1914 was a mistake". Not surprisingly, in January 1950, at the general conference summoned at Ibadan to discuss proposals for the review of the Nigerian constitution, the northern Nigerian delegates announced that, "unless the northern region was allowed 50 percent of the seats in the central legislature, it would ask for separation from the rest of Nigeria on the (basis of) arrangements existing before 1914". In other words, northern Nigeria would secede... Three years later in May 1953... northern Nigerians again agitated for secession... northern Nigerian leaders organized and carried out violent demonstrations during which they slaughtered and wounded hundreds of our people then resident in Kano, northern Nigeria – acts of genocide which they had perpetrated at Jos in northern Nigeria earlier in 1945... the following year (in 1953), as a result of its failure to absorb Lagos, western Nigeria also threatened to secede and was only prevented from proceeding to make good the threat by a stern and timely warning from the British secretary of state for the colonies, Mr. Oliver Littleton" (Mwakikagile, 2001:4-5).

Ojukwu tried to gather the support of the West support against the North. In his speeches, the North wanted to dominate the entire country and not only the East. A few weeks after the beginning of the civil war, he made the following speech:

I started off this struggle in July 1966 with 120 rifles to defend the entirety of the east. I took my stand knowing fully well that in doing so, whilst carving my name in history, I was also signing my death warrant. But I took it because I believe that this stand was vital to the survival of south. I appealed for settlement quietly because I understood that this was a naked struggle for power. Quietly I build if you do not know it, I am proud, and my officers are proud that here in the east we possess the biggest army in black Africa. I am no longer speaking as an under-dog; I am speaking from the position of power.

Ojukwu saw the Yorubas (the major group in the West) as an ally against the North. The Yorubas and Igbos had experienced a form of cooperation in 1964 elections. Yorubas and Igbos had established the United Progressive Group Alliance (UPGA) against the North. This was the fundamental reason beyond Ojukwu's trust towards the West. However, he failed to receive support from Yorubas during the secessionist war (Mwakikagile 2001:26-27).

2.6 POST-WAR REHABILITATION FOR IGBOS

After 1964-65 elections, Nigeria suffered due to a political instability that led to the coup of January 1966. Till 1979, the country remained under military rule without democracy and free elections. In 1979, Nigeria experienced free elections with a new regulation regarding the "cross-ethnic voting". The electoral system was reformed and the constituencies gained a more "multi-ethnic" character. Thus, the ethnic groups were given the chance to vote for each other's candidates. This helped Nigerians to moderate the intra-state relations, at least temporarily (Horowitz 1991: Mwakikagile 2001: 84). The government took actions to rehabilitate Igbo women who became victims of rape (Idika 2013). During the war, civilian Igbos in Western and Northern regions were massacred, and this was a tragedy for the Igbo society in Nigeria. With the ceasefire in January 1970, the government widely used the slogan of 'no victor, no vanquished'. Likewise, the government used the "3 Rs", (Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) as the keywords of Nigeria's peace process (Ihediwa 2013).

The Gowon government had terminated Biafran secessionism by using military force. The civil war took 3 years. There are many examples in politics that central governments suppress secessionist movements by using military force (as in Cyprus in 1960s and in Turkey in 1990s). In such cases, even the civilians of ethnic groups suffer due to ethnic violence. So, even though the secessionist movement is assimilated by violence (government's military forces), the loyalty of ethnic groups can only be provided via the peace processes. However, not only the relations between the East and the central government, but also the Nigerian democracy itself suffered due to military

interventions and governments' inadequacy in fulfilling regional and ethnic demands for political participation even till 1990s (Ibory 2005).

CHAPTER THREE

3. ANALYSIS OF NATIONALISM AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

This chapter of the thesis shall link the conclusions of Chapter 1 to the history of Nigeria. It shall account for the Igbo nationalism based on the theoretical and conceptual framework generated in Chapter 1. It shall also answer the research question.

3.1 ETHNIC AND CIVIC NATIONALISM IN NIGERIA

As in many other ex-Colonial societies, in Nigeria there was a lack of socio-political agreement between the regions and ethnic groups enabling them to become a civic nation and be volunteer in sharing the political and economic power of the country based on a national consensus. As Chatterjee (1986, 1996) argues, with the arrival of colonial rulers to their territories, the colonial peoples were dominated with the attachment to ethnic or religious communities in order to protect their local cultures. As the power competition between Igbos and the North showed to us, even though they belonged politically to the same state, there was no social agreement between Nigerians regarding how to share Nigeria and its political and economic resources. As stated in the previous chapter, Biafran leader Ojukwu stated in his speeches that the North was trying to dictate its political will to the rest of the country. Thus, Igbos as a group having self-affiliation based on their ethnicity has embraced a form of ethnic nationalism; however their self-awareness was encountered with a form of counter-ethnic nationalism by the North. So, in Nigeria, the nationalism driving the civil war was ethnic instead of civic.

3.2 RELIGION AND THE CIVIL WAR

The religious composition of Nigeria was another factor driving the ethnic war. Before and during the Biafran war, religion played a crucial role in integrating and disintegrating the ethnic groups from each other in Nigeria. The majority of people in the North are Muslims (Hausa). In the West, there is not only Muslim, but also Christian

Yorubas. In the East however, the Igbos are majorly Christians. This gives a clue about why the ethnic violence was experienced in the North and the East and not in the West. Despite that the two contesting religions placed their priority in the political and economic positions in the country; religious factors were traced to the fight. The Muslim majority of the North had demanded 50% of the seats in federal legislation and the Christian majority of the East followed a secessionist policy (Mwakikagile, 2001). It is a fact that Gowon was not a Muslim. However, the Muslims of the North exerted violence on Christian Igbos during the coup, the counter-coup and the civil war. Due to the violence, Igbos was forced to be separated from their families, kinship groups, towns and villages. In Igbo culture, abandoning the village or town was seen as a betrayal to ancestors and traditions. Thus, for Biafrans and Igbos, the main motivation of the war was the survival of identity. In his speeches, Ojukwu tended to present the Northerners' violence against Igbos as a "genocide" and "jihad". On the other hand, it was also a fact that leaders of Hausas were in search of rendering the Muslim character dominant in Nigerian politics. Nonetheless, there was a clash of religions between the Muslims and Christians, but particularly Hausas and Igbos in the Nigeria, which led to the civil war (Burgress 2004: 88-89).

3.3 ECONOMY AND ETHNIC CONFLICTS

The Nigerian civil war was also caused by economic disputes and disagreements particularly about the eastern oil. The British who overthrew the caliphate rulers during the 1914 were only interested in exploiting the economy of the country which they claimed they brought together under the name NIGERIA. Unfortunately, the Nigerian leaders that took over from the British failed in efforts to evolve the nationally shared values that were essential for national unity. The oil was the main natural resource driving the Biafran war. Under the British rule, only the British companies had oil licenses in Nigeria. Thus the utilization of oil in Nigeria was an issue decided by the British during the colonial rule. In the era of independence, the Multinational Oil Companies utilizing Nigerian oil were asked to pay 50% profit tax to the central government. In 1960s, the oil was produced in the Midwest and in the East. The leaders of Republic of Biafra aimed to obtain the income from the oil trade as an independent

state, instead of leaving it to the central government. However not only before, but also during the Biafran war, the central government claimed rights on Eastern oil. Based on the Petroleum Act of 1969, the Federal Government of Nigeria had declared its ownership and control over “1. All Petroleum in, under or upon any lands in the country. 2. All petroleum under the territorial waters of Nigeria. 3. All land forming part of the continental shelf of the country” (Yusufu 2012: 193).

At this point, approaches of Mann, Breuilly and Brass become useful in analyzing the economic aspects of the civil war. The three scholars assert that nationalism is a tool of motivation that mobilizes the people to achieve economic or political goals. Remaining under a federal Nigeria would mean to Biafrans sharing the income from oil with the rest of the country. However, under an independent Biafra, the oil would belong only to Biafrans instead of Nigerians. The ideology of the Igbo ethnic group tempered with the economic growth of the country. Therefore, the economic perspective based on the oil resources was a motivation for the war. As noted in the previous chapter, the central government had divided Nigeria into 12 in order to prevent the sea access of Biafra and discouraging the secessionist movement by rendering Biafrans dependent on the rest of the country.

In nationalism theories, Paul Brass asserts that ethnic identity and modern nationalism arises out of specific types of interactions between the leadership of centralizing states and the elites from non-dominant ethnic groups. He insists that ethnicity and nationalism are the products of modernity; and its constructed character. (Brass, 199 1:9). He also opined that cultures are fabricated by elites who use raw materials from different groups to create ethnics nations; hence, the elites aimed at ensuring their economic or political advantages for themselves. While the Biafrans aimed at the oil in the east which promised development for the Igbo people, the pressure from the north and the federal government crippled their wish to be an independent state of Biafra. The Biafrans failed in their quest to secede because they are minority from the eastern region and the northerners are the majority ethnic groups in Nigeria; hence, the Igbo ethnic groups were suppressed and failed to achieve their dream of becoming an independent state of Biafra.

3.4 POLITICS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

In Chapter 1, it was noted that the ethnic conflicts lead dominant groups try to centralize the state while they lead the minor groups to try to decentralize the state. It was also stressed that assimilative policies of dominant groups and secessionist policies of minor groups trigger each other. Interestingly, Ironsi, as an Igbo leader, tried to centralize the governance of Nigeria. However, he favored Igbos in the statecraft by providing their promotion under the military regime. So, he tried to centralize the state, but, at the same time, to maximize the political power of Igbos. In addition to this, his successor, Gowon, tried to decentralize the governance by dividing the federation to 12 regions. Also, the war is viewed as ethnic conflict as the political parties were ethnic based, hence the killings of politicians was ethno-political; as the political party in power was a northern based party. As a result, the government was occupied by the Hausas, and the Yorubas had the Igbos withdrawn from the government to Biafra. Based on the conventional wisdom, Ironsi (an Igbo leader) would hardly try to centralize the state and Gowon (an anti-secessionist leader) would hardly try to decentralize the state. However, for Ironsi, further centralization was a way of providing Igbo dominance over Nigeria, and, for Gowon, decentralizing the governance was a way of fighting the Biafran secessionism. So, even though the policies of the two leaders were, to some extent, contradictory to the assumptions of the conventional wisdom, the main motivation of their decisions was the power competitions. On the other hand, the pressures from Gowon government and the secessionism of Biafra mutually triggered each other. Biafrans preparations to secede led the Gowon government to increase the pressure on Biafra, and Gowon government's pressures inflamed the secessionism of Biafra.

In this thesis, these three authors Mann, Breuilly and Brass in their theories explained and analyses igbo nationalism in Nigeria during the 1960s. These authors have a common feature that is prominent to the state and in the development of nationalism. Breuilly (1982-83) in his "Nationalism and the state" says that nations and national sentiments exists in mediaval Europe, but nationalism exists in the modern era; he sees it as a consequence of development of modern state and that of the international state system. According to Breuilly, the formation of western European states at religious and political level struggles is seen at the early modern periods. In the case of Nigeria, it was power struggle and competition especially between the north and the secessionists'

biafrans. While the government of Gowon aimed at bringing Nigeria together as one, the clash between the federal military government, north and the biafrans increased and the unity of Nigeria faded away; with that, politics in the country became a game for who have the power and influence.

There were political coup de 'tat that were carried out from the different regions of Nigeria during the civil war. Political readers plotted several coups in order to put other regions away from obtaining the key positions in the governance of the country. In the process, the north carried their own plots, the east and also the west; many leaders of these regions lost their lives. Major General Aguiyi Ironsi who launched the first coup was killed in another coup by Theophilus Danjuma. Ironsi was the only Nigerian military head of state that had the shortest term in office, spending: 194 days as head of state. Others were military generals and officers from all the regions; all the killings were to dominate and attained a political power and positions that is based on selfish reasons. These reasons led to innocent Nigerians killed and dispose of their villages, families and properties. The civil war ravages and placed Nigerians in a position of pity sufferings especially the children who suffered different diseases due to the selfishness of Nigerian leaders.

Mann also as a theorist of nationalism says in accounting for nationalism development, it is important sees these four sources of social power: economic, political, ideological and military. He sees these four sources of social power as those that make up a nation (Mann, 1993:731). As in Nigeria, the north and the east region which are the contending parties in this research are both trying hard to attain these four social powers to favor their respective regions. The Biafrans, despite their efforts to be separated from the rest of Nigerians were denied the right and their leader after the defeat surrendered to the government of Nigeria, and that was the end of the civil war of 1966 in Nigeria.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis generated a conceptual framework for the analysis of Igbo nationalism in 1966-1970. The thesis had the research question of ““What were the conditions motivating the Igbo nationalism in 1966-1970?” Speaking with impartial and academic terms, this thesis concludes that there were two fundamental conditions motivating the Igbo nationalism: The political power competition between different regions and ethnic groups, and the oil which promised economic development. Ironsi tried to maximize the Igbo influence over Nigerian politics by seizing power, appointing Igbos to key positions and centralizing the state. However he failed. Likewise, Ojukwu tried to secede from Nigeria and use the oil for Biafra’s interests. He also failed. In both attempts, the competition for power between the North and the East was a key factor driving the politics of Igbo leaders.

Accordingly, it analyzed the political sphere and the economic prospects as regards to central governments pressures and Biafra’s secessionism. It concluded that the pressures from the North and the secessionist stance of the East triggered each other and led to the civil war in Nigeria. Interestingly, the thesis noted that the Ironsi’s seizure of power and his attempts to centralize the state and appoint Igbos to key positions was something contradictory to the conventional wisdom. According to the conventional wisdom, in ethnic conflicts the minor groups generally tend to decentralize the state. However, Ironsi tried to use military power to render Igbos dominant in Nigerian politics. This maneuver shows us that, the minor groups might also try to centralize the state under their own dominance. However, Ironsi failed and he was killed. After the counter-coup

seized by Gowon, Biafran leadership tried to utilize the oil and they were reluctant to share it with the rest of the Nigeria. This was the main economic reason beyond Biafran secessionism and the civil war. Therefore, this thesis concludes that the political and economic power competitions between different regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria constituted the main motivation for the Igbo nationalism. This thesis has reached to the conclusion that the Modernist approach in the literature of Nationalism Studies successfully accounts for the Igbo nationalism, since there were political and economic reasons driving the secessionist movement. The thesis also noted that, the religion was used as a tool of nationalism propaganda, motivating Igbos to stand against the North (composed mostly of Muslims).

Photos of Nigerian leaders during the Biafra civil war:



**Major Gen. Johnson Aguyi
Ironsi**



Major Gen. Yakubu Gowon



**Lt. Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu
Ojukwu**

Photos during the Biafran civil war in Nigeria:



The Biafran Soldiers



A humanitarian woman giving aids to the Biafran children.



A family in Biafra, a secessionist state in Nigeria, 1970

(<http://www.nairaland.com/582396/biafra-nigerian-civil-war-pictures/3>)



The Biafran Refuges

Flags and maps of Nigeria and the Biafra:



Nigerian Flag



Biafran Flag



Map of Biafra

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