

## The War of Biafra (1967- 1970): The Colonial Legacy

### حرب بيافرا (1967-1970): الإرث الاستعماري

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#### Abstract:

A civil war results as the last resort of politics, and this was the process which occurred in Nigeria within a few years of its attaining independence in 1960. The causes of the Biafran war can be traced back to the colonial period of Nigeria's history. The colonial administration divided Nigeria, and so divided the 250 ethnic groups that composed Nigeria, and created a country composed of three distinct regions: The Northern region, the Western region and Eastern region. This paper is concerned with the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, called the war of Biafra. It seeks to identify the origins of that war that had one of its roots in the colonial era.

**Keywords:** Biafra; Colonization; Civil War; Nigeria.

#### ملخص

تنتج الحروب الأهلية عند بلوغ حدود السياسة، وهذا ما حدث في نيجيريا في غضون بضع سنوات من حصولها على الاستقلال في عام 1960. يمكن إرجاع أسباب حرب بيافرا، وهي الحرب الأهلية التي عاشتها نيجيريا إلى الفترة الاستعمارية. قسمت الإدارة الاستعمارية نيجيريا إلى مناطق حسب المجموعات العرقية الـ 250 التي تتكون منها نيجيريا، وأنشأت دولة تتكون من ثلاث مناطق متميزة: المنطقة الشمالية، والمنطقة الغربية، والمنطقة الشرقية باختلافاتها العرقية والثقافية والدينية والاقتصادية معتمدة على مبدئ فرق تسد.

يتناول هذا المقال الحرب الأهلية النيجيرية 1967- 1970، والتي تسمى حرب بيافرا، ويسعى إلى تحديد أصول تلك الحرب التي تعود جذورها إلى الحقبة الاستعمارية.

كلمات مفتاحية: بيافرا؛ الاستعمار؛ الحرب الأهلية؛ نيجيريا.

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## 1. Introduction

Nigeria as such did not exist prior to the colonial period, and its boundaries were determined by the British, and its very name was a British invention. It was by 1900 that the British assumed complete control on Nigeria that was composed of three regions: The Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, the colony of Lagos, and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. On January 1, 1914, following the recommendations of Sir Frederick Lugard, the different parts were amalgamated to form the colony and Protectorate of Nigeria under a single Governor General. Yet, this amalgamation was constitutional and not administrative since different ways of administration were adapted to the different regions.

In the Southern region, which was to be divided again into East and West by 1945, the traditional chiefs were maintained in the West, or appointed in the East as Native Authority that had to apply Britain's rules, while in the North, the Indirect Rule system was applied through which traditional chiefs and Emirs and traditional Islamic laws were kept and reinforced to avoid Muslims' revolt. This was one aspect of colonial rule that created differences and rivalry between the different regions. Moreover, the colonial policies towards economy and education in the rich and Christian educated South on the one hand, and the poorer less educated North on the other hand, were also different. Thus, another economic and educational gap was created between the regions.

Colonial rule lasted for almost 100 years in Nigeria and caused profound changes in the social and political systems of the Nigerian people. After WWII when Europeans had struggled for the equality between races and religions and for freedom, the destiny of the colonized peoples was reconsidered, and so, the British started to think about their colonies' autonomy, and by the 1950's, Britain started to prepare them for self- government and then independence.

At independence, Nigeria's inherited constitution was a federal one, dividing power between a central government in Lagos and regional governments in the North, where the Islamic states of the 19th century were largely preserved under British rule, and in the East and West where European influence had been greater, and where social and economic changes were more rapid and far-reaching. This federation meant that the North would be far larger and more populous than either the East or West, so that the populous North would have the largest share of influence on Federal affairs. The two other regions were then less favoured than the North as far as political power is concerned.

After independence in 1960, Nigeria's regional stresses of ethnic competitiveness, educational inequality and economic imbalance came to the fore during the federal election of 1964, and brought the country to the brink of breakdown. The point of no return was reached on January 15th, 1966, when, after the collapse of order in the West as a result of the suspicious election of 1965, a group of Ibo army officers attempted to overthrow the Federal Government.

A military administration was set up under Major General Ironsi, but this plan was to abolish the system of regions, and to impose a Unitary government. This plan met with anti-Ibo riots in the North and another coup d'état overthrew Ironsi government, and Colonel Y. Gowon from the Middle Belt region, came to power. Yet, on May 27th, 1967, the Eastern Region declared its secession as the Republic of Biafra, and at the same time, the Federal military government promulgated a decree dividing the Federation into 12 states, including six in the North and three in the East. The Federal Government interpreted the Eastern secession as an act of rebellion, and fighting broke out on July 6, 1967, and was to last for 30 months. It should be noted that the political and socio-economic landscape of independent Nigeria was none other than the legacy of British colonial politics.

## 2. Methodology

*Historical research method or historiography*, "attempts to systematically recapture the complex nuances, the people, meanings, events, and even ideas of the past that have influenced and shaped the present" (Berg & Lure, 2012, 305). Historical research relies on a wide variety of sources, both primary & secondary including unpublished material.

Historical research involves different steps that are to identify an idea, topic or research question; to conduct a background literature review; to refine the research idea and questions; to determine that historical methods will be the method used; to identify and locate primary and secondary data sources; to evaluate the authenticity and accuracy of source materials; and then to analyse the data and develop a narrative exposition of the findings (Berg & Lure, 2012, 311).

The use of a hypothesis in historical research analysis helps to increase the objectivity of the study and minimise research's bias. It also guides the researcher in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data by indicating what is relevant to the study. Thus, like any other kind of research method, historical research tends to benefit by incorporation of a hypothesis.

Therefore, the present paper is based on the hypothesis that the British colonial policy that had been implemented in Nigeria paved the way for future unrest in the independent Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Nigerian erudite political thinker and one of the foremost nationalists, Chief Obafemi

Awolowo, has described the idea of Nigeria as a "geographical expression." The various ethnic nations bounded together into the Niger-area by her majesty servants existed as a nation only in name.

### **3. The Main Ethnic Groups of Nigeria**

Nigeria is a state comprising 250 ethnic groups with various customs, traditions and languages (Carver, R, 1996, 01). However, these are ethnic minority groups, and only three ethnic groups attained "ethnic majority" status in their respective regions: the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Ibo (or Igbo) in the South-East, and the Yoruba in the South West.

According to the 1963 census, these three last ethnic groups represented 57, 8 % of the whole Nigerian population, whereas the other ethnic groups, the kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv, Idjo, Edo, Annag, Nupe, Urhodo, Igalla, and Idoma represented 27, 9 % of the population (Camara, C, 1982, 31). In addition to those groups, there are other smaller ethnic groups, such as the Igbirra, Gwari, Iboi, Mumuye, Alago, and Efike. (Camara, C, 1982, 31)

The Hausa are Muslims who live principally in centre-North, and North- west Nigeria, and are mixed with other ethnic groups such as the Kanouri, the Nupe on the Niger, and the Fulani with whom they live in symbiosis. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic faith of these people witnessed a phase of regression that led to the emergence of a reformist movement under the leadership of a Peul learned man, Osman Dan Fodio (1754 - 1817) who started a holy war, the "Jihad", in 1807, in the oasis of Gudu through the North, to purify and spread the Islamic faith. By 1809, this Jihad ended by conquering a large territory with Sokoto as capital. By 1830, this Peul Empire was composed of different provinces and covered the whole of the North of modern Nigeria, ruled by traditional Emirs.

In the South, the Yoruba represented the most numerous people made up of numerous smaller groupings (Rakov, A, 1990, 03). Those who are identified as Yoruba consider themselves to be members of the Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ife, Ilesha, Ebiti or Owu peoples. The Yoruba are united by their common belief in the town of Ife as their land of origin (Rakov, A, 1990, 03). The Yoruba society was organized into kingdoms, the greatest of which was called Oyo which collapsed in 1830 after a Hausa- Fulani invasion and the capital was occupied by 1835 (Boutet, R, 1994, 26).

The third ethnic majority group was the Ibo (or Igbo) who, unlike the Fulani and the Yoruba people, was individualistic people who lived in segmented units (Martin, G, 1982, 225). Their largest societal unit was the village, where each extended family managed its own affairs without being dictated to

by any higher authority. Power and prestige went to house elders who had accumulated wealth and demonstrated the strongest commitment to the village value system (Rakov, A, 1990, 05). The Ibo lived in the forest to the East of the Niger Valley. By the 15th century, these ethnic groups came into contact with the Portuguese who landed on the coast and started exchanging gold for slaves (Rakov, A, 1990, 05).

During the 19th century, the attitude of the main trading nations towards West Africa, including Britain, underwent a change thanks to a new trend of philanthropy which fought to abolish slave trade. Thus, Denmark made slave trade illegal for her own nationals in 1805, Britain in 1807, Holland in 1814, and France in 1818. Britain even carried a new anti-slavery policy establishing a naval patrol in West African waters (Oliver, R & Atmore, A, 1994, 57). However, despite the constant patrolling of the British navy, the slave trade not only continued, but actually increased in scale (Oliver, R & Atmore, A, 1994, 60).

It is noteworthy to mention that during that period, Europeans present in West Africa had already some possessions in this region. Britain possessed the Crown Colony of Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast in addition to the forts of the Gambia that Britain bought by 1850. Moreover, Britain together with the other European countries present in West Africa had to seek a new basis for their commerce instead of slave trade.

Though Britain first wanted to keep the expenditure of her colonies as small as she could by keeping these colonies as small as possible, she extended her positions in West Africa in order to afford greater support and protection to the campaigners against slave trade, Christian missions and to British traders who succeeded in developing alternative trades with Africans (Fage, J.D, 1969, 164). The British, then, engaged to impose themselves as a colonial power in their West African possessions. This created a European competition over West African territories, the fact that led the British and other European countries, such as Germany and France, that were interested in West African natural resources to determine areas with precise boundaries put under their respective control. This was done during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 The territories of what is now Nigeria were defined as British Territories (Fage, J.D, 1969, 164).

The British conquest of Nigeria was conducted from its existing enclaves. Lagos was taken by the British as early as 1867 in order to end slave trade still practiced there. Britain wanted to monopolize the Delta trade, and created the Niger Delta Protectorate in 1897 (Crowder, M, 1962, 161). Moreover, the British occupation of the Fulani Emirates was accomplished thanks to Sir Frederick

Lugard who was appointed High Commissioner (1900-1906) with the task of establishing a British administration for the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria which he could not accomplish only after many military interventions until 1906. Consequently, Nigeria became constituted of three regions, the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria, the Niger Coast Protectorate, which was renamed the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria after 1900, and the Colony of Lagos. The British followed different policies for the different regions.

#### **4. Colonial Rule in Nigeria**

The British government formally assumed responsibility for the administration of Nigeria on New Year's Day in 1900, the date when the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, the Lagos Colony Protectorate, and the Northern Nigeria Protectorate, hitherto administered by commercial enterprises, were taken by the colonial government (Nicolson, J.F, 1977, 01). However, the British ruled differently the administration, economy and education of the Southern and Northern protectorates though they all came under the British Crown.

#### **5. Colonial Administration**

##### **5.1. Administration in Southern Nigeria**

In Lagos, Governor Sir Mac Gregor (1900- 1904) first appointed the first administration over the Yoruba traditional rulers (the Obas) as Native Authorities, but he gradually turned to a direct way of ruling by controlling the Native Councils, appointing residents and travelling commissioners to organize and supervise the Native Authority (Balogun, M.J, 1983, 71).

In the Niger Coast Protectorate, the same policy was followed to shape the African administration on British concepts of law and morality. By 1900, Sir Ralph Moor, High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (1900-1904), supervised the Yoruba Native Court, and replaced all unjust and barbarous laws (Balogun, M.J, 1983, 71).

The situation in South Eastern Nigeria, with its egalitarian and Segmented society was a special case. Therefore, the government selected influential people from the various clans, made them members of the Native Court and gave them the duty of collecting taxes, and named them «Warrant Chiefs (Key & Tomas, 1977). Yet, they were unpopular since they were not considered by people as native chiefs

These Southern Protectorates were amalgamated by 1906, to form the Colony of Southern Nigeria that was given an executive and a legislative council to make laws and manage the administrative

and financial affairs of the colony. Unlike the South, Northern Nigeria had strong traditional rules, the fact that made the British follow another type of administration there.

## 5.2. Indirect Rule in Northern Nigeria

When the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria was established in 1900 by Lord Lugard, Governor of Northern Nigeria (1900-1906), the territories of this region were ruled by Emirs who had their own system of administration. Lugard did not abolish this system but signed agreements with Emirs, by which he recognized their authority, provided that they accepted the government of the new Protectorate and obeyed its laws which included the abolition of slavery and inhuman practices (Key, A.E & H. Thomas, H, 1977, 73). This policy was called "Indirect Rule"

A number of factors made this doctrine suitable to Northern Nigeria. First, it was easier for the colonial government to adapt the already well-organized traditional system of administration of the Hausa-Fulani society to the needs of the new rulers. Secondly, it was not possible for the British to govern "directly" this large territory because of the shortage of British officers willing to work under hard conditions, with no medical facilities, poor means of communication, few roads, and no navigable rivers.

Consequently, Lugard not only preserved the traditional system of administration, but also pledged, in a speech delivered at the installation of a new sultan of Sokoto in March 1903, to defend the Islamic religion from outside interference (Burns, A, 1958, 266). A dual system of law functioned, the Sharia (Islamic law) court continued to deal with matters affecting the personal status of Muslims, including land disputes, divorce, debt, and slave emancipation.

Lugard divided the Protectorate into provinces, each one controlled by a Resident Commissioner who represented the High Commissioner, and who advised the Emirs in their ruling and see that they enforced the law. These Emirs were known as "Native Authority" controlling the Native administration (Balogun, M.J, 1983, 70).

The "Indirect Rule doctrine proved to be successful in Northern Nigeria. Yet, the colonial administration had to tackle differently with the Southern Protectorate. This is not to say that no effort was made to apply uniform methods of government. Yet, it proved to be more successful in the North because there was a problem of diversity between the Northern and Southern traditional organization and administrative systems. By 1906, Lugard suggested to unify these governments by amalgamating the three separate British administrations in Nigeria for different reasons.

First, it was because Lugard could not accept the administrative "anarchy" that existed in the South, at the opposite to the North that preserved the well-organized traditional administration because he wanted to extend the same administration of the North as to the South. It was also due to economic factors. In fact, Britain wanted the colonies to be self-financed. Yet, the North could not cover its own administrative expenses, and needed financial support from the South that was richer (Camara, C, 1982, 46).

Moreover, through indirect rule Lugard succeeded in controlling the large Northern territories cheaply and effectively, but he had to find money for his administration to develop the services that the region required (Fage, J.D, 1969, 183). Thus, by 1906, the governments of Lagos and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria were amalgamated to form the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria, and by 1914, the amalgamation of the administrations of Northern and Southern Nigeria was affected, and Lugard became Governor General of all Nigeria. The Southern and Northern Protectorates were renamed provinces.

After the amalgamation, the principle of indirect rule was applied throughout Nigeria, and colonial officers were instructed to interfere as little as possible with the existing order.

Unification meant only the loose affiliation of the three distinct regional administrations into which Nigeria was subdivided, northern, western, and eastern regions that had little in common, politically or socially. As one expert put it, «if the British created Nigeria, British Colonial policy largely contributed to its remaining a mere geographic expression » (Carver, R, 1996, 07).

Lugard's policy had very important consequences on Nigeria First, Lugard expressed his support to the Northern provinces, and through his indirect rule, he separated the North and the South by creating differences between the two, and resulting in regional differences that were to influence the future of Nigerian politics (Camara, C, 1982, 47). As a result, Lugard did not encourage the creation of a united nation, and by the time of independence, the Nigerians had a state composed of different regions. Nigeria was then united in name only.

The policy of separating the ethnic groups of Nigeria was known by the British as "divide and rule" (Amuta, C, 1983, 87), that is, to divide people in order to weaken the power. The indirect rule policy was thought to be a policy of division. In fact, for some Africans, indirect rule appeared as:

*A policy designed to frustrate the Africans' ambition to take a greater part in the government of their country, another example of the imperial formula of Divide and rule (Arifalo, S.O, 1983, 24).*



In spite of Nigerian unification, Nigeria was still run as two colonies, North and South, with two distinct administrative centres: Kaduna and Lagos, and for half a century until 1947, there was no representative political structure that brought the regions together. In fact, after amalgamation in 1914, it was frequently said that « if all Africans were to leave Nigeria, the Southern and Northern administrations could go to war » (Coleman, J.S, 1963, 64-65).

By 1919, when Lugard retired from politics, the Lagos press enjoyed the coming of his successor, Sir Hugh Clifford, and qualified the indirect rule as anachronic, intolerable, barbarian, and as a crime against the Nigerians. Yet, the British introduced a new constitution for their Nigerian colony by 1922, through which, the principle of direct election to the Legislative council was first conceded. With the new constitution, four members of the Legislative Council were elected, three from Lagos and one from Calabar, both in Southern Nigeria, while the North was not represented.

In sum, the British chose to rule Nigeria through traditional local leaders, "Emirs" of the North and "chiefs" of the South. The use of different administrations for the North and South was one aspect of colonial policy that created cleavages between the two regions. Furthermore, the socio-economic policy followed by the British in Nigeria was another important cause for such cleavages.

## 6. Socio-economic Policy in Colonial Nigeria

Since the beginning of colonial rule in British West Africa, it was appreciated that West African colonies had to pay for their own development, and to find money for such development from their own resources through taxes and customs' duties (Fage, J.D, 1969, 202). This was also the case for Nigeria. Lugard insisted that: « the largest possible place should be left free for the enterprise of Africans in their own country » (Oliver, R, & Atmore, A, 1994, 115).

Yet, Northern Nigeria could not cover its own administrative expenses and needed financial support from the South which was richer. By 1910, the Southern region had a revenue from its exploited products twenty times as much as the Northern region. The amalgamation of Nigeria proposed by Lugard and effected by 1914 was then a solution to make the North benefit from the commercial prosperity of the South, and the administrative expenses were reduced by amalgamating the two administrations.

Moreover, in the North, the Emirs taxed their subjects, and each Native Authority collected the taxes and gave them to the Native treasury. Yet, these taxes were not sufficient for the expenses of the Northern region, and the Southern people suffered from the high taxes imposed on them mainly to finance the North. This resulted in a rebellion in Abeokuta in 1914 (Boutet, R, 1994, 22). This was

the first reaction of Southern Nigerians against the colonial policy applied in Nigeria which, not only created cleavages between North and South, but also made the South endorse the consequences of such policy. Such a rebellious feeling that emerged in Southern Nigeria was to subsist, and to develop during colonial rule and independent Nigeria too. This was the basic cause for the violence and then the civil war that was to take place during the 1960's.

In Nigeria, the Northern region was always lagging behind the Southern region. It is generally assumed that the indirect rule policy which the British practised in Nigeria during the colonial period was the reason for Northern Nigeria's backwardness in socio-economic development, compared to Southern Nigeria (Tibenderana, P.K, 1988, 86). In fact, in the field of education that was to have great impact on future Nigerian politics, the British had different policies for the South and the North. This was due mainly to the already existing patterns of education in Southern and Northern Nigeria before the establishment of colonial rule.

In Southern Nigeria, the history of education is closely linked with the work of mission societies whose presence can be traced back to the 16th century (Fafunwa, A.B, 1974, 74), and whose number grew rapidly. The main purpose of those missions was to civilize and evangelize the Nigerians, and to reach this goal the missions had to provide literacy to understand the Bible.

Unlike the South, Northern Nigeria, and specially the Muslim part of it had not been much open to missionary endeavours. This was due to the restrictions imposed by the emirs first, then by the colonial government for peace and order. In fact, Lugard pledged that there would be no interference with Islam, not because he was against the spread of Christianity, but because he did not want a disruption of the Northern society. Moreover, Lugard excluded the missions from the North by fear of the creation of an educated group, as it happened in the South, the fact that could be dangerous for colonial domination. Furthermore, the existence of a strongly established.

It is clear now that from the beginning of colonial rule, the British had opted for two separate educational policies for the North and the South of Nigeria. The adoption of two different policies for the two parts of Nigeria was certainly to have far reaching consequences on the future of Nigeria, that would be populated by educated Southerners and backward Northerners. These educated Southerners were the first who were to get political consciousness in Nigeria, and who, different from the Northerners, were to ask for self-government and then independence from British rule by the 1930's.

## **7. The Rise of Nationalism in Southern Nigeria**

Political consciousness in West Africa, and especially in the coastal regions such as the Gold Coast Colony and Southern Nigeria, had been exposed to the growing influence of European education, and the disruption of the traditional organization of the society under British rule. Thus, some movements started to rise. In Nigeria, other factors influenced Nigerian nationalism. First, Nigerian nationalism was influenced by black American writings against racism in the United States of America, like W. E. Dubois (1868-1963), and Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), in addition to Pan African ideas spread in Nigeria, especially the Southern part of it, by some important men, such as Edward Blyden (1832-1912) who enforced the Pan-African aspect of Nigerian nationalism by the 1920's (Camara, C, 1982, 98).

As mentioned earlier, Lugard's indirect rule imposed on Southern Nigeria to pay taxes to contribute to the economy of the North. During the world economic crisis of 1929, women from Aba, Owerri, Calabar, and Opobo, all in Eastern Nigeria, revolted against these taxes. 32 persons were killed by the army during this manifestation; and 31 persons were wounded (Camara, C, 1982, 97). This situation was another reaction of the Southerners, after that of 1914 against the British colonial policy that created two rival and different regions. Furthermore, this situation was also an encouragement for the nationalistic feeling for the Southern Nigerians.

After the Second World War, new ideals had dawned on the world and informed opinion had become much concerned with the problem of dependent Peoples. Thus, the British started to consider the autonomy of their colonies, influenced by these new ideals and started to prepare their African colonies, including Nigeria, for independence. Oliver Stanley, the wartime Colonial Secretary, had stated in June 1943 "We are pledged to guide colonial people along the road to self-government within the British empire » (Oliver, R & Atmore, A, 1994, 199). This road to Self-government was called the constitution making process that started by 1946.

This was the general background and the main colonial policies that created Nigeria of the 1960's, which was characterized by regionalism and ethnic rivalry. Independent Nigeria was to endorse the consequences of such colonial policies; that is to say, violence and division within the country. This division between South and North, the former commercialized and educated, the latter under the control of the agrarian and uneducated oligarchy of the Hausa-Fulani, looked like possessing the potential of an American Civil War (First, R, 1972, 149).

## **8. Results and Discussion**

The present study was carried out to determine the impact of the colonial legacy on the civil war of Nigeria (1967- 1970). Africa's most populous nation became independent from Britain on October 1, 1960, a little more than 100 years after colonisers first arrived.

The legacies of the British colonial administration left deep rooted political and social mistrust among the different ethnic nationalities in the young nation. The eastern region of Biafra sought its independence from the federal republic of Nigeria, which unfortunately resulted in the tremendous loss of lives. It becomes certain that this was a result of the divide and rule tactics left in place and fuelled by the colonizers.

The colonial educational policy towards the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria also represented a root to the Biafra war. The British had opted for two separate educational policies for the north and the south of Nigeria. Under colonialism, the south was more developed and educated, and these differences would have long-lasting consequences that continued post-independence. The educated Southerners were the first who were to get political consciousness in Nigeria, and who, different from the Northerners, were to ask for self-government and then independence from British rule by the 1930's.

After independence, tensions that had been building between two ethnic groups – the northern Hausa and the eastern Igbo – led to violence in 1966, when more than 1, 000 people were killed in the north.

## **9. Conclusion**

In common with most African countries, Nigeria was a colonial creation. Many of its troubles since independence can be traced back to the formation by the United Kingdom, the colonial power, of a multi-ethnic colonial state which suspended the deeply-rooted political entities which already existed. The civil war of 1967-1970, in which up to 2 million persons died, was in part a consequence of this inherited colonial state.

The Federation of Nigeria became an independent and sovereign state in 1960, after having existed as a unified political entity under colonial rule for Scarcely half a century. It is a state comprising about 250 ethnic groups, although it came to be dominated by the three larger regional and ethnic blocks, which were reflected in the political structure at the time of independence.

The civil war of 1967-1970 was a result of Eastern secession from Federation after the two coups d'état of January and July 1966, and was a consequence of such differences. Yet, civil war was to last

for as long as 30 months, mainly because of international military and humanitarian help. After cease-fire in 1970, the process of national reconciliation was remarkably rapid. The introduction of a twelve states system to replace the previous regional structure seemed a positive step, aside the reintegration of former Biafran army personnel in the Federal armed forces (Carver, R, 1996). However, the Biafran war is still in the minds of the peoples of the world as an atrocious war where millions of children died of starvation, as De St Jorre has pointed out:

*If you ask anyone outside Africa, even today, what they knew or thought about Biafra, they invariably reply: Oh, that was the place where all those kids were being starved to death by the Nigerians, wasn't it?*(De St Jorre, 1972, 242)

And even 30 years later, Ibos are still asking for billions of dollars in damages to the Commission of Human Rights, as compensation for the losses and the dead among the Biafrans during the war.

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