

# The Nigerian Civil War: The Consequences of Imperialism

## Imperialism in Nigeria

Beginning in 1883 increased ethnic tensions and the role of the British in Nigeria.

British colonial rule began four to five hundred years ago from the west coast of Africa through the transatlantic slave trade to the east coast of Africa. This continued until the late 19th century when the British and other colonial powers began to colonize the continent.



## Beginning of the War

Following the 1966 military coup, the government was overthrown and the military took control of the country.



The 1966 military coup was a turning point in the history of Nigeria. It led to the formation of a military government and the beginning of a period of political instability.

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## Siege of Biafra

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A wood carving depicting a woman and child brought back from Biafra in the 1970s.



## The War

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# Britain in Nigeria

British Imperialism beginning in 1861 increased ethnic tensions and laid the foundation for the Civil War.

"The rain that beat Africa began four to five hundred years ago, from the 'discovery' of Africa by Europe, through the transatlantic slave trade, to the Berlin Conference of 1885. That controversial gathering of the world's leading European powers precipitated what we now call the Scramble for Africa, created boundaries that did violence to Africa's ancient societies and resulted in tension-prone modern states." *There Was a Country* page one by Chinua Achebe author and survivor of the war.



"Map of Africa in 1913." Gaba, Eric 1913.



"Scramble for Africa." © Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge 2012.

Britain created Nigeria by combining multiple territories into one political unit establishing the modern boundaries.

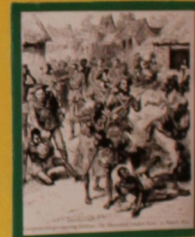
Nigeria was a British Protectorate from 1901-1960. It was under British control, but retained some local autonomy through the preservation of tribal leaders.



British Colonial Administrators meeting with Nigerian Representatives. © Hulton Deutsch Collection/Corbis 1861.

"They protected these local chiefs from any rebellion, making it impossible for people to challenge authority. Each chief ruled over a single ethnic group fostering ethnic division." - "Nigerian Civil War Begins" *Global Events: Milestone Events Throughout History* edited by Jennifer Stock.

"The roots of Nigeria's civil war can be traced to colonial rule, when the British forced three very distinct peoples, each living in their own region—the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the Southwest, and the Igbo in the Southeast—to integrate into a state that encouraged regional and ethnic competition." - Kairn A. Kleiman professor of African history at University of Houston.



European troops entering Kumaasi. The Illustrated London News, 1804.



"Four Hausa Gun Carriers of the South Nigerian Regiment by Sir (John) Benjamin Stone." Sir Benjamin Stone, National Portrait Gallery, 1914.



Traditional Yoruba tribal markings. "The Sacred art of the Ori." Senbanjo, Laolu 2015.



Igbo population in Nigeria." Gaba, Eric 2012.

Economic division between the ethnic divisions became apparent.

The Igbos location in the South allowed them to become educated which gave them more opportunities and caused resentment from the other ethnic groups.

"The southern part had longer exposure to Europeans... because particularly the British had a policy of indirect rule. They allowed missionaries to run schools and hospitals." - John Stanley Friesen, Survivor of the Biafran War, 2017

"Education, the white man's knowledge, was a collective aspiration of the entire community. It was the path to individual and family success." - *There was a country* page 16 by Chinua Achebe



# Begin

Beginning in 1960...



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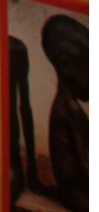
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© Hulton Deutsch Collection/Corbis 1861.

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Igbo population in Nigeria." Gale, Cengage Learning, COPYRIGHT 2012.

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A rural school in a remote region of Nigeria.  
Ivan Kuzmin © Shutterstock.com 2012

Following decades of clamors for independence, Nigeria was granted independence on October 1st, 1960. However, the British left Nigeria without a stable government in place.



A wood carving depicting a mother and child brought back from Nigeria in the 1960s.





# Beginning of the War

**Thesis:** The Nigerian Civil War from 1967-1970 began due to ethnic tensions exacerbated by British control. The attempted secession of Biafra and the destruction of the country during the war revealed that despite attempts to compromise at the conclusion of the war, through the policy of "No victor No vanquished", ultimately the ethnic divisions and economic disparity intensified by the war would result in Nigeria's failure to truly become one people.

Beginning in 1966 a series of coups destabilized the government and resulted in new leaders from the Northern ethnic group the Hausa-Fulani.

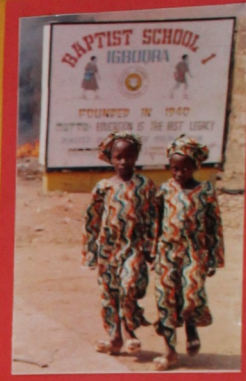


Major General Yakubu Gowon head of state throughout the war. FLORENCE SPENCE/TIME LIFE PICTURES GETTY IMAGES 1966.

"It destabilized the currency, made people jittery, increased the levels of tension, fear, mistrust, etc., prices skyrocketed. More military presence became obvious." - Dolores Friesen, survivor of the Biafran War, 2017

"After the second coup, a campaign of ethnic cleansing began in the northern region. Largely northern officials began the killing of several Igbo officers and civilians. From September to November 1966, one hundred thousand Igbo living in the north were massacred. Hundreds of thousands more were mutilated or otherwise injured." - *The Nigerian Civil War Begins: July 6, 1967*

"Repeated outbursts of violence between June and October 1966 peaked in massacres against Igbos living in the Sabon Gari, the 'foreigners' quarters' of northern Nigerian towns." - Lasse Heerten and A. Dirk Moses



Igbo twins walking home from school. EKPEI, PIUS UTOMI/AFP/Getty Images 2007.

The Igbo ethnic group originated in the Biafran region, however, during British imperialism they dispersed and disrupted ethnic lines. The coups began ethnically motivated killings of Igbos in the Northern territory that forced the Igbo people back to Biafra.

"Whether representatives of the Nigerian state systematically organized the killings remains disputed. At the very least, the Nigerian government failed to halt the riots. This violence drove a stream of more than a million refugees to the Eastern Region." - Lasse Heerten and A. Dirk Moses



British business men and Biafrans held captive by the Nigerian Government's army. HULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS 1967-1970.



"Map of Biafra." ibtimes.co.uk 2015.



Civilians flee Biafra to go to Umuahia, the new capital of the Republic of Biafra. Mazine, François AFP PHOTO 1968.

Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, called for Igbos to come to the Eastern region. He said the Federal government aided the genocide in the North and unable to protect Easterners.

The Republic of Biafra was officially proclaimed on May 30, 1967.

The discovery of oil in the Eastern region (Biafra) was a motivating factor for the Federal governments cause, as oil was an economic necessity. On July 6, 1967, the Federal government sent the army to the East and engaged the Biafrans.

"We witnessed the slow, and sometimes unbelievably fast slide into chaos, anarchy, loss of freedom of the press, written (newspapers) and spoken (radio). We saw and felt ourselves the loss of hope, the fear, the distrust, mistrust, and suspicion." - Dolores Friesen

# Siege of Biafra

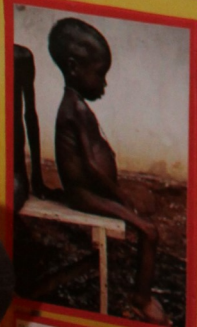
"By the end of 1967, they had captured the Niger Delta and cut off Biafran access to the sea." - *The Nigerian Civil War Begins: July 6, 1967*

"A combination of military operations—by land, air, and sea—and an economic blockade against Biafra and the destruction of its agricultural life by the Nigerian federal government led to the starvation, mass death, and displacement of Igbos." - Kolawole

"There were severe shortages of food, medicine, clothing, and housing. The economy of the region was shattered. Cities were in ruins; schools, hospitals, utilities, and transportation facilities were destroyed or inoperative." - John Pike contributor to CNN, MSNBC, and BBC on global security.

In response to the federal government's blockade Biafra turned to propaganda to motivate other nations to join their cause.

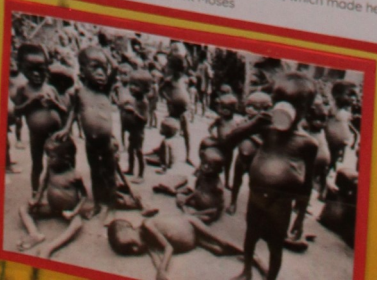
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Starving Biafran girl from Nigerian civil war. COC 1968



"Biafran Baby, Biafra." Mousulin, Dan 1968



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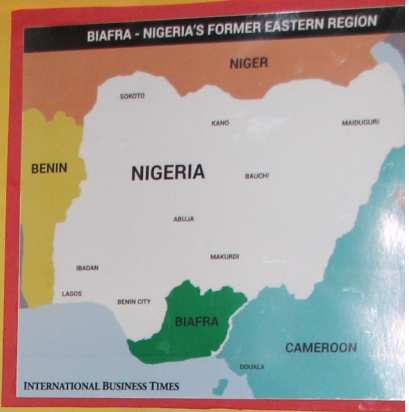
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"Map of Biafra." lbtimes.co.uk 2015.

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Albino boy, Biafra. McCullin, Don 1969.



Nigerian children during the famine resulting from the Biafra War in the 1970s. SHULTON-DEUTSCH COLLECTION/CORBIS, 1970.



The Biafra Telegraph 1967.

"The military standoff remained for another eighteen months after the increase of international interest in mid 1968." -Lasse Heerten and A. Dirk Moses

"In December 1968 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimated that fourteen thousand people were dying each day in Biafra." - O. Kolawole



Biafran soldiers prepare to resist a federal troop attack. AFP/Getty Images 1967

"Operating the policy of hunger as a legitimate weapon of war and sent thousands of children to their untimely graves through starvation." -Ochereome Nnamo a Nigerian journalist

The rebels received unofficial military aid from France. The Organization of African Unity attempted to broker peace between the two sides, but was unsuccessful. As the easterners suffered from malnutrition and illness, they began to weaken. In December 1969, a major offensive by the government troops captured the rebel stronghold of Owerri." -The Nigerian Civil War

On January 11, 1970, Ojukwu fled to the Cote d'Ivoire. On January 15, Biafra surrendered and was abolished.



A cartoon of Ojukwu sharing drinks with Charles De Gaulle Prime Minister of France. "Italian Hostages." Horton, Dale 1969.

depicting a mother brought back from in the 1960s.

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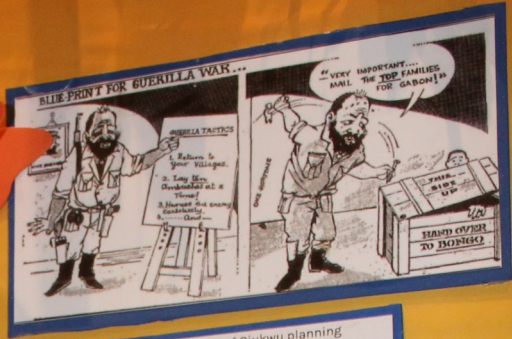
Oliver Fabian  
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# After the War

After Ojukwu fled the country the Nigerian Government enacted a policy of "No victor, no vanquished" in 1970. This attempted to unify the country by blaming no one for the war.

"Igbo personnel soon were being enlisted in the federal armed forces. There were no trials and few people were imprisoned. Ojukwu, in exile, was made the scapegoat, but efforts to have him extradited failed" -Helen Chapin Metz analyst at the library of Congress' Federal Research Division



A political cartoon of Ojukwu planning Guerilla Warfare. "Blueprint for Guerrilla War." Hortons, Oke. Sunday Times, 13 Oct. 1968.



Pro-federal government editorial mocking Ojukwu "Mr.Ojukwu." Daily Times (Nigeria), 1968.

"Ojukwu..Traitor." Drum Magazine, 1968.

"The federal government granted funds to cover the [Biafran] state's operating expenses for an interim period, and much of the war damage was repaired. Social services and public utilities slowly were reinstated, although not to the prewar levels"- Helen Chapin Metz



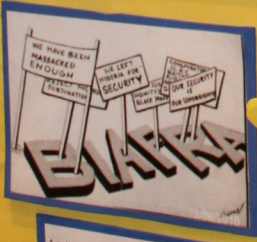
Destruction in Biafra. Life 1969.

A compromise with the division of oil attempted to reduce regional tensions.

"Ranked fifth globally in oil production, this nation has earned more than \$340 billion in oil and gas revenues since the 1970s"-Kaim Kleiman

However, Nigeria still struggles with division despite the compromises.

"While the misery of the Biafran war put an end to the separatist ambitions of many Biafrans, a lot of Igbo people still feel that they are not fairly treated in Nigeria." -"Biafran Leader Nnamdi Kanu..." BBC News



A political cartoon of the reasons behind Biafran secession. "Biafra Picards." Ezzen, Chiwee 1969.

Political policy furthered the divide between Igbos and other ethnic groups.

"While the Igbos comprise one of the three largest ethnic groups, they have fewer states than the Hausas in the north and the Yorubas in the south-west, and subsequently get a smaller budget allocation"- "Nigeria treats us like slaves." BBC News

A resurgence in separatist movements have motivated a push for Biafra.

"In Nigeria, a movement in the southeast seeking independence of the country has also gained steam... 50 years of the same issue left one million people dead... 50 years of conflicts... Iyare and Eze..."



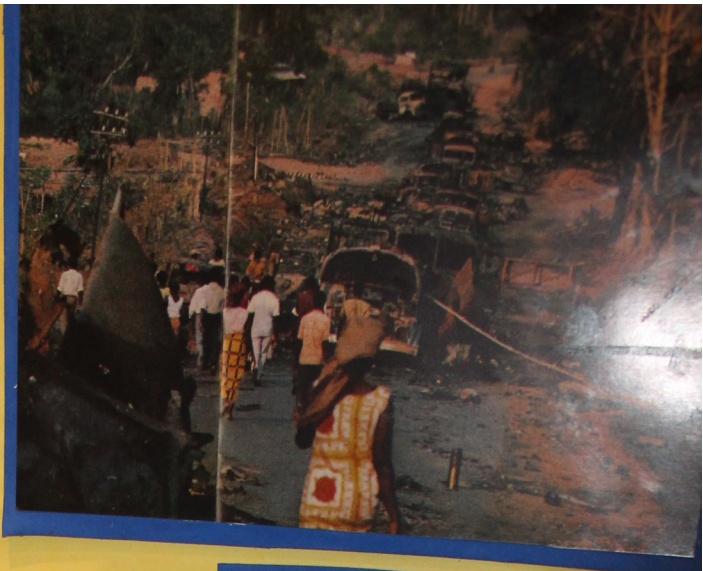


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"In Nigeria, a movement in the southeast seeking independence from the rest of the country has also gained steam - 50 years after a civil war over the same issue left one million people dead in one of the region's deadliest conflicts"- Iyare and Essomba. Iyare and Essomba are Nigerian journalists.

"Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari, declared a separatist group, the Indigenous People of Biafra, a terrorist organization and unleashed a military offensive in the region"- Iyare and Essomba

The compromises at the end of the war failed to address the root causes of the Biafran secession, as a result of this Nigeria faces similar conflicts today.

"After so much sacrifice we are not prepared to go back."-Kenneth Dike a Nigerian historian.

The war might have ended, but Biafra did not



A stamp celebrating Biafra's first year of independence. "Nigerian Pogrom 1966." 1968.



"The Flag of Nigeria." Copyright Gale, Cengage Learning 2012.



Ojukwu  
Life 1968.

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